



The Hook – Frame – Action Framework: High Impact Language for Marketers

Description

I am a big believer in the power of words. We often forget just how powerful they can be, whether it is talking to our friends, loved ones or – in this instance – potential customers.

In marketing, or CRO or any type of sales-like activity, just like with gamification, we are trying to encourage our users / customers to behave in a certain way. You need to capture their attention, keep them interested and then guide them towards an outcome of some sort – and this is really hard.

I built the the Hook – Frame – Action framework to see if I could create a clear and structured approach to achieving these goals, to create messaging that is both compelling and effective. I went back to the books (so to speak) and looked at cognitive biases again, a perennial favourite in gamification to see how those could be added to simple language to create higher impact.

Below is the fruits of me efforts. I look at the overall concept of Hook – Frame – Action, then some biases to use and finally some retail inspired examples.

I hope you find them handy and that they inspire you to consider your language more carefully.

Understanding the Hook – Frame – Action Framework

At its core, the Hook – Frame – Action framework simplifies persuasive communication into three essential steps:

1. **Hook:** Captures attention and sparks curiosity.
 2. **Frame:** Shapes the audience's perceptions and motivates engagement using emotional or psychological responses, often employing cognitive biases.
 3. **Action:** Guides the audience with a clear and compelling call-to-action.
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Step 1: Hook – Capturing Attention

The Hook is the starting point of any effective message. In a world filled with information, noise and distractions, the hook is your opportunity to stand out. It should grab attention, spark curiosity, and prepare the audience for what's next. In arcade games, this was the attention screen, used to draw people into the game.

Crafting Effective Hooks

- Use the **Curiosity Gap**: Hint at a solution without revealing it straight away.
 - Example: "What if you could double your productivity in just one week?"
 - Create a Sense of **Urgency** or **Exclusivity**.
 - Example: "Limited-time offer: Don't miss out!"
 - Tap into **Novelty** or **Surprise**.
 - Example: "This one change could save you thousands."
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Step 2: Frame – Shaping Perceptions

The Frame stage is where you shape how the audience perceives your message. It's not enough to grab attention; you need to guide their thinking and motivate them. This is where the cognitive biases I mentioned come into play.

The Ten Key Cognitive Biases

Bias	Definition	Marketing Example
Loss Aversion	People fear losing more than they desire to gain.	Hook: "Don't let this deal slip away!" Frame: "Save £50 if you order before midnight." Action: "Order now and secure your discount."
Social Proof	People are influenced by others' actions.	Hook: "Join thousands who've discovered this secret!" Frame: "Over 10,000 happy customers can't be wrong." Action: "Sign up today and become part of the community."
Scarcity Effect	Limited availability increases perceived value.	Hook: "Hurry—time is running out!" Frame: "Only 3 left in stock—don't miss your chance." Action: "Act now to claim yours before it's gone."
Anchoring Bias	People rely heavily on the first piece of info.	Hook: "Was £1,000, now just £600!" Frame: "Save £400 instantly with this exclusive offer." Action: "Claim your discount today—limited time only."
Endowment Effect	People value things more when they feel ownership.	Hook: "Imagine this smartwatch enhancing your daily routine." Frame: "Try it free for 30 days and see how it changes your life." Action: "Sign up now and start your free trial today."

Decoy Effect	A third option makes one choice more appealing.	Hook: “Looking for the perfect streaming plan?” Frame: “Choose Basic (£9), Standard (£15), or Premium (£16).” Action: “Upgrade to Premium today for the best value!”
Bandwagon Effect	People do something because others are doing it.	Hook: “Everyone’s talking about this trend!” Frame: “Join over 1 million users smashing their fitness goals.” Action: “Download the app now and see the results for yourself.”
Zeigarnik Effect	People remember incomplete tasks better.	Hook: “You’re almost there!” Frame: “Complete your profile to unlock exclusive rewards.” Action: “Finish now and claim your prize.”
Reciprocity	People feel obligated to return a favor or gift.	Hook: “We’ve got something special for you!” Frame: “Enjoy a free eBook just for visiting our site.” Action: “Download your free copy now—no strings attached.”
Framing Effect	Info presentation influences decision-making.	Hook: “Save 30% on your energy bill—just by switching!” Frame: “Switch now and keep more money in your pocket.” Action: “Sign up today and start saving instantly.”

Step 3: Action – Closing the Loop

The final step, Action, translates interest into behaviour. A strong call-to-action should be concise and clear:

1. **Direct:** Use action verbs like “Sign up,” “Order now.”
2. **Benefit-Oriented:** Highlight what the audience will gain.
 - Example: “Save £100 today!”
3. **Immediate:** Reduce hesitation by emphasizing urgency.
 - Example: “Offer ends at midnight—don’t wait!”

In the world of online retail, this might look more like a **CTA button** than a sentence. You have set the audience up, so you need to give them a simple call to action that reinforces the key message:

- CTA Button Text: “Shop the Sale”
 - CTA Button Text: “Sign Up Now”
 - CTA Button Text: “Get Started Today”
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Retail Examples

1. **Clothing Retailer (Scarcity Effect)**
 - Hook: “Your perfect winter coat is waiting!”
 - Frame: “Only 5 left in your size—don’t let it slip away.” (Scarcity Effect)
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- Action: “Shop now and get free next-day delivery!”
 - CTA Button Text: “Shop the Sale”
2. **Electronics Store (Anchoring Bias)**
- Hook: “Unbeatable savings on the latest tech!”
 - Frame: “Was £999, now just £699—save £300 today.” (Anchoring Bias)
 - Action: “Order now and upgrade your gadgets!”
 - CTA Button Text: “Order Now”
3. **Beauty Products (Social Proof)**
- Hook: “Find out why everyone’s talking about this skincare set.”
 - Frame: “Trusted by 10,000+ happy customers for glowing skin.” (Social Proof)
 - Action: “Get yours today and receive a free gift!”
 - CTA Button Text: “Shop Now”
4. **Furniture Store (Endowment Effect)**
- Hook: “Imagine your home transformed with this sofa.”
 - Frame: “Try it in your home for 30 days—risk-free!” (Endowment Effect)
 - Action: “Order today and enjoy free returns!”
 - CTA Button Text: “Buy Now”
5. **Grocery Delivery (Zeigarnik Effect)**
- Hook: “Your basket is waiting!”
 - Frame: “Complete your order now and get free delivery on your first shop.” (Zeigarnik Effect)
 - Action: “Finish checking out today to claim your offer!”
 - CTA Button Text: “Complete Order”
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Template

Use this template to design your campaign:

Product/Service: [Enter here]

- **Hook:** [Write your attention-grabbing statement here.]
 - **Frame:** [Incorporate a cognitive bias to shape perception.]
 - **Action:** [A clear and compelling call-to-action.]
 - **CTA:** [A clear, very short version of your action]
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Conclusion

With luck, this was interesting. I want the **Hook – Frame – Action framework** to be a practical and informed approach to creating messages that engage and convert – let me know in the comments if you think I managed it!

And before I forget – I trained a simple GPT to help <https://chatgpt.com/g/g-6766e88c5280819185fc18528e492cbd-the-hook-frame-action-framework>

Reading List

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Category

1. Education
2. Gamification

Tags

1. cognitive bias
2. hook
3. language
4. messaging

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