



Why emotional words are essential in selling copy - and why so-called intellectuals who dabble in marketing - can be a pain in the ass...

"I use the oldest words in the English language. People think I'm an ignorant bastard who doesn't know the ten-dollar words. I know the ten-dollar words. And they don't work in copy..."

Ernest Hemingway

Read that and digest it. Read it again. And again.

And believe it. Because it's true.

Hemingway was one of the greatest writers *ever*.

His work has touched so many people – and will continue to do so, for as long as this world of ours keeps on turning.

One of the secrets of his success, was he was 'real'. A man of the people...

The way he wrote, connected readily with people. Rich and poor. Of all races and creeds. People of all types and profiles. And, of all ages.

This was down to his genius – and the words he used. Copywriters today could learn so much from him.

If you are writing copy to generate a response and a positive reaction, then here are three essential copy commandments that I'm sure Ernest would have endorsed, had he been around today.

- 1. Never use a 'clever' word when a simple one will do.**
- 2. Use everyday words that connect to the reader and sound as if you are talking naturally to them.**
- 3. Keep any so-called intellectuals as far away from your copy as possible.**

I want to take a little time to talk about this last point, as it is one that is very important. If you write copy for a living, or you are just a budding copywriter, having your work reviewed by one of these people can be a nightmare experience.

To have it reviewed by a group of them is beyond description...

Intellectuals who dabble in marketing are a pain in the ass. No point beating about the bush. They are...

By nature, these people are 'stiff' writers. That's because most of them are 'stiff' people and have a very strange way about them. For some reason, they seem uncomfortable in the 'real' world.

Like aliens...

And selling one-to-one - which is what direct marketing is all about - is right slap-bang in the centre of the 'real' world.

If you write for a living, in the blood-soaked trenches of direct response, you have to be a natural communicator with great experience of life. You must understand 'real' people and be comfortable in their presence.

As they will be in yours...

You should know from experience what turns them on - and turns them off. And, because of this, you will stand a better than even chance of writing copy that connects and sells.

As David Ogilvy once said:

"I don't know the rules of grammar. If you're trying to persuade people to do something or buy something, it seems to me that you should use *their* language. The language *they* use every day. The language in which they *think*..."

Spot on. I passionately believe that an understanding of people and a sympathy towards them - is essential when writing copy.

This understanding, if used correctly, builds a natural bridge between the writer and the reader. Herschell Gordon Lewis referred to it, as "writing within the experiential background of the reader."

This enables you to introduce as many facts and relevant points as you can, which are likely to come within that experience.

When you do that, you will readily connect with the reader. The reader's reaction is likely to be: "Yes, I know that, so it's likely that the other facts are true."

As Professor Poffenberger stated years ago, "Belief is a fabric of personal experiences."

Effective copywriters are people that have been around the block. The knowledge and experience they have gained, the scars and the failures, as well as the accolades and the gongs, enable them to write copy that connects, reassures and influences.

And *sells*. In spades...

The best copywriters are real people. They don't live in a twilight world like these intellectual bird brains...

Let me tell you this. If you have the misfortune to have your copy reviewed by someone who considers themselves to be intellectual, be prepared to go to hell and back.

These people hate *simple*. They like to use big words, to try and show how clever they are. Most of them aren't clever at all.

More importantly, they haven't got the faintest idea of how to write copy to make people do positive things.

Copy that *sells*...

So, they should stay well away. But, unfortunately, they don't.

Publishing clients, especially take note. Editors have absolutely no idea about how direct response copy works. So, if they ask to see your latest DM Subs letter or email, say 'no'.

If they get to see it, this is what will happen...

They will 'red pen' the copy. In less than 15 minutes, it will be devastated and look like a Christmas card from Hell.

They will replace most of the good, effective, emotional copy that has probably been written for you by your professional copywriter.

Copy that has excited you – and you can't wait to use.

You see, they hate words like 'lovely' and 'wonderful'. They will ask you to change them for less emotional alternatives that won't work half as well.

And, if your copy contains a sentence starting with 'And', they will request you change it. What's more, they will probably pass a message back to you about this being a schoolboy error and how teachers taught us never to start a sentence with 'And' or 'But'.

It drives me mental...

Tell them, that to start with, teachers never had to write for a living in the minefields of direct response. 'And' is a fabulous sentence starter, as it links the positivity of the previous paragraph with the benefits of the next one.

(Linking paragraphs in selling copy is absolutely vital. It keeps the reader reading. Once they stop reading, your selling opportunity is over).

After you've told them those home truths, be prepared to be overruled.

Editors, for example, really fancy themselves and like to throw their weight about. As do a lot of Marketing Directors these days.

Especially those in their 20's that have all that vast experience behind them...

They think they know it all.

(I'll let you in on a little secret). They don't...

It seems to me, that a hell of a lot of marketers these days, are abysmally bad at understanding real people. As soon as they achieve even a moderate amount of success, they seem to stop living real lives.

They change somehow. They think they are above it. I've seen it happen.

So, you must fight tooth and nail for your copy. Believe in it. Defend it. Go to war for it. Because, remember, you will be right. Not them...

And here's a hand grenade you can throw in, if all else fails. Suggest a straight A/B test of both sets of copy against each other.

But, be aware, this is unlikely to succeed. They wouldn't dare take a chance that you and/or your copywriter could possibly be right.

So, what can you do, if these 'aliens' insist you change your copy?

You have three main options:

1. Hire a hit man and have them taken out.
2. Say no and go and work for someone else that appreciates your talent and experience.
3. Run their copy and watch the campaign fail.

Option 3, will, of course, result in the copy being significantly weaker and will make the readers' eyes glaze over. As a result, the campaign won't work and they will definitely blame you.

So you'll probably lose your job.

Option 2 is almost certainly the best, although I have to say I have been tempted by Option 1 on many occasions.

I still have time...

I always think of how Editors, for example, would feel if we walked into their office, sat down and started commenting on - and suggesting amendments to - editorial copy they had written...

Chances are, they wouldn't like it. Well, neither do we. So, keep the hell out. Go back to your boring editorials - with loads of grammar and punctuation mistakes and copy that turns people off in droves.

If you are very lucky and your particular intellectual nightmare is reasonable (not many of those around these days), then remind them of this vital copy commandment:

"Emotional words outpull intellectual words every single time in selling copy. There is absolutely NO exception".

OK, that's the intellectuals taken care of. (I wish...) Now let's talk about the words that really work in copy and those that don't.

Here are **80 proven and effective words** to start with.

First-Ever	Introducing	You	Now
Startling	Hurry	Free	Stunning
Bargain	Offer	Wonderful	Magical
Save	Unique	Exclusive	Breakthrough
Compare	Revealing	Beautiful	Miracle
Exciting	Money	Proven	New
Amazing	Announcing	Show	Powerful
Your	Remarkable	Spectacular	Improved
Sensational	Today	Easy	Guaranteed
Quick	Classic	Latest	Superb
Presenting	Wanted	Modern	Tremendous
Novel	How	Immediately	Appealing
Challenge	Recent	Secrets	Endorsed
Notable	Good	Excellent	Fascinating
Superior	Greatest	Famous	Astonishing
Terrific	Selective	Striking	Acclaimed
Rare	Special	Genuine	Authentic
Elegant	Dramatic	Fantastic	Exceptional
Commended	Exquisite	Classic	Great
Astounding	Recommended	Magnificent	Revolutionary

Words like that - and words that mean the same things, tend to work the best in copy. Why they work is simple; they relate to 3 vitally important things:

1. They relate to the single most important thing that makes copy work - and that's BENEFITS.

2. They relate to the next most important thing, which is NEWS. (The best copy tends to contain news of benefits).

3. They are also, in the main, emotional words. (Remember, emotional words always work best, in selling copy)

Just look again at that list of words above. Can you feel the energy and positivity they exude? The power of them almost jumps off the page.

That's why they work.

In Vic Schwab's legendary direct marketing book - *How to Write a Good Advertisement*, Schwab lists "100 Good Headlines and Why They Were So Profitable." Incidentally, this identical list is also quoted in Maxwell Sackheim's book *My First Sixty Years in Advertising*.

This is a pretty unique endorsement of this group of headlines, by two famous direct marketing authorities.

As I was putting this new **Copycat** together, I thought it would be fun to analyse those headlines and the words used in them.

Here are the ten most frequently-used words in Schwab's 100 good headlines. Following each word is a figure showing the number of times the word was used.

You - 31 Your - 14 How - 12 New - 10 Money - 6
Who - 8 Now - 4 Why - 4 Want - 4 People - 4

(Not many intellectual words in that lot, is there?)

The power of 'you' I explored in a previous [Copycat](#).

Remember this. Every single word in selling copy is important. Many times in test activity, the change of one word dramatically increased the response levels of a letter or ad.

One of the most famous examples was the headline of an ad for an automobile repair kit. The original ad's headline was "How To Repair Cars."

The headline was changed to "How To *Fix* Cars."

The ad pulled 22% more business, just with that one word change.

Every word is a weapon to the copywriter. So, if you write for a living, you must recognise the incredible power of the *right* words. The words that make people do positive things. Like respond. Or make a purchase.

Never forget, **words make people buy**, not pictures.

Well, the right words, anyway. *Emotional* words. *Everyday* words. Not ten-dollar words as Hemingway told us. The ten-dollar words don't work.

So, playmates, underestimate the power of words at your peril, because it's words, not pictures or numbers that are the TRUE currency of business these days.

I passionately believe that.

The words we use every day, can and do have a massive impact on our lives. The right words can bring us success and everything we want in life. The wrong words can – and very often do – bring us poor results and failure.

Great copy comes from people who think beyond the words. Not many of those individuals about these days. Are you one?

Keep the faith...

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andy'.

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