THE COPYWRITER'S CRUCIBLE

PRESENTS

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1. My Advice to a Copywriter Starting from Zero

I often get emails from aspiring copywriters looking for advice on getting started. So, as you now know, while I do offer a book on it, I still try to find time to reply when I can.

Here's my reply to one aspiring wordsmith and the advice I gave him:

Hey Joe,

Thanks for your letter.

I'm not currently looking to take on any "copy cubs" (industry term for apprentices), yet there's a lot you can do to build your skills on your own.

My advice would be to focus on breaking into the US direct response market. I wish I'd learned this sooner, as I spent years writing B2B tech copy. While you can make a good income in B2B tech, when you can write high converting copy that's directly linked to sales you can make six figures or more.

Gary Halbert (copywriting legend) wrote an excellent article detailing steps you can take on your own to build your knowledge and skills. Set his website as a bookmark on your tablet or phone and read every letter. People paid good money to get this info when it was a print newsletter, and having it available freely online is a steal.

After you've done what he recommends, setup a basic website and write advertorials promoting products on Clickbank. You could also build an email list and upsell Clickbank products that way to earn a small income. Then create your own info product (it could be just a 50 page eBook or you could buy it done for you as a private label rights product = PLR) and sell it yourself. That way you'll get some stats on conversion rates and sales to attract clients.

When you're starting out it's a chicken and egg scenario. How do you get clients without a portfolio? Or how do you build a portfolio without clients?

By creating your own site and running your own promos you can solve this problem.

Starting out is tough. Yet as you sent me a letter and followed up with a phone call, I believe you'll be disciplined and strategic enough to see it through.

2. Pro Level Tactics for Busting the Feast/Famine Cycle

Create your own opportunities, instead of waiting for them to arrive

How did the freelancing life treat you this year?

Get a steady flow of clients to keep amassing your cash pile, Scrooge McDuck stylee?

Or find yourself scrambling for change on freelance bidding sites just to cover the rent?

If it's the latter – I hear you.

I've been through more famines than I care to remember…

Times when I'd stare at my inbox *praying* someone would reply to the hundredth prospecting email I'd sent out that week.

Or thinking I was a fraud and crazy to think people would *actually* pay me to write for them.

Sometimes it got so bad I'd even look at full-time jobs. Just imagine.

But the most annoying thing is I could have escaped the feast/famine cycle a lot sooner than I did.

That is if I'd implemented **two key pro level tactics**.

These are tactics I previously had locked away in my eBook on fast tracking your freelance success. But as it's Christmas, I'll share them with you here:

1. **Attending live events** is the best way to find high paying clients who understand marketing and respect what you do
2. Positioning yourself as the **"go to" person** in a specific skill + niche (e.g. email marketing for vets or webinars for property investors) will focus your marketing activities and rocket your earnings faster than the price of Bitcoin (which is actually dropping as I write, but you get the point)

Now, giving out advice is easy (just ask any of the Facebook gurus making a killing repackaging the techniques of Schwartz or Caples as their own).

But do these tactics work in the real world?

Well, allow me to share how they played out for me at this year's Copy Chief Live...

Live Events are Where the Big Dogs Hang Out

When you add up the cost of flights to Florida, a room at the Hilton, a new blazer to wow the clients, printing 20 copies of my YouTube Remarketing Generator and networking over nachos, my bill for attending CC Live came to a cool $3,000, or so.

That may sound like a big injection of cash reserves.

But it pails in comparison to the risk another CC member took who gambled their savings to attend, despite seeming cool as a cucumber when I met them at the airport (a gamble which paid off for them in spades, by the way).

Yet had the only benefit of Copy Chief Live been meeting "ethically minded" copywriters at the top of their game, I'd have handed over the money gladly to discover what it takes to be among the best.

Yet luckily for me, I did succeed in getting a new client...

And no ordinary client...

A major A-Lister...

Someone who's mentored Parris Lampropoulos, Carline Anglade-Cole and many other elite marketers – many of whom are million dollar copywriters today...

I am of course talking about the living legend **Clayton Makepeace** (I still can't believe it either).

Based on my samples, he was willing to give me a shot.

My challenge was to write a lead on the impending pensions crisis as a preamble for selling a financial newsletter.

Click below to read it (Just be warned – if you're retiring soon and haven't got much squirrelled away it may ruin your Christmas. But don't worry too much. Japan is in an even worse state, and governments everywhere will likely click the money printers onto turbo and kick the can down the road for another cycle):

The Copywriter's Crucible

"When Congress Bailed Out Wall Street it Started the Clock Ticking on a Financial Time Bomb. Now Set to Explode in 2018."

When Hank Paulson stood in front of Congress and demanded they hand over 750 billion dollars to soak up Wall Street's rotten assets, he started the clock ticking on a time bomb.

A bomb created by a mountain of debt, rock bottom interest rates and financial incompetence at every level of government.

And when it explodes, this bomb threatens to incinerate the value of the dollar, crash the stock market and bring about the worst financial crisis of our lives.

If you're going to protect yourself from the fallout, you'll need to move fast.

Because it's predicted this bomb will detonate in...

2018

In less than 12 months the circumstances that created this bomb will come to a head.

It started with the massive debt burden of mopping up Wall Street's mess.

Because it *didn't* stop at 750 billion.

It soon grew to 16 TRILLION in bailouts and financial assistance.

A massive sum that should have set alarm bells before the ink was dry.

But nobody raised an eyebrow.

A Nervous Month of Waiting

After reading through it so many times I lost all objectivity, I hit send and spent the next few weeks living under a cloud of anxiety, self doubt and being convinced Clayton had mixed up my samples with somebody else…

Then one day an email from Clayton arrived…the first of a series, in fact.

Long story short, he said he was interested in hiring me and would I be available for a promo in Feb or March next year!

After throwing my laptop in the air, spinning in circles on the floor and phoning my mum, I replied in the affirmative.

Now, I know I may have jinxed it publishing this.

A lot can happen between now and Feb.

This career changing opportunity could fall through (comes with the territory, unfortunately).

So for now I'm just going to embrace the satisfaction of having someone of Clayton Makepeace's stature deem my copy worthy of their perusal.

After all, that's what we all crave – to have someone we respect tell us our copy is good.

3 Daily Habits for Raising Your Game

I didn't *just* write this to boast about getting on Clayton's radar…

I'm hoping my progress can show you where putting in the work, focusing on a niche and attending live events can get you.

I've been through the struggles of worrying about paying the bills, dealing with disrespectful low balling clients, hiring lawyers to take non-payers to court and feeling like a fraud seconds after submitting copy for review.

Yet, what got me through, and will continue to do so, is committing to doing three things every day:

1. Studying a winning sales letter
2. Writing at least a couple of pages of sales copy
3. Coming up with a big idea for a new promo

Commit to doing these 3 things every day to raise your game, as well as niche down and attend at least one live event.

3. Onboarding Process for Copywriting Clients – Set the Ground Rules from Day One

When working with a new client it's wise to set some ground rules.

Outlining how you work will establish yourself as the adult in the room. It will also avoid mission creep and "just touching base" emails gobbling up your time.

Clients like boundaries too.

If they've never worked with a copywriter before (or been burned too many times), they'll eagerly grab your hand when you offer to guide them through the field of landmines they see stretched before them.

Here's my process:

1. After I receive your email I'll send you a questionnaire to identify the scope of the project and how I can help
2. I'll conduct background research into your business based
3. We schedule a call to discuss your project
4. I'll send you a proposal
5. If the proposal is accepted, I'll email you an agreement to digitally sign
6. I'll send you an invoice for the project
7. I'll conduct market research into your product, competitors, customers and positioning
8. I'll send you an outline for your project
9. Once approved, I'll draft the copy

10. The copy is proofed
11. Copy is delivered
12. Based on your feedback, further editing is conducted to get a final version.
13. We publish the copy and track the results using analytics and heat maps
14. If conversions are below what we needed for the project to be profitable, I'll work on changes to improve the conversion rate
15. Upon project completion I'll send you a questionnaire for feedback

Feel free to copy this into your FAQ page or email it to a new client as part of your onboarding process.

Trust me. It will save you a lot of time and hassle down the road.

4. Webinar Copywriting Tips – Sell Through Education Instead of Hype

Webinars can be a powerful a way to sell to B2C markets that aren't yet over exposed

In our marketing bubble, webinars have been the #1 way to sell high ticket items for years. Yet in most markets, their selling power is largely untapped.

B2B folks seem convinced anyway.

A B2B Content Marketing Trends survey placed webinars as the second most effective way to sell, after live events and ahead of videos, blogs and case studies.

Why are they so effective?

- Webinars instantly position you as an expert
- People unfamiliar with webinars don't feel they're being sold to
- They can convert leads into sales within 24-48 hours
- They're highly measurable and can be automated for consistent ROI

Webinars are common in B2B, whereas in B2C they're still fresh and underutilized.

Let's say you're selling a natural health blood sugar balancing supplement. Just imagine how powerful a 40 minute webinar could be at educating people on the

causes of high cholesterol, what foods to eat and how to naturally balance their ratio and reduce their risk of heart disease?

A lot of people would rather sit through a presentation that resolves something that's bugging them than wade through 5,000 words of copy.

Webinars are only effective if you keep people's attention

The challenge is overcoming the million distractions threatening to pull users a way. Your presentation has to go beyond plain vanilla advice if it's going to keep people from flicking through Instagram, chatting on Facebook or checking their email. As always, harnessing emotion, intrigue and building tension are the keys to success.

Here are 7 webinar copywriting tips to help you keep viewers engaged and buying at the end:

1. Tell a Story

Stories engage at a deeper emotional level than a straight pitch. It's how we've been wired since cavemen times. Share the background to devising your product or solution. Talk about the struggles, the failures and the Eureka breakthrough that led to your product.

2. Give Them an Easy Win

Give viewers a tactic they can implement almost immediately. This will give them an instant sense of advancing from where they are now. It will also make it easier for them to FEEL what they can gain from your product.

3. Frame the Price

Before you reveal the price, establish the costs of not taking action. Explain how much time and money they're wasting without your solution. While they could try and figure it out for themselves or buy a cheaper alternative, explain how this will cost them more in the long run.

4. Crush Objections

In every sales letter, VSL and webinar, crushing objections is vital to clinching the sale. Write out a list of reasons why someone might not buy and then address every one in a clear, objective manner. Then by the end they'll have no excuses and will only see positives from having your solution in their life.

5. Lead Them Up a Staircase

Imagine your webinar is a staircase. At the start your viewer is at the bottom, struggling with a problem that's preventing them from advancing in their career or life. Over the course of the webinar your job is to jump them up the steps by revealing what they can do to achieve the salvation that awaits at the top.

6. Track and Optimize

The beauty of webinars is the ability to track and improve their performance. Your goal is to get average order value (AOV) above your cost to acquire customers (CAC). Once you've done that then you can open the money hose and potentially scale to six or seven figures.

7. Test Live then Automate

Doing webinars LIVE is the best way to test and perfect your pitch. The interaction, unscripted vibe of live webinars naturally creates greater trust and engagement with your viewers. Just calling out their names and reading their comments has been found to increase sales. Then when you have a winning formula you can switch to automation for a consistent pipeline of sales.

Ready to Grow Your Business with Webinars?

Recently I completed Joel Erway's Webinar Accelerator Program. Joel gets paid up to $40,000 to write webinars for elite marketers like Russell Brunson. And for them it's money well spent. Russell generated $10 million from his webinars last year alone.

At $1,997 (it will soon go up to $2,997), Joel's Webinar Accelerator ain't cheap.

However, webinars are arguably the best way to sell right now. They've got huge potential in under served B2C markets. And you may make your money back on your first webinar project.

So whether you take Joel's course or figure it out on your own, writing webinars is a high ticket copywriting service to add to your arsenal.

5. Live Event Networking Tips for Copywriters to Make Connections in an Extrovert's World

Listen to people and offer advice. Don't just talk about yourself

Maybe not today. Maybe not tomorrow. But there will come a day when you'll have to step away from your keyboard, iron a shirt/blouse and go speak to living, breathing business owners.

I know it's not what you signed up for when you shelled out for that expensive copywriting course, promising you could work from home in your PJs and never have to do real businessy things like "networking" ever again.

But trawling through Facebook groups, battling over poverty level rates on Upwork or email bombing lists you've harvested on LinkedIn will only get you so far.

If you want to work with serious players and high ballers (who'll pay you $10k+ per project) you need to make some moves in the real world, making eye contact and greasing palms.

Live events are where ballers hang out

Unfortunately, most of us in this madcap copywriting world are committed introverts.

That's nothing to be ashamed of.

It's why we're so good at getting into people's heads, emphasizing with the pain they feel in their gut and conjuring up the emotional triggers that helps us sell stuff.

However, at a live networking event, hiding in the corner pretending to read your emails ain't going to win you many new clients. So what can you do?

Thankfully, over the years of relentless marching into networking events, bold as brass, I've developed a few tactics for connecting with the right people and sparking new business opportunities, before kicking open the nearest fire escape to scurry home and recharge.

Today, I'd like to share them with you:

1. Dress smart

I know we're all complicated and 'multifaceted' types. But people make opinions based on first impressions. So we just have to accept it and dress like professionals.

However, getting the iron out does offer an added bonus...

Along with presenting yourself as a reliable wordsmith, who pens high converting copy as surely as lightning strikes the tree, dressing smart is like putting on a suit of armour. It puts you in the right frame of mind and to feel like you have a serious service people need to know about.

Wearing an ironed shirt (or a smart T-shirt under a blazer) will give you the confidence that you have a look that reassures prospects. Turning up in your

slacks and “witty” T-shirt (“we dress like this because we’re creative”) will have the reverse effect.

2. Walk up to people and say “Hello”

If you’ve attended a networking event before, the idea of entering a room of people you don’t know and walking up to introduce yourself can feel so far outside your comfort zone that you’re convinced your body will shutdown in protest before you’ve even opened the door.

When, in fact, there’s nothing much to it.

I’ve done it so many times now that I don’t even think about it. I just look for the nearest group of people that looks interesting, walk up and introduce myself with hand outstretched.

Here’s the truth: Nearly everybody HATES networking. But if you want to make connections outside of the interwebs and step up in your career, it’s a necessary evil.

Attendees get this and will always be open to welcoming you into their conversation.

3. Ask questions. Don’t just talk about yourself

Any door-to-door salesmen worth their salt knows that the most powerful way to sell is to LISTEN. Find out about people’s business. Ask them what their marketing challenges are. What tactics have they tried and which have been a black hole for spending money (i.e. SEO).

Then give them advice on what to do. Help them to solve a marketing challenges that’s been bugging them or give them tips on why to try instead.

But...hold back a little.

Give them some chickens but don't hand over the farm.

Give advice freely. But hold back on giving them an entire marketing strategy in one sitting. Just give them enough advice to get them interested and then tell them how to contact you to book a consultation.

4. Take PRINTED case studies

Reassuringly stiff business cards are good and all. But if you really want to impress people, proudly handing out printed, attractively designed case studies is a powerful way to do it.

You could do a case study about:

- How you built a funnel for a client with a clear ROI
- A breakdown of a sales page you did that converts well
- How to write a soap opera sequence instead of pure promotional emails
- How to use tol lfree numbers to generate leads
- A traffic source that isn't yet swamped and offers cheap, targeted clicks (more on this to follow).

Then present your case study like you're giving them a gift. Explain how you are giving them a strategy that can ramp up their response rates and sales in a matter of days.

Remember to follow-up to see how they're getting on. If they haven't had time to implement it or are struggling to action it, propose you do it for them for a very reasonable fee.

6. Use Toll Free Numbers to Build a ‘Red Hot’ List of Prospects at Low Cost

A survey by the Direct Marketing Association found that 83% of people prefer to listen to a 24 hour free recorded message than speak to a live sales person.

Click costs are *outta* control.

On Facebook they’ve rocketed from a reasonable $0.27 at the end of 2016 to a budget busting $1.72 today. And with 2 million advertisers (and rising) all fighting over that sweet Facebook traffic, the costs are only going one way amigo. And that is UP.

Google stopped being profitable (in most markets) years ago.

Traffic from Outbrain, RevContent and their brethren may be cheaper. But it has the precision targeting of a garden sprinkler.

So what can you do?

You can focus on customer lifetime value and backend sales. And treat the initial sale as a 'break even' on your ad spend.

Or...

You can switch to channels few dare to mess with.

I'm talking about offline my friend. And using a tactic that gets grizzled veterans nodding approvingly and young bucks shrugging their shoulders, mistakenly thinking it went out of fashion with the fax machine.

Hire a 'robot' to talk to your customers (in a good way)

Through services like Telecenter you can setup your own Toll Free (Free Phone if you're one of my UK countrymen) number.

You can then can record a message to convince prospects to leave their name and address for further info (i.e. your sales letter).

It costs a measly $40/month for this number to then generate leads around the clock. And if done right, it can be higher converting and cheaper than running an online paid ad campaign.

Here's the strategy...

Say, you're selling a supplement for joint pain. You'd run a small ad in newspapers (using low cost 'remnant advertising') saying something like:

Free Report – Repairs and Lubricates Your Joints to Take the Pain Away. Toll Free: (123) 456789.

People with joint pain are typically over 50 and still get most of their information from newspapers. They also trust printed coms a lot more than all the 'fake news' awash online.

And unless they're sat at their computer, you'll have their complete attention as they can't be Liking or Tweeting when their phone is glued to their ear.

What to say in your recorded message

There's no perfect length to a recorded message. As with a sales letter, you need to say whatever is necessary to get them to take the action you want – which in this case is to leave their name and address.

In the message simply:

1. Introduce yourself, your credentials and the reason why you created this message (never say you're a doctor, unless you actually are one. Faking that you're a qualified professional can get you in seriously hot water).
2. Discuss their pain, such as unscrewing a jar, getting dressed in the morning or feeling like a prisoner in their own home.
3. How wear and tear is the likely cause of their joint pain and how widespread joint pain is.
4. Give 3 lifestyle habits that may be making their pain worse (build the tension and raise the stakes for why they need help).
5. Tell them how your report shares the latest breakthrough research into joint pain and how best to relieve it.
6. Provide some proof with a stat from a study in your report, such as how X herb helped reduce joint pain for 8 out of 10 people.
7. Ask them to share their name and address and their biggest challenge of overcoming their joint pain (you're getting pure old market research and lead generation rolled into one).

What results can you expect?

With a toll free number, you should be aiming for at least 50% leaving their name and address. Trevor Toecracker Crook typically gets an 80% response to his recorded messages

Then when they get your sales letter with a handwritten post it note (in BLUE ink) on the front saying "Barry, thanks for requesting my free report. Call me if you need advice, Matt" do you think they're going to read it?

You can bet the farm on it.

And their trust in you is going to be at 'best friends' level compared to all the snake oil salesmen they find online, with their unrealistic claims, suspiciously positive testimonials and 'grinning couple' stock photos.

If you can get a good rate on your ad costs (remember to use remnant advertising), getting leads this way could also work out WAY more profitable than buying a list from a list broker.

Because you see, bought lists can be of questionable value.

And when you're sending letters to people who don't know who you are or 'when the heck' did they give you permission to write to them, what do you think they'll do with your letter?

It's going straight into the 'B' pile compadre. Into the trash.

Hear from the masters on 'Free Recorded Messages'

You can listen to marketing wizards Dean Jackson and Joe Polish discussing the Free Recorded Messages strategy in their "I Love Marketing Podcast", and how they use it to generate qualified, red hot leads around the clock.

7. Tactics Drayton Bird Told Me that Most Marketers Don't Know About

Tactic # 4 – Always have a caption below an image

It’s unbelievable.

But the sad reality is that a lot of marketers don’t study.

They create campaigns based on intuition, *creativity* and hope, instead of studying classic ads from the last fifty years to see how selling in print is *really* done. Ask a crowd of ad agency folks if they’ve read Caples, Hopkins and Schwartz and you may as well be listing Renaissance poets.

Last week I had the fortune to be in the presence of a direct marketing legend. A real life Mad Man. A godfather of direct response copywriters, with tales that make Roger Sterling’s exploits seem tame. I am, of course, talking about Mr Drayton Bird.

For two days I was immersed in hardcore direct response training at Mr Bird’s swansong: the ‘Last Hurrah’ seminar. My pen rarely left the paper as I feverishly took down notes faster than lightning strikes the tree, not wishing to miss a single off the cuff comment that could explode response rates for my clients (and justify my rising fees).

Throwing gold nuggets like it’s spare change

Sharing the podium with Mr Bird was Trevor ‘Toecracker’ Crook. His no fluff, spit and sawdust attitude didn’t disappoint. And he threw golden nuggets into the air like they were spare change, with all of us lunging to grab and embed them into our notebooks (I believe just one of his nuggets will help me write more convincing proposals and double my fees at the same time).

Drayton Bird will soon be publishing the videos from his two-day seminar as a course. So I’m not about to share all my notes here and spoil the surprise.

However, I will share 7 moreish takeaways:

1. Have a case study or real life story at the heart of your promotion

2. Your competition is not other marketers. It is Spectator and Cosmo journalists. You need to raise your writing to that level to earn attention
3. Add incentives that are low cost but high perceived value (e.g. cruise ships make their income from drinks sales and excursions, they can afford to give the room away practically for free)
4. Always have captions below images
5. Cartoons for attention. Photos for conviction
6. Don't accept 'No' as the reason. Dig down to find out why they aren't buying.
7. Ask them to take the action you want at least 3 times

These are just seven tactics that can ramp up your response rates and moolah. I literally wrote down over 10 pages of notes (front and back) that I'll be referring to every time I write a VSL or sales letter to try and inject some Drayton Bird magic into my copy.

8. What Schwarzenegger Says About Marketing

Schwarzenegger and 'Jim' Cameron will be teaming up on a new Terminator movie. At least we know the marketing will be great.

Recently I've been reading the autobiography of the prior Governator Arnold Schwarzenegger.

And it truly is a rags to riches story. His work ethic, ambition and promotional nous led to him amassing millions before he was even a movie star. His appointment to Governor of California was no fluke (whatever your opinions on his performance in said role).

Anywho. Enough eulogizing.

I want to focus on one chapter in particular on turning around the fortunes of the movie Total Recall (as it relates to my recent post on dealing with failure).

At the time, Total Recall was the most expensive movie ever made. It was a bold attempt at bringing sci-fi to the masses, and a lot of careers were riding on its success.

But the pre-launch test scores were BAD.

Even after weeks of trailers and advertisements, its 'awareness' score was in the 40s, when it needed to be in the 90s. Unless they did something drastic, Total Recall was on track to be Turkey of the Year.

So what did Arnold do?

He switched the marketing team.

Out went the team who were clueless on how to market such a weird, over the top story (this typically comes down to a lack of research in our world), and in came a team that devised new hooks, big ideas and taglines.

The result?

Within two weeks, Total Recall's awareness score rocketed to 92 percent. It went on to achieve the biggest opening weekend yet recorded, earned over $300 million worldwide and even picked up an Oscar.

All from switching up the marketing.

As Arnold writes:

The experience proves how important marketing is – how important it is to tell people what this is about; really blow up their skirt and make them say, "I have to go see this movie"

9. What Separates Amateurs from the Pros

Research.

That's what makes the grizzled veterans standout and is the key to higher conversions.

Within a few years (or months, in some cases) of hand copying sales letters and working from templates, you should be writing out decent sales letters that keep most clients happy.

But to reach the creme de la creme of clients (and fees), you need to be offering big ideas, hooks and triggers on an epic scale that few can match.

The only way to uncover these ideas is through deep, unrelenting and obsessive research. The top copy dogs typically spend 1-2 weeks (or even a month) on research before they even write the headline.

So what are they doing during this time?

Here's my 12 step checklist for completing the research stage:

1. Send the client a questionnaire

2. Send their email list a 'Deep Dive Survey'

3. Review the results with the client (optional)

4. Review all of the client's current marketing and best-performing pages and emails

5. Research competitor websites and sales pages to identify their key hooks and benefits

6. Research the market for challenges, problems and language (Amazon reviews can be a goldmine)

7. List all of the problems the product solves and how it does it

8. Research the market again to assess how aware they are of the solution to their problem and my client's product

9. Writing out pages of benefit bullets and headlines

10. Identify what 'big idea' will help the product stand out

11. Write down all the objections a customer would have before buying

12. Plot out the sales letter in Scrivener

Boom! Once you've done all that the writing part is easy.

As you can imagine, working through all these steps eats up a lot of time.

In fact, you should be spending two-thirds of your time on research and only a third on the actual writing.

Try working through all these steps on your next big project and let me know how it improves your conversion rate (and praise from the client).

10. Dealing with Failure

Campaigns are a marathon. Not a sprint

We all have to face this at some point in our working lives.

We work our fingers to the bone to get a campaign launched, only to see it fizzle for a while before dying completely.

The clickthrough rate is abysmal. We barely get a 1% conversion rate on the sales page and we start questioning whether we're cut out for this gig at all.

I'll let you in on a secret: It happens to all of us. Even the grizzled veterans who'd assume haven't had a campaign fail in decades.

But the reality is that failure comes with the territory.

You then have two options: Kill the campaign entirely and start from scratch or seeing if you can test your way into turning it around.

If a campaign has bombed it's typically due to one of these reasons:

1. Not enough testing

The gurus may not tell you this, but few campaigns succeed straight out the gate.

You need to test them out to find out what's working and what's dragging your stats down. Test the big things first, like the headline, lead and bullets to see if that gives you a bump.

Then focus on tightening the fundamentals of your offer, the guarantee, the close and the PS. And don't forget to test images with a caption too.

2. There isn't a starving market

Too many times I've taken on projects where the client hadn't tested the market to see if there was a demand for their product. It's then up to me to, supposedly, wave my magic marketing wand to make people want something they don't feel in their gut.

Its not gonna happen.

Not unless you start making outrageous claims that will only book you a visit from the FTC.

The first step in any product launch, is to check if there is demand, or a 'starving crowd' as Gary Halbert called it.

Thankfully, you no longer have to go door to door or walking around a store to interview customers to find out. You can simply write an advertorial about the challenge your product solves, have a signup form for people to register their interest in the solution and then spend some gold on ad traffic. Then see what the signups tell you.

A simpler option is to run a quiz, poll or survey to find out your market's biggest challenges. This is also a great way of building a list of prospects to mail when you're ready to roll.

3. Haven't got to know the customer

Creating a buyer persona based on best guesses will only get you so far. You need to study the market and find out who your customers are if you are to be successful.

Spend 1-2 weeks lurking in your market's Amazon reviews, forums, Facebook groups and YouTube channels to understand the language they use, who the villains in their market are and what they need help with.

Then when you sit down to write, you'll have a clearer idea of who's sat across from you that you need to convince to buy your new widget. Your copy will then naturally resonate more, be more conversational and higher conversions will follow.

Turning failure into success

Failure may come with the territory. But that doesn't mean you have to accept it.

It's always wise to set clients up with the right expectations before you launch (e.g. 1% of conversions on the front end, majority of profits from the back end).

But if they start freaking out because a campaign is failing, advise them to stay calm, to work through the three steps listed above and to treat it like a marathon, not a sprint.

11. 3 Secrets to Writing ‘Winning’ Copywriting Proposals that Turn $100 Mini Projects into $10,000 Monster Gigs

A strong copywriting proposal can both win and increase the size of a gig

You get an email from a potential client asking for a web page.

You’re smart.

You don’t instantly email back with a price and a delivery date. That would be stupid.

Instead, you do some digging.

You ask:

...what action do you want visitors to take?

...what's the traffic source?

...what's your current conversion rate?

...what does your sales funnel look like?

Yadda, yadda.

They email you back – "What's a sales funnel?"

Your eyes light up.

You have the chance to turn a one off project into a monster gig (and pocket a tidy sum in the process).

But...

First you have to convince them WHY they need a sales funnel and HOW it will generate profits many times over the fee you're about to charge them (which has a couple more zeros than they'd budgeted for).

You can do it by submitting a copywriting proposal featuring these 3 key elements:

1. Strategy – Business owners aren't always savvy marketers. They need some hand holding. Rather than talk about word counts, explain how the web page forms part of a larger strategy for taking visitors from curious to convinced and ready to buy.

2. List ALL the deliverables – Sales funnels have a LOT of components. This can include lead magnets, registration pages, webinar scripts, VSL production, 'sideways sales letter' email sequences, upsell pages and Facebook ads. There's

also background research, competitor analysis and an audit of their current progress and assets. List *every* single deliverable in your proposal.

3. Talk about revenue goals, rather than conversions – Clients could care less about CTR, time on site and 'engagement'. All that matters is revenue. Present an estimate of how your strategy can increase their existing sales and profits using conservative numbers (e.g. 1-2% conversions). Always under promise and over deliver.

Building a proposal around these three elements will positions you as a valued consultant and a profit generator, rather than just a vendor of words.

This naturally entitles you to charge more for your services as you can justify your fee in terms of solid ROI.

The next time someone emails you to write a press release, web page or an email, consider how you can expand it into a bigger gig by setting a more ambitious target for what your client can achieve.

12. Easy Ways to Make Leads More Profitable (without Spending an Extra Cent on Traffic)

May 17, 2017 Matt AmbroseNo Comments

Have your lead costs gone up to $10 yet?

Advertising is getting darned expensive.

If the rumours are true, heavyweights like Clickfunnels and Digital Marketer now spend $10 just on getting a LEAD.

That's right, a LEAD, not a sale.

With millions of marketers ploughing their ad budget into Facebook and Instagram, click costs are getting out of control. This is why it is your duty to wring every last cent from every lead, if you are to have any hope of making your campaigns profitable.

Thankfully, there are lot of tweaks, hacks and tactics you can apply which most of your competitors are ignoring (or don't know about).

For starters, here are 2 easy ways of increasing the ROI on every lead that swims its way into your sales funnel:

1. How to convert more opt-ins into subscribers

Most marketers agonize over their landing page copy, the bullets and how they frame the offer.

But they're ignoring where the biggest uplift in response is to be found. And that's getting people to confirm their registration.

It sounds so simple, yet most marketers completely ignore what happens after people enter their email address, thinking all the hard work is done.

But the hard truth is this: about 4 people out of 10 people who opt-in NEVER confirm.

That's right!

About 40% of ad spend is being completely WASTED simply because people never opened the email and clicked the confirmation link.

So what can you do?

A great way of rocketing your confirmations is to record a short VIDEO, instead of relying on the boiler plate email copy.

In the video, thank them for signing up, remind them about the benefits they'll gain from registering and then tell them exactly what to do to confirm their registration.

Now, I know many people will have stopped reading when I mentioned the V word.

Us copywriters are introverted types.

We'd rather complete our tax return then go on camera.

I get it. So consider recording a simple slideshow using Camtasia and speak over the top. You can even hire someone off Fiverr to record the voice over.

However you do it, recording a short video asking people to click the confirmation link is one of the most powerful ways of driving up the profits of every campaign.

2. Getting people to complete their checkout

Reading stats on cart abandonment will make even the most hardened e-commerce warrior put down their mouse and weep.

Across industries, the average cart abandonment rate is a migraine inducing 67.4% (source – http://baymard.com/lists/cart-abandonment-rate).

In other words...

Even after your lead has read through your onboarding email sequence...

sat through the 90 minute webinar...

read the sales copy and nodded their head sagely before clicking the purchase link...

in 7 out of 10 cases something goes WRONG.

Maybe they get a Whatsapp ping, the doorbell rings, the kids start playing up or they suddenly remember to put the washing on.

The list of possible distractions and reasons why people don't complete is endless. And they are all out of your control.

They only thing you can control is the checkout page.

So it is your duty to invest as much time, if not more, on creating the smoothest, clearest most checkout sequence possible.

Just a small change – like a graphical progress bar – could lead to getting 1 or 2 more people out of 10 converting. This, again, can trigger a MASSIVE jump in your profits.

Luckily, there's no need to reinvent the wheel. Analyze how your competitors or Amazon does it. And see where your checkout process is falling short.

Small hinges swing big doors

These are just two small changes you can make to your funnel that can rocket your conversions and maximise the ROI of your ad spend.

Even better is that when you iron out the chinks in your funnel, you can look forward to predictable, reliable results, consistent reductions in your lead costs and more PROFIT from every visitor to your offer page.

Put simply, you can make MORE money from ZERO extra traffic. So it is your duty to your business's profitability and future success that tighten and tweak your sales funnel until it is a slick, sales pipeline that

Attribution – This post's content comes from a training webinar in David Garfunkel's Fast, Effective Copy (affiliate link) I've only mentioned 2 of the 3 ways to claw back profits they covered. So if you want to know what the third one is, you'll have to sign up for the course. I've been working my way through it over the last few months, and I believe that its volume of top tier strategic thinking makes it an investment that pays for itself many times over, whether you're a newbie copywriter or a grizzled veteran.

13. Sir Winston Churchill's '4 Iron Clad Rules' of Persuasive Copywriting

"Writing a book is an adventure. To begin with it is a toy, than an amusement. Then it becomes a mistress, and then it becomes a master, and then it becomes a tyrant and, in the last stage, just as you are about to be reconciled to your servitude, you kill the monster and fling him to the public." – Sir Winston Churchill, 2 November 1949, Grosvenor House, London

Sir Winston Churchill is famed for being the 'British Bulldog' whose speeches galvanized a nation against seemingly insurmountable odds.

He was also a writing workhorse. Over his lifetime, he wrote more words than Dickens and Shakespeare combined. His published speeches stretch to eighteen volumes, while his memos and letters run into the millions and fill over 2,500 boxes. He even won a Nobel Prize for his writing, much to the chagrin of his critics.

Although Winston Churchill was a writer of historical non-fiction, he'd no doubt have a few droll words to share on what it takes to be a top copy dog.

Here are four rules I believe he'd have drilled into any copy cub lucky enough to have him as a mentor:

1. Spend two thirds of your time on research and one third on writing

Describing the internet to someone in the 1930s would have sounded like the ravings of a mad fantasist. Yet, as one of the first people to fly a plane, Churchill would have been enthralled.

He had a contemporary equivalent he called his 'factory'. It consisted of a cavernous library of 60,000 leather bound books and a small army of researchers, secretaries and literary assistants. With a few barked commands, he'd send them scurrying down to search for facts or texts, in the manner of his own rudimentary search engine.

After handing over their findings, Churchill would absorb them into his elephantine brain to be processed and his thoughts verbalized in concise, lucid prose. His dictation sessions could last an entire day and late into to the night, when he'd continue to reflect while sat, naked, in a bath.

My takeaway:

Without enough research, your copy will fall flat. Unless you understand the market inside out and your reader better than they know themselves, your copy is unlikely to create a deep emotional yearning in their gut.

Conversely, when you do enough research the writing part is easy. The challenge is then keeping the word count down rather than knowing what to say.

2. Review your copy three times before you publish

Churchill's writing process had three stages.

First his typists got his spoken thoughts on paper. Then he'd go through the text with a fountain pen to cross out dull sections, rephrase clumsy syntax and, as a beholder of brevity, replace long words with shorter versions.

He'd then have the whole thing typed out again to be reviewed a third or forth time before he'd deem it worthy to be sent to the printers.

My takeaway:

After completing the 'ugly' first draft, we're blind to our own writing. The only way to be able to spot typos, mixed metaphors and clunky phrases is to go through a 'gestation' period.

This is like rebooting your brain from the head space you were in when writing. Wait at least one day. Or go for a walk, watch a movie or clean the bathroom. Do anything to take your mind elsewhere.

Then when you sit down to polish, you can assess your copy with fresh eyes and review it from the reader's perspective.

3. Write how you talk and put the reader first

In an era when people wrote post it notes like it was a job application, Churchill's writing stood out for its 'lucid self expression' and 'rich and rollicking readability'.

He wrote with crisp, punchy sentences that took readers racing down the page. His writing style may not have won him admirers in literary circles. But the public loved it. And he got paid handsomely for it too.

My takeaway:

Top copywriter Nick Usborne posts a lot about conversational copywriting (he's even got a course on it), and for good reason.

Underneath their power suit, even hard nosed business types have a beating heart. And a new generation of marketing managers is ready to embrace the benefits of copy that speaks to their prospects as individuals with challenges to solve, rather than someone you have to impress with superlatives and sales speak.

4. Be trustworthy

Churchill often wrote from the front lines and wasn't shy about exposing the horrors of war. He'd write about the machine gunned corpses and men without legs crawling to the Nile because they were dying of thirst as well as the bravery of cavalry charges.

This was at a time when politicians were eager for war to be glamorized as noble and heroic. His brutal honesty won him few friends in the military. But readers trusted him to pull back the curtain, as it was said that Churchill 'cannot really tell lies.'

My takeaway:

In this era of 'fake news' and militant cynicism, you have to start every page as though the reader is staring across the table from you with a furrowed brow.

So consider how you can add a trust element to everything you write. Point out your product's faults (while subtly turning them into an advantage). Explain who your product is NOT for and call out the lies told in your marketplace.

A show of brutal honesty will help position you on the same side as your reader against a common foe, and build trust that you have their interests at heart.

Who inspires you to write better copy?

These were just four rules I noted down while reading about Churchill. I could easily have written down 20 more.

Perhaps the biggest takeaway is that Churchill's attitude to writing reinforces that tactics come and go. But the fundamentals of clear, persuasive writing never change. So consider replacing some of the time you spend in Facebook groups and forums with re-reading the classics. You'll find more gold in Hopkins, Caples and Schwartz than hours spent panning in most threads.

Who inspires you to set higher standards for yourself as a copywriter? I'd love to know.

N.B. This post was inspired by 'The Churchill Factor: How One Man Made History' by Boris Johnson (yes, that Boris Johnson)

14. 8 Ways to Spice Up Stories About Your Product

“Grab a cushion and gather round. I have a story to tell.”

Everyone has fond memories of story time as kids. And the love of a good tale, of heroes, villains and victory against the odds, never dies.

For this reason, stories are marketing gold.

They swoop under people’s anti-sales radar to deliver a payload of emotion, aspiration and desire in one concisely worded hamper.

And you don’t need the creativity of Tolstoy or Hemingway to write them.

A story can be as simple as:

- The challenge – what problem did the hero face?
- The struggle – what did they have to overcome on their journey?
- The resolution – what was the solution they found?

- The result – what victory did they achieve?

To spice things up, consider using one of these plot devices:

1.Surprise – Tell a story that challenges your reader's preconceptions. Tell them something that goes against the status quo. Tip over the sacred cows and reveal why they've been misled by the powers that be all along.

2. Create curiosity gaps – This works great for email. Reveal enough information to make the reader realize they are missing a vital piece of knowledge. Then explain how to get it by checking their inbox tomorrow, visiting your website or buying your info product.

3. Create mysteries or puzzles – People love a good mystery. It's why detective novels are one of the most popular genres and people went nuts over The Da Vinci Code. You can harness the same appeal by slowly solving a mystery over the course of your communications.

4. Make it trustworthy – In this era of fake news, distrust of the MSM and marketers respected as highly as car salesmen, we start at -10 on the trustometer when someone reads our sales message. So consider how you can build trust through the language you use. Instead of 'smash and grab' tactics of exaggeration and unsupported claims, pepper your story with concrete figures, referenced stats and quotes to cement your story in reality.

5. Create a springboard – People love a good yarn about someone who struggled to overcome a problem before succeeding and moving onto bigger, brighter things. People can relate to 'springboard stories' much better than a fawning testimonial or back slapping self praise in a corporate brochure.

6. Replace stats with meaningful examples – Rather than tell people how much sugar they eat per week in processed food, fill a bag with the stuff and describe its size and the thud it makes when dropped on a table.

7. Tap into their identities – People respond better to stories in which they see themselves. An advertising company needed to convince people in Texas to stop

throwing their litter from the car window. So they fed on people's affection for their state's identity by telling stories involving local sporting heroes with the slogan 'Don't Mess with Texas'. Littering plummeted as a result.

8. Inspire them to conquer a challenge – JFK's pledge to land a man on the moon inspired a nation to embark on a decade of work and unforgettable success. Consider setting your reader a goal and a vision for the future, which they can only achieve with product.

The next time you're tasked with writing a press release, email sequence or case study, consider turning it into a story. In a world awash with mediocre 'BUY ME' marketing, stories can hook people in at deeper level and more inclined to make the relationship monetary.

P.S. This post was inspired by 'Made to Stick' by Chip and Dan Heath

15. The Simple Way to Write Copy

Leave the clever wordplay to the impoverished novelists. We're in the business of selling.novelists. We're in the business of selling.

People often ask me what it takes to become a copywriter.

What I tell them is this…

to be a great (or just good) copywriter you don't need to be able to write like Hemingway.

But you DO need to be understood.

Your writing needs to be easy to read.

And it's the strength of your arguments, rather than strength of your words, that wins the sale.

Leave the clever wordplay to the impoverished novelists. We're in the business of selling.

So how can you make writing copy simple?

Take this page as an example.

I'm using short sentences. Simple words.

Without chunky paragraphs to wade through, your eyes glide down the page.

This style of writing would make your English teacher go nuts.

But your reader's brain loves it.

Because it doesn't have to jump through hoops to understand it.

This article teaches you another lesson about simple writing.

What is it?

Simple.

Your "Subheads" Summarize Your Message

Seriously.

Even brains battling brain fog and a sugar deficiency at 4pm on a Friday can understand what this page is about from the subheads.

And this is important.

Because most people won't read a page before they skim read it first.

People are busy.

You've got app pings, Facebook chats and YouTube to compete with.

All of them screaming for attention.

So if someone is going to read your page they have to know it's worth their time.

Skimming the sub heads can reveal this to them.

There's a third lesson I wanted to teach you in this article.

Your Copy Must Focus on the Reader

I haven't tried to sell you anything.

Because I know you're reading this because you hope to gain some useful information.

Not to be upsold to.

From this post, I hope that you're learning that writing copy doesn't need to be complicated.

It can be simple.

And if you're still reading, I hope that proves my point.

It enables me to demonstrate a fourth lesson.

The more time you keep a reader engaged with your writing the more time you have to earn their trust.

A great way of earning trust is what Eugene Schwartz called 'Gradualization'.

It works like this...

If you make simple statements the reader agrees with early on then when you make bigger claims your reader is more likely to accept them as fact.

This is just one way of influencing the reader.

Another way of convincing a reader is what Schwartz called ‘Mechanization’

This is a logical explanation of why something works.

Because results is what ultimately matters

My hope is that after reading this article…

The result will be that you find writing copy easier.

Because writing copy doesn’t need to be complicated.

You don’t need to be a creative genius.

You just need to understand your reader’s problem.

What solutions they’ve tried in the past.

What their objections are to trying something new.

Why your product is better.

And how you can prove it.

Then offer it to them.

That’s it.

Writing copy is not rocket science

When you strip away the ‘power words’, ‘open loops’ and other copywriting tricks, it comes down to one thing…

presenting a solution to your customer’s problem.

When you do that it doesn’t feel like you’re tricking someone into buying something.

You’re helping them.

So there you go.

Writing copy is simple when you follow these principles.

Think how you can write something that’s easy to read, focuses on helping the reader solve a problem and builds trust.

Selling your product is then the easy part.

Hemingway once said, “Writing’s easy. Just open a vein and bleed all over the page.”

Maybe in the literary world. But it doesn’t have to be that soul draining to write convincing, high converting copy

P.S. People often read the P.S. straight after the headline. So use yours to summarize your offer or what they will gain from reading the page.

16. Why VSLs are the Fastest Way to Build a Six Figure

Business (SEO agencies hate me for sharing this advice)

People will eagerly watch videos on topics they're passionate about

If you're happy spending thousands on SEO, social media marketing or 'branding' each month with very little to show for it, read no further.

Because I'm about to reveal how six figure businesses can be built in weeks (or even days) without spending a cent on any of these methods.

What I'm referring to is the 'video sales letter'. Or VSL for short.

A sales vehicle that's ugly, basic and has a bad rep for hype. But can be a conversions monster in the right hands.

"Why would anyone watch this?"

Whenever I show a VSL to someone for the first time they're incredulous as to why anybody would happily watch a 40 minute 'slideshow', let alone buy anything at the end.

My response is that people will happily watch a documentary on TV if it's on a topic that matters deeply to them.

Imagine you're targeting the obesity market – your viewer is 30 kg overweight, their cholesterol is out of control, they suffer from stomach pains and fear the Sword of Damocles (in the form of a massive and fatal heart attack) is dangling above their head.

Don't you think they'd eagerly devour a VSL that reveals the simple lifestyle changes that can help them shed the kilos without starving themselves, to reverse their heart disease and to be around long enough to see their grandkids grow up?

Sure they would.

Here are four reasons why VSLs are so powerful at selling:

1. VSLs Out Convert Long Form Sales Pages

A VSL is, in essence, a long form sales letter pasted over multiple slides. This makes it more appealing to people happier watching YouTube videos than reading 20 pages of 14pt Times New Roman.

Just like a sales letter, VSLs use all manner of copywriting techniques, sales psychology and even NLP to keep people watching and to present your offer in a persuasive way. This helps them to typically convert better than long-form sales letters, particularly for cold traffic from advertising.

2. VSLs Have Built 6 Figure Businesses

The key to growing a business fast is SCALE.

When you have a high converting offer all you need to do is open up the money hose and spray it with traffic.

When you've got a persuasive VSL as the gateway to your sales funnel, you can grow to six figures or more like greased lightning, compared to months of toiling away in the smoke and mirrors wonderland of SEO or posting Tweets that get drowned in the stream seconds later.

You can even get free traffic by starting an affiliate program and reaching out to people in your niche with large email lists or followings. It's the definitive win win.

3. VSLs Allow YOU to Control the Sales Process

On a written sales page people can scroll around, skim read, check the price and pick which bits to read in whatever order they choose. Seeing this in action (and realizing that people don't studiously read every word in order) is enough to make grown copywriters cry.

However, with a VSL it's YOU that controls the conversation in their heads.

With no option to fast forward, viewers have to engage with your pitch in the sequence you choose.

That's the magic of the VSL.

YOU control the sales process. Not them.

You can address their pain, build trust, present your solution, explain its benefits, provide proof and justify the price in one logical flow that takes them from curious to convinced and ready to buy.

4. EVERY Business Can Benefit from a VSL

You may think that VSLs only work for supplements, weight loss products, eBooks and B2C markets.

But sales psychology is the same whatever market you're in – yes, that includes hard nosed corporate B2B types.

For B2B markers, VSLs can be presented as webinars – arguably the most powerful way of selling high ticket items to switched on prospects.

VSLs also give you the best chance of converting a lead much faster than a 10 part email sequence, series of sales calls or a round of golf with your account manager.

Million Dollar VSLs in Action

Here are five examples of simple slideshows that have generated millions in sales:

The American Parasite – VSL for a probiotic supplement

The Biggest Sign of Aging – VSL for anti-aging cream

End of America – VSL for a financial newsletter

Big Diabetes Lie – VSL for a diabetes course

7 Second Trick Eliminates Brain Fog – VSL for a nootropics supplement

17. Don't Read this If You Are Happy Getting Mediocre Results from Email

Email marketing is *the* most profitable channel.

See how I said that unequivocally.

The reason is because study after study proves that it's true:

When it comes to purchases made as a result of receiving a marketing message, email has the highest conversion rate (66%), when compared to social, direct mail and more. – *DMA*

Social media is great for building an audience and rapport with your customer base.

But ultimately (if you're smart) you use social media to feed your email sales funnel, and not the other way around.

Having said that, with inboxes overflowing with promotions and newsletters begging for attention.

So getting your emails opened and responded to can be tough.

This is why it's essential to write emails people find useful and enjoy reading.

How can this be done?

Here are five proven email types you can try:

1 You're doing this wrong – Challenge the status quo. Point out why what they're doing isn't going to solve their problem, but that you have a system that will.

2. Will this work for you? – Tell them a story about how someone just like them faced a similar challenge. How they tried all the options but nothing worked. But then they solved it by using this amazing new product

3. Hero Vs the System – Everything is a conspiracy if you look hard enough. Feed on their preexisting suspicions by telling them how the government/food companies/big pharma are trying to trick them and why there is a natural alternative they need to know about.

4. Newsjacking – Piggybacking on the latest hot topic is always a powerful way of getting your emails opened. The trick is then reframing that hot topic in a way that relates to your product and so it gives them an added reason to buy.

5. FAQ – If people still have objections, kick them aside with an FAQ email. You can tackle all their objections in one email or multiple emails, approaching each objection like a barrier to be knocked aside so they have a clear path to buying.

Make them WANT to read your emails

The key to success in email marketing is creating a positive association in your subscriber's mind with your name. Then when your email appears in their inbox they'll be eager to hear what you have to share. When you can do that, subject lines don't even matter.

If you're struggling to get results from email, try plugging a few of these five email types into your sales pipeline. Then watch a drip turn into a flood of clicks and conversions from the channel with the highest ROI.

18. HIPS – A Simple Storytelling Formula

You hear all the time that the best way to sell is with stories.

They're instantly engaging and people think they're being entertained, rather than sold to, and their cloak of cynicism is temporarily lowered.

But how do you write them?

That's the tricky part.

A good place to look for inspiration is forums and product reviews.

And a good way to tell them is to use the HIPS storytelling formula:

Hook

The angle, shocking fact or event that sets the stage for what your story is about.

Example – How you've always loved hearing people play the drums as a child.

Interest

The reason why this story is going to be interesting to be your reader, such as the pain point it addresses.

Example – Learning a new skill, like playing the drums, can be difficult and frustrating.

Parable

A simple story that reflects how your product solves the customer's problem.

Example – How you learned to play the drums and how much satisfaction you get from it.

Slide

This is the close when you explain why the story matters.

Example – Learning to play the drums is like any skill. The best way to learn is practice and to have a good teacher, which is why you should buy my course.

By following the HIPS formula, you can easily create stories around your product that will be fun and engaging while selling your product at a deeper level – an emotional one.

19. 4 Easy Ways of Doing Buyer Persona Research

Ever find yourself staring at a screen as blank as your brain? If so, you probably haven't done enough research on who you're writing to and why.

Research should take up two thirds of your time. Your goal should be to keep going until you reach the 'a ha' moment when everything clicks into place and you know *exactly* why the product matters and how you're going to sell it. Then writing it down is the easy part.

Remember, we're in the selling business. We're not trying to win a literary prize or to get compliments on our elegant turn of phrase. It's structure, making the complex simple and sales psychology that matters.

One of the key goals when researching is to understand your target customer's hopes, dreams and motivations. Your copy may be read by millions, but you want to imagine you're selling to just one. An imaginary person (a.k.a. buyer persona) sat across the table from you whom you have to convince to spend money.

So how do you work out who this person is and what to say to them?

You could do what most marketers seem to do and guess. But I know you're better than that.

Here are four tools you can use for finding out who that person sat opposite you is, what they care about and what will motivate them to buy your product:

1. Quantcast – Pop in the URL of your client's website to get demographic and lifestyle insights on their target audience.

2. Surveys – You can drop a survey to your client's existing email list. Or you can use tools like Survey Monkey to ask strangers what they thinks about your product, the problems they need solving and what will get them spending money.

3. Reviews – When selling B2C, Amazon's reviews are a goldmine of opinions and insights. It's amazing how much people are willing to share on the problems they were experiencing with other products. Here's a tip – check out the one or two star reviews to find objections you *must* address.

4. Competitors – Does a competitor have a high converting VSL, sales page or email series you can gain *inspiration* from? If so, go through their copy and note down the key elements of their sales argument, what proof they provide and the benefits they focus on. Then make it your mission to not just replicate but improve on what they've done. There's no such thing as a crowded market when your copy out-converts your rivals.

The best door to door salesmen know how to listen and what questions to ask. You can't convince someone to buy something unless they feel a gnawing pain in their gut. With these four research tips you can unearth deeply buried market needs to address in your copy and make it more persuasive as a result.

20. The 9 Word Email – The Highest Coverting Email of All Time

It's true.

If you have an email list you haven't contacted in a while or are stubbornly refusing to respond, a nine word email is all it may take to turn silence into sales.

What are those nine magical words?

You simply say – "Are you still looking for [insert product]?".

That's it. Not a syllable more.

Countless folks have been astounded at how such a tiny message can generate such a huge response.

Its power comes from its brevity and directness. No one could imagine something so brutally abrupt being sent to an entire list. Surely it's been sent to them only. Ignoring it would be rude.

Try it out and let me know if it works.

21. How a Dog Helped De Beers to Sell More Diamonds

Did you know that a dog invented branding?

Tis true.

It wasn't devised by an ancient sect of theologians, psychologists and savvy Greek business owners of luxury spas.

Branding was invented by a dog.

Allow me to explain…

If you've read Influence – The Psychology of Persuasion (and if not, add it to your list to Santa), you may know this story already.

In 1904 Ivan Pavlov won a Nobel Prize.

Not for finding a cure to indigestion or for negotiating a peace settlement to end the Chile-Bolivian war, but for discovering that you could get a dog to salivate by rubbing meat paste on its nose and ringing a bell.

What Pavlov discovered was that it's possible to implant an associative memory into the brain (a bit like Inception, I guess) that can be triggered with a recall cue.

In the dog's case, the memory was the smell of meat paste linked to the bell, and the memory became so hardwired that just ringing the bell was enough to get the dog to salivate.

What's this got to do with branding?

It turns out, people are as susceptible to mental cues as dogs.

It's how advertising is *supposed* to work – bombard your audience with enough noise and messages and they'll subconsciously reach for your brand on the supermarket shelf.

But mentally bullying your audience into submission, like it's a war of attrition, isn't the best way of selling.

Branding is at it's most effective when the implanted memory is 'salient'. This is a neurological term for important or relevant. When the message is salient you don't have to repeat it so many times for it to be embedded into their chemical long-term memory (rather than short-term electric memory).

So how can you create a salient memory?

There are three keys:

Consistency – Focus on one core message.

Frequency – Contact prospects multiple times with your core message.

Anchoring – Implant a recall cue that triggers the memory of your message.

De Beers doesn't sell diamonds

I can imagine you were nodding in sage agreement with the first two and then the mental brakes came on when you reached the third, correct?

So now you're wondering why I've opened another question loop and how do you anchor a memory?'

The answer, dear Crucible reader, is to give the dog what it wants.

Pavlov's dog salivated because it loved the smell of meat paste. You need to do the same with your audience.

Don't sell them the drill, sell them the hole.

To give you a less rolled out example, De Beers doesn't sell diamonds.

People could care less about the cut, clarity and Karat weight. They care about the **reaction**they get from giving them to the person they love.

Give your customers what they want

Do the same in your copy – offer the customer what they want.

Don't write about 'exceeding expectations', 'blue sky thinking' or about your widget's speed settings.

Talk about what *they* care about – their motivations, problems and dreams – to implant a salient memory.

Then when they actually need your client's product or service, it will be their brand that pops to the forefront of their thinking.

It may have seemed an odd choice, but awarding Mr Pavlov a Nobel Prize is something us copywriters have a lot to be thankful for.

22. My Morning Routine

Morning routines are a hot topic among 'growth hackers' these days. And many of them get competitive over who can set their alarm clock at the most insanely early hour and pack in the most soul enriching stuff before the milkman arrives.

My routine is pretty lightweight, so Tim Ferris and The Rock can rest easy.

I'm not a morning person. My routine's only aim is to force my brain into a gear slightly above sluggish, rather than redefining my place in the mulitverse.

7.30am – Alarm clock goes off. My brain wakes up long enough to switch on CNN or RT at high volume before I slip back into a coma.

8.00am – Headline news on what Donald Trump said wakes me up long enough to sit upright. I check my email, browse the news and see what Skype chats I missed.

8.15am – Grab my headphones from a drawer next to my bed and listen to a 15 minute guided meditation on YouTube (I recommend the Honest Guys channel).

8.30am – Now a full hour after my alarm clock first went off, I slide (rather than leap) out of bed to put on a pair of shorts before heading to the gym.

8.45am – Exercise for 30 mins, alternating between weights. running and yoga on different days to get the blood and brain cells flowing.

9.15am – Shower and breakfast.

9.30am – Grab a notepad and pen and fire up the latest assignment on Copyhour. This is a course I've been doing for the last year where they email you a successful direct response ad to dissect and copy by hand. If you've done all your homework on copywriting theory, I recommend taking Copyhour to start hardwiring smart sales writing into your brain.*

10.30am – I'm ready to tackle the day's projects with gusto. Just for good measure, I'll take a tablet of L-Theanine with my morning coffee (L-Theanine is a key active ingredient in most nootropics supplements) to get a caffeine buzz that seems to last the whole day..

My two 'hours of power' help me to banish the lethargy that plagued my mornings. I now feel more mentally alert and focused, and not wasting hours shopping for moleskine notebooks.

How about you? Any morning routine hacks you'd love to share?

23. The 5 Step 'Sideways Sales Letter' Method

Yesterday when I was working from a coffee shop when I overheard a conversation between a marketing consultant and a client.

Let me tell you, it was painful listening.

The consultant was trying to convince a rightly cynical client that social media was the 'new way' of marketing. That nobody read emails or visited corporate websites anymore and the client needed a flow of Facebook updates, Tweets and hashtags to shift his wares. I think the consultant may even have called it 'content marketing'.

After spitting coffee all over my laptop, I was forced to change seats. Partly because my battery was running low and I needed a wall socket. But mainly because I knew I wouldn't be able to sit in silence much longer without sharing some poignant facts:

- Email generates $44 for every $1 invested
- Only 34% of marketers think Facebook marketing is effective
- Even if you have 500k Facebook fans, less than 2% will see your updates
- With email, you're guaranteed they will at least see the subject line (as long as you're not spamming)
- Open rates for email are typically 20-30%
- Readership of email is increasing year on year, with people checking messages at spare moments on their smartphones

I could go on, but you get the idea.

Never build your farm on rented land

As I've mentioned multiple times at the Crucible: 'never build your farm on rented land'. In other words, building up Fans and followers puts you at the mercy of whatever changes the owner of that platform wants to make.

When Facebook tweaked their algorithm to limit the number of times people viewed 'promotional' posts it made a lot of social media marketers look sheepish. And best not to mention Google+ around anyone who does marketing for Starbucks.

With, an email list you keep control over how and when you can contact subscribers for as long as they stay subscribed, enabling you to keeping selling and promoting your services whatever disruption happens in the social media world.

So we're agreed: a large social media following is nice to have, and it can be effective when numbers run into the tens of thousands (on Twitter, anyway). But it's dirt poor engagement rate make it a questionable sales channel compared to email's massive (and quantifiable) ROI.

Using Email as a Sideways Sales Letter

Now, I'm not just writing to you to vent. I also wanted to share a strategy for maximizing your email marketing success. After all, it's easy to quote studies and stats on email, but the best way to guarantee success is to have a clear strategy.

Clients often ask me to write just one email, but I always tell them that five is better. Not to inflate my fee (you cynical types), but because any salesman worth his salt will tell you that the majority of sales come after the fifth contact.

So you should also structure campaigns so that prospects are contacted multiple times, whether it's by email, letter, postcard or biting the bullet and using for

phone for something other than Whatsapp (or is it Telegram, these days?) and Words with Friends.

Anyway, let's say we're focusing on email and we've built a list after running a lead generation campaign with a lead magnet. So we've given away something valuable to get people registered but haven't done anything yet to sell to them.

A smart approach would be to structure your emails so they follow the awareness scale, and take people from clueless about what you do to interested then convinced then whipping out their credit card before your stocks run dry. Jeff Walker coined this as using email like a 'sideways sales letter'.

You could structure your emails like this:

Email 1 – Unaware – Introduce yourself, tell them what you do and what's coming up in future emails (a.k.a. an 'onboarding' email).

Email 2 – Problem Aware – Rub salt in their wound by addressing the problem discussed in your lead magnet. Remind them how this problem is holding them back from the good life.

Email 3 – Solution Aware – Discuss their options for solving their problem. More importantly, mention why the existing solutions aren't working and they need something better.

Email 4 – Product Aware – Introduce your product or service as the optimum solution that can answer all their worries and their fears. The future looks brighter with it in their life.

Email 5 – Most Aware – Make an offer. Remind them of the problems they face if they do nothing and what they have to look forward to if they decide to buy (the crossroads method).

Following this email structure enables you to deliver a long sales pitch in delicious fun size portions that are easier for today's attention shy consumer to digest and respond to.

So if you ever find yourself within earshot of a social media consultant, consider politely tapping them on the shoulder and showing them this post. Hopefully, it may persuade them that they need a copywriter and digital sales warhorse, like yourself, sat alongside them the next time they pitch.

24. Shortcut to Writing Winning Sales Letters

Here's a clever technique for analysing sales letters that came up in the Copy Chief forum (hat tip Stephen Carter):

Copy and paste the sales letter into Google Docs (or Word, or whatever).

Then in BLOCK CAPITALS write what the copywriter is trying to do in each paragraph.

Do this enough times and you start to notice how copywriters follow the same pattern in every sales letter they write (more or less).

Then if you copy out the BLOCK CAPITAL sections into another doc you have the skeleton for a sales letter in the same niche.

Even better…

Before writing ANY sales letter, find at least 5 high performing sales letters on that topic. Repeat this exercise for each sales letter then combine the best elements of each to put yourself on the right tracks towards a winning promo.

25. 5 Ways to Project Status to Attract High Paying Clients

Want to know the secret to attracting high paying clients?

STATUS.

Clients respect status.

But it's not something you can earn just dropping knowledge bombs in Facebook groups.

You've got to project status with every interaction, Skype call, and piece of content you publish.

Here are five ways of developing the aura of status A list copywriters project to compete at the top table.

1.Demonstration

Demonstration is Gary Bencivenga's #1 form of proof.

'Showing' how you achieve results is far more powerful than 'telling' clients what an amazing copywriter you are.

Publishing case studies on LinkedIn, being interviewed, appearing on Podcasts, and sharing your secret tactics are all great ways of demonstrating your status as a major player who walks the walk.

2. Be scarce

When you're on a call with a new client, it can be tempting to offer 24 hour turnaround time on your proposal, email or whatever.

But this is firstly going to result in quality issues. Secondly, it's going to give the impression you were sat around twiddling your thumbs until you got their enquiry.

Always ask for more time than you realistically need (for practical reasons too) and make it clear your time is valuable by making it scarce.

3. Be the prize

As any high stakes negotiator (or serial dater) will tell you, neediness is the #1 way to repel people.

In every discovery call, make it clear you're the prize and the value you offer is greater than your fee. Remember that you're ultimately providing them with a 'sales machine', not a Word doc.

If your dance card is consistently full, consider giving new clients hoops to jump through, like a prescreening questionaire or simple puzzle. This helps scare away the price shoppers and ensures you're dealing with people who value your time and skills.

4. Be expensive

When a client asks for your rates, don't handover a pricelist like you're selling burgers at McDonalds.

Copywriters supply a service that results in customers, profits, satisfied shareholders, and salaries getting paid. Charge accordingly.

If you want to know if you're charging enough, check out AWAI's recommended rates for guidance.

5. Be the adult in the room

B level copywriters write the sales letter, wish the client luck then ride off into the sunset to hunt for their next victim.

Whereas A level copywriters take ownership and stick around for the long haul.

Experienced pros know only too well that campaigns are rarely profitable from day one. So they know to dig in and help the client make sense of the data, find the leaks, and to test what screams rather than what whispers.

A level copywriter also don't shy away from telling clients hard truths.

Sometimes clients have to be told their new super ingredient isn't all that super and how much they'll need to spend on testing before they have more than a snowball's chance in hell of profitability.

Sure, sticking around for the hard times is going to make your job harder, more stressful, and make you fondly remember the days of writing keyword articles in bulk.

Yet being the adult in the room is what defines A listers, and defines your status as a problem solver rather than just a wordsmith.

When all else fails, get adventurous

If you've already ticked off all 5 status builders, try being outrageous.

Wear suits with a personal coat of arms… add pink streaks to your hair… or create your own tagline.

But ultimately, when you strip away all the tactics and gimmicks, what matters is being someone who can get the job done.

There's no fast track to this.

The only way is to build your skills, get some wins, and take ownership of your losses.

Think and act like a class act and status will follow.

26. 3 Ways to Wage War on Bigger Competitors

"*The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting*" – Sun Tzu

Plucking away on a keyboard may not feel like an act of war.

But one day a client will come along who'll want to weaponise your words.

They'll want to turn your copy into hand grenades and psychological WMDs they can launch at competitors to win market share.

Because you see, "co-petitors" quickly turn into bitter rivals when markets get squeezed, shareholders have to be pacified, and salaries paid.

Should asymmetric warfare break out, it will be your marketing skills clients seek to deploy to dominate their opponents.

When you get the call, you may want to refuse or go AWOL.

But if you step aside and allow the competition to steal your client's customers, it will be YOU who's the bad guy.

Sometimes you just gotta stand and fight.

Here are 3 ways you can use your copy skills for waging war:

1. David vs Goliath

People always love a good underdog story.

Particularly when you can portray larger competitors as cold, uncaring, and chasing profits at the expense of the customer experience.

So if your client is the smaller dog in the fight, use that to your advantage.

Promote your client as the little guy who still believes in treating customers as friends, puts product quality above profits, and always has their customers' best interests at heart.

2. Find their weakness and exploit it

One of Gary Halbert's key lessons was never to reinvent the wheel.

Instead, find out what people are buying already then create a better version.

Start by finding out what the top selling products are in your niche. Then check reviews, popular questions, and forums to find out what's grinding people's gears about current solutions. Then present yours as the upgrade.

3. Steal customers with emotion

Framing the "reason why" your product exists can instantly give it a powerful USP that positions it superior to the competition.

For Harley Davidson their ‘reason why’ is the freedom of the open road.

For Apple it’s creating creative tools for people that think different.

While Nike has the founding story of an athletics coach who made his own rubber soled track shoes in his garage to reduce ankle injuries.

Another advantage of having a “reason why” is that if it resonates with your target customer it can get them to open up to you emotionally. And when an emotional bond is formed, desire and loyalty soon follow.

Is psychological warfare ethical?

If the idea of writing copy that stamps on a competitor’s toes makes you uncomfortable, you’re not alone.

But think of it this way…

If your product is the superior option, don’t you think you have a moral duty to convince people to buy it over a competitors’?

If it’s something that can improve their lives, isn’t it right to get in a customer’s head and prod their emotions so they take action?

But…

If you feel so guilty about “selling” you can barely write a word… maybe it’s because the product isn’t any good?

In which case, you need to rethink the clients you’re working with and attracting.

The ethics of selling is just one of many internal debates you’ll face in this psychologically charged career.

Because, just as every religion teaches, the greatest battle is in yourself.

And your success at winning internal struggles comes from expanding your knowledge, self awareness, and taking consistent action towards your goals.

27. Ever tried the “Columbo close”?

Ever tried the “Columbo Close”?

This is where you’re reaching the end of your sales letter… your prospect is wavering… and you hit them with “*Just one more thing*”.

A final killer benefit that obliterates their resistance.

Because one key point delivered at the right moment can be all it takes to clinch the sale.

The "Columbo Close" is one of many trump cards that can turn a so-so sales letter into a conversion monster.

Here are three more trump cards of persuasion for creating the tension and desire for reward that underpins every successful sales letter:

Trump Card 1 – Framing

"Victorious warriors win first and then go to war, while defeated warriors go to war first and then seek to win." – Sun Tzu

How you frame an offer can set you up for victory before they've got past the lead.

Frame control explains how a painting sold on the street for $5 can fetch $5,000 in an art gallery. And is what "branding" is all about.

Mark Joyner uses frame control to increase engagement in his presentations.

Before agreeing to speak at events, Mark demands to be the headliner. And this positioning combined with being presented as the "father of internet marketing" instantly increases the potency of his words before he even speaks.

It's why we listen when Robert De Niro talk about politics even though he's never run for office. We still see him through the frame of playing tough wise guys. We think his words have more value, when he's just an actor.

You have 3 shots at frame control:

Pre Framing – Introduce your offer with an absurd amount of glamour. Victor Caldini covers pre framing in detail in his *Presuasion* book (essential reading).

Midgame – Backup the preframe by delivering quality content and an avalanche of benefit bullets about your offer.

Post game – Follow up the sale with more quality content to avoid buyer's remorse. Because it's the first and last impressions that count the most.

Trump Card 2 – Zeigarnik Effect

Ever wondered how waiters can remember long orders in their heads but forget them the moment they're all delivered to the table?

It's due to the "Zeigarnik Effect".

This is the brain's ability to store information that's unresolved but forgets it the moment the puzzle is solved. In copywriting it's commonly known as creating "open loops".

You can harness the Zeigarnik Effect by telling readers about the incredible information you're going to reveal. Then before you reveal it, open another loop to keep their brains eager to solve another puzzle.

The Zeigarnik Effect is the essence of powerful storytelling.

It's why Star Wars has 3 storylines running concurrently. And why each story section ends with a cliffhanger before switching to another thread.

The Zeigarnik Effect is also the secret sauce behind the success of Dan Brown's Da Vinci Code. A book critics loathed but readers couldn't put down.

Trump Card 3 – Story

Along with the Zeigarnik Effect, every story should have a "hero's journey".

The basic outline is:

- The hero has a seemingly impossible problem to solve
- They hit rock bottom and are close to giving up
- They meet a guru
- The guru gives them a path or a quest item
- The hero overcomes their problem

- They become a better version of themselves

Stories are powerful because we're hardwired to listen, attach meaning to them, and give the outcome more significance than a dry medical study.

Readers also feel emotionally engaged with a protagonist's struggle due to "morphic residence". Morphic residence is why we feel the pain of someone else going through a tough ordeal we can relate to.

If you ever find yourself struggling for ideas on how to start a sales letter, start with a story.

Stories are engaging whatever your reader's awareness level of their problem or your product. Making stories the ultimate universal lead.

Want to be a better storyteller?

Try these tips:

- Put on music that represents the vibe you're trying to capture
- Believe you're a good storyteller
- Believe what you're telling the customer is the most important thing they'll read today
- Show don't tell. In other words, don't use adjectives. But if you must, use them sparingly.

These three trump cards are powerful on their own.

But when you combine them together, your prospect's brain has too much to process. Rendering them defenseless to your pitch.

28. How to Resurrect a Cold Email List

Got a list of subscribers you haven't contacted in a while?

Here's how to re-engage in a way they'll welcome and can generate sales at the end…

Don't send a grovelling email saying "sorry for not contacting".

March in with fanfare and ribbon tape like you're Macho Man Randy Savage.

Hit them with your best stuff. And if people unsubscribe, see it as cleansing the unworthy.

Aim for a week's worth of quality content before presenting another offer. And remember that even if your open rate is just 20%, those 20% are your raving fans. They're people eager to consume your content and open to you promoting products that help them on their journey.

Today's tip comes courtesy of Brian Cassingena's presentation at Project Persuasion Goes Dark 3.0.

29. Creating a Personal Brand that Crushes

Want to know how to attract higher paying clients and lift your rates?

You've got to boost your status.

The good news is it's never been easier to grow your personal brand and your status along with it.

And the way to do it is to develop your "channel".

Because when you want to step up into the big leagues, you can't settle for being just a copywriter.

You've got to become a channel.

A channel people can subscribe to, follow, and Like.

But they'll only follow you if they see you as someone on the rise. Because if you're someone on the ascendance, they'll want to hop a ride on your coat tails.

But if your progress stalls or your content sucks, they'll abandon you just as fast.

A more successful copywriting guru is one swipe away.

So you need to be strategic about what you publish and how it reflects your brand. Every post needs to promote what makes you unique, what you represent, and why people should listen.

As Dan Kennedy says "*Only fools market the thing*".

Pros know to maket what makes a "thing" special. And a great way to do this is to harness "self-congruity".

Take the Tai Lopez Masterclass in Self-congruity

Self-congruity is why people are attracted to certain brands. It's because these brands project the values they desire to obtain, and represent the tribe they want to belong to.

Take Tai Lopez.

Lopez targets people who desire status and money. So he projects his own status and money to attract them.

His followers see money as the trigger for all the other things they want in life. So Lopez projects himslves as the ideal version his target market wants to become.

Because you see, we have three versions of ourselves:

- Past self
- Present (real) self
- Ideal future self

The present self is what people want to escape. And it's becoming the ideal future self that triggers all their hot desire buttons.

Lopez knows to present himself as his market's ideal future self. Because it's the most powerful way to get people to take action.

Use Glamour to Magnify Your Appeal

Hand-in-hand with self-congruity goes "glamour".

Glamour is the act of glorifying or magnifying what's real.

Lopez uses the imagery of cars, stacks of money, and private jets to create glamour around his brand.

He may take glamour to extremes. But it's something we all do all the time.

If you use filters on photos, dress up in clothes you wouldn't normally wear, or rent cars and houses for photoshoots, you're using glamour to enhance your personal brand.

But you've got be careful about how you use glamour.

Because it's an illusion.

And if you use it too much to hide what you don't want the world to see, like how a ballerina's shoes hide the bruises, the backlash can be brutal.

Display your Kryptonite

Nobody likes people who are fake or pretend to be too perfect.

When Superman was unbeatable, few fans felt emotionally engaged with his struggles.

But when it was discovered kryponite robs his powers, his popularity soared.

When you try to seem too perfect, people are eager to see you get smashed into a skyscraper by an alien.

It's only when you admit you're not unbeatable after all that people come to your side.

So if you've spend too much time developing a perfect online persona, consider showing some weakenesses.

And a great way to do it is with "Zohavian Handicap Signalling".

Zohavian Handicap Signalling is where you do something high risk to display your weakness.

It's why antelopes jump up and down when a lion appears. Not because they want to get chased. But because they know their display of bravery will help attract a mate.

Make High Risk Gestures Others Aren't Willing to Do

If you want to create a channel and online persona that's unique, attracts your target market, and doesn't push "glamour" to the point of fakery, think what you can do to reveal something about yourself that's high risk.

Take a stand on a contentious issue. Rattle some cages. Call out someone for offering bad advice.

And when you do, record a full production video instead of just going live in your car on Facebook.

Because when you do what others are unwilling to do in defining your brand, the more you'll crush competitors playing it safe.

And the more Likes, follows, and subscribers you'll get to your channel.

30. 7 Mindset Hacks for Copywriting Success

“Father of online marketing” Mark Joyner knows a thing or two about stress.
During his time as a CIA agent spying on North Korea, he had to be aware of his surroundings every waking moment on edge.

The ability to stay calm under pressure then served him well as a serial entrepreneur, with 30+ startups under his belt.
At Project Persuasion Goes Dark, Mark Joyner shared his advice on managing stress and staying at the peak of your game.

Stress kills

It drains your energy. Darkens your mood. Makes you sick. And it takes years off your life.
Stress may be unavoidable.
But in the freelance copywriting game, where you’ve swapped the comfort of a regular paycheck for surviving by your wits and word processor, having systems for managing stress is vital to your success.

1. Reduce Overwhelm

Our brain’s can only handle so much information at once. But the amount of apps, channels, and people demanding our attention overwhelmed our brain capacity a long time ago.
The only way to stay productive is to make some cuts.
Identify the habits and channels that aren’t helping you (for me, it’s reading the news) and look to reduce the time you invest in them. Or even better, cut them completely.
Focus on the things you can control and help you towards your goals. Everything else is a distraction.

2. Don’t Feed the Trolls

“The greatest fear in the world is of the opinions of others. And the moment you are unafraid of the crowd you are no longer a sheep. You become a lion. A great roar arises in your heart. The roar of freedom” – Osho
Haters gonna hate.
Us copywriters (me included) tend to be introverted types. We don’t go looking for fights on Twitter.

But as you start growing your following and running ads, the trolls will find you. There's no shortage of frustrated people in this world looking for someone to unload on. So when they come, set ground rules on how you engage, if at all.

Personally, I engage with people online the same way I would face-to-face. But if they can't play nice, I pull down the shutters.

A mind hack for dealing with trolls is to be clear on who you are and what you do. That way you can create emotional distance so you can walk away without feeling like you've lost face.

After all, if you've confidence in what you have to offer, why should some random troll's need to unleash bother you?

3. Pursue Fulfilling Projects

Life's too short to be working for clients who don't appreciate you or writing about junk nobody needs.

Find projects and quality products you believe in.

This will naturally make the hours at the keyboard more fulfilling. Believing in what you're selling will naturally make your copy more persuasive too.

4. Replicate Your Role Models

Why allow your feeds to get polluted with people complaining when there are so many positive people to take inspiration from?

People I follow include Arnold Schwarzenegger (if you've read his autobiography you'll get why), Joe Rogan, and Dave Asprey (Bulletproof Coffee founder). I follow them for their work ethic, desire to inspire others to be better versions of themselves, and their healthy attitudes to life.

We might not have the money and success of our celebrity idols. But what we can do is share some of the traits that led to their success.

So write down the characteristics of your role models you admire. Then try to adopt them in your daily life.

5. Know Your Path

"Comfort is bullshit. Getting most out of yourself is real comfort. Get that through commitment" – The Iceman Wilmhoff

We live in the safest period in history. Globally, you're less likely to be killed in war or die in poverty. But that doesn't mean happiness is assured.

We still carry the same primal drives as our ancestors. They had to struggle every day to survive. And the only reason they survived and prospered was because of their motivation to overcome challenges.

The drive to overcome challenges is still buried within us. And it's something we're going to need armies of psychologists and sociologists to cope with when AI arrives. When people suddenly have no reason to get up in the morning they're primed to self destruct.

It may still be a few years before AI can write a natural sounding sales page.

So until that day arrives, remember it's making progress towards your goals that makes you happy. Not the pot of gold at the end.

6. Enjoy the Ride

When you retire, your brain starts to shut down.

The satisfaction that comes from living a productive life was reinforced to me when I met Drayton Bird a couple of years ago.

Drayton is the UK's copywriting godfather. Our own David Ogilvy. And he's still going strong in this 80s. I plan on doing the same.

Many entrepreneurs see retiring by age 40 as the goal. Or amassing a few mill to pay for endless travel.

But this is a mistake countless millionaires have made. They may have bank vaults of cash to roll around in, but many still feel empty inside.

It's the journey, not the destination. So enjoy the ride.

7. Conquer Procrastination

Procrastination arises from indecision + distraction.

Here's how to beat it...

Get clear on what you want. Write it down. Then write down how getting stuff done gets you closer to that goal. And post it somewhere around your screen.

Writing down your objectives this way makes it easier to stay focused on the prize. You can strip away the time wasting habits and bat away the "fear" of doing something hard that makes many of us freeze when staring at a blank screen.

If that's not enough to get you shutting down tabs, keep ratcheting up your desire for the things you want until it overwhelms your avoidance behaviors.

The more you focus on being productive, the more it becomes a habitual pattern.

31. Easy Way to Get $5k Retainers

1. Google “[keyword] we hate spam as much as you do” to find newsletters related to your area of specialist knowledge.

2. Signup to their newsletter and see if their thank you page takes you to an affiliate offer

3. If not, send them an example of an advertorial you’ve written and explain how turning their thank you page into an advertorial can instantly earn them more moolah

4. Followup with an offer to write their daily emails for $5k a month

32. Mass Hallucination

I'm guy wearing the hat second from the right back row

Last weekend I attended Project Persuasion Goes Dark in Phuket.
Over 3 days I was lucky enough to rub shoulders and grab quick chats with legendary marketer Mark Joyner, personal branding genius Mitch Miller, and email wiz Brian Cassingena. And all while having my brain expanded by sessions on deep marketing psychology. Some of it was pretty dark too.
The good news is you won't have to run a gauntlet of stray dogs each day, like I did, to learn it. Because I'm going to share the chunkiest golden nuggets with you.
First off, a post based on Mitch Miller's session on why we're all living a mass hallucination, and why the world's not as real as we think...

Is the world real? Or are we living in a simulation?

It's a question that baffles the world's brightest minds. And it's beyond the scope of this post (or my brain's capacity) to answer.
But what I can tell you is that all of us are experiencing the world in different ways.
No, I'm not about to jump down the rabbit hole of alternative realities. What I'm talking about is how we all view the world through a different "lens".
This lens dictate how we view ourselves, events, and the world around us. Over time, it gets filtered by our own biases and experiences. And it dictates how we think, behave, and the stuff we buy.

Buying Choices are Based on Fiction

Let's say you're buying a new pair of jeans. Do you check the quality of the denim, the stitching on the inside leg ("selvedge" to fashionistas), or size of the pockets?

Or do you just make a beeline for your favorite brand?

Whether we like to admit it or not, we're all on a quest to be liked and validated. We buy things we think help us on this quest. And the choices we make are all based on our individual lens.

So what is this lens exactly?

It can be broken down into 2 layers:

1. Shared fiction "mass hallucination" layer

The world is filled with mass movements based on ideas.

Brands, money, and countries all started as ideas. But because enough people believe in them, they morphed to became accepted as true.

The shared fiction layer has led to all sorts of subcultures, trends, and tribes emerging. Groups we all seek to belong to because of how we see the world and our place in it.

2. Individual fiction layer

This layer defines our own reality. It controls how we perceive ourselves and the tribes we think we belong to.

We believe this layer to be as true as the first layer. It's how we experience the world so it seems real to us. But when you dig down, it's even more false than the first layer.

Brands Look Different Through Different Lenses

We can only experience the world through our own lens. So you could say everything we know is an illusion. Just a single view on the vastness of human experience.

Yet, our lens controls the brands we're attracted to. We choose brands that reflect our own individual fiction and our desire for social status, prestige and belonging.

Take Gucci, for example.

To some people it's the height of sophistication and glamour (more on "glamour" in an upcoming post). To others it's garish, or even vulgar.

But what matters for the person wearing Gucci is that through their own lens it satisfies their need for uniqueness and tribalism.

Your Copy Has to Satisfy Both Layers

I know this all sounds confusing and woo woo.
But the bottom line is that when writing about a brand you need to think how you can pitch it so it satisfies both layers of target buyer's lens.

You need to explain how it meets their individual layer's need for uniqueness and shared fiction layer of belonging to a tribe. Only then will they view it as a product that can help them on their quest to being liked and validated.

33. Big 3 Copywriter Traits to Go from Good to Great

In our line of work, there are no diplomas, certificates, or league tables to tell you when you've made the grade.

There's no board of examiners to say when you've progressed from competent to craftsman.

Sure, praise from clients and conversion stats helps.

But if you want to feel confident you've got the chops to compete with the best, there are six key copywriter traits to embed in your playbook:

1. Confidence You Can Deliver Results

Confidence doesn't come from posting your open rates in Facebook and waiting to be applauded with emojis.

Confidence means knowing you can get the job done.

It comes from knowing how to find the unmet desires in the marketplace...knowing how to research to dig up that golden USP that will bring in

a rush of customers…and knowing how to drill for riches in niches where no one else is looking.

The bottom line is this: When you're a great copywriter, going from discovery call to dominating a market is no longer a mystery. You've got the skills to dial in on what needs to be done, and you know what results clients can expect on launch day.

2. Knowing the Customer Like a Friend

Good copywriters know to turn features into red hot bullets.

Great copywriters know how to aim those bullets square between the prospect's eyes.

It's a glorious day in a copywriter's career to ask a client for a customer bio and be rewarded with a buyer persona so detailed you wonder if they've been bugging a customer's phone.

But back in the real world, it's down to you to scour Amazon reviews…mine Facebook groups….infiltrate Reddit tribes…and run Ask method surveys to work out what will convince people to buy your client's wares.

This is all good level research.

Great level research is plucking it from the horse's mouth.

That means speaking to customers in real life.

Whether you do it in the flesh or over the phone (Whatsapp doesn't count) a two way conversation with a living, breathing human is the best way of getting them to speak off the cuff, rather than in considered soundbites.

You want them to vent. To rage on their nagging pains…their frustration with all the shoddy products they've tried before….and how they'll think twice before falling for clever marketing tricks again.

All you need to do is listen, ask the right questions, and take notes.

Then when you sit down to write, it will be like they're sat across the table. All you then need to do is write what will convince them you offer the salvation they need. When you can do that, clever wordplay isn't needed.

3. A Master of Big Ideas, Hooks, and Story

As you progress up the levels eventually you're going to wade into a saturated market where you have to wrestle a "market sophistication level 5" problem (check out Great Leads by Michael Masterson for more on market sophistication).

This is a brutal place where the market has been plundered to death. A once fertile paradise ravaged with so many false promises that jaded customers have stopped believing any claims you can make.

It's a place where copywriters become legends, or have their reputation tarnished.

Yet, level 5 problems can be conquered with the right approach.

Ways to do it include:

- Creating a new cause of their pain so you can present your product as a new solution
- Combining 2 or 3 market trends into a new overarching theme
- Being the first to reveal a breakthrough before it's reached the mainstream
- Explaining how the product works at a deeper level (Joe Sugarman was a master at this)
- Using the power of storytelling, with multiple soap opera swings and sensory language, to take the reader on an emotionally interesting journey. A story that motivates them to stop praying for change but to stride towards a bold new future in which they become the person they want to be viewed as by others (and not just by themselves).
- Harnessing celebrities, Nobel prize winners, NASA, diabolical Nazi experiments, or an Amazonian tribe that diabetes forgot to present a pitch more compelling than the zaniest National Enquirer exposé.

It can take grizzled veterans 6 months or more to develop the big idea, hook, and mechanism with which to take down a level 5 problem.

The good news is that if you're victorious it can mean having enough coins in the vault to take the rest of the year off. It can even mean retiring early to down piña coladas on a beach somewhere (but who wants that).

Want to Know More About Going from Good to Great? Subscribe to David Garfunkel's Copywriter Podcast Immediately

This post is a condensed list of David Garfunkel's big 6 traits of a great copywriter, as discussed in episodes 67 and 68 of his Copywriters Podcast.

Mr Garfunkel (I'm not worthy to call him David) is known as the world's greatest copywriting coach. You'll soon understand why when you listen to his podcast as he shares insights more valuable than you'll find in many $5,000+ courses. Yet, bizarrely, you don't have to pay a dime.