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**It's Time To Start That "Swipe" File**

**By David B. Silva**

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Just as great fiction is an art, so is great copywriting. Beneath the art, however, there's a foundation of basic knowledge and skills. The craft that goes into your writing.

Craft comes first. Art follows.

You learn the craft of writing by educating yourself, by the actual process of writing (the doing), and by reading incessantly. Every successful writer will tell you that reading has been and still is the cornerstone of developing his craft.

Reading presents you with a written illustration of what works and what doesn't, of what you like as a writer and what you don't. It helps you understand the possibilities, and offers practical instruction of how the rules of your craft are used.

Most writers, when they start out, mimic their favorite authors. I have a friend who became incredibly adept at writing like Stephen King. For several years, everything I wrote had a Ray Bradbury flavor.

Eventually, we developed our own styles, which were richer for having first gone through this mimic stage.

The point is this: part of any effective learning process is to mimic what has been successful before you.

This is true of copywriting, too. And it's the reason you need to start a "swipe" file if you want to become a successful copywriter.

What is a "swipe" file? It's exactly what it sounds like ... a file of great copywriting examples that you've collected, studied, and can access whenever you're in need of a little inspiration. These are not

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examples meant to be plagiarized. You aren't copying work here; you're adapting it to your own copywriting needs.

For example ... suppose you're writing a sales letter for an Internet site that sells an expensive men's wristwatch and you're in need of a great headline. You search through your "swipe" file and find a sales letter for The Oxford Club (actually taken from my own "swipe" file) with the headline: A Man's Right To Wealth. How To Master Every Situation And Prosper On A Grand Scale.

You toy around with it and come up with this: A Man's Right To Elegance. How To Impress In Every Situation With A Watch That Does Far More Than Keep Accurate Time.

See how a good "swipe" file can help?

You can use it to adapt opening sentences. Or the layout of a sales letter. Or the guarantee you or your client offers. Even the pace or the emotional "tug" of a piece.

By using your "swipe" file, your creative juices are instantly flowing. There's no blank page. You already have something to work with. And as any good writer will tell you, it's easier to edit than it is to write.

So where do you get the material for your "swipe" file?

The quickest and easiest source is the Internet. Start checking out website sales letters. Print them out. Good or bad (even the bad ones can inspire your work). Study them. And keep them close by in a handy file.

The other great source is from mailing lists. If you're already on a few lists, then start filing those pitches away when they arrive instead of tossing them out. If you're not on a list, try purchasing a product or asking for a catalog. It won't be long before you're on a number of lists and your "swipe" file is growing exponentially.

Two good places to get started are: Publisher's Clearing House, 101 Channel Drive, Port Washington, NY 11050; and Nightingale-Conant, 7300 N. Leigh Avenue, Chicago, IL 60648.

Try them both. Try any others that come to mind, as well. Just start building your "swipe" today!

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### **How To Ethically Use A "Swipe File" For Your Ad Copy**

**By David Riewe**

## It's Time To Start That "Swipe" File

Did you ever wish you could afford to hire one of those professional copy writers who charge \$5000 or more to write a simple sales letter? Or worse, have you laid down your hard-earned cash for a self-proclaimed "professional" writer, and gotten back something your 3rd grader could have written?

If you spend countless hours staring at a blank page trying to come up with compelling ad copy for that "killer" sales letter (you know, the one that's going to make you rich beyond your wildest dreams?)... STOP!

Why drive yourself nuts and give yourself a major headache trying to train yourself to be a professional copy writer overnight? Do what the gurus do... start a "swipe file."

That's an unfortunate name, swipe file. It sounds unethical. Please understand, I am NOT condoning plagiarism! But every so-called "internet marketing guru" openly admits to having a swipe file that they use when they need a little inspiration.

So what is a swipe file and how do you use it legally and ethically?

Basically, whenever you come across an ad or sales letter that makes you want to run and grab your wallet... stop and print out that copy first! Highlight or circle the parts of the ad that have you excited and eager to make a purchase. Then put it away in a folder or notebook. This is your swipe file.

Eventually, you'll accumulate quite a stack of great professional quality ads. Then, when you're staring at that blank page trying to compose your next ad campaign or sales letter, you can leaf through your swipe file and MODEL your ad copy after some of those ads... but DO NOT copy them word for word. Substitute your own words and put your own stamp on them. Mix and match different approaches from different ads.

Remember, this is meant to be inspirational, not criminal. NEVER out and out copy these ads. Just analyze how the ad is structured, what TYPES of words are used, and then create your own UNIQUE sales copy by emulating the successful advertising techniques from your swipe file.

The idea is to study copy writing techniques as you go. Eventually, you'll find you won't need to refer to your swipe file as often. Your blank pages won't stay blank for long because you'll have learned how to write killer ad copy of your own! You learn best by doing it. Then it becomes second nature.

Who knows? Maybe you'll get so good at writing sales copy that soon other people will be adding YOUR work to THEIR swipe files!

Discover how to Make Your Online Business An Outstanding Success with David Riewe's FREE ezine "The Ultimate Marketing Tips"

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