

Secrets

OF WRITING

Killer Copy



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INTRODUCTION

Want to know some insider copy writing secrets?

There are some proven formulas you can use to get more sales (without being spammy or annoying). In order to get a sale, you need to get attention, spell out the problem your reader has, convince your her you can fix it, and then ask for a response.

This e-book includes tips on how to start your sales letter with a bang, secrets for writing great headlines, plus seven common copy mistakes (and how to avoid them).

At the end, there's a few words about me, plus a feedback page. Please let me know what you think!

Start Your Sales Letter With a Bang

If you're writing a sales letter (or an email) the most important thing is to get the reader to open the envelope or the email. The next key step is the headline and the opening paragraph.

One way to get attention is to address the reader directly. Start with "you" to create a conversation, rather than "I" (which is more like a speech).

Keep the sentences and paragraphs short, so they're easy to read and digest. Use that first sentence to introduce the conversation you'd like to have, and explain why the reader should keep reading.



Incite curiosity with a headline:

Make a statement that encourages the reader to want to learn more. Promise they'll get useful information, or learn to do something better.

20 Ways to Market Your Business For Free

Ask a question that you know your reader will agree with:

Are you tired of spending money on IT support that leaves your wallet empty and your computer full of viruses?

Start with "because"

Because you've been a cardmember for 10 years, we'd like to reward you with a free gift.

Address skepticism about your product immediately, agree with it, then discuss (in the next sentence) why your solution is different.

"Email marketing is just junk and a waste of time. The truth is, I agree with you. The problem with most marketing is.....What makes this different is....."

Use memories and imagination.

Conjure up a picture in the reader's mind and tell a story.

Do you remember how much you enjoyed recess as a child?

"It was 1945, the war was over and my dad, Ed Cushman, had just opened a small store and fruit packaging plant here in West Palm Beach. One night (a night never to be forgotten by anyone in our family), everyone was waiting for a truckload of grape-fruit. When it finally arrived, my dad took one look and said, "What the devil is this?"

[They were Honeybell oranges; and when I tasted my first one, I said pretty much the same thing, "What was that??" It was sweet, juicy, and unlike any other orange I ever ate!].

A Quick, Easy Secret Copywriting Tip

Go look at your Web site's home page in a new window. Or, pull out your company brochure.

It's OK, I'll wait.

Read the first two or three paragraphs.

Do they pull you in? Make you want to read more? Or, is the best opening sentence buried?

Here's an example, from the completely fictional Wow Wow Web Design company.

After the initial consultation phase of your project, Wow Wow Web Design will create your web site using professional design tools. There are people who will offer to produce graphics for you at highly discounted rates. However, the quality of their design may be poor.

A badly designed web site can have a negative impact on your site's effectiveness and the money you earn from it. Whether you need a big web site or a small one, we can provide all your design needs.

The best sentence is buried at the beginning of the second paragraph. Move that up and see how much better it reads.

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Whether you need a big web site or a small one, we can provide all your design needs.

Now, look back at your own site or brochure. Is the best sentence buried? Move it up to the top and see what happens.

7 Secret Shortcuts for Writing Great Headlines

The headline is the first thing that catches a reader's eye. Nobody (except for judges in advertising competitions) will read your entire post or ad unless the headline does its job. Here are seven tips for getting attention with your headline.

1. Start with a number

People love lists. They promise knowledge, quick help, and understanding of complex problems — in a format that's easy to read and digest.

2. Ask readers if they make common mistakes

A headline asking if readers made “these common mistakes in English” was a bit direct mail hit long ago. Ask your readers if they make these common design mistakes, or web development errors.

3. Offer a quiz

It's fun to test your knowledge, especially if it's a contest. Have your readers see how well they do on common (or uncommon tests of grammar, design, or photography tricks.

4. Make a big promise

Offer to get rid of [horrible problem] once and for all. Or, a quick, easy way to do something hard.: Get a web site that's impressive and easy!



5. Offer inside information or big savings

Everything you need to know to get cheaper software, or how to (do something that's usually expensive) on a budget.

6. Make a big list

This is particularly effective in magazine articles or blog posts you want bookmarked or reread. List 21 design tools under \$21, or [27 free marketing ideas](#).

7. List the best (or the worst) examples

“The best software under \$50,” or “[The worst marketing email. Ever.](#)”

Try This Timeless Copywriting Technique

An advertiser with an unprofitable campaign was desperate. The ads for his business books were attractive, but the books weren't selling. A colleague suggested adding the buyer's name in gilt lettering on each book. The ads went out again (virtually unchanged, except for a note about adding the name). They sold hundreds of thousands of books.

Another company offered small memo books to customers and prospects as gifts. The results were poor until they sent letters saying "a book with your name is waiting for you." All the prospect had to do was to fill out and mail a simple form. Nearly everyone who received the letter returned the form.



When Everyone Knows Your Name

These examples are from *Scientific Advertising* (published in 1920), but the technique is still effective. Squidoo greets me by name when I log in. So does Amazon. Online grocer Fresh Direct does the same thing (and just had me fill out a brief survey asking what kinds of foods I enjoy most).

Address your letter or email directly to the person receiving it. Treat your customers and prospects like people (instead of account numbers). They'll love you for it. They might even put *your* name in lights.

If you can't wait, [click this link for instant gratification.](#)

Seven Deadly Web Copy Mistakes

1. Creating the design before the copy

The images are there to enhance the words (not the other way around). Writing can be edited to fit. Removing design elements to fit the text will mess up the entire design. Write the copy first, then you'll be able to use design to highlight your testimonials or your great guarantee.



2. Do-it-yourself copywriting

Thinking that you can write the copy yourself. Copywriting is a specific skill. There are books and blogs you can read ([email me](#) if you'd like some recommendations), but you have to convince people to do something and hand you their hard-earned money. Besides, is this the best use of your time? [Read this](#) before you hire someone.

3. Burying the lede

In the newspaper business, the lede is the sentence that sums up the story – and draws you in. In copywriting it's the sentence that should tell readers why they should read the second sentence, and the third. Start with a bang – so readers will keep going. Try moving the paragraphs around. Often your best sentence is buried in the second or third paragraph.

4. Not stating the problem

If you want people to trust you and buy from you, you've got to establish trust and empathy. Point out a problem, a concern, or a desire.

5. Talking about yourself too much

Saying “me”, “my” and “our” will drive people away. They don’t want to hear about your background or your MFA, they want to know how your knowledge and skills will help solve their problems. Take the [one-minute marketing test](#) to find out how your site copy stacks up.

6. Not offering a solution

Explain how your product or service solves that problem. Tell them what they’ll get, how it works, why it works. Show how other people have benefited from it. Answer common questions (yes, this is why sales letters are long – to answer all the questions that people may have).

7. No call to action

Don’t forget that call to action. Make it absolutely clear what to do, and how to do it. The buttons should be big, easy to find, and clearly labeled. You don’t want people hunting around to find them.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Secrets of Writing Killer Copy was written by Jodi Kaplan. Jodi fixes “broken marketing.” Her clients are writers, graphic designers, and creatives who are great at generating ideas and doing their jobs — but need help turning their expertise, their skills, and their desires into dollars.

She blogs about marketing at [Fix Your Broken Marketing](#). You can [get new posts for free here](#).

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FEEDBACK

Thanks for reading **Secrets of Writing Killer Copy**. I hope you found it useful. If you have any feedback, [send me an email](#).