



Is copy the  
weakest link in your  
current marketing  
performance?

## EXPOSING THE LINK BETWEEN... YOUR MARKETING SUCCESS AND YOUR COPYWRITER SELECTION PROCESS

**W**hen sales copy captures the essence of your company's product...

...it becomes the most revealing business plan that your competitors could possibly hope to steal from your encryption protected company servers...

...and also the most difficult thing for them to ever compete against.

Why?

Because good copy will laser-focus into the heart of your business strategy with a sniper's precision, including:

- ➔ Who is your highest value target audience?
- ➔ What is their exact profile and buying process?
- ➔ What psychological triggers will not only cause them to buy your product -- but to do so as soon as they can scramble for their wallet or get PO approval?

- ➔ What features will position your product or service beyond the reach of your competition?
- ➔ Where exactly is the sweet spot in the market that will attract the most valuable customer segments for maximum ROI with long-term competitive advantage?

*But why is this so hard for your competition to duplicate?*

**Because:** Well crafted copy is not just words-on-a-page that trigger an *emotional buying frenzy* (no matter how much we might wish it to be so)...

**Instead:** Well crafted copy makes use of genuine product features, unique benefits, and highly competitive offers, wrapped within a compelling emotionally bonding storyline that your competition simply can not duplicate. Or at least, that's the goal.

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## Supporting Your Strategic Marketing Objectives

A good copywriter can near effortlessly reel off high quality copy for short-term gains by evolving pre-existing collateral.

But beyond a short-term promotional sales uplift, copywriting can get at the roots of your business strategy to support a sustained competitive advantage.

In *Marketing Due Diligence*, McDonald, Smith and Ward explain:

“Market definition should be described in terms of a customer need, in a way which covers the aggregation of all the alternative products or services that customers regard as being capable of satisfying that same need.”

Legendary copywriter Gene Schwartz put it thus:

“Your markets sophistication depends on how many similar products, and how many competing ads... the goal is to be at exactly the right place, at the right time, with the right gadget or gizmo – To discover, intensify, and revitalise the desires held by a market. To focus those already existing desires onto a particular product.”

The closer your copywriter can use a clear and accurate market definition for your product, the closer he or she can come to hitting a home run with the copy they produce for you.

## Where Marketing And Copywriting Come Together

The copywriter must capture the essence of your product offer and make the customer attach it to a central idea to build brand preference and response.

“**Positioning** starts with a product.

A piece of merchandise, a service, a company, an institution, or even a person.

Perhaps yourself.

But positioning is not what you do to a product.

Positioning is what you do to the mind of the prospect.

That is, you position the product in the mind of the prospect.”

- Positioning – The Battle For Your Mind, Al Ries and Jack Trout

The more narrowly you can focus the position (whilst creating a new category in the market) the better. For example: Kleenex = tissues. Fairy = washing up liquid. Red bull = energy drink. **What does your company equal?**

Consider beer. First there was just beer. Brands like Miller, Schlitz, Heineken and Carlsberg. Which to choose? But then came Miller *Light*. A new market category was instantly formed for the market segment concerned about calories and weight. Miller created and owned a new market category. **How can your company create and own an entirely new market category?**

## Your Product Positioning Statement

To really empower your copywriter, work together to select a suitable company/product positioning statement for the brief. Something to the effect of:

My product helps [whom?] do [what?], [when?], better than any other product in the world by [how?].

With strong product positioning, your copywriter can produce rock-solid sales messages for you.

## Armed With Insight

You give your company great leverage by finding a copywriter who appreciates the considerations of strategic marketing and long-term brand positioning... someone that will become dedicated to a long-term relationship. This takes trust which can develop after the initial assignments success.

Having worked both sides of the fence... as a marketing professional and senior manager (reporting to the Chairman of a marketing service provider) as well as a copywriter both freelance and for ad agencies... I have learned some important details about the copywriters process of copy development, and the managers process of how to choose the right copywriter.

When selecting a copywriter, be wary of their use of buzzwords such as 'creative', 'on-brand', and 'consistency'. These are often smoke-and-mirrors that hide a lack of knowing what really works for measurable performance or the near-scientific approach that direct marketing should take.

Armed with the insider information presented in this paper, never again will you risk making a major mistake on a copywriter that says all the right things, but lacks the due diligence of strategic marketing to contribute to a genuine and ongoing performance uplift.

So let's dive deep in to the copywriters world...

- ➔ Research the copy platform
- ➔ Organize the research
- ➔ Develop the copy
- ➔ Incubate and Refine
- ➔ Test and Optimise

# RESEARCH THE COPY PLATFORM

An old copywriters tip advises:

*"Copywriting is 80% research, only 20% writing the actual copy."*

The copy platform is the crux of the brief... including elements that feed the direction of the copy... which may include: the problem or issue the ad must address, the advertising and communication objectives, product features, target audience, major selling idea, campaign theme, and any other highly relevant information.

From there, a copywriters research may involve: product research, offer research, competitor research, media research (marketing channels) and customer research. In this white paper let's focus on the area of...

## Customer Research

By intimately understanding the customers wants or needs, you can a) target them cost efficiently and b) fulfill their buying criteria so that they buy from you... now... rather than the competition.

In reality, customers wants are actually very simple. Yet arriving at a pure and simple insight may be quite an involved process...

*"The aim of marketing is to know and understand the customer so well the product or service fits him and sells itself" – Peter Drucker*

Your copywriter must spend enough time to genuinely and deeply understand your companies ideal prospect. Only then can we know what is needed to prove to our prospect that we really do have the goods.

*"If you wish to persuade me, you must think my thoughts, feel my feelings, and speak my words." – Cicero, Roman Statesman*

The copywriters process of arriving at prospect insight includes:

- ➔ Prospect involvement, through customer service surveys and one-to-one interviews
- ➔ Considering any demo-psychographic research you can provide or that he can collect (including list rental profile data, magazine subscription data, age, location, Internet and TV behaviour, etc)
- ➔ Analysing transactional data (recency and frequency of purchase, purchase values and volumes) and also reviewing split test data and all previously successful AND unsuccessful campaigns)
- ➔ Soul searching – the copywriters process of putting themselves in the shoes of the prospect and reflecting on the prospects beliefs, feelings and desires

From this information the copywriter can assemble an ideal prospect profile based on their 'core complex'.

# ORGANIZE THE RESEARCH

## Your Prospects Core Complex

The copywriter will build a clear picture of your prospects beliefs, frustrations, and desires.

### Beliefs

**What does the prospect believe about your product?** Does he believe, for example, that short-term stock market trading is risky, difficult, expensive... or requires great time commitment... or should only be done with a small portion of their overall investment portfolio... or perhaps that it's the best thing since derivatives trading begun back in Babylonia.

### Frustrations

We don't just want to stop at the prospects general beliefs. We want to get right under their skin and know exactly what is causing them pain, with relevance to your product. **What pain in your prospects life are we going to relieve or even hopefully solve?** Frustrations with other products in the market place, direct problems they have with that are related to your product, and also the broader life frustrations that may be influencing them towards being an ideal prospect for your product.

Pain can generally be grouped into 3 main categories:

- ➔ Financial (affordability, security, etc)
- ➔ Strategic (getting things done, succeeding, etc)
- ➔ Personal (related to emotions, including status, self-esteem, harmony, love, etc)

To diagnose a prospects deepest and most important pains, the copywriter may also consider these 4 questions:

- ➔ What is the source of the most prominent pain?
- ➔ What is the intensity of that pain?
- ➔ What is the level of urgency requiring the pain to be solved?
- ➔ How consciously aware of the pain and its source is the prospect?

### Desires

And finally we want to know what the prospect really wants. What would satisfy and fulfill them with regards to your product category? What would truly wow them? What is the end result and imagined future that they can possibly hope for by using your product?

How does the product suit their desires for status, leisure, convenience, advancement, pleasure, comfort, security, basic needs, level of self-reliance, etc?

Is it 'a moment on the lips' (a tasty snack), is it to avoid 'a lifetime on the hips' (a diet or exercise program). The copywriter searches for nuances of what the prospect desires in relation to the product.

### Facilitating the buying process

By developing this *core complex* view of the prospect we expose primary motivators through which we can trigger their buying process.

What buying experience is important to them? In general, customers want individualised respect, service, a

choice of product options, and information to make informed and comfortable buying decisions. As such, they tend to trust the vendors that provide them with information in the way they are most receptive to it.

Whilst this level of research and thought about the prospect may seem like a lot of trouble to a marketing manager or business owner... gathering and investigating this information is what gives the copywriter his power. Let your copywriter spend time mulling over these intricacies whilst you reap the benefit.

## DEVELOP THE COPY

From review of dozens of books on copywriting and training programs from A-Grade copywriters we know that there is no single magic formula or blueprint to follow for successful copywriting, but a plethora of models, applications, considerations to make, principles to interpret, and lessons from which to learn and apply.

Copywriter Bob Bly advocates a model based on 8 elements that must in some way all be present in every piece of sales copy:

- ➔ Gets attention
- ➔ Focuses on the customer
- ➔ Stresses benefits
- ➔ Differentiates your product from the competition
- ➔ Proves its case
- ➔ Establishes credibility
- ➔ Builds value
- ➔ Closes with a call to action

Copywriters must seek a 'message to market match' that 'meets the prospect where their mind is at', hooking their interest by aligning as closely as possible to her core complex, and building a case for why the product is of value through demonstration, credibility, and respect.

### 3 copywriters questions about your product

- ➔ Is it desirable?
- ➔ Is it credible?
- ➔ Is it worth it?

Each of those 3 questions unfold as follows:

#### 1. Is it Desirable?

- ➔ The Problem? What problem faced by your prospect does your product address? What is the prospects most relevant problem or greatest frustration?
- ➔ The Solution? How can you describe the solution your product provides in a clear and compelling way? What does your product do for the prospect? What benefit does it provide? What pain does it remove for them?

- ➔ Specialness? Why should the prospect buy YOUR solution, rather than your competitors? How does it stand out? What's unique, better, or preferable about your product?

## 2. Is it Credible?

- ➔ What's the Background? How can you drive home the pain of the problem and joy of the solution through a story or case study that demonstrates the product and builds a human bond with the prospect?
- ➔ Where's the proof? How can you logically or experientially demonstrate the validity of your proposed solution? How can you prove that your product does what you promise that it can? (Has it worked for your clients? Has a similar product worked for anyone else? Can you "borrow" proof from another product or person like a celebrity or authority figure?)
- ➔ Have you handled possible objections? What questions, concerns, and barriers may your prospect have with regards to your offer? And how can you resolve them?

## 3. Is it Worth It?

- ➔ Risk reversal – Making it easy to say 'yes' is the goal of risk reversal. It's the perceived risk and not price that keeps your clients from moving forward. Eliminate the risk and the client buys. (High risk items include B2B contract services, and expensive purchase items like a new car) What assurances does the prospect have about the products performance? What guarantee does he have?
- ➔ Is it enough value? – Is it worth the money and time to get and use your product for the perceived benefit to be gained? (In business, what will be the ROI? For a consumer product, is the benefit of the product worth the monetary and/or time costs of getting the product?)

If your copywriter can give your target audience solid answers to those 3 categories of question, doesn't it stand to reason that you stand a good chance of maximising your sales volumes? Of course.

## Summary

Copywriting, just like Marketing in general, is both art and science. Marketing must be a seduction, not an assault. Your prospect must be charmed by emotionally gripping clarity of the exact benefits your product will deliver, with the irrefutable reasons why they should choose you rather than any of your direct competition or substitute products. He wants a promise of benefit. And assurance of satisfaction.

In summary, effective sales copy must...

- ➔ Engage the reader.
- ➔ Fully demonstrate the gain offered by the product.
- ➔ Handle potential objections.
- ➔ Deliver social proof in the form of credentials and testimonials.
- ➔ Pinpoint the unique selling proposition.
- ➔ Make the product benefits incredibly compelling -- yet totally believable.
- ➔ Match with the prospects beliefs, frustrations, and desires.
- ➔ Satisfies your prospects skepticism (by being transparent, honest, personal, and logical).
- ➔ Remove the risk (with quality assurances and guarantees).
- ➔ Build anticipation and excitement of using the product.
- ➔ And compel them to take immediate action.

# INCUBATE AND REFINE

Your copywriter will now want to set aside the initial draft of the copy, to let it incubate for a while and then come back to it with fresh eyes.

Then he will begin to carefully read through the copy he has written for you, out loud to himself, and see how it strikes him... where he trips up by difficult language or unclear explanations... where it is emotionally flat, or feels contrived.

We know that the modern consumer is highly sophisticated, as is today's marketplace, and always pressed for time. **So how long should your copy be?**

An old copywriting joke reveals the answer:

`"Copy should be like a ladies skirt. Long enough to cover the essentials, but short enough to keep things interesting".`

When the copywriter lets you see the work-in-progress copy, you can provide valuable feedback by focusing on 3 issues throughout the copy.

- ➔ Bullshit detection (where might it lack credibility with the target audience)
- ➔ Boredom detection (where might it lack interest for our intended audience)
- ➔ Confusion detection (where is the intended meaning of any passage not as clear as it could be)

# TEST AND OPTIMISE

What is the best way to gain increasing insight into the most profitable customers for your business, become increasingly confident that you have fully identified the core complex and uncovered the buying process in sufficient details that will lead to the most amount of sale in your market?

Listen to the wise words of Chairman and Founder of ad agency Ogilvy & Mather:

`"The key to success (maximum sales per dollar) lies in perpetual testing of all the variables" - David Ogilvy`

Copywriting legend John Caples gave a three step approach to testing:

- ➔ Accept nothing as true about what works best in advertising until it has been objectively tested.
- ➔ Build upon everything you learn from testing to create an ever stronger system that you return to with each new project.
- ➔ Test every ad as an ongoing test of what has been learned before.

And legendary copywriter Gene Schwartz really nails the importance of ongoing testing (even for the experienced marketer and copywriter) when he says:

"I've been doing copy now for 35 years. I've sold millions and millions and millions of things. What does my experience allow me to say about the power of an ad? ... Absolutely nothing! You must remember that. You don't know anything about how an ad is going to pull. The only way you can tell is to get a test cell... I don't believe in focus groups or anything else. Only the test can decide." - Gene Schwartz

Along with your copywriter, pursue an optimisation process until you reach diminishing returns compared to other available market opportunities. Apply learnings to future copywriting projects and you will magically discover insight for new market opportunities and product innovation.

## CONCLUSION

This paper is a work in progress, but I hope it has given you a real sense of the journey that a copywriter pursues, so that you can support and guide his process, and find a suitable writer for your projects.

Remember, the links between business strategy, marketing optimisation, and copy... are very important for maximising revenue. It pays to do due diligence on defining your market and letting your copywriter develop a carefully crafted collection of direct response adverts. This can be utilised across channels, from print ads to email marketing to website conversion pages, and more.

Happy marketing.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gavriel Shaw has experience in corporate London as a professional marketer and direct response copywriter. Sometimes working on permanent contracts, sometimes freelancing, sometimes traveling parts of the world. Find out more at [www.gavrielshaw.com/about-me/](http://www.gavrielshaw.com/about-me/). Gavriel may be available for hire as a marketing copywriter via his copywriting services page at [www.gavrielshaw.com/hire/](http://www.gavrielshaw.com/hire/)

# REFERENCES

Books recommended to those that want to understand the direct response copywriters process in depth:

## Copywriting

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- ➔ Breakthrough Advertising, Gene Schwartz (See notes at [www.gavrielshaw.com/post/149/](http://www.gavrielshaw.com/post/149/) and his explanation of 5 stages of market sophistication at [www.gavrielshaw.com/post/152/](http://www.gavrielshaw.com/post/152/))
- ➔ Tested Advertising Methods, John Caples
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- ➔ The Adweek Copywriting Handbook, Joseph Sugarman
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- ➔ Successful Direct Marketing Methods, Bob Stone
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