

INTRODUCTION

I don't care how many books you've read or letters you've written. I'm willing to bet that you're one of the 99% of people who don't really begin to understand what makes true million-dollar copy.

Even if you've written letters that have sold \$1,000,000 worth of product.

If you think about what you're about to read and hear, and test it in the real world, you can quickly become one of the 1% who does "get it." But you'll have to do a fair bit of work. And a whole lot of thinking.

If you are willing to do the work and the thinking, I believe I can show you how to make your sales copy produce far more effectively, in a lot less time than it would have taken you otherwise.

Before we get started, take a minute and list three to five specific improvements you'd like to make from the copy on your site. Not just sales, but any action you want your visitors to take.

Making that list is your first day's homework.

As you read through this course, keep these things in mind. Consider how you can apply what you read to improve your results by focusing your copy using these ideas.

In the next section I'll explain what "Million Dollar Copy" is, and why it's so important to your long-term success. Before we get to that, though, I want to emphasize something right up front:

This is NOT a manual on writing sales letters. There are hundreds of them out there. The world doesn't need another course on basic copywriting.

This is a collection of ideas, techniques and concepts that form a mindset that leads to what I call "Million Dollar Copywriting."

Some of what you'll read here is basic stuff. Unfortunately, much of it isn't talked about in many of the courses that already exist. If you're new to writing sales copy, it's stuff that you'll find useful as you learn.

Some of it is ... well, not so much "advanced" as undiscussed. Portions of it may seem a bit theoretical. Others will strike some people as wrong and, quite possibly, offensive.

Those are the parts you should give the closest attention.

As you go through this report, you'll probably notice that there are areas that would be clearer with examples. The lack of examples isn't because I couldn't think of any – I've used every technique in this book in multiple sales letters. Examples are easy. Too easy.

The problem I've run into, and I've run into it headlong on many occasions, is that a majority of people will read an example and try to use it exactly as they see it. That almost never works. When it fails, the person will often decide that the problem is with the technique or the idea, rather than how they used it.

When that happens, they almost never try that technique or idea again.

That is what we in the trade call a Bad Thing.

I had a choice: Give some examples and let the folks who want push-button solutions fall on their faces while making it easier for the folks who are willing to think for themselves, or leave out the examples.

But is that really the choice? The people who are willing to make the effort will read some letters and think about what they've learned here and do just fine either way. It's not rocket science, after all.

The real problem is that misusing some of the techniques and ideas in the later parts of this report can be downright dangerous. If people don't make the effort to understand those parts of it, they're more likely to miss the mark completely than to hit it the wrong way.

That made the decision for me.

A final thought before we get going: If you're tempted to dismiss the concept of "Million Dollar Copywriting" as a bunch of exaggerated hooey, I don't blame you. It can seem like that.

One of the examples I'll show you in a later section demonstrates the power of this concept rather dramatically. In it, you'll see how I took a process that was brilliant in concept but lacking in results and changed one small but critical thing: The close.

100 words of simple copy turned that project from an expensive bandwidth hog into a machine that has already generated a *targeted* mailing list of over 220,000 subscribers - and it's still growing.

That's the power of "Million Dollar Copy." Let's get started.

WHAT IS "MILLION DOLLAR COPY?"

First, it isn't necessarily copy that sells a million dollars worth of product. The factors that go into turning that kind of volume include a lot more than the copy itself. Any copywriter who tells you otherwise should be avoided.

In fact, it's quite possible to sell a million dollars worth of product with less-than-perfect, even mediocre, copy - if you get enough of those other factors right. It's just a lot harder.

Don't make things harder on yourself than you need to.

The first thing that differentiates Million Dollar Copy from ordinary copy is that it converts a higher than usual percentage of targeted prospects to buyers.

After that, it's not quite so obvious.

The main factors that separate "Million Dollar Copy" from everything else are, in no particular order:

- ❑ The copy creates appropriate expectations in the reader. It highlights every benefit, while never exaggerating or misleading - even by omission. It also never leaves the reader feeling manipulated, whether they order or not.
- ❑ It increases the likelihood that the prospect will not only use the product, but use it correctly and get the results they're looking for.
- ❑ It doesn't call attention to itself. It communicates with the prospect without them thinking about anything but the product and what it will do for them.
- ❑ It's more powerful every time you read it.
- ❑ Instead of just trying to provoke emotional reactions, it creates an experience that engages real prospects. When this is done correctly, the reader feels as though they're interacting with the copy and the benefits of the product while they're still reading your letter.
- ❑ It doesn't start with the letter or end with the order. It begins with the way the prospect talks internally, and sets the stage for any communication that follows the purchase.

It's part of the customer's experience with your product and your company.

True "Million Dollar Copy" focuses on building your business, rather than just making the current sale. It sets a positive tone by which your firm is judged, reduces refunds, encourages future sales, and helps to create customers who feel more like "partners in the product" than just "buyers."

Put in its shortest form:

"Million Dollar Copy" starts in exactly the same place as the prospect, and guides them through a positive experience that makes your product a necessity in their mind.

Think about that. Go back and look at your existing copy and see how much of it can be changed to make it fit this model better.

If you're not sure, have someone else read it and tell you how they feel as they go through the copy.

Then consider how that fits with what you've just read.

Before we get too deep into the actual copywriting aspect of things, there are some mistakes about the process that you may have learned. Some of these mistakes can be dangerous to your income.

The next section will clear up some of these myths, and give you a better idea of what it really takes to become a great copywriter.

You're in for some surprises...

COPYWRITING MYTHS YOU MUST DISCARD

Before we get into what you need to do to write great copy, let's get started by killing off some myths that you very likely have bought into. Many of them are spread by copywriters. Most copywriters even believe them.

They're what I call "Myths of Perspective."

Myth #1: The term "Copywriter" is an accurate description.

It is not. We'll use it for convenience, but it's just that... a convenient word. Shorthand for the real thing. The fact is:

Good print salespeople don't just "write copy." They certainly don't try to manipulate a prospect's desires using sneaky tricks and false promises.

They introduce the prospect's desires to the supplier's solutions. They guide the conversation far enough to get the prospect to accept that first date - the first order.

They create and manage expectations.

A good copywriter is a matchmaker.

If you learn to think in that mindset, your odds of creating effective copy increase dramatically.

Myth #2: Only "Masters" can produce million-dollar copy.

This belief is probably the single biggest obstacle to you producing the kind of copy that can make you rich.

Good technical skills and an understanding of advanced techniques can certainly improve your conversion rate, but they are far from the most important element of producing effective, million-dollar copy. And anyone who's produced that kind of copy knows it.

Nearly anyone can produce million-dollar copy, if they're willing to learn a few things that really are critical to the process.

Yes, even you.

Myth #3: Long copy is the best.

Really. How many times have you said, "I hate long copy. I can't stand to read it. Just give me the facts, and let me make my decision."

But how many magazines, newspaper articles and reports have you read this month?

Read any good books lately? THAT is long copy. Most businesspeople will read more in the course of their daily activities than any sales letter they'll ever encounter.

Really - haven't you read sales letters that were interesting, full of details that were important to you, and often even entertaining?

Of course.

The ones that you remember as being long are just those that were poorly written, didn't talk to your own personal interests, or were just not relevant or believable.

If it's 5 pages of irrelevant stuff, it seems long. If it's thirty pages of solutions to problems that are important to you, it goes by like a great short story. When you're finished, you want more.

That's why you order. That's the difference.

Understand this clearly:

**There is no such thing as long copy.
There is only copy that's long enough.**

Myth #4: Verbal skills are the most critical part of effective copy.

More nonsense.

Yes, good verbal skills are useful in turning a good letter into a better one. They are a distant second to the skill that is truly the most critical in producing great copy:

Listening.

Listening to your prospects. Hearing what they really want from you. Understanding what need, want or desire they're hoping to satisfy with your product. That is the one great skill that lies at the heart of compelling, million-dollar copy.

That leaves one more myth. An important one...

Myth #5: The customer is always right.

The client is NOT always right. If they were, they wouldn't need you.

The customer is NOT always right. If they were, they wouldn't need your product.

Yes, you've run into situations where the customer wants something that you believe isn't what they really need. It happens to anyone that's producing any product, especially information products.

Their DESIRE is right. Never forget that. They simply lack understanding of the benefits that you can offer because of their less-extensive experience. But that difference in experience is why you're valuable to them in the first place, no?

Don't argue with them, and don't try to educate them all at once. It's like trying to teach a pig to sing. It'll only frustrate you and annoy the pig.

Your prospects are a whole lot smarter than pigs. That doesn't mean they'll welcome being "educated" about how wrong they are. It means they'll be a whole lot more annoyed than the pig...

The only time you should outright refuse to provide what the client truly desires is if it would be unethical, uneconomical or harmful for you to do so.

Here's a simple formula that will solve your frustration and let you provide the maximum benefit that you want to provide:

Sell them what they want.
Give them what you sold them.
Sneak in what they need.

Everyone gets more of what they want, need and desire. That's a real win-win.

If you really grasp these ideas, and keep them in mind as you practice writing your sales materials, you'll find that you're way ahead of the curve.

If you look carefully, you'll notice that none of them are what people usually think of when they think of "copywriting." They're not the skills or attitudes that seem typical of the trade.

They're much more powerful. They're **human** skills. And, unless you've tapped markets I've never been able to reach, that's who you're selling to: Humans.

Remember that.

Yes, there are specific skills you can learn that can help you to create powerful copy more quickly. I'll tell you about some books and courses you can use for that in a later section.

There are a few other things you need to learn before you get started on those.

The next section will tell you the one thing you absolutely **must** know in order to make a lot of money from your efforts at creating sales copy.

Read on, MacDuff...

THE FIRST KEY TO MILLION-DOLLAR COPY

This one is deceptively simple:

Offer people solutions they already want to problems they already have.

If you've done any market research, you already know what your prospect wants.

You can drive people to a survey site and find out what their most common and powerful desires are.

If you've got a list and want to work within the same market consistently, you can probably get the information even more quickly: Send them an email and ASK!

If you don't have a list of subscribers, there's a simpler system yet. It takes a bit more time and patience, but it works. Surf the web-based discussion boards and look for the questions and topics discussed most. Take lots of notes.

Alex Mandossian's "ASK Campaign" is a great way to get the information you need to develop products in this fashion. It has a number of advantages, the biggest being that it can be very fast.

This is a very handy tool. For more details on it, go to:

<http://www.askdatabase.com/cmd.asp?AF=278484>

Here's a key point to making the most of your feedback, however you get it... Don't just listen for the most common responses. **Listen for the responses that sound the most desperate!**

The most common are your bread and butter benefits. They'll sell copies of your products for you in enough quantities to make them profitable.

The most desperate ones, the ones that talk about real pain, are the ones that will turn a profitable promotion into a monster. Those are the ones that can kick your conversion rates up by multiples instead of fractions.

Those are your million-dollar selling points.

They're also the things you should focus on for your higher-priced back-end products and services.

I've been called all sorts of unpleasant names, including ghoul, predatory creep and leech for telling people to focus on the pain. That's fine with me. The people slinging those names are just missing the point:

**People WANT to get rid of pain,
and they'll pay for the relief.**

Who does the world a greater service: The guy who provides an evening's entertainment or satisfies an idle curiosity, or the person who helps people feel good and achieve the things that are important to them?

Remember: You're not creating the pain. You're removing it.

The more pain you remove, the more money you'll make. And the happier your customers will be for having met you.

Your homework today is to sit down and think of all the things that create pain for your customers and how your product or service removes that pain.

Make a list of every point that occurs to you, and keep that. You'll need it later.

Next, we get into the fun parts of creating killer sales copy. The best way to virtually guarantee your success in selling, and a little-known trick for creating products that have unusually high chances of being wildly successful.

Yes, all that in one section. ;)

THE SECOND KEY TO MILLION-DOLLAR COPY

This is where it gets fun.

You've heard the saying, "Build a better mousetrap, and the world will beat a path to your door." You almost certainly know that is a myth.

The second key is much more direct:

Build a Better Offer!

Then beat a path to the doors of people who already want it.

If you make the right offer to the right prospect at the right time, you can have the worst copy in the world and still make a fortune.

The way to do this is as simple as the rest of this system, and just as non-intuitive.

--> Write the sales letter before you create the product. <--

Start by listing every single desire your research has uncovered. Promise your prospect specific ways to fix those problems or satisfy those wants and desires.

If you're selling a low-ticket item to a consumer market, you can do this in a matter of a few hours. Remember: You have to be believable. Don't write a 40-page letter promising the world to sell a \$30 product.

That's an impulse purchase. You don't need to create a burning desire. Just an impulse strong enough for them to act on.

On the other hand... If you're looking to create a higher-ticket item, ***get outrageous***.

Seriously. Get truly outrageous. If you think there's a remote chance you can deliver, include it. Don't worry at this point about how, and don't worry that you're doing anything deceptive. (You're not.) Just do it.

Make several edits, adding as much as you can at every point.

(For some ideas on this, watch for the section creatively entitled: "Thud!")

Get excited about it. That will show through in your copy, and it will get your creative juices flowing. You will be amazed at how much better your efforts will turn out if you try this.

Now comes the interesting part. There's a very good chance that you could deliver on every promise you've made in that letter. List them all, and decide how you're going to fulfill them.

Match the method to the market. Do they prefer audio? In what format? Are they likely to be able to use spreadsheets? Have they asked for worksheets or examples or templates?

Don't just give them what they want. Give it to them the way they want it.

They'll read your letter and have just exactly the response you want: "Yes! This is what I've been looking for!"

Even if they had never thought about it before.

Here's a little-known secret to organizing an offer for maximum results: The desperate needs should determine your central product. The rest should be offered as separate bonuses.

You should also keep ***the central product*** to one medium. Audio, text, software... whatever. Everything else should be a bonus.

A major exception is audio training programs that include printed worksheets. The worksheets are essential to the main product and can be used at the same time as the audio, so they should be described as part of the central product.

The psychology behind this is pretty straightforward. If there's too much stuff addressed in the main product, it looks unorganized or generic. If things are addressed separately, the perceived value and credibility is raised substantially.

Yeah. This stuff does make a difference.

Every item in the offer should address a clear and identifiable need that your prospects have said they want help with. Every one. If you just threw it in because it sounds cool, but it fails that test, get rid of it. Or offer it as an upsell or follow-up offer.

Or include it as an unadvertised bonus.

Oh yeah... The stuff you promised in the letter and can't deliver on? That's easy.

Delete it.

Never make a promise that you can't deliver on. That's something every honest businessperson knows. What most of them don't realize is that they can deliver a lot more than they are.

And, often, more than they know.

Creating the sales copy first is a wonderful trick for removing the limitations and letting your imagination show you what you've been missing. You'll come up with options and features and improvements that you might never think of otherwise.

You'll promise things in your "vision copy" that might later seem impossible. Look at those things before you delete them, and see if there isn't a way to make it happen that isn't as obvious as what you came up with at first.

This really is the master key to copy that sells in a truly big way. Make a powerful offer to people who already want it.

In some ways, the rest is just a matter of getting out of your own way and letting the prospect make the obvious decision.

The next section will give you some concrete ideas on ways to increase the perceived (and real) value of your products. It's a reprint of an article that originally appeared in my newsletter, TalkBiz News, under the imaginative title, "Thud!"

This lesson is a reprint of part of the March 4, 2003 issue of my newsletter, TalkBiz News. It's a little long, but I think you'll find it worthwhile.

As you read it, consider how you can use the suggestions to improve your offer.

Remember: The offer is the key!

And now, on with the show...

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"THUD!"

alternatively titled:

**Adding Real and Perceived Value to
Boost Profits and Make Happier Customers**

A while back, I read a post on the Warrior board in which someone asked "How long should an e-book be?" One person suggested that 240 pages was the minimum, and anything less would leave him feeling ripped off.

My first response was:

"When did we start valuing information by the pound?!"

Duh. What was I thinking? We already do.

It's called the "Thud Factor."

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In the info-product world, the phrase refers to the noise the box makes when you drop it. If people spend a lot of money on a hard copy information product, they want mass to justify the cost in their mind.

This works differently for various types of products, but it all boils down to one critical part of the buying process: Perceived value.

When you buy an information product, you generally buy on the basis of the results promised. Unfortunately, many people have a comparison-mode that kicks in when they get the package that requires that they judge information as though it was all of the same value - by volume.

For instance, a person might judge a 100-page book that will solve a serious health or business problem for them by the same criteria they'd use when looking at a book on Cajun cooking. That's not a valid comparison of the value of each product, but it's what happens. It's what they're used to.

People get into perceptual ruts.

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This can cause some serious problems, ranging from high returns and customer service issues to (more importantly) failure to use the information. This means the customer misses out on the true value of the work.

There are a number of solutions to this. The easiest and most common is to add to the package, mixing the media so that you don't get snared by the problem of misperceived familiarity.

In other words: Break the pattern.

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Warning: Don't mistake volume for value.

The most common example of this online is the site that offers "\$1600 worth of ebooks as a free bonus for signing up for our newsletter!"

Puh-LEEZ, people!

If you're not making the package more valuable for your customer *IN A WAY THAT'S RELEVANT TO YOUR MAIN OFFER*, you're wasting your time.

And theirs.

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In order to add to the "Thud Factor" in a way that your customers will respond to and appreciate, you must actually make the product more valuable as well as increasing the perceived value. A few possibilities to consider:

Add media: People learn better if more of their senses are engaged in the process. If your product is primarily audio in format, add transcriptions, with worksheets to make the information easier to grasp and apply.

A 3-minute narrated video demonstration of some things can take the place of 20 pages of text instructions. The text can, and should, focus on the principles behind the process: why it works the way it does, how to make it most effective, etc.

Or consider adding audio tutorials. Many people grasp information more readily when they listen to it.

If you're sending hard copies, deliver the audio in standard CD format, rather than packaging it as MP3s to save money and space. Standard audio CDs are more convenient, thus more likely to be used, and they add to the perceived value at the same time.

Add supplements: Additional "advanced" or "extra" information that goes beyond the specific product description make very useful bonuses. As a word of caution, I'd avoid including them in the same binding as other material. They have to LOOK extra or they won't be seen as BEING extra.

Deliver it as a course (or deliver a course in addition to the main work): This is simple enough. Sequential material with worksheets makes it more likely that the customer will actually use the information. It also reframes the content as educational, and intended for progressive usage.

Add personal service: Consulting, critiques, etc. Anything that involves you directly interacting with the customer is clearly a substantial value.

Look at your product or service, and see what you can come up with. There's a very strong chance that you can add significantly to both the perceived and the actual value of your offering without adding substantially to your costs.

That means you make more money AND the customer gets more real value. Everyone wins. We like that.

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Note that relevance is a key factor in all of this. One of the fastest ways to kill the psychological "Thud" your product carries is to add a lot of material that doesn't relate to what the customer is ordering.

One common mistake is to constantly interject political, religious, philosophical or social beliefs throughout the content - IF they're not directly relevant to the customer's success with the product.

I like to know about the creators of the various products I buy. Most of us do. But that sort of thing is best kept to the introduction or "About the Author" sections of a product. Or put on a separate page on your site. Or put in your newsletter in a section that's separate from the main content. (Unless, of course, your opinions are the main content, which is often the case.)

Anywhere but in the middle of "how-to" instructions.

In short, if you're a liberal Calvinist, don't beat people over the head with tuna sandwiches when they paid to learn how to teach their cows to play billiards!

(Name those cartoonists...)

Side note: Don't include obscure references like the one above, except for example or humor purposes. ;)

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It's often a good idea to give the customer choices. You don't want to make them confusing, so you need to balance this carefully.

This is quite common online. You'll often see a package offered in Bronze, Silver and Gold options, with additional value at each level, but the same fundamental content at the root of each.

The various options let each person choose the parts that are most important to them. This generally increases sales and opens further options for future products. Let people acquaint themselves with your material's quality at their own pace.

Letting people become comfortable is a major addition to perceived (and actual) value.

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Let's look at some specific examples of increasing the "Thud Factor" for different types of products.

One powerful way to do this with pure digital products is to offer multiple files. A lot of people misunderstand the concept and just give away bucketloads of ebooks, without concern for their relevance to the offer, or even their value to the reader.

An offer with a solid "Virtual Thud" will contain useful and original information combined with one or more of the ideas on the following page:

The "THUD!" Checklist

1. Relevant and (at least somewhat) exclusive software.
2. Proprietary data.
3. Bundled services that relate to the product.
4. Expanded info on related techniques.
5. Audio files to add depth to the process of learning.
6. Video, for clarity in learning.
7. Worksheets and checklists
8. Phone or email consultation.
9. Exclusive follow-up info or free subscriptions.
10. Case studies. (Separate, for illustration purposes.)
11. Sample text, scripts, ads, and anything else that will help the customer to better use the product.
12. Free or discounted updates.
13. Spreadsheets.
14. Easily imported "Bookmarks" or "Favorites" collections.
15. Access to membership areas.
16. Contact lists for vendors, potential partners, or other relevant companies or individuals.
17. Separate package of reviews of related products.
18. "Quick start" guide.
19. Interactive tutorials or self-assessments.
20. Hard copy material mailed separately.

Note that every one of these is intended to add VALUE, not just bulk.

REMEMBER: The real goal is to get the customer from purchase to results as quickly as possible.

Re-read that. It's important.

Really. I'll wait.

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When looking to increase the value of a hard copy product (both real and perceived), all of the above are useful. Some additional things to keep in mind are:

- ❑ Separately mentioned print material should be under separate covers. Make sure your customers have no problem finding each piece individually.
- ❑ As of this writing, CDs have become more popular than cassettes for audio presentations. Bonus CDs should be in separate packaging.
- ❑ Stick to the main theme of the product.
- ❑ For business-to-business or other "How-To" material, make the packaging appropriate to working documents, rather than being too slick. You want people to write in the margins.
- ❑ Save the slick, "professional" look for lower cost consumer goods.

Yes, that last is counter-intuitive. It also works.

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For affiliates, one brilliant strategy (first used by Phil Wiley) is to offer your own bonuses to people who buy using your affiliate link and send you the receipt.

In this way, you add sales and add to your own customer list.

Leave it to Phil, eh?

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So - Does this actually work?

How about an example or two?

#1: I recently went to Tampa for a brainstorming session that included some extremely sharp folks. One of them asked "How would you take this \$39 product and turn it into a package that's actually worth \$1500 in real value?"

In a half hour, using just these strategies, we did it.

He suggested that he'd probably sell the resulting product for around \$400.

The increased cost of delivery is about \$10. He'll get 10 times the price, and the customer will get 40 times the value.

Not a bad deal for anyone.

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#2: I attended Jay Abraham's (<http://www.abraham.com>) "Advanced PEQ" conference last year. When I got the home study package (which sells separately for \$5000), I was surprised at the sheer size of the box.

Included were the entire contents of the seminar in cassette, CD and video formats (along with the promised bonus materials.)

This may seem like just a way to "pump up the volume," but it's actually what most of Jay's clients wanted.

The program is designed to be used by anything from small companies and professional practices to large organizations. Many of the attendees wanted ways to incorporate the material in their in-house training programs, and the different formats accommodated that need perfectly.

Rather than explain the information themselves, with the inevitable omissions and lack of clarity from second-hand instruction, they can use the multiple formats to make sure it's all clear and accurate.

That's adding value - perceived AND real.

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#3: Jimmy Brown (<http://www.123webmarketing.com>) has a much more straight-forward way of adding to the "THUD!" factor. He offers many of his products with reprint rights. This allows you to sell them and keep the resulting income.

It doesn't get a whole lot simpler than that folks.

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Look over the checklist above. How many of those ways can you use in your business to add value to your product or service?

By the way, don't make the mistake of thinking this is just for digital information producers. Any business can use these ideas to add profits, increase value for your customers, and increase your customer loyalty.

Take a few minutes right now and see how many of these ideas you can incorporate in your business within the next week.

I think you'll be pleasantly surprised.

Paul

PS: Making an ebook fit a mandatory size expectation is a Very Bad Idea. If you take 240 pages to teach me something that requires 240 pages to teach well, I'm going to be happy.

If you take 240 pages to teach something that could have been done in 50 pages, I will probably never buy from you again.

Time savings can be one of the most powerful additions to perceived value. Sometimes less really is more.

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Yes, that really was from a free electronic newsletter.

Your homework, should you choose to accept it, is to apply at least 3 of these ideas to your current offer. Any business can do this, not just information businesses.

For example, a restaurant might offer printed copies of some of their favorite recipes, a "subscription" card, which would be good for three meals - all prepaid at a discounted flat rate - and access to a private web site or phone number where your best customers can make advance reservations.

A consultant might offer recordings of each session for the client to review, so they get more out of the advice they're given, spreadsheets that they can use to set and adjust targets, and a set of worksheets allowing them to plan out how they're going to employ the ideas they've learned.

Get started. You can stop at three if you like, but do at least those.

THE THIRD KEY TO MILLION-DOLLAR COPY

This step is crucial:

Make sure the offer is presented in the prospect's language!

To do this, run it by a few people in your target market that you know. Listen carefully to their feedback. If they're not drooling to get their hands on it; if they haven't got brush burns on their butts from whipping out their wallets; if they don't say HOLY COW, I WANT THAT NOW!...

Work on it some more.

You need to use the same words the prospects used when they told you what they wanted. You need to hit on the emotions they described, and point out that the solution will do what they want, the way they want it done.

Perry Marshall covers a powerful technique for testing the offer fast: Google AdWords. Or, if you have your own list, send an email to a small subset of that list asking them what they think.

Using these approaches, you can very likely get the feedback you need within a matter of a day or two.

Once you get a consistently enthusiastic response, you're ready for the next step.

Not sure how important it is to be really tuned in to your prospect's desires AND language? Here's an example of the difference it can make. This is "Million Dollar Copy" at its finest. And, surprisingly, its simplest.

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Scott Stratten had developed a Flash movie (<http://www.workyourlife.com/movie.html>) based on a viral email that he'd received several times. Nice stuff, and people loved it. They were telling their friends and driving tons of traffic to the thing.

Problem: It was a great lead-in for his newsletter, but less than 1% of those visitors were subscribing. He was burning up the bandwidth bills and getting almost nothing in return.

It was a perfect match, all the way around. And the people who subscribed loved him and his information. He was stymied as to why so few people followed up and subscribed. It made no sense.

So, he did the smart thing. He went to a discussion board where he knew he could find people who knew what they were doing, and he asked for help.

I took a look at the site. Beautiful. Hallmark quality animation, with a black background and a great message about how we spend our most precious resource: Time.

The page that came up after it was white, thanked them for coming, and tried to sell them stuff, some of which was great and some of which wasn't really related to what they'd just seen.

Ooops. Major disconnects.

For a complete case study of why this worked and what the challenges were, grab the report at: <http://www.talkbiznews.com/ViralStudy.pdf>

I typed up some replacement copy and sent it to Scott, with the suggestion that it be put on a black background in white text.

The copy was:

Sometimes, just sometimes, we all need that reminder.
The reminder that life is too short to waste, and too
precious to leave to routine.

We need a reminder to give more time to our families
and friends and, just as importantly, ourselves.

"Work Your Life" is that reminder. It's a little nudge,
to get you remembering what's important to YOU. It's free,
and it's the kind of thinking you'll find adding joy to
your life.

To start receiving these precious reminders, just twice
a month, enter your email address below and click on the
button that says, "I deserve more!"

He had gotten around 100 subscribers from this page in the previous month.
After making this change, he was soon getting 500 or more subscribers PER DAY.

Suddenly that bandwidth bill didn't look so bad.

He had taken 2+ years to build a list of 4300 subscribers before launching that site. 18 months after this, his current subscriber list is over 220,000 - and still growing.

Scott knew that his market liked the message. They were already passing it around. He tested the format, and found that it worked. But after they viewed it, he offered them what HE wanted, rather than what THEY wanted.

To top it off, the offer was confusing and had too many options. Plus, it was in a different language than was used in the "sample" - the movie.

Ooops.

No second date.

I just changed it so they were getting more of what they wanted. I offered to extend the experience for them. That was all the difference, in exactly 100 words and about three minutes.

That's the power of a consistent language match.

That's million-dollar copy.

I want to point out here that Scott was brilliant in the way he handled the whole process. He looked for something his market already wanted, and went to them for cues.

He took an email that was already circulating widely, and added "Thud" by turning it from a few words on the screen into a truly beautiful video presentation.

His follow-up offer contained a perfect match. His products, his newsletter, even the screensaver of the same video.

There really was only one thing wrong – the close - and, when he realized it was broken, he asked for help. He didn't know what to fix because the break wasn't in an area in which he specialized.

He needed a copywriter.

I'd estimate that any competent copywriter using the traditional approach could have turned Scott's conversion rate up to 5 times what he was previously getting.

The factors that made the difference between that 500% and the 1500% (and more) that he ended up with are all part of the "Million Dollar Copy" mindset.

Go back to the second section and go over those factors, and you'll see how they all fit into that small space of words.

Better yet, go through the experience. Watch the video at <http://www.workyourlife.com/movie.html> and read the copy that follows. Watch how it all fits together as part of a single experience.

When you do, remember that the copy is a tiny part of that process. It doesn't create the demand or the end result. The offer did all of that, and Scott put together a hell of an offer.

The copy simply eases the way for the reader to do what they already want to do. It sewed the offer and the order together, without bumps or jostling.

And literally anyone could have written it.

AN IMPORTANT NOTE

Something to consider while we're on the subject:

"Million Dollar Copy" isn't something that can only be done one way. There is at least one right way to do it for every person writing and for every project.

Copywriting is something of an art and a science both. The art is very much an individual thing. The science has been nicely outlined in many books and courses.

When you're starting out, it's helpful to have a formula that you use to structure your letters. That keeps you focused on the content, while making sure that you include everything you need in an order that makes sense and has some power to it.

The course that I learned the most from in that regard is "Power Copywriting for the Internet," by Bob Serling.

<http://www.power-copywriting-for-the-internet.com/>

The best step-by-step process for writing a sales letter I've ever seen.

Whatever process you use, remember that the only important judge of its effectiveness is the market. You'll hear from a lot of people that you're doing something wrong, no matter how you do it.

Just watch the numbers. Cash never lies.

The next section gets into improving your product, preparing to sell, and ways you can boost your conversion even more.

We'll also look at a simple way to help protect yourself from copycats...

THE FOURTH KEY TO MILLION-DOLLAR COPY

Okay. You've got your sales letter. You've rewritten it to make sure it's in your prospect's language.

NOW you create the product.

By the way... If you already have a product, you may want to go through this process anyway. It can help you to see how you can improve your overall response in ways you might not have considered when you originally designed it.

You might find an idea for an extra bonus that could be the thing that kicks sales up in a big way. Or you might get some good ideas for new and more profitable front- or back-end products and services.

Never stop looking for those million-dollar selling points.

Creating the product is simply a matter of organizing and developing something that fulfills as many of the promises you made in that sales letter as possible, with an emphasis on the things that your prospects told you they wanted most.

If you have the time and money, you'll want to create several versions right away. The basic, or "lead" product, which will be the least expensive, an upsell, and one or more back-end offers. A simple way to do this is to create the entire product you described and take things away to make the lower cost versions.

If you've done the previous steps right, the odds are very good that you've got a winner on your hands. You want to be able to capitalize on that response from the start.

This is one way to prepare for the nearly inevitable knock-offs of your offer. People who steal ideas usually do it for a quick fix, and won't understand this whole process. By having a series of products and offers in place, you establish yourself as a more prepared and professional choice in the market.

Having these offers available will boost your profits, even if no one ever buys them.

Of course, we hope they buy them in massive quantities. ;)

If you don't have the time and money to create the whole sequence up front, get the main product rolled out as soon as possible, and start building the follow-up materials while you're rolling it out. Finance it from sales, if you have to.

Remember, most of your money will come from repeat buyers. Million-dollar campaigns can be made or broken on this concept alone.

Before you start selling it, make sure that it's well liked by a few of the people in your market. The best folks to run it by are some of the ones who helped you out with suggestions. They'll be looking for the value, instead of critiquing it. And they're very likely to give you great testimonials.

Side note: When you get testimonials, ask the senders what specifically they liked most. "Great stuff!" is not a great testimonial.

"I used the suggestion on managing expectations (page 132), and it's saved me about 2 hours a day in customer service hassles. I'm spending one of those building my business even more, and the other playing with my kids, who I'd felt like I was ignoring. This is terrific. Thanks!"

- Jim Davidson, Walton's Beach, AZ

That is a great testimonial.

It's a good idea to run your product by other folks in your industry for critique, but don't get sucked in to believing that they know what your customers want. They can help you find glitches, and suggest ways to improve, but if their suggestions don't echo the concerns of your customers: Politely ignore them.

Remember: Your peers are not usually your market.

One note on the testimonials you get from reviewers: Make sure you mention that they're from people who got pre-release copies. There is a significant difference between testimonials from paying customers and from reviewers.

THE FIFTH KEY TO MILLION-DOLLAR COPY

You're almost ready to roll it out.

Revise the letter to reflect the actual finished product and what it delivers, and then do a test campaign.

Do not test to your list!

Do not try to set up JVs or endorsements yet!

Test using Google AdWords or other pay-per-click or paid traffic methods. Get a feel for the conversion rate, and make any adjustments your prospects might suggest. Consider putting in a pop-up that comes up when they go anywhere but the order page. Ask them why they didn't buy. (Ask less bluntly, but ask.)

Your list, if you have one, is composed of people who are much more likely to buy from you, so you want to make sure they get the best promotion possible.

Once you've got it ready for them, do a phased rollout. A pre-sale announcement, with a compelling story or other "hook" will get people into a buying mood. Curiosity alone can create a lot more traffic to the site, and more of a desire to find out what the deal is.

That always means more sales, assuming your set-up was consistent with the offer.

Use something to really drive people to the site. Curiosity, scarcity, a time-sensitive discount, exclusive bonus or any of the other techniques that increase desire.

Track your conversion rate.

The second phase of the rollout, assuming the first is profitable, is to look for partners to help you promote it. Affiliate programs are the simplest route. Don't play this as a passive game, though. You need to approach potential affiliates in a proactive fashion, and make sure you can tell them what's in it for them.

Conversion rates aren't enough, but they're essential. Tell them the estimated EPC (earnings per click) that they're likely to get, or that other affiliates are getting. EPC is basically the visitor value, from the perspective of the affiliate.

Test other traffic sources as well. Endorsed mailings, pop-ups on niche sites, exit pop-ups on the sales pages of related (or even competing) products, banner networks, combined product ventures, niched discounts to tap existing customer bases. Anything else you can think of that could generate targeted traffic.

When you're preparing your marketing materials for partners, make them as easy to use as possible. Cut and paste pop-up code, banners already completed and ready to go, sample endorsement letters for them to model (NOT copy), etc.

Focus all of your traffic driving materials on the concept of pre-selling. Get the prospect to the page knowing what they're going to find, and interested in the solution your materials offer.

If you just try to drive a lot of untargeted traffic, you will most likely find that it costs you a bunch of money, since most of these traffic sources provide more than one option for the visitor.

If your ad is cute but unclear and the other guy's is clear but less appropriate, the serious prospect is going to visit the other advertiser, if anyone at all.

I'll take 1000 serious prospects over 100,000 curiosity seekers any day of the week. Even if the curiosity seekers are in my market. Curiosity seekers are far less likely to buy, and far more likely to ask for refunds if they do order.

Serious people go looking for solutions. They're proactive, which means they'll buy more if they like what you gave them in the first place. And they're many times more likely to buy high-ticket items and consulting services.

Do the math.

Who do you think will get you to your goal the fastest?

THE SIXTH KEY TO MILLION-DOLLAR COPY

Feedback: The breakfast, lunch and dinner of champions.

The most direct form of feedback is already in place: How many buy?

Most people are lucky if they can tell you that, surprisingly. In recent months I've encountered no less than 3 established and savvy businesspeople, who've been selling their products online for from 1-7 years, who could not tell me what their conversion rates were.

They wanted help with copy. That's all well and good, but if your conversion rate isn't the problem, that may not be the best place to look for improvements. You may just need more traffic.

And if'n the traffic yer gettin' ain't targeted, the best copy in the world ain't gonna sell stuff fer ya, ya know what ah mean?

To really know what the weak points are in your process, you need to watch all the important variables. That information comes from two main sources: Testing and visitor comments.

When you test, you want to focus on a small group of variables:

1. Your Offer.
2. Your Copy.
3. Your Traffic sources.

If people aren't staying at your site more than a minute or two, the problem is most likely to be your traffic sources or your opening copy.

If they're staying long enough to read halfway through, it's more likely to be your offer or a speed-bump (deal killer) somewhere in the copy. Another common problem here is the pre-selling (traffic generation materials) not being targeted enough.

If they read the whole way through and aren't buying, it's either your offer or the closing copy.

Test all the variations, using this as an initial guide. To help narrow down the search for the weak points, ask your visitors. And ask your customers what would have made the package even better for them.

Never take a single comment as more than that. The opinion of one person, no matter how perfect a prospect they might seem to be, isn't enough. That's something that is difficult for a lot of people to accept. ***Get over it.***

Until you determine a trend, you don't have a basis for anything but a blind test. If you're going to do blind testing, do it with a separate URL, and drive traffic from the same sources. This way, you can test without putting your entire income stream from that product at risk.

That doesn't mean you should shy away from those kinds of tests. Just that you want to narrow down the focus to the real weak points as quickly as possible. Make sure you go into every test with a clear and realistic understanding of the validity of the data you're depending on.

The more consistent the comments, the more dependable the data will be for a test. Just remember, ALL comments are to be considered probationary until tested. People will often tell you what they think they're supposed to say. They don't always act on what they've said they would.

An excellent program for this and most other kinds of testing is ProAnalyzer.

<http://www.proanalyzer.com/cgi-bin/affiliates/clickthru.cgi/talkbiz>

Recommendations on process from professionals with Clue can be a great place to get ideas for testing. As an example of this, Perry Marshall heard something at a conference recently during a panel discussion of copywriting. He went home and tested it, ***adding a single paragraph of copy*** early in his letter.

His sales doubled.

Yeah. One paragraph meant a 100% increase in sales.

Those are the things that create million-dollar copy.

Test, track, and refine.

Along the way, you're going to find that a lot of things make small differences. A few will make huge differences, like the single paragraph that Perry added, or the 100 words I created for Scott.

Small or large, they all add up. And even tiny looking differences can make for very significant increases to your annual income.

The only way you're going to be able to consistently increase your conversion rate is to test. The more tests you do, the more accurate your future testing will be.

You'll hear a lot of people talk about testing. Don't ignore it. It's the surest way to get the most from your efforts.

In the next section we'll talk about creating your own sales techniques, and show you some examples of how others have gone about it.

After all, you're unique and your product is unique. Why shouldn't your sales approach be?

THE SEVENTH KEY TO MILLION-DOLLAR COPY

Innovate.

Create new approaches.

This one is best explained through an example.

When Mark Joyner decided to shut down his main business, he had some powerful assets he wanted to capitalize on. There were a number of perceived problems with the offer, though:

- ❑ **There were over 2 dozen different software products, 3 e-books, a database and 15 different audio products in the package, each of which could have had its own sales letter. There simply wasn't a way to give people enough info to make a sound decision on any of the products individually.**
- ❑ The audio interviews spanned the entire spectrum of online business activity. Hardly a niche-targetable promotion.
- ❑ **The software covered a wide range of uses and was written in several different languages.**
- ❑ It came with minimal documentation and no technical support.
- ❑ **There was a "no refund" policy, on a \$1000 purchase.**
- ❑ Customers would have to spend additional money on programmers to use most of the software.
- ❑ **The company was going out of business.**

On the plus side, this stuff cost a lot of money to produce. A lot more than \$1000. It represented a significant head start for the person or company with the resources to put it to work.

The biggest trick to the copy was overcoming the sheer volume and variety of the package. No one could really know how a given person would choose to use the code, or what code they would find useful.

The offer included the right to re-purpose the code, modifying it into other products. So, we went with that.

The technique used to get the value across was simple. For each software module or application, I gave a few examples of different ways the visitor could modify it for their own use. By the time they got through a few different applications, they were thinking up their own ideas for how they could adapt the code into new products and services.

We didn't know the benefits of all the aspects of the product, so we allowed the visitors to create those benefits themselves - while they read the letter!

That's powerful. There's an aspect to it that isn't obvious:

If you tell them, it's a statement. An assertion. Nothing more.

If they tell themselves how a thing can be used, it's an accepted FACT.

You can do this by presenting lists of alternatives, or by asking open-ended questions that relate to the feature you're presenting. The key is to do the same thing at least 3 times. If you can, do it seven times or more. By the time they get to the seventh, their imaginations are fully engaged, and they'll figure out all the ways they could want to get more than their money's worth from the offer.

There is really no more honest way to approach a sale than to provide the prospect the necessary data and let them define their own benefits. They know their needs and interests better than you ever will, and they're motivated to find solutions that fit their goals.

Using this approach, we sold 1500 copies (\$1,500,000) in the first 3 1/2 months. Then things stalled.

Meanwhile, Mark was listening to the folks who told him what it would take for them to buy. He also got some folks together on a conference call to discuss ways to complete the 2000 package limit.

On the call, he mentioned that he had come up with a way to handle payment options for the people who had asked for them. (Mind you, the price went up to \$1500 at the same time.)

We had been focusing on the source code up to that point. It was suggested that we re-focus on the audio portion, since so many of the people who wanted to promote it had audiences that were less technically skilled, but serious about marketing online.

The testimonials on the audio segments themselves made it clear that people considered them more than worth the package price, so why not?

There was one small problem with the idea. ***I had absolutely no desire to rewrite the letter***, which several people insisted would be necessary. But how to do it without that?

That was simple.

We drafted a new series of promotional emails that included comments from paying customers about the value of the audios. We then told the readers about

the installment plan, and suggested that they skip the technical stuff and go straight to the section with the audio training materials.

We reframed the entire offer in each email.

The remaining 500 packages (over \$500,000) sold out in about 3 days.

Understand what happened there. By reframing the focus of the promotional copy, we appealed to entirely different markets. The software became the bonuses, and the audio was now the product. **Completely different offer.**

When your campaigns get "stuck in the mud," consider new ways to promote or package your offers. You'll be surprised at what you might come up with. Little things like that can be all the difference.

What aspects of your offer do your prospects suggest improvements for? Is there a way you can give it to them that doesn't cut down your sales or increase your costs?

Can you:

- 1. Tailor packages?**
2. Offer a la carte bonuses?
- 3. Offer installment plans?**
4. Provide personal consulting?
- 5. Offer combination deals, including products from others?**
6. Offer membership features?
- 7. Provide a continuity product?**
8. Offer web-based services?
- 9. Provide custom software?**
10. Offer expert advice from others?

Spend a few minutes thinking about this, and you'll start to see more ways you can quickly increase your product line and price points, as well as providing your customers more and better solutions to their problems.

Look for approaches that aren't obvious. Ken Evoy created the technique of breaking sales letters into smaller pages, with phrases designed to get people to click to the next section. He outlined it in "Make Your Site Sell."

<http://makethat.sitesell.com/>

Tom Kulzer developed the follow-up autoresponder that's used to deliver this course.

<http://lists.aweber.com/>

Mike Stewart pioneered the use of audio testimonials, and has done more to teach marketers how to use audio than anyone else in the business.

<http://www.internetaudioguy.com/>

Armand Morin, Rick Raddatz and Alex Mandossian recognized the potential in Mike's ideas and developed the idea into a simple approach that anyone can use to put audio testimonials on their sales sites.

<http://www.audiogenerator.com/>

Allen Says has developed the process of "selling through adrenaline" to a fine art. His sales pieces don't look like sales pieces, but they pull like almost nothing else.

<http://www.paulstoolbox.com/posts/>

These guys are all very successful. They're all innovators. They took ideas that were different and tried them out. Sure, some failed. But the ones that succeeded, like those above, have made the effort of testing and innovation extremely profitable.

The most important thing they all do is to remember who their customers are and how they look at things. What their expectations and preferences and "languages" are.

Then they adjust their approaches to their prospects' desires.

Satisfying those desires is what benefits are all about. It's also an area where even lifelong salespeople can be easily confused.

The next section will explain the difference between features and benefits. And, unless you've already read the article (it's another reprint from my newsletter), there's a good chance it's very different from what you might think.

FEATURES VS BENEFITS: WHERE'S THE PARTY?

This section is a reprint of an article I wrote for my newsletter a few years back. Like most things that relate to human beings, it seems to be just as apt today as it was back then.

Understanding human nature is the best investment a copywriter can make. They don't upgrade the species all that often...

On with the show.

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Yet Another Blasted Article On The Difference Between Features and Benefits

(alternatively titled)

"Where's the Party?"

The primary function of marketing is simple: To create a situation in which people willingly give you what you want in exchange for what you offer.

You need to do one of two things to make any deal work:

Find the people who have what you want and who already want what you've got, and propose a deal...

...or, find out what those people already want, get it, and give it to them. (This is actually a simpler process, as it doesn't matter what you start out with in this approach, and your risk is much smaller.)

One of the most curious things about marketers is their almost universal failure to grasp the most important aspect of their trade:

They don't understand what people really want.

Sometimes it's because they're wrapped up in the way they present the deal. These are the folks that win Clio Awards for their cleverness and "creativity," and find themselves clientless shortly thereafter. (Because their clients either went elsewhere or went broke.)

Sometimes it's because they try to fit the market to the product, which is something like resizing your feet to fit your boots.

Sometimes it's because they separate branding from response, which should be punishable by being barbecued over old issues of the Wall Street Journal.

Most often it's because they fail to recognize - and emphasize - the difference between features, products, and benefits.

This is a Very Bad Thing®.

....

A long time ago, in a lifetime far, far away, I was employed by a "Corporation." (To you creative types, this is something like the Empire in Star Wars, only less benevolent.)

They wanted me to teach their people to sell a line of nutritional products. Vitamins and the like. Great products, but not real "sexy" stuff.

You can imagine the training process, eh?

They all wanted to do the same thing: List ingredients. The more, the merrier.

"We gotcher vitamin A, yer vitamin B, and yer vitamins X, Y and Z. Absorption rate's over 90%. Cold processed, just like yer faveright beer!"

"Ummm... No," says I, in my most professorial voice. "That ain't how you sell vitamins."

"Huh?"

"Huh?" seemed like a wall in their minds. Even the fitness fanatics couldn't get past the Ingredient Approach to selling vitamins.

We explained that the ingredients were of no interest to the customer, except as far as they produced a benefit the customer was looking for. (Benefit being defined as "Whatever brings the customer closer to the state in which they'd like to live." Well, that's the definition we used back then, anyway.)

The customer, we pointed out, was similarly uninterested in the product. Little tasteless pills that they had to remember to take every day? What a nuisance! That's too much like taking medicine.

They didn't want the features (the ingredients), and they didn't really even want the product itself. So why do people buy vitamins?

Vitamin C sells big because people know it helps them feel better when they've got a cold. That's easy. Removing pain that people understand is a simple sale.

Anti-oxidants help people minimize wear and tear on their bodies, by cleaning up poisons. Sort of nebulous, until you tell them the unpleasant things those poisons can cause.

B vitamins help reduce the effects of stress. People who are interested in their health "got it" right away.

The salespeople didn't.

We'd explain to them that what people get from vitamins is the key. More energy to enjoy the things they do. Less stress. Reduced risk of certain illnesses. Better sleep. Stuff that makes a difference.

With vitamins, as with any product, the key is simple:

They don't care what's in it until they know what's in it for them.

Some of them learned. The rest needed a more "concrete" example.

But how do you make the point? If your salespeople (or you) are focusing on the features of your product, how do you get them to switch their attention to benefits?

....

Try something like this.

One day, put a bag of groceries on a desk somewhere in the office. Include a 5 pound sack of flour, a gallon of milk, a dozen eggs, a pound of sugar, a stick of butter, and miscellaneous flavorings. Generic stuff.

Tell them you grabbed someone else's groceries by mistake, and ask each of them individually if they want to buy them from you. ***At a markup, of course.***

Hey, the store makes a profit, why shouldn't you?

They'll look at you like you have two heads. At the end of the day you'll still have those groceries.

A couple of days later, have a birthday party for one of your staff. If it isn't anyone's birthday, get someone to play along. (This works best if you time it for a birthday, though.)

Play music. Have someone bring out a cake, complete with candles and balloons, and sing "Happy Birthday" to the victi... err... lucky celebrant. Do it up right.

The next day, get everyone together and ask if they enjoyed the party. (Except the Grinches. Never ask a Grinch about a party.)

When they say yes, ask them, "Then why didn't anyone buy those groceries from me?"

The confusion will be a tangible thing. Let it simmer for a moment.

"Those groceries are the ingredients that go into a cake. The 'features' if you will."

"You know, if I had gone in to buy that cake and been offered the flour, butter, eggs and all that went into it, I wouldn't have bought them either. I paid for a cake, not a sack of groceries."

"I paid for a cake, but that's not what I bought."

"What I bought was a party."

"THAT is the difference between features and benefits."

----=(*)=----

Think about this. That's your homework for today. Just spend some time and figure out what the real benefit is that your prospect is looking for from you.

In the example above, the cake wasn't the list of ingredients. And it was just one ingredient in the recipe needed to get the real benefit: The party.

In the next section, you'll learn about something even more powerful, but you'll need to understand this to get the ultimate benefit from that lesson.

That's the "more powerful" thing you'll learn about next.

Ultimate benefits.

ULTIMATE BENEFITS

This is possibly the most important lesson you'll ever get in writing million dollar copy. If it's not, I'm betting it's at least near the top.

Last time, we talked about the difference between benefits and features. I'd like to clear that up even further. It seems that we need an even more distinct line, something that you can use without fail to make the distinction. And this one does the trick:

If you can touch it, it's a feature.

Simple enough. But do you really understand how it's applied?

True benefits occur in the head and the heart. They're emotional, or they're based in our own self-image.

This is much more important than it sounds. Consider, for example, that better health can be "touched," in the sense that it can be measured. Blood pressure, cellular activity, hormonal levels, etc can all be quantified.

Good health is something that most people consider a benefit. Rather than argue with those people, let's call it a subsidiary benefit. A "something" that's necessary to achieve a more important thing that is a true benefit.

Think of it as an upgrade to their feature set.

When you are selling something, you want to present benefits to your prospect. The more precisely you target the features that are emotionally important to each prospect as an individual, the more sales you'll make.

For the ultimate in sales, you want to offer Ultimate Benefits.

WHAT IS AN "ULTIMATE BENEFIT?"

It's the most important emotional payoff that the prospect hopes to get as a result of using your product or service.

Interestingly, the closer you get to an Ultimate Benefit, the simpler the desire will seem. The key is to understand how your product or service helps the prospect move toward that state.

Before I explain any further, let me provide an example that might serve make the whole thing easier to understand.

While attending the conference at which the original version of this series was presented, I took a break and went outside to hang out with some of the attendees. (It was January in Orlando and I live in Erie, PA after all.)

We were talking about sales copy and I used the phrase "Ultimate benefit." One of the gentlemen there, a friend of mine, asked what that was. When I asked if he'd like a demonstration, he agreed.

Some people are just gluttons for punishment. ;)

The sequence went something like this:

Me: "What do you want out of your online efforts?"

Him: "I want to make a lot of money."

Me: "For what?"

Him: "To do more and to have more security."

Me: "What does security mean to you? Mind you, I'm talking about the specifics. I don't want to get into a pop-psych thing here."

Him: "Well, it means being able to provide for my family. Making sure my kids have good educations and a decent place to live and good health. It means giving them all stability and a chance to grow and be successful and happy."

Me: "What's in it for you?"

Him: "Huh?"

Me: "What do you get out of providing all of that for your family?"

Him: "I'm not sure what you mean."

Me: "Does it give you the freedom to do something else? Does it give you a sense of accomplishment? Is there a specific feeling or next step that comes after giving your family all of that?"

"What's in it for you?"

Him: "I'll have fulfilled my responsibility to my kids."

Me: "What does that feel like?"

Him: "Like I'm a good father."

That is an Ultimate Benefit. Not being a good father (which is a subsidiary benefit), but **feeling** like you are.

This sort of questioning process is how you find the Ultimate Benefit(s) your prospects are looking for. Notice that every question is a "What" question. They're all open-ended and asking for specific information.

I could easily have gone back to the part where he said "To do more..." and started over from that point in a different direction. There are other Ultimate Benefits to be had from a successful online business.

There was no need. I knew this direction would provide one, and it was just to show him what an Ultimate Benefit is.

Normally, the person you're speaking with won't be so free with that last step. It's usually very personal, and they won't always be close friends who know they can trust you with that kind of ammunition.

Think about it. Telling someone your most important goals and most powerful motivators is giving up a lot of control, isn't it?

Think about that for a while. See if that doesn't help you to understand sales resistance a bit more.

Go ahead and take a few minutes. I'll still be here when you get back.

Most of the time, as I said, they'll stop you before they get to an Ultimate Benefit.

So, what do you do when you "hit the wall," and they stop telling you anything useful? How do you even know?

Well, in this case, it would have happened by my buddy saying "Like I fulfilled my responsibility to my kids," and stopping, instead of going on to "Like I'm a good father."

They'll either start repeating themselves, or insisting that what they've just said is really the goal, or they'll go off in circles. If you press someone at that point, they may even get angry. And they will almost never know why they're being so defensive.

If it gets to one of those points, either drop it or go back to something earlier in the conversation, like the "To do more" comment.

You see, while it's helpful, you don't really need to know their Ultimate Benefit. You just need to know what would make it possible for them.

Anything more than that is just fact-checking.

People spend their lives wishing for or moving toward what they see as the perfect state. That can be very different for each person, but there are certain things each has to accomplish before they can move to the next stage.

Every person knows that, short of a magic event like winning the lottery, they need to advance through those stages in order. Each stage is a significant step along the way, and carries very strong emotional payoffs for reaching it. Each stage, as the individual defines it, is an Ultimate Benefit.

Students of psychology will hear echoes of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs at this point. That's a concept/process/model that's often mentioned by salespeople and copywriters, but they don't do a very good job of explaining how it fits the business of selling.

It doesn't. It's not supposed to.

It's a useful example, and illustrates the concept well, but it's not very practical as a copywriting model. Unless you're selling self-actualization.

So, why the psycho-babble about Maslow, and how do you actually use this to sell stuff?

Maslow's Hierarchy shows a number of needs one must fulfill, in a definite order, to reach a state he calls "self-actualized."

Upon fulfilling each need, you automatically focus on fulfilling the next and moving up to the next again, until you reach the goal of self-actualization.

Real people do actually make jumps like this, although they're not always as neatly defined as Maslow's diagrams.

That's the key. It's why you don't need to know the prospect's Ultimate Benefit in order to appeal to it in your sales copy. All you really need to know is what they have to achieve or get in order to move to that next level they're looking for.

Then you refer to it in your sales copy.

Watch how you do it, though. For instance, it wouldn't make any sense at all to say, "This follow-up autoresponder script will make you a better father!"

That sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? You'll lose them right there.

Biff! Bang! Pow!

(Can you tell I watched a lot of Batman as a kid?)

You can say the same thing in terms that actually make sense. You might point out that the proper use of a good follow-up autoresponder series will help them to make more money in less time.

Then ask, "What would you be able to do with that extra time? Add to your marketing, so you can build you business even more? Spend some of it with your family? Volunteer at a local charity? Play more golf? Buy a fancy car? Maybe just relax and enjoy your Saturdays again?"

Wherever possible, you want to know what your prospects' desired Ultimate Benefits are, so you can tailor your examples to fit their wishes.

If you can make a credible case that your product will help them achieve one or more of their Ultimate Benefits, you've as much as made the sale.

When you refer to these, you want to be specific. Use examples that represent the achievement of the desired state, rather than referring to the state itself.

People don't always associate anything concrete with a state. They **always** associate a state with a specific activity or situation.

For example, picture yourself in this scenario:

You decided to come home early today and, as you pull your car up in front of the house, your gardener mentions how well the orchard is doing this year.

*You already know because you can smell the blossoms
on the fruit trees all the way up here.*

*You pick a rose on the way up the stairs and, as you
open the door, you catch the scent of a fire in the
fireplace and hear the laughter of your kids playing
in the family room down the hall.*

*As you pass the mirror on your way to put your
briefcase in your den, you stop and smile.*

"Yes," you think, "it's a good life."

How did that feel?

Here's something interesting: There are no benefits mentioned in that description until the last two words. "Good life." The rest is nothing but a list of features, each associated with a specific action.

The thing that makes that list powerful is that they're tied together into an easily imagined scenario that evokes a very strong feeling of state.

The name given to that state will be different for different people. For some, it will be wealth. For some, security. For others it might be peace or stability or just "the good life."

Some people will be attracted by the freedom. Some by the possessions and what they represent. Some will welcome the image of happy family life.

Just as with their Ultimate Benefit(s), you don't really need to know the name they'll put to the state. You just need to know what will make it possible for them, and present your offer in a way that credibly provides it.

You want to hint at it very near the top of your sales copy. If possible, in the headline and/or opening paragraph. If you can evoke a strong sense of the desired state at that point, they'll read your entire letter.

Well, until you get boring. So don't.

Weave these associations between your product and the state they're looking for throughout your copy. Keep them focused on what they want from your product or service.

Don't overdo this. If you do, and you manage to avoid looking like a snake oil salesman, you'll overload them and they'll back off because they don't believe you.

Keep it credible. If you can evoke a particularly sharp and clear state that your product can credibly deliver, you've done your job better than the vast majority of professional copywriters.

And your sales will show it.

A little homework for you: Call a few of your prospects or customers and ask them the sorts of questions outlined in the example above. "What" type questions, that require specifics as answers. Find out what Ultimate Benefits they're looking for from you.

Then look over your sales copy and see how well you address them - if at all. Try working up a modified version to better appeal to those desires.

The next section will show you what Ultimate Benefits all have in common. And what one thing is THE Ultimate Benefit. For everyone.

Yes, everyone.

I suspect you're going to be surprised at this one...

THE ULTIMATE BENEFIT

In the last lesson I mentioned a gentleman whose Ultimate Benefit was feeling that he was a good father. That's why he was attending the (rather high-priced) seminar where we talked.

This is further proof of the old saying:

Sex Sells!

"HUH?"

"What," I hear you saying, *"does being a good father have to do with sex? Becoming a father, yes, but being a good one?"*

Doesn't sound like it makes any sense at all, does it?

Once you really understand this, you will never have to worry about your sales copy pulling well again. Learn to use it and you're golden. Except when you forget. (And you will forget, from time to time.)

Fight it, and you're fighting the entire history of the human race.

That said, there are a lot of people who will fight the ideas in this section because they don't want to believe that they're driven this much by things they aren't even aware of. That's the funny part. It's the stuff you're not aware of that has the most control over you.

Please, take this seriously. This section gets a little into psychology, but it has everything to do with writing copy that sells.

Bear with me. You'll either be very glad you did or you'll hate me by the time we're done.

Or both.

Let's start with something we all know already. There are certain things that make people buy products in mass quantities. They're universal.

Here's the list of things people really want - **BADLY** - boiled down to the 10 most fundamental:

Money
Power
Romance

Prestige
Self-esteem
Freedom
Physical fitness
Security
Good health
Luxuries

Everything any person wants fits into one of those categories.

Everything.

But... If you have decent health and basic security (food, water and shelter from hostile elements), everything else is a bonus, right?

Clothing? There have been many cultures in which clothing was unneeded and unused, except for decoration. If you live in the right sort of climate, clothing is optional.

If you felt a twinge at that statement, just wait. You're in for a shock.

What do all of those things? They're all about sex. Not in the usual meaning of the word, but something much larger. The driving force for almost everything anyone does in life:

Reproductive success.

Sex is the most obvious and direct aspect of this, but it's just the start. The most primal urge of every living thing is to reproduce itself successfully. And giving birth or shedding seeds or laying eggs isn't enough to guarantee success.

The most successful organisms give rise to more of themselves and equip and "train" their young to do the same.

Any species that doesn't do this - dies.

In higher mammals, this leads to social institutions that are geared for that one thing: Reproductive success.

This explains the old rule of "women and children first." It explains wars. It explains male "coming of age" rituals. It explains parents nagging their kids for grandchildren. It explains the desire for fast cars and cool clothes and high-tech toys.

There really isn't much in human existence it doesn't explain.

Some of the explanations aren't quite as obvious as others, though.

To understand those, we need to think further about what reproductive success means to a modern day human.

It doesn't have to mean having and raising children. There is enormous power in the entire process, from the start (mating rituals) to the end (training children to be successful.)

Everything in that list of things that people really want points toward some part of the process. The things that appeal most, of course, are those that relate to having more potential choices for mating. Those are at the beginning of the process, and are the most powerful drives.

Think about all those infomercials you see for exercise equipment, and what the "models" look like.

Let's face it: No-one really wants to look like that for themselves. You want to look like that because of what other people think of you. Or what you think they'll think of you.

Why does that matter? Because it impacts your ability to defend yourself and your family, your confidence, your prestige, your romantic life, your health...

In short, your mating opportunities.

It doesn't matter if you have no children and never intend to have them. The drive to expand your mating opportunities is powerful. It may be the single most powerful force in human existence.

It's an established fact that, psychologically speaking, powerful people almost always have very powerful sex drives. This includes political figures, businesspeople, inventors, actors/actresses and successful artists of all kinds. The urge for productive effort and creativity is a facet of the sex drive.

That's where all human advancement comes from.

The desire for reproductive success.

To understand how this all works, think about the cycle.

We'll simplify it a bit for illustration. Just a bit. ;)

It starts with the process of selecting a mate. Then it proceeds to conception and birth, to providing for the young, training them in basic survival skills, and then - teaching them to repeat the process successfully.

The drive is stronger in different parts of the process for different people. While it's usually at its most active and demanding in the area of selecting a mate, some folks find their greatest satisfaction in providing or training or teaching.

People who have turned their efforts to humanitarian pursuits are training and equipping other people's kids to succeed at the reproduction game.

It may sound strange to describe charity work as being part of the drive for reproductive success, but it's true. After all, what is more selfless than making the survival of the species your first priority?

As though you really had a choice.

You don't, you know. It's just a question of how you go about it. If you're not seriously damaged upstairs, that's your principal goal.

Reproductive success.

In fact, some of the most seriously damaged people alive are also the most devoted to the process. They've let it take over their thinking because of something that happened to them, and they've got a different outlook on what reproductive success for the species means.

But they're still driven by it, just like you are.

We're all just about three steps outside the caves. We're all motivated by the same thing.

Reproductive success.

We'll do anything to achieve it. It's in our genes. Literally.

That's why sex sells.

So, again, how do you use this to sell?

Understand what part of the process your product appeals to, and address the concerns and desires of the person who's striving for success at that stage.

For someone looking for a mate, you're going to appeal to strong, fiery, powerful drives. Personal power and raw sexuality.

For someone who's looking to be a provider, you're going to appeal to their respect for security and personal responsibility.

For someone who wants to train people, you're going to appeal to either their nurturing side or their desire to teach responsibility and discipline.

They really are the same thing. Biology dictates that, for the most part, the first will be the tendency of the female and the second the tendency of the male.

I don't think saying that makes me a sexist. I think it makes me a realist.

Remember, the roles are not absolutes, and one is not better than the other. The species wouldn't have survived this long without both in proper measure. We just tend toward what we're built for. We're more comfortable with it. We're better at it.

No matter how much we know that it's a choice intellectually, there's a real and very strong bias in one direction or the other, and it's hormonal. We all know it.

We can overcome it or learn to deal with it differently. That's the experience aspect of being human. But, on the whole, the bias remains.

It's how we're wired, for reproductive success.

When you're writing copy, consider which of these drives your product satisfies. Draw mental pictures for your prospect of the circumstances that would need to exist to satisfy those drives.

They'll provide the feeling of state that goes along with it. That state is the Ultimate Benefit your product delivers.

Some people will consider this type of approach to be manipulative. As a rule, those people will be reacting from what they've been taught they should think, rather than what they know in their guts.

Understand what the word manipulative means. According to Merriam-Webster Online (<http://www.m-w.com>) it means:

1: to treat or operate with the hands or by mechanical means especially in a skillful manner - 2 a: to manage or utilize skillfully b: to control or play upon by artful, unfair, or insidious means especially to one's own advantage - 3: to change by artful or unfair means so as to serve one's purpose

The first definition doesn't have anything to do with the use of the word in this kind of case. So, let's look at the second and third. The main characteristic of each is the devious control of another for one's own benefit.

Yes, it is possible to misuse this in manipulative ways. That can be a very powerful thing. Until you're discovered and that same elemental drive is turned against you. And it will be. The old D&D'ers called it "The Angry Villager Rule."

That's not a fun place to be, boys and girls.

Just say no. You'll live longer.

But is that what's going on when you actually give someone what they really want?

They know you want money for your product. You're being up front about that, so there's nothing unfair or devious about that part. And if you deliver on your promises, there's nothing dishonest about it.

What you're doing is giving them what they **really** want. You're making the effort to understand and address drives that, quite often, they haven't even acknowledged themselves.

You're talking to the core of their desires, in their own language.

That's not called manipulation. There's another word for it entirely.

Empathy.

I mentioned very early in the series that the most important skill a copywriter can have is the ability to listen.

Empathy is the ultimate expression of that skill.

This whole section is just a way for you to get a head start on achieving it.

Empathy is the thing that gives you the juice to communicate the benefits of your product in a way that motivates your prospects; that gets them excited right along with you.

It's what tells you when you've used the wrong word, or when you're hitting a wrong note with an explanation. If you're really "in tune" with your prospect, you'll feel what's right and what's not in your copy.

This takes some practice. How much depends on how well you communicate in the first place, and how comfortable you are with putting yourself in someone else's shoes.

Remember, unless you're selling a book on seduction or child-rearing or the like, you don't want to hit these notes head on. You want to consider which aspect of the process your product addresses and tailor your copy to the emotions that would exist if the prospect were to achieve the state they're buying.

You do that by painting pictures of the state and using language that drives home that your product can help them achieve that state.

For instance, consider the following situation: You come home. A woman meets you at the door. You have dinner. You get a phone call. You listen to some music.

Those are the facts of the case. How the prospect perceives them depends on the emotional parts of the description. They are very different, for example, if the woman is described as your maid, your wife, your current girlfriend or your daughter.

The description of the house will change the “state” that’s created in the prospect’s mind, as will what you actually have for dinner.

The phone call is a perfect state-setter. What is it about?

What kind of music do you listen to, and with whom? What are you doing while you listen? What else is going on around you?

If you’re describing an autoresponder system, you can tailor your copy in much the same way. The ability to schedule follow-ups could be portrayed as a matter of control (power), convenience (freedom), automation (security), professionalism (prestige), or even technical sophistication (luxury).

A lot of you probably just read that and thought, “So what? He’s talking about benefit statements. I already knew that!”

You’d be almost right to think that.

The difference between copy that uses this effectively and copy that doesn’t can be very subtle. It’s a matter of awareness and the consistency of the state you evoke. There are specific and powerful emotions that are associated with each part of the spectrum that leads to reproductive success. You want to keep these in mind while writing.

For example, suppose you’ve just delivered a strong summary of the benefits that your product will deliver to the middle manager who follows its advice. It grabs the reader’s attention and makes it clear that you really can help them advance in their firm, get more and larger raises and do it all more efficiently.

Many copywriters would stop there. All they’ve really done is convinced the prospect they can upgrade their own “feature set” by making the purchase. That will work often enough to make the ad profitable, but it leaves a lot of money on the table.

How much more effective do you think it would be if they added something that created a feeling of the state that your prospect desires?

Paint a picture of what they can do with the extra money and time and security. Tailor it to the desires that are typical of the person most likely to want your product. In this case, middle management, you would be talking about primarily married folk with children and not a lot of disposable income. The provider/teaching stage. So, you'd describe a better house and car, better schools for the kids, more time with the family... Things like that.

If your prospects are younger women and your product relates to their own self-image, you'd address very different things. Confidence, attractiveness and relationships (romantic and otherwise) would be among the top triggers.

Making this work takes practice and thought, as well as a lot of sensitivity. You really want to be sure that you're respecting the prospect's legitimate desires, rather than just banging away at unfocused emotions.

Look at your product. Think about how it relates to the process of reproductive success. Then see if your marketing materials talk to that part of the prospect's motivations. If so, how can you improve it? If not, how will it help them and how can you express that in a way that matches their goals in that process?

This will take some time and effort to master. How much depends on your understanding of the concept and your level of real empathy.

It's worth whatever effort you have to make to learn it.

CONCLUSION

Like I said, it's not a course in copywriting. Just some thoughts, from a guy who's been there.

Copywriting is an evolving process. As you practice each technique or increase your understanding of each concept, you will find your results increasing along with it.

I firmly believe that the most important skill any businessperson can achieve is a mastery of the art of writing effective copy. I hope you find this useful in helping you to reach that state.

Just a reminder: This PDF version of this collection is for your personal use only. Please do not pass this around.

I'm going to put it on an autoresponder, so you can refer people to it later, if you like. I'll send the info to the group when it's ready. It'll even be possible for you to make a little money by telling them about it. (And we all like that.)

If you have any comments on the material as it is, or suggestions on ways it might be improved, or if you just can't wait to tell me what you did with what you've learned here, email me. I like to hear how people use the things I write.

The address to use is paul@talkbiz.com

And thanks for reading this far. You're a generous and patient soul!

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