

# Do-it-Yourself Classified Ads

By Heather Reimer

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A simple classified ad placed in a highly targeted vehicle can be a great way to kick start your sales, especially if your company is the new kid on the block with low visibility and a small advertising budget.

There are two components to this important equation: the ad and the vehicle. Choosing the right ezine or website is an art form in itself and a story for another day.

For now, let's focus on how to write a your own classified ads that jump off the screen and demand attention.

1. The headline is the most important feature of your ad so spend lots of time on it. A good headline teases, entices and lures. Here's an example of a headline that DEMANDS to be read by everyone in business:

Is Your Online Business "Wide Open" to Criminals?

2. Address your target market early and clearly so they

know

your message applies to them. "Is Your Online Business..." speaks directly to e-business owners.

3. Use simple language and short, punchy statements.

4. Decide on an appropriate length. Between five and seven lines formatted to 65 characters per line is most common but

individual ezines may have different guidelines.

5. Focus on benefits. Your prospects don't care, for instance, that you're "the best in the tri-state area" (according to you). They don't care if your cheese spread is "the cheesiest and darn proud of it." Neither your pride nor your puffery will convince them to buy. All they want to know is, "What's in it for me?"

6. Give something away. An ebook, a free course, or just the answer to a question, as in the example above. Anything to get prospects to make contact and open up a dialogue with you.

7. Be different. Have you noticed lately how many ads promise "work at home and make \$10,000 a month"? Your copy has to be original to get attention and be remembered. For example, this headline also sells the work-at-home dream but with a unique twist: "Commute in your slippers."

8. Try to be realistic. People are skeptical of outlandish claims and weary of hype. "How to Publish a Book and Sell a Million Copies." Know how few best-selling authors flog a million copies? More effective would be: "We make it easy to sell 150,000 copies of your very own book."

9. Action! Decide what you want prospects to do and then ask them to do it. Visit your website? Sign up for your ezine? Request an estimate? Click here? Spell it out clearly or they'll read your pretty words and keep scanning right on down the page without stopping to act.

10. Write a couple of different ads so you have several on hand to rotate. Track them to see which ones pull best.

A well-written classified ad can be a great way to launch your promotional campaign without spending a fortune.

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