

How to Write Great Copy

It is a myth that good copywriting is something that you are born with. It is a skill that can be learned and perfected over time and there really is no one who knows your business better than you, so why get someone else to write your copy?

The first lesson in good copywriting is that you should not waffle on about yourself and your company and how long you've been in business, etc. People are really not interested. The single most important thing you can learn about writing good copy is that it is all about THEM, your potential customers. What are they going to get from using your product or service? How will it make them feel? Will it solve all their problems? Surprisingly, this is an idea that not many people employ, so your copy will instantly stand out against the rest.

Before you sit down to write an advert, a brochure or a page for your website, you should brain storm ways in which your potential customers can benefit from your product or service and write these down as a list of bullet points. The truth is that once you have done this you are half way there.

It is essential not to mistake a feature for a benefit. A feature is a factual statement about your product or service, whereas a benefit tells the reader what's in it for them. Promoting your product or service on features alone effectively means that the reader has to do all the work in figuring out how they are going to benefit. That should be your job, so that the only decision the reader has to make is whether or not to pick up the phone and get in touch. Put yourself in their shoes and come up with some real benefits.

It is also important not to just elaborate on your feature in an attempt to portray a benefit. For example, being open 24 hours would be a feature; the fact that you can buy when you want would simply be an elaboration; while not having to rush home from work to get to the shop before it closes would be the benefit.

So, you now have a list of benefits, what's next? To create the structure of your copy, you need to start thinking about AIDA:

Attention: You need people to stop and read all your wonderful, carefully put together copy so you need to grab their attention. This is normally done with a heading – the reference line of your letter, the top line in your advert or the subject of your email. You should experiment with different headings, even when you have ones that are working because they can often be improved upon. A good place to test and experiment with different headings is in your Google Adwords campaign.

Interest: Once you have the reader's attention, you need to generate an interest in what you have to offer. This is where you start mentioning some of those benefits.

Desire: Interest is not enough: you need the reader to desire your product or service. Convince the reader that their needs will be satisfied or their problem solved. Maybe address some of the objections keeping them from buying your product.

Action: The final part of your copy should be a call to action: you need to tell the reader exactly what they need to do, whether it is to make a phone call or go to your website to sign up – and you should encourage them to do it NOW.

So that's AIDA in a nutshell. There are also a few tips that will help you successfully implement AIDA within your copy:

1. **The magic word is YOU** – 'You' and 'your' are words you should try and use frequently in conveying your message. Your aim is to make your copy personal as if you are having a one on one conversation with your reader. You are meeting their needs and desires, no one else's.
2. **Bullet Points** are an effective way to get your point across in a simple and concise way. They are both easy to write and easy to read and stand out for people who just skim read.
3. **You don't have to offer discounts** – Not everyone buys on price, especially if your copy is convincing enough, so don't fall into the trap of offering discounts left, right and centre to attract in new customers. It is fine to offer discounts occasionally, but if you do on all the time, you are only going to cause problems for yourself.
4. **Answer Objections** – There may be one or two objections keeping people from purchasing your product or service no matter how good your copy is. If you can address these objections, you can make a dramatic difference to the success of your ad or brochure. For example, some people may be concerned that your service is too expensive for them. You should take the time to justify your costs and explain why it is worth spending the extra money.
5. **Don't use flowery language** – Keeping your apostrophes in the right place is fair enough, but you should keep your copy concise and conversational. If you wouldn't say it, don't write it.
6. **Long copy is usually best** – If you have the space, longer copy is usually more successful. True, there are people who just want to know the basic facts and just read the headlines, but there are some people that like to know all the details. If you write short copy, you are catering just for the skimmers, not the readers. If you write longer copy on the other hand, you can cater for both: the skimmers can read just the headlines and bullet points while the readers can see all the details.
7. **Use testimonials** – Nothing works better than testimonials and you can never over use them. People are far more likely to trust what other people say about your service than what you tell them. Always remember to include the name and (if applicable) company of the person who gave the testimonial as it adds credibility.

In Conclusion

As with all marketing, writing good copy is something that you learn over time. Once you employ a few basic rules, you're already ahead of the game. Only you or those who work in your company can truly know your company inside out so always try your hand at writing your own copy before you pay someone else to do it for you. You may surprise yourself!

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