

Compelling Words that Sell With the Magic of Pixie Dust

By Linda Elizabeth Alexander

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This was going to be an article about "power" words and phrases with "juice," those "magic" words that will add punch to your copy and bring thousands of affluent customers to your doorstep, just waiting to empty their wallets to call themselves owners of your merchandise.

I knew that topic had been done a hundred times, so I thought I would have no trouble making a list of words to share with you. Then about two minutes after I began my research, I changed the focus of the article. Why? Because there are no magic words.

Like the IBM commercial where they remind you that there's no pixie dust, only qualified consultants, I'm here to remind you that words are just tools. Petting dogs can lower your blood pressure: it's the petting that does it, not the pet. Similarly, good writing will bring customers to you, but it's the writing, not the individual words.

That said, of course you know certain words have been proven to work. Words like free, buy now, don't miss out, etc., are trite *because* they have worked for years in

mail order. But your business may be different. Not every product benefits from a hard sell. In fact, there are so many ways of selling, not selling, and everything in between, that you must keep a list of words that have worked for YOU, in your job, in your industry, for your audiences.

Start by looking through some of your more successful communication pieces: Did a particular memo cause controversy in your office? Did a sales letter you never expected to work instead have phenomenal response? Analyze these items for timing, offer, context, audience, and what happened before or after the message was sent.

There are a lot of factors that play into the success of a particular communication. Only after you have figured out a number of the above variables, should you look at the individual words you used.

If you can narrow it down at all to a particular headline that worked, make a note. Keep the headline in a "swipe file" for the next time you are looking for a successful headline. Did you use a phrase that angered customers, perked up your lawyers' ears, or released a flood of gossip around the water cooler? Write that one down too, in your file of phrases NOT to use again. Unless, of course, angering people is your aim.

Over time your list will build and you too will be able to write an article about magic words that are proven to bring you tons of sales overnight.

Linda Elizabeth Alexander writes marketing copy for nonprofits and traditional businesses. Sign up for her free business writing newsletter, Write to the Point, at <http://www.write2thepointcom.com/newsletter.html> .

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