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Segmenting Your Target Audience Through Your Copywriting

By Karon Thackston

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Ask any copywriter what the first commandment of copywriting is and they'll quickly tell you "Know Thy Target Audience." In order to write effectively you have to know this one group of people and know them well. I guess that's why many people get so frustrated when it seems they have more than one preferred customer base. One of the most frequent questions I get asked is, "What if I have more than one target audience?" In all actuality, you probably don't. You just have different segments of the same audience.

Segmenting your target audience is a very common practice... almost expected even. Let me explain. Perhaps you sell a nutritional supplement. Think of all the people who might use your nutritional supplement. There are adults, pregnant women, growing teenagers, children, senior citizens, athletes, and many others. While all of these may seem to be entirely different target markets, they are actually just segments of the same nutritional supplement market. These people all have a need and an interest in nutritional supplements, but for very different reasons.

While some of the information you provide to each segment will be general and apply to everyone, other information will be specific to that particular segment.

Information Specific To Each Segment

For instance, everyone will want to know the overall benefits of taking the nutritional supplement you offer. Perhaps they can expect to have more energy, lose a little weight, or prevent or cure certain diseases. Everyone cares about these benefits. But your nutritional supplement may offer other benefits that only certain customers would have a need/want for.

Pregnant women want a nutritional supplement that has high levels of folic acid and other nutrients that will aid their developing babies. Senior citizens may have a need for supplements that contain higher levels of calcium (and in a more readily absorbable form). Athletes burn a lot of nutrients and have a

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higher chance of getting injured so those things are important to them.

Make the information about your product or service specific to whatever the needs of each segment are. You can do this in specific ways through a variety of different advertising mediums.

Segmenting In Brochures

Create one brochure with the general information laid out within its panels. Then create a separate, single panel addressing the needs/wants of one specific segment of your market (seniors, athletes, etc.). When you mail or give out your brochures, simply slip the correct insert into the regular brochure, and you have a custom-designed marketing piece.

Segmenting On The Web

Web sites are also an excellent place to make use of segmenting. Starting with your home page, give general information that is applicable to all your site visitors. Then break out the information specific to each segment of your market. Give a brief description of the details that this segment can expect to find and a link to the page where they'll find them.

When your customers click to the various pages, they'll find specifics on how your product will benefit them and their special needs.

NOTE: When you segment on the Web, you also have a great opportunity for search engine optimization. Many excellent keyphrases come from highly specific phrases. So, instead of "nutritional supplements," you might find that "nutritional supplements for seniors" or "nutritional supplements for athletes" will give you the high rankings you want.

Segmenting In Print

Are you running newspaper ads? If so, ask about multiple placement discounts. Many papers will give you discounts for running ads in various sections of the paper at the same time. This gives you greater exposure and also allows you to segment your market through the use of the different sections.

Before you lump all your customers into one category, take a good hard look. Do they have different needs? Do you see various groups emerging from the crowd? Is there a way to segment your market? If your market is already broken into various segments, what is the best way to reach each group?

Once you determine the needs and wants of each segment of your target audience, you'll be better equipped to write copy that appeals to them. When you accomplish this through your copywriting, you'll find yourself with higher conversion ratios and more sales.

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Copywriting Is Not One-Size-Fits-All

By Karon Thackston

I was in shock. Honestly, I shook my head when I read his email. I meant no disrespect; I just couldn't believe he really felt that way.

"Karon, I want you to write the sales letter for my site. How much will it cost me?" read his note. After looking at his home page and evaluating his target audience, I didn't feel a sales letter would be the best type of copy for his site. When I sent him my suggestion he replied with something along the lines of, "No sales letter? What other kind of copy is there?"

Was he a fan of sales letters? No, not especially. Did his question come with a sarcastic tone? No, it was a genuine question. A lot of what he had been exposed to online was sales letters. So much so that he thought this was the **only** type of copy to have on a website. That's what all the "gurus" were telling him, so it must be true. Even though he had been to countless sites that did not have sales letters, he never realized the differences.

I pointed him to several sites that had a wide range of copy to show him some of the other styles.

Catalog Copy – (one of my favorite types to write!)

Long Sales Copy –

Short Sales Copy –

Brochure Copy –

Shopping Cart Copy –

(works especially well for books)

Of course, these are just a few. What was his response? "Now I feel stupid! Of course, there are several types of copy. I don't know why I thought I had to have one particular kind for my site."

From there we worked together to better understand his audience and create copy that would appeal to them.

Copywriting is not one-size-fits-all. I'm not saying sales letters don't work. Like every other type of

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copy, they do, given the right environment and the right product/service. What I am saying is you shouldn't box yourself in by assuming you *have* to have a particular type of copy. Just because one style of writing works well with someone else's site doesn't mean it is right for yours. Just because another person is selling a similar product or service doesn't mean you have the same audience... therefore it doesn't mean you should use the same type of copy.

In fact, there may be several different types of copy that work equally well for your site/customer. After all, diversity is part of advertising. Take the time to investigate your product, service, and customer

then research copywriting styles. When you do, you'll likely discover that you have several options. Test those options in order to find the one that pulls the best response. *That's* the type of copy that works best for your site.

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