

107

Time-Tested Rules for Creating Great Sales Copy

By

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WHAT MAKES SALES COPY “GOOD”?

How can you tell if your sales copy is any good? Easy.

By testing the response of your marketing materials. Is your copy generating sales? Are your prospects buying?

Copy is considered “good” if it increases the bottom line. **The more sales the better the copy.**

Good copywriting isn’t an art. It’s a science. And there are time-tested rules you can follow to produce good advertising copy.

These things are discovered through testing. Testing helps you figure out what’s working and what’s not. TESTING is the smartest thing you can do with your advertising. By testing you can refine it. Hone it. Make it sharper. Get more results for less cost with less effort.

Test your headline. Test your offer. Test your body copy. Test your mailing lists. Test your market. Ask questions. Above all let your prospects tell you what THEY want. They’ll reward you with purchases if you listen.

These general rules (and I use the word “rules” loosely) seem to work because human beings are pretty much “wired” the same way. We all have emotions. We like it when the words we’re reading strike a cord with our feelings. We also like it when words are arranged on the page to make them easier to read. Our eyes seem to like certain fonts because they don’t tire out as quickly.

This report contains many such tidbits. It will serve as a basic checklist - - especially if you don’t write advertising copy everyday.

So without any further delay here are “**107 Time-Tested Rules for Creating Great Sales Copy.**”

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BEFORE YOU WRITE

1. Research ... research ... research. Intimately know the product/service you’re writing about AND your ideal prospect before you ever sit down to write one word of advertising copy.
2. Study at least one direct mail piece everyday. Especially those of your competitors.
3. Create an outline or copy platform. It will give you a guide to work around. It will also help you include all the important benefits you want to tell your reader about.
4. Think about ways you can make your sales package stand out from the crowd. How can you make it different? What elements can you include in it to make it stronger?
5. Have the entire package in mind before you start to write (including all the individual parts of the sales letter. Consider using all "gates" such as a “lift note” and “envelope teaser” copy (in a direct mail package).

KNOWING YOUR PROSPECT

6. People buy primarily for *emotional* reasons, not *logical* reasons. Your copy must appeal to the emotions first; then justify the emotional appeal with facts and logic about your product or service. Emotions first. Justification second. The way to do this is to communicate every possible benefit to your reader. Your copy must constantly be reminding her, "This is what's in it for you."

7. Keep your prospect's interests first. Be consumed with finding their mindset and telling them what you're product/service can do for them. Tell them what's in it for them at every turn.

8. Always include your USP or "Unique Selling Proposition" somewhere in your sales copy. Your USP might be described as the main thing you do that separates you from everyone else who offers what you offer. It's so important many marketers consider it to be among the most important things to include in your marketing. Copywriter Bob Bly recommends using this fill-in-the-blanks formula to come up with your USP.

"My (name of product or service) _____,
(does what?) _____ ,
for (whom?), _____ ,
by (what method?) _____."

9. Your reader doesn't care about your company logo, your cool graphics, or the great name you thought up for your company. Don't emphasize these things at all.

10. The reader of your sales copy only cares about one thing ... "What can you do for me?" ... "What's in it for me?" ... "Me" ... "Me" ... "Me" ... Tell her. Tell him. Clearly. Get to the point... quickly. Or your copy is headed for the trash (or they'll "click" and stop from reading your website).

11. Focus on your reader's problems and interests. Nothing else matters in sales copy. Remind your reader of the biggest benefits once again on your order form. It will help dispel any second thoughts about making the purchase.

12. Make the salutation as specific as possible: "Dear Investor" is better than "Dear Sir" or "Dear Madam." "Dear Real Estate Investor" is even better (if that's who you're writing to). "Dear Southern Florida Real Estate Investor" is even better yet. "Dear Miami Beach Area Real Estate Investor" is even better.

13. Realize the anxieties within your prospect. Address them in your copy. Reassuring them you have what they need to solve their problems.

14. Get right to selling. Don't beat around the bush. Identify your customer's biggest problem and let them know you've got the answer for it.

15. Remember... you're not selling a "product." You're offering something that's going to make your prospect richer, healthier, slimmer, smarter, more productive, give them more leisure time, make life easier for them...etc.

16. Your prospect must believe you know what they want early on in your sales letter.

17. Don't think of yourself as selling something; think of yourself as solving a problem for someone.

18. Always find the answer to the following questions: a) What is my reader's core desire? b) What is it they most want from this product? This is what the benefits in your sales copy will address. Satisfy your prospects core desire.

MAKING YOUR COPY EASY TO READ

19. Break up the copy. No long paragraphs. No thick blocks of text.

20. Use contractions wherever possible. Copy must be written so it can be scanned easily. Most readers are scanners. They want to be able to read your copy - - fast. If what you're selling interests them they'll slow down to read the parts that interest them.

21. Avoid long sentences with conjunctions.

22. Use subheadings (or **Subheads**) throughout your copy. Readers like them because subheads help summarize the copy. Put them in **bold**. Write them as short, easy to read mini-headlines.

23. Use lots of bullets: Bullet points are:

- easy to read
- easy to scan
- easy on the eye
- great for "lists" of things

24. The copy on your website's homepage should have [underlined text links](#) embedded throughout your sales copy leading to relevant subjects or products.

25. Keep sentences and paragraphs short. Make sentences easy to understand. Don't use a fancy word (in most cases) when a simpler one will do.

26. Use easy to read typeface (like Courier New or Times Roman). Serif fonts such as these make copy easier to read.

27. Use the subheads in your copy to tell the story - - like a mini-version of the whole story contained in your copy.

ON WRITING SALES COPY

28. Make your sales copy conversational. Write it as if you are "speaking" to another person.

29. Remember... good grammar isn't the goal. Selling is the goal. To sell you must write like you speak. Your copy must be personal. This means sentence fragments are okay. Beginning sentences with the word "And" is okay... etc. Write it like you would say it.

30. Picture your ideal client/prospect/buyer in your mind - - as if they were right in front of you. Ask yourself: Is it a man or a woman? What does she do? What does he read? What are the words she uses?
31. Always write to ONE person. Don't use phrases like, "all of you" or "some of you."
32. Saturate your copy with **benefits**. In short, it's about benefits, not features. Your copy must always answer your prospect's ever-present question, "What's in it for me?" Your copy must not focus on what your product **is**, but on what it can **do** for your customer.
33. Always tell the truth. Never lie. Never use hype.
34. There should be a "you-orientation" in your copy for the most part. Say "We'll help **you** save money," instead of "We help **our clients** save money."
35. As a general rule, the copy on your website's homepage should be one long direct response sales letter. It shouldn't talk about you; its focus should be on telling your prospect what you can do for them.
36. As a general rule "long copy" outsells "short copy". Make sure you list every important benefit you can offer your reader in your copy. (If it's a webpage have your prospects **scroll down** the page to continue reading - - don't make them have to click on a link to read Part 2 ... or Part 3 ... etc.)
37. Make your copy as long as it needs to be. Give all the benefits. Take the time to tell your story. But make sure you include interesting facts and fascinating truths along the way to keep it from boring your reader.
38. Your copy should be tight, crisp and push one benefit after another.
39. Make the headline as long as it needs to be. It doesn't have to be limited to 1 or 2 lines.
40. Write down 50 to 100 possible headlines before you start writing.
41. Explore several possible lead-ins before you begin writing the body of the sales letter.
42. Honestly communicating the real benefits you're offering doesn't mean you're "bragging or boasting." Always tell the truth. But do it in a way your reader can see what's in it for them.
43. Always use a headline (of some type) at the top of your home webpage.
44. A good headline will usually state **the most important benefit** you're offering to your ideal prospect.
45. If your headline states your most important benefit you'll likely repeat this benefit several times throughout your sales letter. But be careful about repetitiveness. Don't just keep making the same points over and over.
46. Don't include a product's name in the headline unless it somehow reflects the product's #1 benefit.

47. Be careful not to overuse your favorite words or phrases.
48. Fill your copy with specific details. What sounds better? *“Mark Smith is a doctor.”*
or ...
“Mark Smith is a doctor at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital. In addition to his medical degree Dr. Smith has a PhD in Ethics. He’s authored 5 best-selling books about new breakthroughs in medicine and is considered an authority in cutting-edge medical treatments.”
49. Never write “down” to your reader; never be condescending.
50. Never try to argue your prospect into buying. You must entice them. Make them “want” what you’re offering.
51. Check to see if all the elements in your sales letter (and entire sales package) work together. Each one has its own job ... the headline ... the lead in ... the body copy ... the false close ... the close ... the offer ... the guarantee ... the PS ... the order device... the lift note ... the brochure ... etc.
52. Always have several people (preferably individuals who fit your targeted group of prospects) read your copy **before** you finish the final draft. Have at least 3 other people read and edit your copy **after** you think it’s done.
53. See if you can eliminate your first paragraph (when editing). Ask yourself if it's merely a "warm up" paragraph before getting into the strong copy. It’s better to start your copy strong and keep it strong throughout the letter.
54. Go over your first sentence time and time again. Is it as strong as it can be? Does it lead into the introduction well?
55. Use lots of **action** words. Be heavy on the use of verbs and light on the use of adjectives.
56. Use active verbs (active voice) whenever possible. It helps your prospect imagine they’re doing or using what you're selling.
57. Maintain consistency in both the style and tone of your letter all throughout. Anything else will cause confusion.
58. Don't invite your prospect to **stop** reading at some point in your letter to read another part of your package.
59. Go through the copy and remove as many of the "that" words as possible. Most of them probably won’t be needed.
60. Stay away from words and phrases like ***"this product is the best"*** or the ***"brightest"*** ... etc. It takes away from its trueness. Makes it seem fake (unreal) to your prospect.
61. Be careful not to use jargon associated with your industry or profession. If your reader doesn’t know it they won’t understand your copy.
62. Don't be afraid to make statements you know your prospect agrees with. It helps create a bond between writer and reader.

63. When editing ask yourself if the claims made in your letter make sense.
64. Avoid humor in your copy. Avoid cleverness. Never try to be cute.
65. Write to sell, not impress. Don't try to impress your reader with fancy words. If your copy is good your reader won't even be conscious of your copy ... they'll be focuses on all the benefits of your product or service.
- 66 As a general rule, use smaller words. Less complicated words. You don't want your reader to have to stop and think about what a word means.
67. When using "Fear" as a motivator in your copy the fear must be:
- a) real
 - b) specific
 - c) have a "near" timeframe
68. If you use "teaser copy" (sales copy on envelopes for direct mail packages) make sure you use it on both sides.
69. Start your letter strong and keep it strong. Don't start out "slowly" and then try to build momentum.
70. Use numerals rather than written out numbers in your copy. Write "We sell 1059 machines every week" instead of "We sell one thousand fifty-nine machines every week"
71. Assume your prospect wants to believe you. Assume they want what you have to offer. Give her (or him) good reasons to justify their belief.
72. Avoid generalities. Always use specifics.
73. Benefits stir emotions. Emotions are the major key to making the sale.
74. Stick with one major message or theme throughout your sales letter.
75. Be aware of the punctuation tricks used in copywriting: ALL CAPS ... *italics* ... (parenthesis) - - dashes ... ellipses ... "quotation marks" ... underlining certain words ... indentations ...
- bullets ... →arrows ... etc.
76. If you make a bold promise in your headline make it so the reader must read all your copy to the end to find out all about it.
77. Use research to include little known facts and tidbits of information to make your copy lively and interesting.
78. Don't let your reader anticipate what your copy will say next. Don't telegraph to them where you're going in your copy.
79. If your copy doesn't grab your prospect's attention and make your product or service stand out to them in 5 seconds or less it's probably going to be a failure.

80. Never be wedded to old facts. Constantly let the marketplace tell you what works. Let your prospects tell you what they like. Their vote is the only one that counts. In Real Estate the saying is "Location, Location, Location." In direct marketing its "Test, Test, and Test."

PROVING YOUR CASE

81. Use real testimonials. Never make them up._

82. Try to use testimonials that fit in with the kind of copy you're writing. If you have a website to advertise your business put testimonials within your copy on your home page. They're that important.

83. If you have a long running sales package you use as the "control" make sure you keep it updated. In other words, don't let old information (charts, market figures, etc.) remain as part of it. Prospects look to these elements in your sales copy to find credibility in your message. These elements must be kept up-to-date.

84. Create "authority" in your package so the "voice" (the person the sales copy is from) is the expert.

85. Identify the signer of the letter with a title if appropriate.

GETTING YOUR PROSPECTS TO RESPOND

86. Try writing the "Order Form" early in the process. It will help you have your objective clearly in mind.

87. Tell your prospect exactly what you want her to do. You must tell her things like ... "Now, pick up the phone and call me for a consultation" ... "Get a pen and fill out the enclosed form" ... "Fill it out and put it in the enclosed envelope" ... etc."

88. Make sure the last sentence in your sales letter is a call to respond to the offer.

89. Use a PS at the end of your sales letter. Most winning packages include a PS. Try to include some sort of extra benefit in it.

90. Remind your prospect of what he stands to miss if he doesn't act on your offer. Their need won't be met unless they buy from you. You have exactly what they want.

91. Try to anticipate every question your prospect will ask. Every objection they will raise. Address these in your copy.

92. Attract you prospect with a great offer. A great offer might even rescue sales copy that's *average*. Offer great terms ... great price ... great quality ... etc. Then **TEST these elements** within your offer to see what results in more sales.

93. Make sure you offer an outstanding guarantee. Your client should take upon himself or herself as much burden as they can bear. Marketing legend Jay Abraham calls this strategy **risk reversal**. You want to make your offer as risk free as possible for your prospect. This can significantly increase sales.

94. Make sure your **guarantee** is spelled out clearly. No *legal-eese*.

95. If you need to include some type of legal disclosure for your product then put it on a separate note of some kind. **Never** put it in your sales letter. It will get in the way of making the sale.

96. Keep the offer simple. Don't make it complicated.

97. Make the whole order process simple and direct. Keep your order form simple.

98. Use **free extras** whenever it's appropriate: Free Shipping ... Free Report ... etc.

99. Always consider offering a bargain in your offer if it fits with your product. People love a "discount" price.

100. Create a sense of urgency. Give your prospect a reason to respond to your offer NOW.

101. Give your prospect more than one chance to take action. In doing so try to use different emotions by appealing to different benefits.

102. Save a big benefit for the close of the sales letter. Think about offering something that might persuade someone who's still undecided.

103. Try to place testimonials near corresponding benefits in the copy. Try to match a testimonial with its related benefit.

104. Use a big **push** at the end of your letter by using some type of premium or other incentive.

105. An example of a premium would be something like the following...

*"Contact me today and I'll send you a free report entitled **Six Easy Steps to Database Management**. I wrote this report myself. After setting up databases for 30 years I've learned how to avoid most of the mistakes and pitfalls that can happen. This report will show you just how easy it is to set up a database using my unique system. It will also help you integrate all your related software programs into the database."*

106. Include your phone number, logo, and tag line on every webpage. Make it easy for your customers to contact you. This includes your Email address, Fax... etc. The tag line states your USP (as previously discussed).

107. Don't forget to tell your prospect why they should buy from you. You **MUST** answer these questions:

1. Why should I read this?
2. Why do I need this product (or service)?
3. Why should I buy from you?
4. Why should I buy from you now?
5. Why should I buy at this price?

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There you have it ... 107 time-tested rules for writing great copy. Apply them when writing your copy. Then watch for increased response rates.

I'm available to help with your copywriting project if you decide to use freelance help. Simply contact me using the form at:

<http://www.sales-letters-and-marketing.com/contact-joe.html>

If you'd like me to review your sales letter, webpage, or direct mail package to see if it can be stronger then contact me.

I'll provide you with "copy that sells" for your website or direct mail sales package.

To your success,

Joe Farinaccio

Freelance Copywriter and Information Products Creator

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