

The Complete Newbie's Guide to Effective Copywriting

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Preface

The basic aim of every business is to enhance stakeholder value. Whether you are keen on generating a huge response from a newspaper or magazine ad, a direct sales letter, or an Internet site, the basic fact you need to realize is "What is it that makes your business tick?"

A chief and extensively used form of marketing communication tool is the sales letter. It can construct your client base and increase your sales.

What is so special about sales letters that are always read? What is it about the sales letters that sell products? What is the secret to sales letters that keep readers reading until the final line? Why do we buy on the basis of some sales letters and not others, even though they offer the same benefits and features?

Sales letters can portray numerous kinds of information. For example:

a) It makes you aware of the product and services that you are offering.

The primary and major reason for using sales letters as a marketing tool is to make the customer conscious of your product or service by providing adequate facts to appeal to the reader.

b) Make an excuse for futures appointment

Sales letter may be used to organize the consumer for contacting in future appointment—for example, visiting him personally or calling him up for appointments.

c) Replying to enquiries.

If at a previous date, the customer asked for additional information about a specific product or service, a sales letter can be sent to respond to their queries. This, in itself, can create ground to sell the product and service.

d) General Information

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A sales letter can notify the consumer of the latest offers, products, services, sales, and so on. It can be any other information that you feel will interest the reader. The consumer may have specially asked you to inform him about such information and/or you may target consumer groups exclusively.

To help in establishing how you should write your sales letter, it is important to map out your objectives. Once you are clear about your objective, it will be easy for you to adopt the required technique. Here can be a few of them:

a) For selling any Product or Service

If your sole aim is to sell your products or service, you need to convince people. You need to use words that will convince the prospect of your product or service. Remember, do not be pushy. Talk in a conversational tone.

b) To Notify the Customer

If your sole objective is to provide the consumer with all essential information about your business or product or service? Such sales letters are, as a result, usually escorted with leaflets and other inserts to give such information.

c) To Get a Response

The prospects may contact you for many reasons other than wanting to buy the product or service. It can be for further information, a free sample/trial, a personal visit, etc. Habitually, consumers do not like buying without physically seeing or trying out the product/service. So you must keep an option to demonstrate open. This also helps build credibility. The prospect will feel that you are genuinely interested in them and not just there to sell your products.

Everyone can write a wonderful sales letter. Sure, you may have to study some new skills. Always know, the famous copywriters of today weren't born knowing how to write great sales letters. All of them started from scratch. They also had their initial trouble and failures. But they persisted. In fact, once you know how to play the game, you will yourself realize that writing an effective sales letter is like child's play.

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This ebook will take you step by step through the process of writing an effectual sales letter. Starting from what your objective is, to the basic elements of a sales letter, to valuable tips on how to enhance your sales letter to increase sales...you will find everything in this ebook.

Happy Reading,

Christian Erwanda

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

(a) All About A Sales Letter

A sales letter is a document intended to generate sales. It influences the reader to place an order, to request for information about a product or service. The basic aim is motivate the reader to take a specific action.

This is a description of a real sales letter.

Results of my R&D

“I'm taking to you to inform you about the really terrific washing machine that I've developed. First of all, I know it's wonderfully terrific because I spent years studying washing machines of all kinds. I then expanded my field of research and Development (R&D) to include all kinds of commercial washing machines, and I came to know about all the possible secrets of what makes dirt come out from the most inconceivable places. Now, TEN YEARS LATER, I'm ready to let you savor the fruits of all my hard work. I've developed the EZ WASHER. I must tell you it will make all other washing machines you have ever seen pale in contrast.”

Do you find anything wrong with this sales letter? Almost everything is wrong.

The headline is all about the writer and does not speak to the customer. Also, it uses some technical terms – "R&D" for research and development. This is an industrial term, which may actually irritate some prospective customers. We have no idea whatsoever what the 10 years of work refers to. Neither are we told about any exceptional features. The writer just generally raves about what great work he has done. The sales letter talks about all what he has done in the last 10 years and not what I will get or at least what I can expect.

Before starting to write a sales letter, you must also try to put yourself in the prospective customer's shoes. Realize how you treat unwanted letters that you

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receive. Most of these letters, if not all, go in the bin. In fact, you don't even bother to open some of them.

(b) Comparison Between Unsolicited Proposals, Brochures And Sales Letters

Whether you are preparing a brochure, or writing an unsolicited proposal, you can always make it better by realizing the similarities and differences between them.

A brochure is a record of your products and services. They are often produced in a large scale and given incognito. Brochures come in different kinds of shapes and sizes and are more often than not printed in bright colors with lots of graphics in it.

An unsolicited proposal is an article about your products and services. They are usually produced independently and given to someone precise (although it may be to someone you are not too familiar with). They are often in the form of a letter, unless they are large documents, which are bound.

A sales letter is a short proposal and always aims towards making you take some action. Depending on the situation, sales letters may or may not be given to precise individuals and are sometimes sent to people you don't know.

So what's the dissimilarity? It turns out that in reality there is not a lot of difference between them. All of them have to offer information and usually seek to influence. Sometimes, the main intention of a brochure is to provide information. A key differentiator is whether the brochure should aim towards making you take some action. Marketing materials are almost always fashioned to stimulate the reader to do something. It could be to visit their store, make a purchase, visit a website, or maybe just to place a telephone call. If your brochure simply supplies information, you should reconsider it to make sure it is convincing, and consider re-designing it to induce people to take an action.

If do you have a call to action, or something that you are trying to inspire the prospective customer to do, then it may help to imagine your brochure to be an

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unsolicited proposal. The brochure should be intended to efficiently convince the reader to execute the call to action.

If you are writing a sales letter, you may not comprehend that it's not much different than a brochure asking the reader to take action. Try to focus on the aesthetics of the brochure.

Both brochures and unsolicited proposals are liable to suffer from not having too much information about the reader. The more you are familiar with the reader, the more persuasive you can be. However, brochures and unsolicited proposals are frequently given to people who you are not too familiar with, usually in the anticipation of getting to know them better.

The next time you are creating a brochure, unsolicited proposal, or a sales letter, take the time to think over it as if it was one of the others. Utilize the comparison to enhance the document, but be obvious about your goals and audience.

(c) Segmentation, Targeting And Positioning

Preparing your sales letter means you need to really have a comprehensive knowledge of the product or service being offered, the market dynamics, and the reader's stated and unstated needs. There is no replacement for product or service knowledge.

What does the product or service do for the one who requires it? How can the reader benefit from buying it? What is the unique selling point of the product or service? To respond to these queries, you should begin by distinguishing the benefits from the features. The sales letter should be able to persuade your reader to buy your stuff based on the grounds of what benefit the product/service derives and not based on its features.

The benefit is what the product or service offers and what the consumer profits from the feature. A benefit is the specific result of the feature. A feature is what the product or service already has built in. Benefits are what inspire people to buy. A refrigerator, for example, has defrosting facilities (feature). If that technology helps in getting rid of unwanted icicles and helps in keeping our greens fresh and healthy, then we have the benefit of that feature.

Decide on how you plan to advertise the product or service. Through the Internet, direct mail, email, direct sales, print advertising, etc.? Is there some other advertising or literature to support the sales letter? Who is your competition? What marketing activities have they undertaken? What is your advertising budget? Are you aiming too high?

Who is your potential buyer? What stimulates a person to buy this item? The experts point out that the emotion most often used to influence people to buy is fear, and a million other variations of it. You have to be in the consumer's position to realize whether your offer appeals to the readers' emotional needs.

(d) Following The Aida Model

Advertising copywriters follows the AIDA model. The AIDA model stands for **Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action.**

Get Your Reader's Attention

If you want your sales letter to have an impact on your readers, it must first get their attention. You can do this with a hard-hitting headline or lead paragraph that hits the nail directly on the head or you can even begin your letter with a captivating question. For instance, "Do you want to cut your electricity cost by 45%?"

An appropriate headline for a sales letter promoting a weight loss program might be: "Now, you can lose 15 pounds in 2 weeks without having to starve; and it's easy and affordable!" This headline not only solves a problem, but also offers a quick and easy solution that keeps in mind the price-sensitive consumer.

Your reader will be interested only in knowing "What's in it for me?" "Why should I invest my time in reading on?" If you let him know instantly, at the beginning of your letter, he'll keep reading the rest of the letter. And that's half the battle won. In any case, he will rarely reach the third paragraph. So the impact has to be instant. The crux of the matter should be explained at the very beginning.

Gain Their Interest

You must clasp the reader's interest by showing him why he needs your product or service. You have to create a want for your product or service. Let him know how his life will become easier with your product. Show him what he is missing by not even trying the product.

Here, you require to prove your trustworthiness. You can rest your case by using testimonials or case histories. You can provide the communication details of users who have benefited from your product. Always remember that you know everything there is to know about your product, so "stale news" to you can be "fresh news" to the other person.

Create Desire

Now you've got the reader's attention and hooked his interest. Next, you've got to create desire. Tell the reader how exactly he'll benefit from your product. Link the benefits to the reader's daily life. Get him to realize how your product can benefit him, how convenient it is for him to get it, and how comfortable life will be for him afterwards.

Generalities are less convincing. Specific details are far more believable. For example, when you want to sell books on lowering employee theft . . . "By the end of this quarter, you could see your percentage of employee theft drop by more than 37%. Imagine the spectacular effect it will have on your bottom line!" If it is selling a weight loss program... "Within 3 weeks you will have lost 15 pounds. Imagine the compliments pouring in from your spouse. Think how gorgeous you will look in that new swimsuit!"

Solicit Action

What do you want the reader to do next? Send in a reply card? Order the product or service? Call in asking for more information? Schedule an appointment? Notify him accordingly. It is amazing how many sales letters do not inform the reader about the subsequent step. They consider that the reader is a mind reader. But usually this is not the case.

You've worked hard so far. You've gotten his attention, hooked his interest, created desire. Isn't it appropriate to ask for action? Don't presume that your reader knows what to do next. As a support to getting the preferred action, you must always incorporate a reply card with your letter.

The P.S. is one component of a letter that at all times gets read. Use your P.S. to emphasize your most compelling benefit or restate your guarantee. Don't waste it on merriment. Used wisely, it could be the final prod that tilts the buying decision in your favor. So be specific and give the final spurt.

Chapter2 - Basic Elements Of A Sales Letter

(a) What Are The Basic Parts Of A Sales Letter?

Any sales letter roughly follows the following sequence:

- a. Image.
- b. Headline.
- c. Greeting.
- d. Lead paragraph.
- e. Body.
- f. Closing.

The Image:

If there is a logo or design for your business, use it in the sales letter only if it is really pertinent to what you are offering. You are not selling your business logo; you are selling benefits that the buyer will realize if he buys your product or service. Use a specific image that is inherent to your headline, content, and theme, or do not use one at all. Stick to words as far as possible.

Job Of The Headline:

The headline is usually 3 - 30 words long. It should be catchy. It should grab the reader's attention and tell him what the ad (sales letter) is about. Ideally, the job of the headline is to get the reader's concentration, target the viewers, list an advantage, and make an assurance.

Greeting And Lead Paragraph:

Any sales letter that influence the reader has a possibility of being opened and read.

- Spin a yarn that the reader can identify with, using a conversational tone.
- Announce a new product or service, an exclusive event, or important news, flaunting your unique selling proposition.

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- Speak to the reader as your equal: "Dear fellow car purchaser, are you aware of. . ."
- You could start with something innovative, perhaps a quote or anecdote.
- You could start by identifying the reader's problem, one that your product promises to solve.
- Ask a question that might excite the reader.
- Let the reader in on some secret or uncommon information.

You could use a sub-headline to answer a query posed in the headline. For example, Part A could say: "Want to lose 15 pounds within 3 weeks at an affordable price?" Part 2 could say: "Well, this is how you can do it . . ."

Body Of The Letter:

The body copy should use the same tone and endure with the theme of the headline. You should persist highlighting the benefits and offer proof of the claim you made. Provide details of the benefits and the features. Build credibility. Your basic objective is to create a need or want for your products or services and make people do what you want them to.

Closing Or Call To Action:

If you solicit the reader to order, support, or to contact you for the particular cause, you must make it easy for him to reply. You must support the sales letter with a prepaid envelope and an order form. If not suitable, supply a toll-free telephone number, an email link, and/or your URL. Always thank the reader for his patience. Always use a postscript.

A Final Suggestion:

Getting the reader to spend his hard-earned money on you is the real challenge. The best way to ensure this is to use test readers. Test readers would be able to give their opinion if anything is missing in the letter.

(b) How To Create Headlines To Invigorate Your Sales Letters?

Every one of your marketing tools would require a headline. Headlines draw attention, make your message simple to read, get your key selling points across, and prompt your customer to buy the product and service.

Use headlines regularly in your sales letter to help people get your main message without having to grope about too much.

Headlines range from "hit-you-in-the face" to more understated ones that don't appear like a headline at all.

Your headline gets noticed when it appeals to the reader's interests. You must use your headline to point out a difficulty the reader has or something you know the reader feels powerfully about.

Seven Sure-Fire Headlines

- a. **Ask a Question.** "Are you worried about becoming fat and flabby?" A question headline forces the reader to answer in her mind. You mechanically get the prospect involved in your message.
- b. **Begin your headline with "How to."** "How to lose 15 pounds in 3 weeks." People love information that illustrates how to do something valuable.
- c. **Provide a testimonial.** The advice of a satisfied customer can act as a catalyst in pursuing others to buy from you.
- d. **Issue a command.** Some traditional headlines order readers to "Aim High" and "Move Ahead" and so on. Turn your most significant benefit into a strong headline.

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- e. **Significant news makes a good headline.** This especially works well for huge changes in your organization or the introduction of savvy new products.
- f. **Headline a last date for a special offer.** Most of us are always too busy and tend to put off taking action. "Save Money Now" and "Get Bonus If You Buy Now" offer augment response.
- g. **FREE offers often draw the greatest response.** There is a myth that wealthy or professional customers are turned off by free offers. This is not accurate at all. Just customize your free offer so as to match the style of your customers or industry.

Prospects are always hard-pressed for time. They are barraged with hundreds of ads, sales letters, postcards, and commercials every day. They tend to tune out any advertising message that looks like it will take quite long to figure out. Headlines help them decide. So focus on them.

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