

## 10 Copywriting Tips by Gerard Bullard

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*"Easy reading is damn hard writing."* - Nathaniel Hawthorne

**N**athaniel Hawthorne would have made a great copywriter. His simple observation states what copywriters the world over face every day. Listed below are 10 time-tested tips that can help turn your next project into a successful, result oriented advertisement.

The first tip is to *write your material like you talk*. In preparing your copy, don't unintentionally talk down to your intended audience, and don't use technical jargon that won't be easily understood no matter how tempting. Keep the tone conversational and natural. The trick is to not make an advertisement sound like an advertisement.

The second tip is to interview your current customers to find out why they are buying from you, what they see in your product, what they really like about your business or service. The results will sometimes amaze you and put you on track to something that you and your advertising may be missing entirely. Large organizations and political groups take this strategy to a new level, spending millions of dollars on what are known as focus groups. You can accomplish the same results with a few phone calls or surveys mailed to your customers.



Number three is to make sure that in your copy you zero in on benefits, not features. A snooze button on a clock radio is a feature. The benefit of the snooze button is that you can safely grab an extra ten to fifteen minutes of sleep after hitting the button and still wake up on time.

Tip number four is to put your copy away for at least a day and let it 'cool' before you submit it for publication. This lets you step back, take a fresh look at your work, and view it more objectively.

Tip number five is to leave the comedy writing to Seinfeld. Comedy writing is tricky at best, and not many copywriters are adept at using it. And advertising that *is* funny sometimes loses the audience because it is funny. Think about it. Do you want people to remember the funny copy that you wrote, or your product? Do you want a laugh or a sale? There are some examples to back this rule up. Years ago there were

some hilarious television commercials done with comedians Elaine May and Mike Nichols for beer. Turns out that the ads were fondly recalled for their humor, but they didn't increase the sales of the beer brand.

Tip number six is to always have some sort of a call to action in your copy. We've all received direct mail advertisements, read them, and then discovered that there was no urgency to the ad. No reason to take any action. Always, after you have gone to the trouble of working up an ad, ask for the order.

Tip number seven goes hand in hand with tip number six. Make it easy for your customer to respond to your ad. Use a business reply card with the postage already affixed. Feature an 800 number for the customer to call. Have a shopping cart on your web-site. A major magazine used to enclose a small pencil to give the customer a nudge to fill out the attached business reply card. Other magazines used to include a nickel or a dime for the customer to keep after they filled out the enclosed business reply card. The easier you make it for the customer to respond, the closer you are to having them take the next step in your sales process.

Number eight is, wherever possible, include testimonials from satisfied customers. A quote or a few words from a satisfied customer gives credibility to your product or service. It shows that the product works and that a customer has benefited from using it. It is a powerful motivator towards a purchase. Think of all the ads that you've seen where an average person is doing the talking versus a celebrity endorser.



Tip number nine is to know what you are in fact selling. Fast food restaurants aren't selling gourmet meals. What they are selling is convenience. Airlines aren't selling seats on their planes – they are selling the destinations. SUV dealers are selling status and prestige. So before you go to work on your ad, think carefully about what you're selling.

It may turn out to be different from what you think.

And finally, tip number ten is to use short sentences when writing up an ad and follow the KISS rule (Keep it short and simple). Remember

the 1992 presidential election when the campaign mantra became *It's the economy stupid*. You only have a few seconds at most to hook a potential buyer – use it wisely. Don't overwhelm them or they will either change the channel, flip the page of the advertisement, or chuck your direct mail piece into the recycle bin. Keep it short and simple. Your content may be long, but your sentences should be short.

There are many other methods for creating copy for your business. These are just the tip of the iceberg. Begin by using these guidelines and get into the habit of using them. You'll see what a difference they can make.

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