



## 5 Top Tips for Good Copywriting

**W**e all know how to write about our business but, as with most things we do often, it's easy to fall into bad habits. And writing a letter to your Auntie is different from writing a brochure or web page. Here are 5 top tips for making sure your words really earn their keep.

### 1. Define what you want out of it

What's the point? What are you trying to achieve with this bit of writing? If you don't know what the aim is, you're REALLY going to have a problem telling anyone else. Are you informing, selling, instructing or apologizing? Do you want some action to be taken? – if so, what? Have a think about your objectives before you put pen to paper (or finger to keyboard.)

### 2. Understand your audience

If you do only ONE thing the next time you're writing some copy, this is IT. Unless you really understand who you're writing for, it's like writing a love letter addressed 'To Whom It May Concern'. If you build up a picture of someone who typifies your potential customer, you can then write directly for him or her. If people feel you are writing for them, that you understand them and what they're looking for, they are much more likely to take action.

#### • What's their problem?

What pain, problem or need does your potential customer have? If you know that, you can offer the solution. We all buy products or services because we're looking for a solution to something; as a customer, we might not think about it like that, but that's at the bottom of every buying decision.

For example:

I buy (too much) chocolate because it meets my need for something sweet. But I choose 85% cocoa-content because I can't eat too much of it at any one time, so hope I won't end up looking like Miss Piggy. It's not the chocolate I buy, but the answer to my problem of how to have my cake and eat it (fortunately met by Lindt).

### 3. Write about benefits not features

It's very easy to fall into the trap of writing reams of information about your products or services. 'We can do this, and we can do that, and we can do the other.' No-one is interested in what you do; what people really want to know is what you can do FOR THEM. The most powerful words you can use in any copy are 'you', 'your' and 'yours'. If you use the words 'I', 'we' and 'our' you're just not thinking about your customer. Put yourself in the shoes of your potential customer and write about what you can do for them. Estee Lauder said "I don't sell cosmetics – I sell hope", and she really knew what her customers wanted.

#### • From features to benefits and how to get there

**A feature** is what the product or service has or does.  
**The benefit** is what it does for the customer.

The way to go from Feature to Benefit is to ask yourself **"So what?"** and drill down until you get the real benefit.

Think about a car.

Feature	So what? (Benefit)...	...might need to go a bit further
ABS brakes	complete safety whatever the conditions	peace of mind that my family is always safe no matter what
0% finance	you can have it NOW - don't have to wait for ages	
Black	look cool & trendy	

So you don't just talk about the ABS, the fact that you can get it in black metallic, and 0% finance; talk about the complete peace of mind, or the added bonus that you can be cool and trendy within the week (depending on what floats the boat of your customer of course; one person's cool & trendy might be another's nightmare).

## 4. Make it easy to read

### • Write about your business as you talk about it

Writing should be just like talking to someone, but something very odd happens as soon as we start to write. We use words we'd never use in conversation, because we think we're being more professional; our sentences get longer and more complex; and generally we lose the passion we have when talking about our business.

### • Use the right language

Use language your potential customers use and understand. If your potential customer is an 80 year old lady interested in stair lifts, you're going to use a different tone and words from when you're talking to a teenage boy about Nintendo.

### • Think about the formatting

The format is really important in making your copy easy to read.

- Use bulleted lists - much easier to read than a long sentence containing lots of items separated by commas.
- Use headings so that people can find the bits they're really interested in. A good heading can really grab the attention too.
- Put just one idea in each paragraph or the second one might get missed.

### • Less is more

The other funny thing that happens when we start to write is the urge to write tons and tons, whereas short and sweet is much more likely to be read and understood. Ever been faced with a page of words and thought "I can't, I just can't"? Whereas if you write succinctly and to the point, people are much more likely to read and enjoy your copy. Good writers never use more words than necessary.

- Don't use five words where one would do – 'Now' is much better than 'At this moment in time'; and 'since' knocks 'owing to the fact that' into a cocked hat.
- Be concise. Writing is a bit like packing for holiday: you put everything out that you want to include, then halve it.
- White space is good.

### • Get it right

This of course goes without saying. Spelling, grammar, punctuation – all must be absolutely spot on. ALWAYS proof read any piece of copy. Leave it for a couple of hours then come back to it and read it backwards – you can't hurry, and you never assume what you've written. It's also a good idea to get someone else to read it through – and don't get offended if they find mistakes; far better to find and correct it now than give the impression of sloppiness to your customers.

## 5. Call to action

This comes right back to the first point, about your objective. If you want the reader to do something as a result of reading your copy, make it really obvious, and really easy. Don't hide your contact details away – put them on every page, at the top if possible. (This is particularly important on your website - how many times have you gone to a website especially to find the phone number or email, and not been able to?)

### To summarise

For good copy that works:

1. Define what you want to achieve.
2. Really understand your audience.
  - Find their pain and offer a solution.
3. Write about benefits not features.
4. Make it easy to read.
  - Write as you speak.
  - Use the language and tone of your customer.
  - Organise it so it's easy to read.
  - Be concise.
  - Get it right.
5. Have a clear call to action – and make it easy.

**You might love writing about your business.  
On the other hand, you might not.**

If you'd rather work on your business than write about it, PHarosMarketing offers marketing, copywriting, web content, search engine optimisation and pay-per-click campaigns. The first meeting is free and without obligation, so please call us - we'd love to hear from you.