

SOME COPY TIPS FROM AN OLD HAND

By Patrick Quinn

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Word Power III <http://www.wordpower3.com>

I have been in the ad game for a long, long time. I have trained hundreds of writers, and I've been responsible for shifting \$ millions in product worldwide. Here are just a few tips that I hope will help you do a better job, and make a bigger name for yourself.

One.

Whatever copy job you are working on - brochure, mailer, sales letter, press ad - always include a headline. A pertinent headline. A selling headline.

This headline will be, or should be, powerful enough or intriguing enough to draw your target into the compass of the body copy. If it can do that, you are on a winner.

To put it simply, your headline should be a snapshot of your sales message - a précis of your offer or promise. In other words, a headline that says: Buy this product and get this benefit.

Two.

Always remember, people don't buy products, they buy the benefits of owning those products. A man doesn't buy a sportscar because it is precision engineered or aesthetically designed. He buys it because of the ego-boost it gives him. It shows the world that he has made it.

Likewise, a woman doesn't buy a cocktail dress by Camille of Paris simply because of the cut or the exquisite stitching. She buys it for the cachet that is attached to the label. She would probably look as good in a dress from a High Street department store, but she wouldn't feel as good. And that's the benefit.

Three.

Around 30% of all copy headlines are both useless and irrelevant. The worst of them often take the form of puns or are re-workings of current film titles or song titles. Puns are fine if they are appropriate, which they seldom are. And the writer who tries to demonstrate how cool he is by working his product message into a film or song title is usually doing a lot for the sales of movie tickets and CDs, but very little for his client.

The moral is this. State your sales proposition cleverly, wittily, stridently or emotively, but never ever employ a device simply because it's the easy thing to do. If you can't be original, at least be positive.

Four.

If it doesn't quack, it ain't a duck. And if your copy doesn't make some kind of selling proposition, it isn't advertising - it's an announcement. So many writers these days fail to understand that copy is nothing more than salesmanship in print. They play with words for the sake of playing with words. They lose sight of the fact that they should be trying to sell something. Thus, copy must use the psychology of the salesman; and it must say, right up front: Here's what's in it for you.

Five.

Always be a little circumspect about experts who try to tell you how to write better copy. And that includes me. Meantime, however, you'll do no better than visit <http://www.wordpower3.com> There, you'll find just about every promotional word and phrase you'll ever need.

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