

12 easy steps to awesome copy!

12 EASY STEPS TO AWESOME COPY!

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Creating an effective sales message isn't done only by award winning copywriters. As copywriting is more like a scientific formula than an art form, anyone can learn to do it. Even professionals use templates. They use the following 12-step outline to easily produce great sales messages that get results.

Removing Buyers Resistance

Everyone has natural buying resistance. The main task of a sales page is to overcome that resistance and at the same time persuade the reader to take whatever action you request them to take. I sometimes see it as a salesman's obstacle race. The first salesman to get through all the obstacles is the winner. Make the sale or get them to take action that is.

It really doesn't matter if you are giving your sales message on-line, in person, by letter or multi-media ad; the process of overcoming the obstacles, or resistance, is pretty much the same. The objections are not always voiced of course. Some are not mentioned at all while others are implied. Here are just seven common ones:-

1. "My problem is unique"
2. "What makes you qualified?"
3. "I don't believe you"
4. "I don't need it right now"
5. "I can't see it working for me"
6. "What if I buy it but don't like it?"
7. "Too expensive for me"

Not all of these issues will apply in every case. A successful sales message will have to address as many as possible though. The following 12-step selling sequence addresses each issue in a certain order designed to reduce objections in an emotional and effective way that is well known to copywriters. The 12-steps are:-

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1. Grab their attention
2. Identify and agitate the problem
3. Tell them you have the solution
4. Show you are qualified
5. Explain the benefits
6. Demonstrate social proof
7. Describe your offer
8. Detail your guarantee
9. Apply scarcity
10. Call to action
11. Issue a warning
12. Give a full reminder at the close.

Every step builds on their emotions by agitating or calming their fears in a logical order.

Emotion Controls Motivation

More often than not, a purchase is made based on emotions, and only afterwards does logic get applied. It is important to remember this as your 12-step sales sequence is designed to build emotion on emotion to a point where your prospect feels they must take the action you describe. There are actually only two emotions that motivate people to take action. They are pleasure or pain. Often interpreted as the promise of gain or the fear of loss. Of these two emotions, fear of loss is the strongest motivator.

Consider this

When spending \$47 on a course to improve your marital relationship, would you choose “How To Improve Your Marriage” or would you prefer “How to Stop Your Divorce”. There is stacks of data showing the 2nd course sells five times more than the first. Why? Because it relates to the fear of loss!

There are eight ‘universal motivations’ behind the gain and loss emotions which virtually everyone responds to. No matter what product or service is being

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promoted it needs to be positioned so its benefits supports one or more of the following universal motivations.

- 1 To be wealthy
- 2 To be healthy
- 3 To have security
- 4 To be good looking
- 5 To be popular
- 6 To have fun
- 7 To have free time
- 8 To achieve inner peace

These eight motivations are what are *really* wanted. The purchase of any service or product is just a means of getting these benefits. Be certain to ensure that your sales message addresses these motivational elements.

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The 12-Step Sales Message Outline

Now knowing the obstacles to action and the motivators to take action, I'll show you the 12-steps of creating a successful sales message.

1. Grab Their Attention

Assuming your prospect has opened your email or landed on your sales page, you then have to grab and hold their attention. Your opening headline should be the first thing your prospect reads. If your headline doesn't appeal enough to make them read further then the rest will never get read – goodbye. Nowadays a short attention span is the norm and people often read with one finger over the mouse button so they can just click you away.

Here are three headline generating templates that are proven to grab interest.

"HOW TO _____"

Wanting to know how to do things has always been a great draw. A "How to" headline plus a highly desirable benefit, will always attract attention. They are possibly two of the most powerful words you can include in a headline.

"SECRETS OF _____ REVEALED!"

If there is anything people are curious about it's secrets. Curiosity is a powerful driver when it comes to getting people to read about what it is you know that they think they don't know. People seek power, and knowledge is power to the reader. Discovering secrets is really attractive to many.

WARNING: DONT EVEN THINK OF _____ UNTIL YOU _____.

If you issue a warning then it raises the fear of loss and we know loss is the greatest motivator.

If there may be a chance of losing something that concerns them, then the reader will want to continue reading in order to seek the answer to prevent that loss.

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2. Identify and Agitate the Problem

After gaining their attention you need to keep interest by not only spelling out their problem but making it sound much worse too. Say things to make them feel the emotions of their problem. You need them to say “Yes, that’s exactly my feelings.” Really grind the bad effects of the problem into their emotions.

This tactic is known as ‘problem aggravation’. After outlining the problem you stir things up so that so much that they can visualize all the hurt and agony of the situation. Being creatures of firm habits, people, and even businesses, will rarely accept a change unless a great amount of pain is registering with them.

Let’s say you were selling paint for example. I couldn’t think of anything less exciting but it will serve as an example. You agitate the problem by describing in a short story what can happen without your product.

“On your way home you pass all the smartly painted houses in a variety of colors all looking very smart. Then you get to your own house. There is some color in your paintwork but it faded long ago and doesn’t look like it has been loved in a long while. In places the paint is peeling off and one of the window frames is actually starting to rot.

You know very well that soon all your woodwork will be rotting and will be very expensive to replace unless you do something about it very soon. What you need is a new paintjob with a longer lasting look of quality to it.”

The scenario I’ve described highlights the negative points of a problem that might not have been noticed over time. I’ve now agitated both the readers ego and the thought of greater expense if they do not act now.

3. Tell them you have the Solution

Now that you reader is feeling pain in regard to their problem, they are much more interested in knowing about the solution which you are about to provide right now.

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At this point you introduce yourself and just tell them about your product or service without going into any great detail. That comes next. All you give is reassurance that your product or service will solve their problem for them.

4. Show you are qualified

As soon as your prospect has read that you can solve their problem they start to think “Ok, what does he know about it? — Anyone can say that.” So your next statements are crucial. You show that you are qualified to handle their problem by giving your credentials, proving that you are trustworthy.

Demonstrate your credentials by telling stories about, or listing, at least two of the following:-

1. Successful past results.
2. Prestigious companies (or people) that are past clients.
3. The length of time you’ve been in this business
4. Conferences you have spoken at.
5. Your awards or industry recognitions.

In this section your prospects impression should be that you are someone that really knows what they are talking about and has proven to get excellent results for their clients.

As a point of interest there is a difference when using the terms ‘client’ or ‘customer’.

Copywriters loosely define a customer as someone that someone that buys your product and leaves. You don’t know much, if anything, about them other than they bought your product.

A client is someone that has a closer relationship and usually gives repeat business.

5. Explain the Benefits

Once you have established that you understand their problem and are qualified to help, you can now explain how they will benefit from your solution. NOT *could* benefit – Will benefit. You do not talk about what your product does but only

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the benefits it gives. The results your prospect wants to get from buying. They are not interested in you or your product/service. Only what it can do for them.

To help you define the differences between the features and benefits of any product or service try the following exercise:-

Divide a piece of paper down the centre. Write what your product/service does (the features) in the left hand column. Now write what each feature does for the buyer (the benefits) on the right.

Benefits can be obvious and not so obvious; hidden benefits they are known as.

For example, a session in a hot tub makes you feel relaxed and stress free. However, it also gives the hidden benefit of being able to talk to your fellow hot tub companions in a relaxed atmosphere without any of the usual distractions. A greater hidden benefit of that is better communication with those you care about which makes for a stronger family/partnership bond.

List your benefits as one line bullet points. This makes them easier to read. Many times a prospect might buy a product/service based on only one bullet pointed benefit. So list as many benefits as possible without overdoing it. Too many bullet points in one list and none will get read. So break them up into several short lists if needs be.

6. Demonstrate Social Proof

Once you have stated all your benefits, doubt is likely to creep in again. Yes, they want what you claim to be true but...

So now you show that satisfied customers found your solution was so good they sent you testimonials. This not only builds your credibility but it also shows they are not alone in thinking your product is good value.

Testimonials that back up your claims are powerful aids to selling. They work even better if you can also show photos of your customers with their name and the area they live in displayed. They are even stronger if you can put that they have a position of authority within the community. John Smith of the city fire dept, sounds more authoritative than just plain John Smith.

7. Describe Your Offer

Your offer is the second most important part of your sales message after your headline. Great offers will still work with below average copy. Unfortunately, brilliant copy will always fail if your offer is poor. You need to make such an incredibly irresistible offer that your reader thinks “I would be stupid to pass this up.”

The most favored offers are usually a mix of price, terms and added value items. As an example, when I bought my last car I was offered a heavily discounted price, a low interest rate with favorable terms and a years free insurance.

When putting your offer together it is advisable to add value items to the offer rather than discount the price. You should also sell the benefits of the added items to ensure the whole deal sounds much more valuable than just the basic product or service.

8. Give a Guarantee

Taking all the risk out of a purchase makes our offer even more irresistible. People have always been frightened they might get ripped off. Have you ever been stuck with an inferior product because you couldn't get your money refunded?

You must be confident enough in your product or service to give an absolutely rock solid guarantee. If you can't, then perhaps you should not make the offer in the first place.

An on-line business, or any small business, already has a strong guarantee that they may not be aware of. Should they have a really upset customer demanding their money back the answer would almost certainly be 'OK' rather than risking getting bad publicity all over the Internet and elsewhere.

Many businesses that give strong guarantees don't usually shout about them. They are frightened that buyers will take them up on it regardless of how good their product or service is. In reality that rarely happens. It's been quite some time since I last asked for a full refund. How about you?

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Here is a guarantee that I use for a product I sell.

“100% No Questions Asked, Full Refund Guarantee”

I will personally promise that, provided you make a focused effort and use the methods detailed in this course, you will produce at least \$4,520 in profit over the next 12 months. Yes, you read that correctly, an additional \$4,520 you would not have received without following the techniques I’ve given you. If not, I’ll give you a full refund of every penny of the course.

Heck, I’ll give you double protection. If at any time over the next 12 months you honestly and truly believe I fell short of delivering you what I promised, I’ll be happy to give you a full refund. Right up to the last day in month twelve!

The possibility of being able to get specific benefits, in this case their money back, for up to 12 months for what seems like any reason they may not yet know about, eliminates all risk in the buyers mind. Actually, the longer the guarantee period the less likely people will make use of the guarantee. They think they have plenty of time to claim their money back but in reality they forget about it completely.

There is only one downside to a really good offer. It might not be believable. You have probably heard the saying ‘If it’s too good to be true, then it probably is.’ The way to dissuade this thought is to explain why you are making such a good offer. If a believable ‘why’ is given, it may even help to make them purchase even faster.

9. Apply Scarcity

Most people do not buy a product or service at first sight. They take their time choosing and sometimes don’t follow through at all. There are a great many reasons why people do not immediately purchase a solution. Here are just a few:-

1. Their pain isn’t strong enough to motivate them.
2. Some are just forgetful even though they intended to buy.
3. They want more value than you seem to be offering for the cost involved.

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4. Some are just too lazy.

Some people need a bit of an extra incentive to persuade them to take immediate action.

We know that people are more inclined to feel loss than be attracted by gain. Getting them to feel an impending loss can be done by including scarcity into your message.

If it is perceived that something a person wants is in short supply they often act quickly to make sure they get their share of it. You can create this scarcity feeling by informing your prospect that you are either limiting supply or your offer is only available for a certain length of time. Be sure to explain why you are doing this or it will not be believable.

Your offer could be along these lines:

"If you purchase by (future date) the entire set of bonuses will be yours. Bonuses will be reduced at the rate of (x)" This works even better if you have a set of bonuses that reduce over time. They will want them all so will buy faster.

Or

"Supply is limited to (x) as we need to be able to maintain service levels to our buyers. Places will be allocated on a first come first served basis. We do not anticipate being able to open more places for at least another (x) months.

Or

"We are offering this package at this price only until (date or quantity) is reached. After which we will be closing access and will be re-opening access at a much higher price at a later date.

A cautionary note: If you do make a conditional offer then keep to the terms originally stated. If you do not, then trust and confidence will be lost in regard to any future offer you may make. Believe me, the news that you are not trustworthy will travel.

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10. Make Your Call to Action

Place calls to action throughout your message. You never know at what point your prospect decides to buy, so give them several opportunities as they read down your message. Many people don't read all the way to the bottom of a sales page so it is vital that you have more points to purchase all the way through your message and not just at the end.

You may be wrong in assuming that the reader knows exactly what to do to get your offer. Spell out very clearly, in plain easy language, every action needed to complete their order. Describe exactly what will happen when they press that 'Buy Now' button on your sales page.

Explain how they will get an email that needs their attention in order to register their purchase. Tell them where to go if things look like they have gone wrong.

10. Issue a Warning

An effective sales message continues to build emotion, all the way to the last word of text.

That is, past your last call to action. Reiterate the 'risk of loss' they would suffer from by not investing in your offer. Perhaps even give a few examples. For instance:-

- Keep struggling to make ends meet from day to day.
- Work too hard for very little return.
- Lose out and not receive the valuable bonuses currently on offer.
- See no improvement in their life and keep getting only what they already have.
- See other companies win all the new business.
- Etc., etc.

Remind the prospect of the consequences of in action. Graphically illustrate in their mind how bad their state will become if they do not take action now. Describe how bad their current state already is and reiterate that it does not have to be that way.

12. Give a Full Reminder at the Close

Inserting a postscript (P.S.) is essential. Because, and you might not believe this, the P.S. is the 3rd most read section of your entire sales message. I know of some copywriters that use several postscripts. (P.P.P.S.) The reason for this is that the postscript is where you put the bones of your offer as a reminder of everything in the sales message.

Over time readers have become conditioned to this practice so will often go straight down to your P.S. to get all of your offer in a nutshell. No sales talk that may cloud any issues. That is why a postscript gets read. So here too you reiterate both your guarantee and the biggest scarcity element you have. Plus your call to action of course.

That's it!

Your powerful sales message is ready for action. Following this 12-step formula just about anyone can create an effective message that sells. Below are few tips to help you sharpen your message up even more.

Tip #1: Write out the Features/Benefits — Once you have something to work with, getting started on writing your sales message is a lot easier.

Using a set of 3 x 5 cards write out a single feature on one side of the card. Turn the card over and write down every benefit, both obvious and hidden, that you can think of for that feature. Continue for as many features/benefits you can think of. Just by doing this you will get into the flow of writing and will be knowledgeable on your subject.

Tip #2: Having written and completed your sales message, leave it alone for a day or two. I've no idea how this works but this break lets you see your message in a new light. You will often see where you can edit and improve it. It's also a good idea to let someone else read it through before you send it out into the world. They will let you know if what you have written is understood in the way you meant when you wrote it. They may also pick up on a few mistakes you may have missed.

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Tip #3: Create a "swipe file" to help give you some proven ideas from past publications. Especially if it's an advertisement that comes in the mail. Those guys employ real experts to write their copy for them as it is so expensive to get it wrong. Modeling their copy can be very lucrative. World famous copywriter Gary Halbert used to keep his swipe file copies in an old wooden potato box. He just used to kick the contents all over the floor to search for ideas.

Tip #4: Some wealthy copywriters I know of develop a written profile of their imaginary ideal customer. By doing interviews and collecting as much information about their target market as they can, they are then able to write a very personal and effective sales message to the type of people known to buy the product or service they are selling. Some even put up a photo and give a name to their avatar as their imaginary customer/client is called.

Tip #5: The question often comes up as to how long should a sales message be. The consensus is that it should be 'Only as long as it needs to be' This translates as make sure you include each of the 12-steps talked about above but do not go into a long diatribe on any of the points. You need to build up the emotion for your case but do not pad out what should be a concise and effective story.

The length should also be relevant to the medium it is delivered by too. No good sending a 24 page email as it will not get read. A half page on a website may seem to short. Do not post a half hour video when a 2 minute one will do. Effectiveness is what you are looking for.

As I've said, most anyone is able to write a powerful and effective sales message in any medium by following the basic rules of this easy 12-step process. Just ensure that each step is followed in the order that it has been presented. That way each step builds upon the previous one to build up an emotional case that is highly effective at getting the desired results.