

# Sensational Sales Letters Still Sell

By Marcia Yudkin

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Creative Ways <http://www.yudkin.com/marketing.htm>

With the rise in popularity of email, last year's anthrax problem and ever-increasing postal rates, many people assume that direct mail is dead. Not so! Postal sales letters delivered by mail carrier rather than digital networks still have an important place in many marketing programs. For one thing, many more very precisely targeted "snail mail" lists are available than for email. For another thing, some populations don't trust any offers coming to them on their computer. So here are my top tips for crafting an effective sent-by-mail sales letter.

The four most important ingredients of a sales letter are an attention-getting headline, a specific offer, a call to action and a P.S.

The headline, placed before the salutation, should make a claim or a promise that ties in with recipients' needs and interests. For instance:

Whatever the Language, We'll Get Your Message Across Right -- And With 25 Percent Savings the First Time You Hire Us!

We'll Prepare Those Pesky 1099s and W-2s for Your Business Right Away -- Absolutely Free!

Finally, an Organization That Fights Like Crazy to Protect and Heal Abused Children!

Your letter needs a clear and compelling offer, an explicit transaction that you are inviting the reader to make. Don't write what I call a "Hello, I exist" sales letter. Here's an example of an offer:

For only \$29.95 you can have unlimited use of our health club for one month, along with a one-hour private session with one of our certified fitness trainers.

Your P.S., which is the second most read element in the letter after the headline, should mobilize the reader to act now. Provide an incentive for acting fast, or toss in an additional bonus. For instance:

P.S. Charge your membership to your credit card in four equal payments for no additional cost -- and receive a full-color desk calendar if you respond by November 10.

In conjunction with the offer, include an explicit call to action. Tell your reader exactly what action or actions you want him or her to take after reading the letter. For example:

Please look over the enclosed materials and return our self-addressed, postage-paid postcard to set up an appointment to discuss your next important building project.

How long should your sales letter be? As long as it takes to arouse interest, lay out the whole offer, address possible objections and ask the reader to take action. Sometimes this takes one page, sometimes four.

Professional copywriters say that two-page letters generally outpull one-pagers, and that even eight pages may not be too long. Those who are not interested won't read even one page, and those who are will read eight. So don't feel you have to cram your whole sales message into one page to get action.

By the way, these principles work for crafting email letters, too, although there you must move very, very carefully to avoid being taken for a dreaded "spammer." An attention-getting headline, a specific offer, a call to action and a P.S. get you results, whatever your delivery mechanism.

The above is adapted from Marcia Yudkin's manual, "Turn Any Sales Letter Into an Irresistible Concoction," available through <http://www.yudkin.com/scourse.htm> . Marcia Yudkin [marcia@yudkin.com](mailto:marcia@yudkin.com) is the author of 11 books, including Six Steps to Free Publicity and Internet Marketing for Less than \$500/Year.

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