



## **Victor Schwab - the Mad Man who taught the Mad Men**

*"Hello, is there anybody in there? Just nod if you can hear me, is there anyone home?  
Come on now. I hear you're feeling down. I can ease your pain and get you on your feet again.*

*There is no pain, you are receding - a distant ship's smoke on the horizon.*

*You are only coming through in waves - your lips move, but I can't hear what you're saying.*

*When I was a child, I caught a fleeting glimpse out of the corner of my eye. I turned to look but it  
was gone.*

*I cannot put my finger on it now, the child is grown. But the dream is gone.*

*I have become comfortably numb..."*

When David Gilmour and Roger Waters of The Floyd wrote that magnificent piece of art in 1979, little did they know how prophetic those words would become.

32 years ago, they were writing about the marketing business in 2011.

It's almost spot on. I would only change one thing. 'Comfortably brain dead' instead of 'numb'. Numb suggests a heartbeat. The vast majority of the marketing collateral I see today doesn't have one.

I don't know about you, but I'm fed up to the back teeth of crap in our business...

It's everywhere. All the time. Just like a nagging toothache...

So, this month, I'm going to try and keep sane and warm by talking about *greatness*. Problem is, bar for Drayton, there is little to none in our business anymore.

So, I'm going to go back in time to share some greatness with you. I'm going to talk about Victor Schwab. And, if you write and create ads for a living, this article will be 100% pure *education* for you. And fun too, I hope...

Victor Schwab was one of the greatest ad copywriters of all time.

He was born in Hoboken, New Jersey in 1898.

At the age of 19, Schwab enrolled at Columbia University as a night student. Whilst there, he met Maxwell Sackheim, who at that time, was copy chief with Ruthrauff and Ryan, a leading mail-order advertising agency of the day.

Schwab impressed Sackheim and was given a job. He started slowly, as most geniuses do. Because Schwab could take shorthand, he was used by Sackheim in 1917 mainly as his private secretary.

Sackheim was highly skilled in writing mail-order copy. Yet Schwab continually improved Sackheim's copy. So much so, he was promoted to copywriter and then went from strength to strength.

INSTRUCTION

Business Schools. Business Schools. Business Schools.

# A Message to Bookkeeper.

## Wishing to Earn \$100 a Week

By Victor Schwab

(Note.—The statements made here are not suggestions. They are facts—all procured after thorough research. Any well-informed business man will verify their accuracy.)

**Few Bookkeepers Realize Their Opportunities**

Either from lack of interest or from insufficient foresight, most bookkeepers do not realize the opportunities that lie before them. A knowledge of bookkeeping is the very groundwork of accountancy—and yet the call for 125,000 high-salaried accountants goes unheeded. Building properly upon their present knowledge should transform these bookkeepers into trained accountants with incomes of \$5,500 to \$15,000 a year. A few bookkeepers have, it is true, at last realized that opportunity is actually **HAMMERING** at their doors—and these bookkeepers who entered the accountancy field are earning four and even five times their former salary. Many bookkeepers, however, still do not seem to have heard the clear call for them to open the door and grasp the opportunities that are waiting.

Every bookkeeper will realize that accountancy holds excellent opportunities. He should also realize—and realize now—that, as a result of his training, he is in a good position to build a successful career.

perhaps, how you can earn \$5,500 to \$15,000 and even more a year in a pleasant, dignified profession, or even if you advance yourself without trying specifically for the C. degree—then there is an important message which you ought to hear.

**New Opportunities for Bookkeepers**

Do not think that a position of accountant is beyond you, nor lapse into the rut of indifference as so many other bookkeepers have done. Do not be discouraged because you are not in a position to attend an accountancy school. The necessity for this has all been removed. Since its inauguration, 14 years ago, the Universal Business Institute of New York has been aiding those desirous of rising to high positions in the field of accountancy. Thousands of bookkeepers from all over the world have taken advantage of the opportunity and, through the correspondence instruction given by the Institute, have become accountants of outstanding merit. But **RESULTS TELL** and here, in their own words, are some of the results of other bookkeepers:

every reason to be

Victor was 21 years old when he wrote this timeless ad.

It represents an astonishing amount of direct response prowess from an individual in 1919. The results it generated were amazing and identified Schwab as someone with really exceptional talents.

Incidentally, \$100 in 1919, translates to about £1,000 today.

In 1928, Schwab and his partner Robert Beatty bought out the agency when Scherman and Sackheim decided to give it up. The agency later was renamed Schwab and Beatty.

Victor Schwab went on to be hailed by a lot of people as "the greatest ad copywriter of all time." Personally, I think it's a triple dead heat. Victor Schwab, Claude Hopkins and John Caples. Followed very closely later, by the great Joe Sugarman.

All of them were geniuses in that culture, at slightly different times...

Anyway, Victor became a copy research pioneer. He would use his coded coupon ads to test headlines, copy appeals, length, layouts, action closings and split runs of ads.

A lot of what we have learned in our business, relating to ad creative and copy, originated from the Schwab, Hopkins and Caples era.

Victor was a trailblazer. He created Sunday comic ads for Dale Carnegie, body-builder Charles Atlas and Sherwin Cody's English Classics Course. Those ads are still revered today.

In his series of five articles titled "**How to Write a Good Advertisement**", which appeared in the 1941 *Printers' Ink* magazine, Schwab introduced a five-step copywriting formula.

These rules still hold good today. Yes, even though they are now over 70 years old.

Why?

Simple. Because, as I've shared with you numerous times in this column, times change, but people *don't*. The reasons people are attracted by, respond to, or act upon sales messages - is exactly the same today as it was then.

It will be exactly the same, on the day the world stops turning.

Yet marketers today seem to be oblivious to this fact. They continually ignore proven communication rules and techniques. That's why the work we see is so awful.

So, if it's your responsibility to write effective ads, stop trying to reinvent the wheel. You won't do it - and you'll waste an awful lot of valuable budget trying...

May I suggest you learn from the greats. And Victor Schwab was certainly one of those. Victor's five-step formula will help you enormously when you are writing ads. It's pure gold dust and you can apply it straight away.

Here it is...

- 1. Get Attention**
- 2. Show People An Advantage**
- 3. Prove It**
- 4. Persuade People To Grasp This Advantage**
- 5. Ask For Action**

It sounds so easy, doesn't it? That's because it is.

It's logical too. What's more, it's structured and sequential. And that's something that every sales message should be.

Remember this. Good ad writers create work that controls the selling process. They are in charge. The reader is taken down the path the writer wants them to go. And the reader has no idea this is happening.

That's the value and unique skill of a knowledgeable, professional writer.

Now, just as an exercise, open up that magazine you have on your desk or in your briefcase and look at the ads inside. You'll see that most of the ads in there, do not adhere to the above disciplines and structure. You'll find the same in the newspaper.

As a result, they will underperform. Not an opinion. A cast-iron certainty.

Most will disappear without trace. Meaning a vital selling opportunity lost and valuable budget wasted. Poor work, created by charlatans and signed off by buffoons.

Individuals that don't understand the copy process - and don't study the business. So they waste money. Every hour. Every day.

A good ad is so rare these days. Yet Victor told the world how to do it, a generation before. Caples and Hopkins too. Many others since. But, despite this, most current marketers and creatives still refuse to listen.

Anyway, in this breathtaking piece of work, Schwab elaborated on each of the above five principles.

Here's what he said about each important element. His words, verbatim.

### **1. Get Attention:**

The most reliable way to get attention is by using a powerful headline.

Good headlines use specific place names and numbers, they're highly targeted to a specific prospect and they draw a reader into the body copy.

A headline should be as long as it needs to be to grab the attention of your prospect.  
(Many of Schwab's most successful headlines were quite long.)

Don't get "arty" in your ads.

Advertisements (and online sales letters) that look too much like highly produced ads can often decrease your sales response.

You want your ads to closely resemble what your prospects would normally read.

Large, simple photographs of people, children and animals get more attention.

Having a picture of your product IN USE - doing something or accomplishing something that appeals to the reader - is more likely to get attention.

## **2. Show People An Advantage**

There is one question prospects have, above all others when they're reading an ad for your product or service... "*What Will It Do For Me?*"

You need to put yourself in your prospect's shoes when you're writing an ad and work out what THEY want...what major hidden motivators will drive them to buy your product.

You don't try to sell the powerful stain removing power of a new kitchen cleaner.

You sell the "admiring looks on the faces of your friends when they see your kitchen sparkling like it was brand new and never used".

Give people a real reason to keep reading your ad in the first paragraph.

My own tests have shown that rewriting that key opening line can dramatically increase your sales.

## **3. Prove It**

Most people will not believe what you tell them in an ad, unless you prove it with facts, figures, testimonials, scientific proof and any other method you can devise.

Here's a huge secret. Whilst most prospects will buy for deeper emotional reasons, they want to justify their purchase with hard facts.

That's where proof becomes especially valuable.

Proof also helps build belief in your prospect fuelling those emotional desires to buy.

Whilst we might believe that we buy on logic - the truth is, the heart dictates to the head when it comes to most of our buying decisions.

#### **4. Persuade People To Grasp This Advantage**

One of the key methods is to sum up the emotional and logical reasons your prospect should buy, then help them picture themselves already enjoying the benefits of your product or service.

Once your prospect is already imagining himself - and the life he'll have when he has your product - he'll be especially eager to buy it. And that leads to:

#### **5. Ask For Action**

In his book Advertising For Immediate Sales, John Caples once wrote:

"There are a lot of good advertisements that are weak in the final urge to act. They are like salesmen who are charming talkers but weak closing men. If they had the right stuff they would pick the reader up by the collar of his coat and the seat of his trousers and stiff-arm him into a showroom."

You need to tell your prospect exactly what to do to buy your product. And you need to make it simple, easy and specific.

Most important of all, the call to action in your sales copy needs to get your prospect to act NOW. Any delay and the chances are, you'll lose the sale altogether.

So, there you are. The advice of a genius.

The work of a Mad Man who taught the Mad Men all they knew.

The difference was, they listened.

Victor Schwab left Schwab and Beatty in 1962 and retired to Spain. He died in 1980 from the effects of a stroke.

Keep the faith...



## About the Author

Andy Owen is Managing Director of Andy Owen & Associates, a leading International direct marketing consultancy, specialising in all aspects of creative, copy and strategy for direct marketing.

The company has offices in UK, Dubai, Bucharest and Moscow.

The company's corporate website is [www.andyowen.co.uk](http://www.andyowen.co.uk) The specialist copy division has its own site at [www.copywritingthatsells.com](http://www.copywritingthatsells.com)

Andy is personally involved in every creative and copy element that is produced by Andy Owen & Associates.

As well as his International speaking engagements, Andy runs in-house copywriting and direct marketing Masterclasses, Workshops and Seminars for companies and organisations all over the world. <http://www.andyowen.co.uk/speaker-presenter.html>

If you feel your company could benefit from any of these, or if you would like further information on any aspect of copywriting and creative for direct marketing, please contact Andy personally at [andyowen@aol.com](mailto:andyowen@aol.com)

All Andy's previous articles are available to view and download at [www.andyowen.co.uk/articles.html](http://www.andyowen.co.uk/articles.html)

Andy's current international events for 2011 are listed at [www.andyowen.co.uk/andys-events\\_11.htm](http://www.andyowen.co.uk/andys-events_11.htm)

Other events are being discussed, and potential countries may include:

Poland, Chile, Botswana, Namibia, UAE, India, South Africa, Palestine and Ukraine.

In addition, Andy is considering a short UK tour. More details will be available on this as dates are finalised. Please check the website for the latest information.