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A Professional Copywriter Can Help You Avoid These Seven Common Marketing Pitfalls

By Heather Robson

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Small business owners often make the mistake of believing that they can get by writing their own copy for their marketing materials. Even big corporations sometimes fall into this trap believing they can be just as effective handling copy development in house.

While it's true that you can produce passable copy this way, you often are missing out on better results—results that a copywriting professional can bring to your marketing efforts. And settling for lesser results means your business isn't doing as well as it could, and its marketing materials are not providing the return on investment that they should.

The main concern that business owners and marketing directors alike have about hiring a professional copywriter is cost. They fear that the cost will be prohibitive. But in most cases the copywriter's fees are minimal compared to the overall cost of the marketing campaign. And good copy can improve the success of the campaign by up to 34%.

The reason a professional copywriter can make such a difference to a marketing campaign is not only that they know how to write persuasively...they also know what common mistakes to avoid. If you're trying to get by using copy written by somebody whose main focus is not copywriting, your marketing materials could be suffering from one of these common traps.

1. Me-Centered Copy

It's so easy when you're selling a product or service to focus on that product or service. It seems like a no-brainer. But the truth is doing so can kill your response rate. Professional copywriters know to avoid this me-centered mentality and focus on the prospect instead. This shift alone is enough to make a sharp improvement in any marketing campaign.

2. No Call to Action

So many marketing pieces do a great job of getting the prospects attention. They draw them in,

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convince them of the product or service's merit...and just when the prospect is ready to buy, they drop the ball, and forget to tell the prospect what to do next. A call to action is a simple, but often overlooked, way to build response rate...and it's something that every copywriter worth his (or her) salt will include.

3. Selling Features

This common marketing trap is similar to the Me-Centered copy trap. Instead of figuring out what the prospect wants to know about your product (why they need it, how it will help them), it's so easy to just tell them what you know about the product. A professional copywriter will avoid this trap and focus on a product's benefits, not features.

4. No Testimonials

If your copy doesn't include powerful testimonials, your marketing efforts are missing out on one of their most powerful tools. A professional copywriter will always ask about testimonials. If you don't have them, they'll offer some tips for collecting them.

5. Where's Your Target?

One of the most common copywriting errors is overlooking the target market. In an effort not to exclude anyone, the copy doesn't appeal to the people it's really meant for. If your copy doesn't immediately grab (and hold) the attention of those your product or service is meant for, a professional copywriter can help your response rate.

6. What's Your USP?

Your Unique Selling Proposition. What sets you apart from the competition. And ultimately why someone buys from you. A professional copywriter will want to know what it is or will help you determine it. And they will use it to make your marketing copy stronger.

7. Don't generalize.

A professional copywriter will spend time researching the market and issues of interest related to your product. They'll always be specific with the information they convey, adding intrigue and credibility to your every marketing piece.

These are just some of the most common pitfalls that a professional copywriter can help you avoid. By enlisting the services of a professional, you can improve your marketing efforts through a better response rate and an increased return on investment.

10 Things You Should Expect From Your Website Copywriter

By Glenn Murray

As websites and electronic commerce are becoming more and more common, business owners and marketing managers are realizing that quality web copy is every bit as important as impressive design. And with the ever increasing importance of search engine presence, the role of web copy has never

been more critical.

But in such a relatively new field, customers are still coming to grips with what they can expect of their website copywriter. The question a lot of people are asking is, "How do I know I'll get what I pay for?"

Before engaging a website copywriter for your next project, ask them whether they're able to provide you with the following ten essentials...

1) Fixed Quote

A lot of website copywriters will tell you they only work on an hourly rate. They'll cite varying requirements, rapidly changing technologies, greater incentive, the risk of customer indecision, and a host of other reasons why they can't provide a fixed quote. But don't be fooled. You have a right to know what the job is going to cost you. If a website copywriter won't give you a fixed quote, think twice...

2) Contract of Works to be Completed

Just as important as a fixed quote is a signed contract. It may not be drawn up by a lawyer, but a written and signed document outlining the works to be carried out, and the cost of those works is essential. If a website copywriter is reluctant to provide a written, itemised quote including estimated number of words, you have to ask yourself why.

3) Timeframe

Always ask how long your job is going to take. If you've already had a go at writing your own web copy, you'll know how time consuming it is. Never make the mistake of thinking the job will be done in a day. Granted, a professional website copywriter will be very efficient in crafting your copy, but no matter who the writer, a quality product requires time. And on top of writing time, remember that you'll have to review and provide feedback on everything they write. In a lot of cases, it's the review phase that takes the most time, so make sure you try to set some time aside, otherwise you'll find yourself the bottleneck!

4) Plan of Attack

Try to get some idea from your website copywriter about how they plan to approach your project. Don't be fooled into believing you have to hand over the dollars before they'll reveal their plan of attack. You have a right to be comfortable with their approach before you engage their services. Will you receive

individual drafts of every page, or a single draft of the entire site? What format will you receive the finished product in? How many review iterations do they anticipate?

5) Samples

A lot of ambitious web service providers of all types are calling themselves writers these days. They

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offer copywriting as a specialist service, but don't engage a specialist to complete the work. Always ask to see samples of their previous copy. Read it thoroughly and ask yourself, "Does this copy convey benefits?". Pretend you're the intended audience and ask "Does this copy answer the questions I need answered before I'll buy?"

6) CV

Most copywriters' websites will give you a very high-level overview of their business and the services they offer. Some even offer samples. But very few offer a professional biography of their writers. If you're not happy relying on their website as your sole source of information, ask for a copy of their CV. The things you're looking for are a professional history in writing, and preferably some tertiary education in the same.

7) Testimonials

Perhaps the best indication of a website copywriter's ability is customer satisfaction. Don't be afraid of asking for customer testimonials. A good website copywriter will be proud of their testimonials - so proud, in fact, that they'll be offering them without you even asking. Look for testimonials from companies you recognise and/or can verify. Anyone can get their great-aunt write them a testimonial. Some will even write their own. If you really want to be sure, ask for contact details so you can give the customer a call and hear it straight from the horse's mouth.

8) SEO Copy Skills

Approximately 80% of all web traffic comes through search engines, so it's essential that your website copywriter has proven experience in SEO copy. Ask them their general approach to SEO copy. Do they normally perform the keyword analysis themselves? How do they know when they've used enough keywords in enough of the right places? Can they show you a high ranking site they've written the copy for? What steps do they take to avoid diluting the effectiveness of your primary keyword phrases? Will their SEO copy change the text links on your pages? (It should!)

9) SEO Copy at No Extra Charge!

Never be fooled into paying more for SEO copy. If you've already performed your keyword analysis, and you know where you want your keyword phrases used, writing of the copy should take no longer than usual. I'll say it again... SEO copy is not an extra - it's how web copy should be written! Do not pay extra for it! The only things you should expect to pay extra for are keyword analyses, adding the HTML code for unmarked text links, providing guidance on site structure, sourcing of inbound links to your site, etc. SEO copy by itself should cost no extra.

10) Writing Experience for Online Media

Writing for an online medium is entirely different to writing for print. Readers have different

requirements and objectives, and reading conditions are very different. Make sure your website

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copywriter knows how to cater to these differences. Ask them to recommend a maximum page length or word count per page. The correct answer should include some comment on the trade-off between the problems of scrolling and the need for a high keyword count for SEO. Ask them whether they prefer long sentences or short (and hope to hear "short"). Ask them whether they will include lots of text links within the main body of the copy, and if so, will they appear as regular links (colored and underlined) or will they be unmarked.

Professionally written copy can mean the difference between a great looking site and a great looking site **THAT EARNS YOU MONEY.**

Choose your website copywriter carefully.

Glenn Murray heads advertising copywriting studio Divine Write. He can be contacted on Sydney +612 4334 6222 or at

. Visit

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