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**Long Copy Sales Letters on the Web: Hype or Not?**

By Nick Osborne

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I have written before about long sales copy on the web. But I have more to say on the subject.

First, let me be clear about what I'm saying here. I'm not talking about long content pages within dozens of other pages on a site. I'm talking about stand-alone pages...a long, direct response sales letter online, often with its own domain name.

Next, let me say this: long copy works, online and offline.

If you can hold someone's attention with your writing, a long page gives you the space to deliver all the benefits, cover all the features and address a myriad of reader questions and concerns. So long as the letter carries momentum and holds the reader's attention, people will keep scrolling.

And you'll get a better conversion rate than you would with a shorter page. This is true offline, and on the web also.

However, what I have found is two distinct approaches to the long, online sales letter. Both work, but do so in different ways.

>> Long copy style #1: Selling with Hype

You probably know the kind of page I mean. Here's an example of the kind of copy you can expect:

"Income For Life™ is the same program being praised by the true experts as "...a new breakthrough method that will probably lead more people from broke to millionaire status than `Think & Grow Rich,' `Rich Dad, Poor Dad,' and `The Science Of Getting Rich' Combined!""

The copy style is fast, packed with superlatives, thick with unsupported promises and bulging with testimonials given by people who appear to sprinkle amphetamines on their wheaties.

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The template for these sales pages is fairly consistent. Lots of highlighted subheads and indents. A breathless pace...and the promise of a better life. Success. Wealth. Happiness.

Well, we all want to be happy and most of us could do with some extra wealth.

But how is it that this approach works so well? Many of us look at these letters and are incredulous. And many of us would claim never to be persuaded by such an approach. But hundreds of thousands of people are.

How come? This copy approach has a hypnotic quality to it. It makes promises with such strength and enthusiasm. And in some way, it tempts us into a state of submission. We submit to the endless waves of promises and testimonials. We succumb to the thought that maybe, just maybe...this might

work...and we might find that extra wealth or happiness.

And yes, even you will turn off your critical faculties from time to time. If you have ever purchased a lottery ticket you have been in this `space'...where your desire for a better future overcomes your more rational thinking process. Hey, someone has to win. Right?

The same is true if you have ever felt your brain go soft in the face of an enthusiastic car or electronics salesperson. One half of your brain knows you are being persuaded to buy extra features you don't need and probably can't afford. The other part of your brain is whispering in your ear, "Hey man, chill. This feels good. Go with the flow, listen to the man."

This happens to us when we WANT to hear what we are hearing. When we WANT it to be true. When we allow ourselves to dream.

This is how hype works. It deepens our state of submission and creates a state of almost dreamlike optimism.

And it works.

The significant downside to this approach is that most of us wake up from the dream and find that the promises were empty. Or, to put it another way, we bought the ticket, but didn't win the lottery.

So if your aim is to build long-term relationships with your readers, prospects and customers, using hype is not the way to go.

>> Long copy style #2: Selling with a Human Connection

The second style of long copy approach is quite different. Again, these are often stand-alone pages, many screens long. Again, you'll find the headings, the subheads, indents and testimonials.

But you'll find a very different approach in the writing style.

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If you have ever read a sales letter from Bill Bonner, Ken Evoy or Allan Gardyne... this is the kind of writing I'm talking about.

These are still long, enthusiastic letters...and the pace still draws you down, line after line.

But here are some differences, and they are very significant.

– Within the text you will hear the genuine voice of the writer. You're not being sold with copy written by the 'Dream-O-Matic 2000' - you're being sold by a recognizable human voice, the voice of Bill, Ken or Allan.

– You are not succumbing to that state of dreamlike submission and suspending your critical faculties. You remain quite rational and quite clear in your thinking.

– You are hearing a voice that sounds and feels infinitely more trustworthy.

– You don't have to suspend your disbelief. Instead, you feel comfortable and believe what you are

reading.

At the end of a letter like this, you make a choice...buy or not to buy. And it's a choice you are much less likely to regret.

Online sales letters like these are the children of traditional direct response letter writing. Good direct mail letters are written in this second way - by making a genuine connection with the reader and earning his or her trust.

There is a big upside to this second approach. It builds trust and loyalty. If your strategy is to build a list of happy prospects and customers who will come back again and again, this is the style you will want to adopt.

>> Conclusions

Long copy works, and it works in more than one way.

If you can reach a big enough readership (no small feat) and want to make big money, right now, hype might work for you.

But if you want to build a long-term list of repeat customers... be yourself and write to your audience with an enthusiasm that is built on a foundation of honesty and respect for your readers.

Nick Osborne is a copywriter, author, speaker and advocate of good writing. You can access all his archived newsletter articles on copywriting and writing for the web at his

site.

You'll find more articles and resources on how to make money as a freelance writer at

## **SALES LETTERS FOR SUCCESS**

**By Meredith Pond**

### **SALES LETTERS FOR SUCCESS by Meredith Pond**

Sales letters are one of the most popular forms of advertising today, and have been for some time. The reason for this is simple: they work. However, with no pure form and no specific requirements for format, length, etc., writing a truly effective sales letter can be a daunting task for even the most seasoned marketing professional.

To come up with a sales letter that sizzles without turning your prospects off, there are a few general rules you'd be wise to follow.

First, let's talk about length. In my line of work, I see a lot of sales letters. Most of these are one to three pages long, which is generally appropriate for a sales letter. Just the other day, however, I got a call from a man who wanted to know how much I would charge him to edit his sales letter, complaining that he just wasn't getting the results he wanted. When I asked him how long the letter was, he replied, "it's about twelve pages." Twelve pages!! Would you want to be pitched to for twelve whole pages? Yuck!

When you sit down to write your sales letter, ask yourself how much patience you have when reading something of this nature. Would you get bored, even angry, if someone expected you to keep reading their sales letter for five pages? Three pages? When writing your letter, be mindful of your target audience and their schedules. If your prospects are unlikely to have more than five or ten minutes to devote to your sales pitch, try stick to one page.

Now let's talk hype. Most of the sales letters I've come across are full of hype, because that's what the customer wants. Hype can be effective or ineffective, depending on your business and the kind of people you're trying to sell to. If you're selling an MLM business opportunity, hype can work well. On the other hand, if your intended audience consists of savvy, experienced business people, you'll probably do better with a brief

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introduction followed by an explanation of what your product or service can do for their business.

In either case, be careful about using too much bold type or

screaming your message at customers. Putting important points in bold type or caps can be an effective marketing tool, but only when used in moderation. Exclamation points can also be helpful, but use them sparingly. When reading back through your letter, pay attention to the tone. If you feel you're being yelled at, tone it down a bit.

A well-written, well-targeted sales letter can do wonders for sagging sales. For tips on writing effective sales letters, see <http://www.drnunley.com/copywriting.htm>.

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