

TESTING HEADLINES

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TESTING HEADLINES

By Patrick Quinn

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A correspondent to AdBriefing, my monthly newsletter, has posed a very sticky question. How, she asks, can you tell whether a headline you have written is a good one...or not? What she means by this, I imagine, is whether the headline will actually help to make sales, rather than just act as a passing amusement to its readers.

The latter precept, that a headline should actually try to sell something, is not as universally known as it might be. The vast proportion of headlines actually say nothing whatsoever about the product and the benefits of owning it. And the reason for this is that good, selling headlines are not easy to write. So the majority of so-called copywriters take the easy route and produce something which they think is humorous or eye-catching and hope that this will do the job. That it won't and doesn't can be witnessed day in and day out in press ads, brochures and websites worldwide.

But I digress.

There is sadly no absolute test that a headline will do the job it is paid to do. If there were, we benighted copywriters would be earning ten times what we are earning now, on the grounds that our work would be foolproof. Every headline we conceived would be irresistible; and products would move off shelves like Spring snow off a dyke.

But there is a test - a very good and worthwhile test - that you can apply to any headline you create. I call it the `So What?' test.

Allow me to give you an example of `So What?' in action. If you produce a headline that says: Our Widget works twice as fast as any other Widget, and then ask yourself `So What?', it immediately becomes clear that the line is bereft of a sales proposition. Because there is no obvious benefit to the potential customer.

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On the other hand, if you write: Our Widget works twice as fast, so you do the job in half the time, then the `So What?' has been answered. Your customer can cut his production time by 50%.

Likewise, were you to write: Our Widget is so small, it fits into the palm of your hand, you simply invoke `So What?'. Which results in: Our Widget fits into the palm of your hand, so it goes wherever you go. In this case, the benefit is portability. You can use it anywhere.

Over the years, I have found the `So What?' test to be invaluable. You might care to give it a try yourself.

And on the subject of headlines consider this.

When trying to write a headline many people tend to go off half-cocked. They consider the marketing brief, then bash down a headline or two to satisfy it. After that, they write the body copy.

Experience shows, however, that if you write the body copy first, the odds are that there will be the makings of a headline within it struggling to get out.

Body copy is, or should be, a carefully worked and logical encapsulation of the marketing brief. In other words, the whys, the wherefores and the benefits of owning the product or service. It makes sense, then, that if it is properly written, there is a very real chance of finding an embryo headline lurking within it.

Why not give it a whirl? You may be agreeably surprised.

Patrick Quinn is an award winning copywriter with 40 years' experience of the advertising business in London, Miami, Dublin and Edinburgh.

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How to GUARANTEE your headline will pull like a MAGNET

By Chuck Crawley

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Here is a little insider technique that will Guarantee that your headlines will attract your target audience like a magnet.

Hopefully you are reading this article because the headline

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attracted your attention. I'm sure that you have seen a lot of information on headlines. Why, because they are the single most important element of your marketing. Just think about it. Whether you are marketing in the search engines, email, WebPages, discussion groups you name it, your headlines are the magnets that forces people to read your *stuff*.

Now, a Killer headline can increase your response rates exponentially. So how do you create a killer headline? Well, it is really quite simple – testing, testing, and testing. Your testing arena will be your target market. They will tell you which headlines they like based on how often they response to a specific headline. There is NO OTHER way to know for sure.

This is where testing can help you to determine which headline will increase your response rate and your bottom–line (of course you will also need to test your ads and sales letters) but your headline is what brings them thru the door.

Banner exchanges have lost their pulling power over the last year or so mainly because people have gotten used to seeing them and now they really *don't* see them like the days of old. However, banner exchanges are great vehicles for testing your headlines.

With most banner exchanges you can target your headline plus determine the response based on the click–through rate. This is the optimum testing ground for determining which of our headlines is a winner. Let the banner exchange network tell you what they like by tracking the click–through. You might not generate any sales but you will surely determine which headline will become your *magnet*.

Just convert three of your headlines into "gif" files using the recommendation of the banner exchange system and let the system work for you. I recommend using the Link Exchange

paid guaranteed views program that cost you \$50 for 5000 views. You can change your banner after 1500 views to a new headline "gif" and track three headlines for your \$50 investment.

This is a fairly inexpensive way to determine the best headline to use for your product or service. A Guaranteed winner!

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The URL for this service is at:

<http://store.bcentral.com>

OR

Once you get there, just click on the Link Exchange graphic to get all of the details.

Just remember, Killer headlines aren't CREATED they are DERIVED.



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