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**3 Steps To Better Sales Copywriting**

By **J.L. Reid**

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Whether you're wet-behind-the-ears or a seasoned copywriter, your craft will benefit by remembering one thing:

You're nothing more than a salesperson.

There's an old saying in the "business" that, "a copywriter is a salesperson sitting in front of a typewriter." True, few of us are using typewriters these days. The principal, however, remains unchanged.

We're in sales. I know this. You know this. We all know this. Yet why does much of the copy out there, especially ads produced by expensive agencies, seem to miss the point?

If all we're doing is sales, albeit transmitted through a written or broadcast medium, then we'd better know what we're doing.

Starting the process

While studying creative writing, I learned this storytelling maxim: every character has a motive for being in a scene. The same is true in a sales situation.

The salesperson's motive is simple. He wants to make the sale and get his commission. But what does the potential customer want?

First, what type of customer are they? Are they ready to make an immediate buy? Are they information shopping, looking for a great deal? Are they even looking for our product or service?

Ask Questions, then Shut-up and Listen

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When selling to prospective customers ask questions that get them to reveal their needs. It's a mistake to sell the product on the tip of your tongue. "Model X" might work, but if you listen you might discover that the more expensive "Model Z" is what the customer really needs.

Once you know why the prospect is there—whether they have an unresolved need, an emotional reason for buying, or they're just shopping around—tailor your pitch to their specific reason.

Now when you make the pitch, tell how your product benefits the customer, rather than rattling off product features you think he cares about.

#### When You're Finished, Close the Door

By this point your spiel should be unforced. You know the customer's "hot-buttons" so everything should be smooth sailing.

After you've explained the last product benefit, you (as the salesperson) are obligated to close the deal. The way you do that is simply to ask, "Are you ready to make your decision?" or "Is this the product you'd like to buy?"

Hopefully the answer is yes. If not, then you ask, "When would you be ready to make your decision? Can I contact you then?"

#### What Does This Have to Do with Copywriting?

Remember, you're nothing more than a salesperson. So you, so while writing copy, you should go through similar steps.

1. Qualify the prospect. How you write your copy, and the ratio of hard selling to information-based soft selling, will change with the medium you're working in. But the first thing your copy should do is state outright what business you're in and what you're selling.

If your pitch is too vague, if it's implied, or it depends on prior knowledge for comprehension, then your prospect might never realize he needs what you're selling.

2. Sell Benefits, not Features. I've heard many sales trainers say, "It's not about you, it's about them." That's golden advice. The best way to apply this idea to your copy is by focusing on your product's benefits.

A sports car's features might be power steering, fast acceleration, and fuel efficiency. The benefits of that same car to a man a mid-life crisis, however, are the social status and appearance of youth it gives him. Which reason, the benefits or the features, would cause him to buy?

In a face-to-face sales environment it's easy to ask for a specific customer's needs. When writing sales copy you can create the same rapport by being customer-centered. To do this, write in the

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second person, or "You" voice. If your copy repeatedly says your company does this, or your product does that, you're being self-centered. Your prospect won't see himself benefiting from your product.

3. Close the Deal. I can't count how often I've read a brochure, watched a commercial, or visited a website and had no clue about what I was supposed to do.

Always end your copy with a Call-to-Action.

Tell the customer exactly what you want him to do. This isn't the time to be cute, so be exact. Do you want him to call you? Click a "Buy This" button? Make a donation? Tell your customer, or else he won't do anything.

When asked what I do I usually say I'm a freelance marketing and publicity copywriter. I might revise the statement to, "I'm a freelance sales copywriter," because that's what it all comes down to: sales. Whether your copy creates a direct response or creates publicity and general awareness of your company, if you don't sell you might as well not be in business.

J.L. Reid is a freelance marketing—er—freelance sales copywriter based in Raleigh NC. Visit his website,

, to learn more about his services.

### **Five (5) Major Pitfalls Of Ad Copywriting And What You Can Do To Avoid Them**

**By Carla Lendor**

For all of us involved in advertising the challenge of producing that one piece of copywriting magic that sends our sales soaring is never far from our minds. Face it, copywriting is not all about aesthetically pleasing language, it is about sales. The most aesthetically pleasing copywriting is not necessarily the most persuasive that will produce the greatest sales. More often than not, simple language is what produces the most sales. This, in no way implies that you should abandon your artistic abilities when writing your ad copy.

Great copywriting demands discipline, imagination, creativity and hard work. You will not become a great copywriter overnight. Even for the best of us, it takes time to master the skill of ad copywriting. With hard work, dedication and purpose you will be able to acquire the techniques that will have you producing great ad copy.

In this article you will learn about the pitfalls you must avoid if you wish to improve your ad copy:

#### **Wrong or Misleading Information**

There is nothing worse than an ad copy that misrepresents its products or services. The only person it hurts is you. Yes, you make a few quick bucks but misleading information will eventually destroy your

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credibility.

Solution: Thoroughly check the facts of your copy before submitting it.

No call to action

Many times we are guilty of producing great ad copy but omit the call to action. You must tell your readers exactly you expect of them, whether to sign up to your mailing list or buy your product. The call for action is what turns visitors into customers.

Solution: State precisely what action you want from your readers

Sexist language

Sexist or gender specific language can be offensive to people and will only serve to alienate your readers.

Solution: Use gender-neutral phrases. Use of plurals is also recommended.

Alienation of Readers

Your audience should always be the primary focus of copywriting and thus your writing style should reflect that of your audience. Unnecessary words and phrases will confuse your audience and take the punch out of your ad copy.

Solution: Avoid the use of technical jargon. Simplicity is the key to effective communication. Make sure

your copy is concise. Don't speak over the heads of your readers or try to impress them with words and phrases they do not understand.

Emotionless Language

Emotion is the central nervous system of copywriting. People buy on emotion not words. Bland copy does not appeal to the emotion of your readers. To write emotionally charged copy that creates an attachment between your readers and products you must first understand your customers needs, moods, personality and desires.

Solution: You must try to understand what motivates them into buying your product. Get to know your customers and understand what motivates them into buying your product. Appeal to the emotions of your readers. Emphasise with your customers.

If you keep those tips in mind when preparing your ad copy, you will see significant improvements in your copywriting.

Carla Lendor is a Small Business Strategist. Visit

,

or

for more information on her.

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