



10 Ways to Write More Effective Ads

What is advertising?

Is it something to be regarded as a work of beauty or art? Is it clever slogans or amusing prose? Is it workmanship to be judged for an award or recognition?

It's none of the above.

Advertising is salesmanship multiplied.

Nothing more.

And advertising copy, or copywriting, is salesmanship in print.

The purpose of a copywriter's job is to sell. Period.

The selling is accomplished by persuasion with the written word, much like a television commercial sells (if done properly) by persuading with visuals and audio.

As Claude Hopkins wrote in his timeless classic, *Scientific Advertising*:

“To properly understand advertising or to learn even its rudiments one must start with the right conception. Advertising is salesmanship. Its principles are the principles of salesmanship. Successes and failures in both lines are due to like causes. Thus every advertising question should be answered by the salesman's standards.

“Let us emphasize that point. The only purpose of advertising is to make sales. It is profitable or unprofitable according to its actual sales.

“It is not for general effect. It is not to keep your name before the people. It is not primarily to aid your other salesmen. Treat it as a salesman. Force it to justify itself. Compare it with other salesmen. Figure its cost and result. Accept no excuses which good salesmen do not make. Then you will not go far wrong.

“The difference is only in degree. Advertising is multiplied salesmanship. It may appeal to thousands while the salesman talks to one. It involves a corresponding cost. Some people spend \$10 per word on an average advertisement. Therefore every ad should be a super-salesman.

“A salesman's mistake may cost little. An advertiser's mistake may cost a thousand times that much. Be more cautious, more exacting, therefore. A mediocre salesman may affect a small part of your trade. Mediocre advertising affects all of your trade.”

These points are as true today as they were when they were written nearly one hundred years ago!

So the goal then becomes: **how can we make our advertising as effective as possible.**

The answer is to test. Test again. And then test some more.

If ad “A” receives a two percent response rate, and ad “B” receives three percent, then we can deduce that ad “B” will continue to outperform ad “A” on a larger scale.

Testing takes time, however, and can be expensive if not kept in check. Therefore, it's ideal to start with some proven tested known ideas and work from there.

For example, if testing has shown for decades or more that targeted advertising significantly outperforms untargeted advertising (and it does), then we can start with that assumption and go from there.

If we know based on test results that crafting an ad that speaks directly to an individual performs better than addressing the masses (again, it does), then it makes little sense to start testing with the assumption that it does not. This is common sense.

So it stands to reason that knowing some basic rules or techniques about writing effective copy is in order. Test results will always trump everything, but it's better to have a starting point before you test.

So this starting point is the essence of this book.

The ten tips expressed here have been generally time-tested and known to be effective.

But I can't emphasize enough that when using these techniques, you should always test them before rolling out a large (and expensive) campaign.

Sometimes a little tweak here or there is all that is needed to increase response rates dramatically.

And with that, let's move onward...

Focus on Them, Not You

When a prospect reads your ad, letter, brochure, etc., the one thing he will be wondering from the start is: "what's in it for me?"

And if your copy doesn't tell him, it'll land in the trash faster than he can read the headline or lead.

A lot of advertisers make this mistake. They focus on them as a company. How long they've been in business, who their biggest customers are, how they've spent ten years of research and millions of dollars on developing this product, blah, blah.

Actually, those points are important. But they should be expressed in a way that matters to your potential customer. Remember, once he's thrown it in the garbage, the sale is lost!

When writing your copy, it helps to think of it as writing a letter to an old friend. In fact, I often picture a friend of mine who most closely fits my prospect's profile. What would I say to convince this friend to try my product? How would I target my friend's objections and beliefs to help *my cause*?

When you're writing to a friend, you'll use the pronouns "I" and "you." When trying to convince your friend, you might say: "Look, I know you think you've tried every widget out there. But you should know that..."

And it goes beyond just writing in the second person. That is, addressing your prospect as "you" within the copy. The fact of the matter is there are many successful ads that *weren't* written in the second person. Some are written in the first person perspective, where the writer uses "I." Other times the third person is used, with "she," "he," and "them."

And even if you *do* write in the second person, it doesn't necessarily mean your copy is about them.

For example:

"As a real estate agent, you can take comfort in the fact that I've sold over 10,000 homes and mastered the tricks of the trade"

Although you're writing in the second person, you're really still focusing on yourself.

So how *can* you focus on them? Glad you asked. One way is to...

Emphasize Benefits, Not Features

What are features? They are descriptions of what qualities a product possesses.

- The XYZ car delivers 55 miles per gallon in the city.
- Our ladder's frame is made from a lightweight durable steel alloy.
- Our glue is protected by a patent.
- This database has a built-in data-mining system.

And what are benefits? They are what those features mean to your prospects.

- You'll save money on gas *and* cut down on environmental pollutants when you use our energy saving high-performance hybrid car. Plus, you'll feel the extra *oomph* when you're passing cars, courtesy of the efficient electric motor, which they don't have!
- Lightweight durable steel-alloy frame means you'll be able to take it with you with ease, and use it in places most other ladders can't go, while still supporting up to 800 pounds. No more backaches lugging around that heavy ladder. And it'll last for 150 years, so you'll never need to buy another ladder again!
- Patent-protected glue ensures you can use it on wood, plastic, metal, ceramic, glass, and tile...without messy cleanup and without ever having to re-glue it again—guaranteed!
- You can instantly see the "big picture" hidden in your data, and pull the most arcane statistics on demand. Watch your business do a "180" in no time flat, when you instantly know why it's failing in the first place! It's all done with our built-in data-mining system that's so easy to use, my twelve year-old son used it successfully *right out of the box.*

I just made up those examples, but I think you understand my point.

By the way, did you notice in the list of features where I wrote "steel alloy?" But in the benefits I wrote "steel-alloy" (with a hyphen). Not sure off-hand which one is correct, but I know which one I'd use.

Here's why: you are not writing to impress your English teacher or win any awards. The only award you're after is your copy beating the control (control being the best-selling copy so far), so take some liberty in grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. You want it to be read and acted upon, not read and admired!

But—back to benefits...

If you were selling an expensive watch, you wouldn't tell your reader that the face is 2 inches in diameter and the band is made of leather.

You show him how the extra-large face will tell him the time at a glance. No sir! He won't have to squint and look foolish to everyone around him trying to read this magnificent timepiece. And how about the way he'll project success and charisma when he wears the beautiful gold watch with its handcrafted custom leather band? How his lover will find him irresistible when he's all dressed up to go out, wearing the watch. Or how the watch's status and beauty will attract the ladies.

Incidentally, did you notice how I brought up *not squinting* as a benefit? Does that sound like a silly benefit? Not if you are selling to affluent baby boomers suffering from degrading vision. They probably hate it when someone they're trying to impress sees them squint in order to read something. It's all part of their inner desire, which you need to discover. And which even they may not know about. That is, until you show them a better way.

The point is to address the benefits of the product, not its features. And when you do that, you're focusing on your reader and his interests, his desires. The trick is to highlight those specific benefits (and word them correctly) that push your reader's emotional hot buttons.

How do you do that? Read on!

Push Their Emotional Hot Buttons

This is where research really pays off. Because in order to push those buttons, you need to first know what they are.

Listen to this story first, and I'll tell you what I mean: Once upon a time a young man walked into a Chevrolet dealer's showroom to check out a Chevy Camaro. He had the money, and he was ready to make a buying decision. But he couldn't decide if he wanted to buy the Camaro or the Ford Mustang up the road at the Ford dealer.

A salesman approached him and soon discovered the man's dilemma.

"Tell me what you like best about the Camaro," said the salesman.

"It's a fast car. I like it for its speed."

After some more discussion, the salesman learned the man had just started dating a cute college cheerleader. So what did the salesman do?

Simple. He changed his pitch accordingly, to push the hot buttons he knew would help advance the sale. He told the man about how impressed his new girlfriend would be when he came home with this car! He placed the mental image in the man's mind of he and his girlfriend cruising to the beach in the Camaro. How all of his friends will be envious when they see him riding around with a beautiful girl in a beautiful car.

And suddenly the man saw it. He got it. And the salesman recognized this and piled it on even more. Before you know it, the man wrote a nice fat check to the Chevy dealership, because he was *sold!*

The salesman found those hot buttons and pushed them like never before until the man realized he wanted the Camaro more than he wanted his money.

I know what you're thinking...the man said he liked the car because it was fast, didn't he?

Yes, he did. But subconsciously, what he really desired was a car that would impress his girlfriend, his friends, and in his mind make them love him more! In his mind he equated speed with thrill. Not because he wanted an endless supply of speeding tickets, but because he thought that thrill would make him more attractive, more likeable.

Perhaps the man didn't even realize this fact himself. But the salesman sure did. And he knew which emotional hot buttons to press to get the sale.

Now, where does the research pay off?

Well, a good salesman knows how to ask the kinds of questions that will tell him which buttons to press on the fly. When you're writing copy, you don't have that luxury. It's therefore very important to know upfront the wants, needs, and desires of your prospects for that very reason. If you haven't done your homework, your prospect is going to decide that he'd rather keep his money than buy your product. Remember, copywriting is **salesmanship in print!**

It's been said many times: People don't like to be sold.

But they do like to buy.

And they buy based on emotion first and foremost. Then they justify their decision with logic, *even after they are already sold emotionally.* So be sure to back up your emotional pitch with logic to nurture that justification at the end.

And while we're on the subject, let's talk a moment about perceived "hype" in a sales letter. A lot of more "conservative" advertisers have decided that they don't like hype, because they consider hype to be old news, been-there-and-done-that, my customers won't fall for hype, it's not believable anymore.

What they should realize is that hype itself does not sell well. Some less experienced copywriters often try to compensate for their lack of research or not fully understanding their target market or the product itself by adding tons of adjectives and adverbs and exclamation points and big bold type.

Whew! If you do your job right, it's just not needed.

That's not to say some adverbs or adjectives don't have their place...only if they're used sparingly, and only if they advance the sale.

But I think you'd agree that backing up your copy with proof and believability will go a lot farther in convincing your prospects than "power words" alone. I say *power words*, because there are certain adverbs and adjectives that *have* been proven to make a difference when they're included. This by itself is not hype. But repeated too often, they become less effective, and they take away (at least in your prospect's mind) from the proof.

Which brings us into our next tip...

Incorporating Proof and Believability

When your prospect reads your ad, you want to make sure he believes any claims you make about your product or service. Because if there's any doubt in his mind, he won't bite, no matter how sweet the deal. In fact, the "too good to be true" mentality will virtually guarantee a lost sale...even if it is all true.

So what can you do to increase the *perception* of believability? Because after all, it's the perception you need to address up front. But of course you also must make sure your copy is accurate and truthful.

Here are some tried and tested methods that will help:

- If you're dealing with existing customers who already know you deliver as promised, emphasize that trust. Don't leave it up to them to figure it out. Make them stop, cock their heads, and say, "Oh, yeah. The ABC Company *has* never done me wrong before. I can trust them."
- Include testimonials of satisfied customers. Be sure to put full names and locations, where possible. Remember, "A.S." is a lot

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

