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Script Mechanics—Suggestions for Writing Effective Voiceover Copy

By Peter Drew

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by: **Peter Drew**

As with any of the performing arts, an effective voiceover begins with a well-crafted script. You don't have to have many years of writing experience to create copy that is both effective and a pleasure for the voice actor to perform. Here are some ideas to consider before you put your pen to paper or fingers to keyboard.

Commericals: Radio and TV

Determine the purpose of the ad, e.g. drive traffic to a store, produce direct response inquiries, announce a grand opening, move end-of-season merchandise, etc.

Determine who your customer is and speak to that person one to one, and, ideally, present one main idea in the copy.

Use A.I.D.A.: Attention, Interest, Desire, Action. Get the listener's attention to the ad; get the listener interested in what you're offering; get the listener to want to take some action on your offer; give the listener a means to act and urge that action.

Narrations (also called "Industrials")

For a video script, use the story board, if you have one, to guide the development of the script. This will help you time the voice over to the video's scenes.

For audio only, where no storyboard exists, do a rough outline. This will help you create a basic logical structure before you start writing. The result will be a script that flows much better for the narrator and the intended listener.

All Scripts

Script Mechanics—Suggestions for Writing Effective Voiceover Copy

Leave room for "verbal white space." Just as a large block of densely printed copy is intimidating and difficult to read, a voice-over script that's crammed with copy is difficult to follow and understand. A good rule of thumb for 30-second radio or TV copy is eight lines down (double-spaced), 10 words across the page. For a slower, more intimate read, go with seven lines, 10 words across. The same idea applies for a briskly paced 60-second ad: 16 lines down, 10 words across. For a slower pace, 14 lines, 10 words across. This 60-second guideline is helpful in timing long-form scripts, too. Just count the pages and you have the total number of minutes.

Numbers are words, so be sure to consider them in your word count. A phone number, such as 1-860-291-9476, is eleven words. That's more than one entire line of copy! Try spelling out numbers as words to get a good handle on the actual length of your copy. For example:

1-860-291-9476,

when typed or written out, is

one-eight-six-oh, two-nine-one, nine-four-seven-six.

You can see how long the line really is when the numbers are spelled out. Then, after you're ready to print your final draft, convert the words back to numbers.

Write for the ear, not the eye. Construct short, conversational sentences, with natural breaks for taking a breath. This is especially helpful to narrators when they voice technical or medical copy, which contains large, complicated, and difficult-to-pronounce terms.

Read your copy out loud, just as you intend the voice talent to read it, and time it. Then adjust your copy accordingly for timing.

Try to write in the active voice, not passive voice. This is a passive construction: "When writing a script, be sure you're saying some exciting things, or else you'll be losing the attention of the listener."

Instead, use the active voice, structured something like this: "When you write a script, say something exciting, or you'll lose the listener's attention." Active voice is more conversational and easier for the ear and mind to follow.

Happy writing!

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Peter Drew, a freelance voice-over talent and copywriter/producer with 28 years of experience, is heard on radio and television stations, corporate presentations, web sites, and messages-on-hold across America. To hear samples of his work or to send an email regarding this article, please visit

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How To Write Super-Effective Ads and Sales Letters!

By Dean Phillips

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"The more things change, the more they stay the same". That old saying couldn't be more true, especially when it comes to writing ads and sales letters.

The same things that worked fifty years ago, continue to work today. Yes, times and technology have changed, but people haven't. At least, not the way we react to an effective advertisement.

When writing an ad or sales letter, there are two critical points you must NEVER, EVER forget:

1. Most people don't make a buying decision based on logic. They make a buying decision based on their emotions.
2. People don't want to feel like they're being coerced or pushed into anything. They want to feel like they arrived at a buying decision completely of their own free will.

Go back and read point number two again. That's a very fine line. But you MUST learn the distinction, if you want to master the art of writing effective sales material.

Actually, writing effective sales material is quite simple, really. In fact, I'm going to teach you all of the basics in this article today. And if you consistently apply those basics, you'll see your income skyrocket!

Here's the key: You MUST write every single ad and sales letter using the following classic AIDA formula:

A=ATTENTION

I=INTEREST

D=DESIRE

A=ACTION

Let's break down each letter, so that you can understand the full import of the formula:

A=ATTENTION: The very first thing your ad or sales letter must do is get your prospects attention. The very best way to do that is with an effective headline.

So, what's an effective headline? An effective headline is any headline that answers this question: "What's in it for me"? That's all your prospects really cares about. What's in it for them? Here's an up-to-the-second example of an effective headline: "How To Write Super-Effective Ads and Sales Letters"!

So, what makes the title of this article an effective headline? Two things: First of all, I answered the

"What's in it for me" question. Secondly, the headline made you read this article.

And that my friend is the whole point! You want prospects to read your sales material!

Now, we come to the second letter in the aforementioned AIDA formula: I="INTEREST". After you get your prospects attention, you want to get them "INTERESTED" in your product or service. You do that by immediately telling them what your headline promises. You don't waste their time with a bunch of fluff and garbage that nobody but you cares about.

Tell them what they want to know, starting with the very first paragraph, and continue to tell them, right through to the very last paragraph. If you keep them interested, they'll keep reading, right to the very end.

Next comes the third letter letter in the formula: D="DESIRE". You have to make your prospects "DESIRE" your product or service. And the way to do that is with benefits, benefits and more benefits!

Remember, just keep telling them what your headline promised. Also, tell them what they stands to gain by purchasing your product or service. More importantly, tell them what they stand to lose, if they doesn't purchase.

Push their emotional "hot buttons", by using magic selling words like, new, save, amazing, free, guaranteed, security, no-risk, look younger, feel better, etc!

Now we come to the last letter in the formula, but certainly not the least: A="ACTION". You want to close your ad or sales letter with a call to action! In other words, ask them for the order. It's important to ask for the order at least three times, preferably six or more.

Here are a few examples of effective closes:

1. "Just click on the button below to order NOW, Risk-Free"!
2. "To get your FREE website, Order NOW"!
3. "Don't waste another minute! Order NOW"!

Something else that's very effective is to include a post-script (P.S.) at the end of your ad or sales letter. Your post-script should include an enticement of some sort, to get your prospects to order NOW. You should also use the post-script as a final call to "ACTION"!

Here's an example of an effective post-script:

P.S. "Don't forget, if your order within the next ten days, you'll also receive a personalized calculator mouse pad FREE, with your company's name embossed in gold lettering! Order NOW"!

You can also use a post script to tie everything together, by summarizing your most important benefits.

Another reason that you should use a post-script is strictly elementary. Studies have shown that most people, when reading an ad or sales letter will read the headline and then immediately zoom right down to the bottom of the page to check out the price and see if your offer is anything that they'd be interested in.

Anyway, that's it. That's "How To Write Super-Effective Ads and Sales Letters"!

Follow the formula faithfully and it will rarely let you down.

And remember, when writing your ads and sales letters, ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS keep in mind that one question we all want to know: "What's in it for me"?

Dean Phillips is an Internet marketing expert, writer, publisher and entrepreneur. Questions? Comments? Dean can be reached at [mailto: dean@lets-make-money.net](mailto:dean@lets-make-money.net) Make Money Online! Internet marketing expert, Dean Phillips will help you make money online, starting today...Guaranteed! For details just visit my website. Website: <http://www.lets-make-money.net>

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