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Long Copy Works Better – Or Is It Short Copy?

By Karon Thackston

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Ahhh! The never-ending battle. I'm sure you've heard both statements made with passion. Those that believe you must walk your customer through each and every benefit preach, "Long copy sells better!" Proponents of this copywriting method say customers need to be "lead" or "teased" into reading the next paragraph and the next. Finally, when you have them drooling, you reveal the punch line.

On the other hand, advocates of short copy state that consumers today have extremely short attention spans. Copy that's "to-the-point" is a necessity in order to make a sale at all. According to these experts, the long, drawn-out copy gets tossed right out the window by busy, impatient readers. Feed it to them fast or you'll lose them to the competition. So exactly who's right? They both are!

No, I'm not being politically correct and I'm not avoiding the issue. The honest truth is that all people in the world do not communicate in the same way. Due to this fact, no one copywriting approach will work with every single product or service. As with every other aspect of advertising, you must look to your target audience for the answer.

I've used this analogy for years... when you begin to write a letter you do not sit down and write then decide who you will mail the letter to. Before you put pen to paper you know who the recipient of the message will be. You know their communication style and how to best phrase the information

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so it will be well received. The same applies to copywriting.

Let's say, just as an example, that your target audience consists of small business owners. These business owners happen to all be Certified Public Accountants. Just from this tiny bit of information I can tell you the target group is extremely busy, is very detail oriented and has a bottom line mentality. These people are generally analytical thinkers. Based on these facts, I would not write copy to this target audience in long form. Why? It would most likely not be read.

The group above communicates in short, precise bursts. They are looking for the bottom line first and an explanation afterwards. The most effective way to get the attention of this group (in writing) is to keep it short, sweet and to the point. Otherwise you will lose them in what they consider to be a "bunch of fluff". These folks are definitely members of the short copy group.

So who belongs to the long copy group? People making an investment for one. I don't mean an investment in the stock market (so to speak). I'm talking about people who are going to make a large investment of time or money in anything. People who are thinking of joining an affiliate program or multilevel marketing program would be receptive to long form copy. Those who are going to invest many hours in a self-help process would appreciate long copy. Let me explain.

When people are going to invest time or money (or both) in something they get nervous. Customers need to be reassured that they are making the right decision. They need to be reminded of why they need to purchase this product or service. A wealth of information makes these prospective clients more secure about their decision.

Yes, there are other target groups that would benefit from both long form and short form copy. There are a multitude of them to say the least. As the advertiser, your job is to discover which type of communication style will be received well by your prospects. (A company named Myers-Briggs offers an excellent course on defining communication styles. I've participated in their training and found it to be highly beneficial.)

So what about the writers who swear their copywriting approach

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will cause major increases in response rates? What about the writers who say their method works for any product or service?

"But this guy said his copywriting style caused a 50% increase in the direct mail response rate of a jewelry store." I've heard this at least a hundred times. Maybe it did. However, I've never been a real fan of statistics when used to prove a point such as this.

There are two items in the above statement that cause me concern. The first is the percentage. We don't know how many direct mail pieces were originally mailed. Perhaps on the first campaign 50 envelopes were sent. Direct mail normally provides a 1–3% response rate. If we allow the 3% in our example, that would mean the original campaign received 1.5 responses. A 50% increase means the mailing using the new copywriting style

received 2.25 responses. Technically, that is a 50% increase even if only 2 people responded.

The second alarm that goes off is the phrase "response rate". Most advertisers don't understand this statement. Response rate does not equal sales. Response rate equals responses. Literally, if a person calls to ask a question in relation to the mailing it is considered a response – even if that person never purchases. I caution you to beware of those with "one size fits all" copy-writing approaches.

Yes, there are big names out there that will tell you that one particular style of copy works to sell each and every product and service. Again, technically, I suppose they are right. However, it does not sell to each and every target audience member. If you don't get through to the target audience, the copy – regardless of who's style it is – is a waste of time and effort.

Karon is Owner and President of KT & Associates who offer targeted copywriting, copy editing & ghostwriting services. Visit her site at <http://www.ktamarketing.com>

10 Incredible Ways To Close A Sale!

By Larry Dotson

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1. You could end your ad copy by telling people what will happen if they buy your product. Use your most powerful benefit as the example.
2. You could end your ad copy by telling people what will happen if they don't buy your product. Use a problem that they won't be able to solve without it.
3. You could end your ad copy with a question they will always say yes too. They then will be used to saying yes when you ask them to order.
4. You could end your ad copy with a short review of your whole ad. Repeat all the major benefits and features they will receive.
5. You could end your ad copy with a deadline. Tell them it's a limited time offer and they need to order by a specific date.
6. You could end your ad copy with a powerful guarantee. Give them a lifetime or triple your money back guarantee.
7. You could end your ad copy with a testimonial. Use one or two of your customers' testimonials that is believable and includes specific results.
8. You could end your ad copy with a free bonus. When you give them a free bonus it increases the product's perceived value.
9. You could end your ad copy with a discounted price. Just list your regular price and then offer a discounted price off the order right now.
10. You could end your ad copy with a free sample or trial of your product. If your ad didn't attract them to buy, maybe a free sample or trial would.

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