



21 Proven Copy Secrets from a Hall of Fame Copywriter

Invaluable and priceless knowledge from over 40 years at the marketing coalface, that will help you to make YOUR copy more effective...

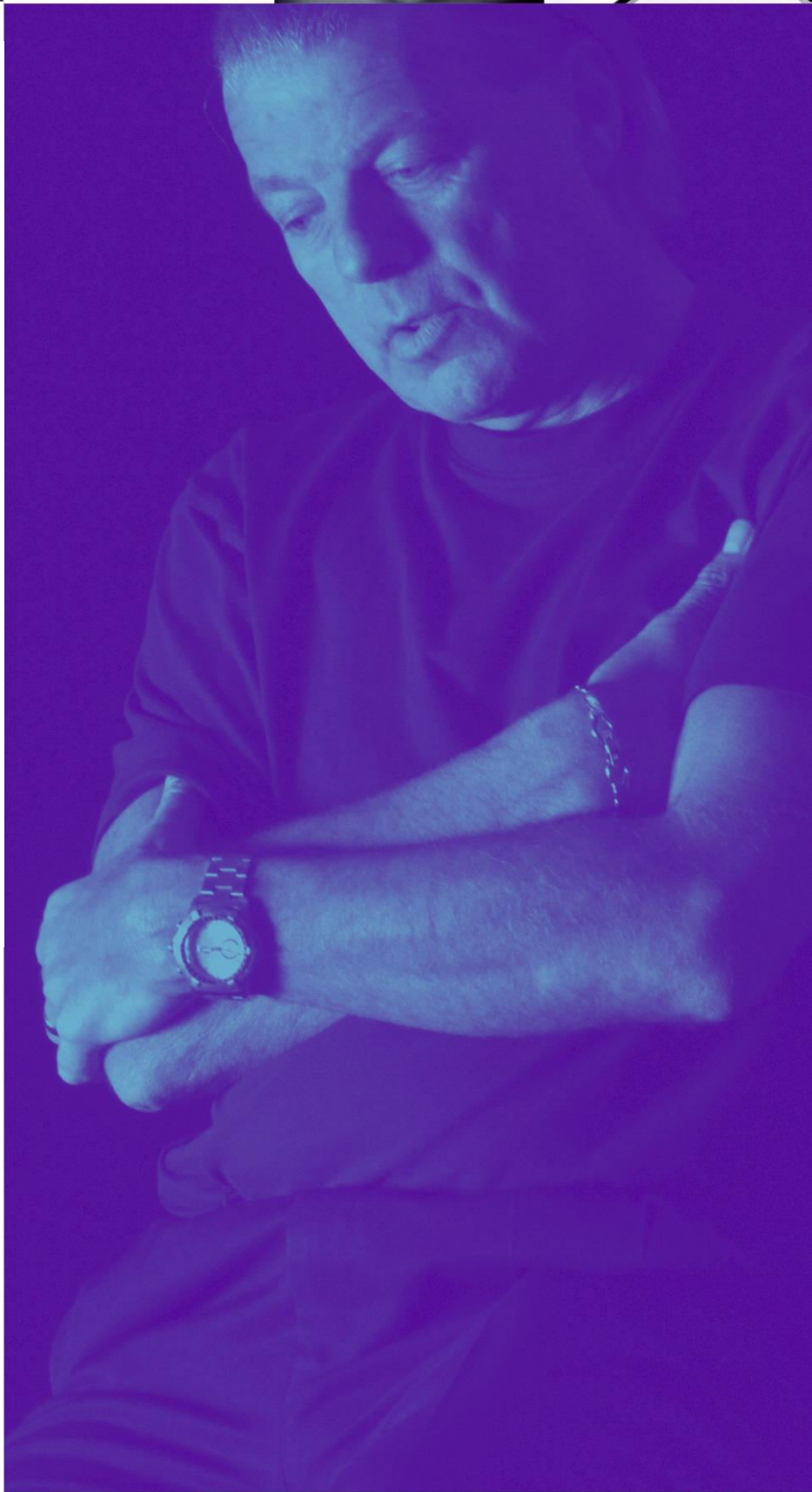


Wheal Cottage, Breaside,
Brea Village, Cornwall TR14 9DG, United Kingdom

Telephone: +44 (0) 7774 894039

Email: andyowen@aol.com

Website: www.andyowencopyandcreative.com



If you want your copy to work much harder - and generate those extra sales that will mean so much to you right now – here's something I've put together for you, that will help you do *exactly* that.

In this document, you'll find **twenty-one absolutely 'gold-plated' copy secrets** which come from my experience of over 40 years, writing selling copy for clients of all shapes and sizes – in pretty much every sector – and in 3 continents.

And I'm giving them to you - in this document - **for FREE**.

Gratis.

No charge.

On the house.

With my compliments.

What a lovely man I am...

Obviously, there are many more than 21. I have just cherry-picked these vitally important ones for you.

And remember, these are not my *opinion*. They are *proven*. And *guaranteed*.

Yes, *guaranteed*. That's because they **work**. They have worked for decades. And they'll continue to work until the world stops turning.

And, they will work for YOU, too.

Of course, you could ignore them. That's your choice.

But I don't think you will.

You aren't one of the very many blinkered idiots out there, that continue to accept mediocrity and wonder why their campaigns aren't delivering. You know them...

Their website pages just sit there and attract no one. Their emails survive no longer than it takes for the recipient to hit the delete button. Their social media messages disappear into the septic tank of digital crap.

Their direct mail packs are quickly consigned to the recycling, given the same short shrift as their awful door drop pieces. Their print ads do not grab the reader, so the page is turned - and the opportunity is lost.

You are much, much smarter than those idiots. You continually strive to get better.

That's why I'm sharing these **proven secrets** with you. When you sprinkle this valuable gold dust on your copy - you will create effective communications that will generate an increased level of interest, responses and sales.

And, of course, you will start to leave your competitors behind.

Here they are - 21 of the very best...

1. Prepare, prepare, prepare

Until you fully understand who you are writing to - and why - you cannot write effectively. Here are nine questions you should ask, before you start writing one word.

1. Who are we writing to?
2. What are we selling?
3. What is the main feature or USP?
4. What is different or better about it?
5. Why should the recipient be interested in it?
6. Have we made a strong offer?
7. Have we delivered the message clearly?
8. What do we want the recipient to do?
9. Have we made it easy for them to respond?

Don't start writing until you have the answers to ALL of the above.

If you choose to ignore these, your copy will underperform.

2. Write today and edit tomorrow

Don't rush your copy. Take your time.

It's vitally important.

Write your first draft. Write as much as you can, then leave it until the next day.

Then re-read it (out loud if you can) and unless you are a genius, you will find it still needs loads of work. So, edit *ruthlessly*.

Don't use three words where one will do. Your copy needs to be tight, persuasive and compelling. No passenger words.

You have to hold the reader's attention.

So, revise, revise, revise. And, when you think you're done, revise again.

3. You should always fire your biggest gun first

No one is waiting to hear from you.

In fact, you are getting in the way of their day.

They only want an excuse to give your communication the old 'heave-ho'.

Start strong. Use a powerful headline.

The headline, subject line or opening statement has to rise above the general noise level. It has to connect – and ‘stop’ - the reader.

"On average, five times as many people read the headline as read the body copy. It follows that if you don't sell the product in your headline, you have wasted 80% of your money." David Ogilvy

Your opening has to suggest a benefit and a relevance and worth the person's time in reading on. If it doesn't, then 9 out of 10 readers will stop reading the communication right there.

How many times does this have to be said before the penny drops? I see so many communications these days, with poor, or simply irrelevant, openings.

Every minute of every day, millions of pounds are wasted on communications that forget this vital commandment.

Your offer must be in lights. If it isn't, your communication will fail.

Incidentally, the best headlines combine news, benefits and curiosity.

4. Get the tone right to suit the prospect

"The tone of a good communication is as direct and personal as the writer's skill can make it. Even though it may go to millions of people, it never orates to a crowd, but rather murmurs into a single ear. It is a message from one writer to one letter reader." Harry Walsh

I always try and picture the recipient in my mind. I have a pen-picture of him/her, before I start. Then I feel I can write to that person.

We must remember, as copywriters, that we are now talking to individuals - not marketplaces. Doctors think and respond differently than Chairmen of Corporations. Charity donors think and respond differently to electricians.

Successful letter writers find out as much about who they are writing to, as the product or service they are trying to sell.

Get closer to your recipients – let them feel you understand them - and you will sell more.

Simple as that.

Here's what David Ogilvy had to say about it:

"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."

5. Don't write long rambling paragraphs

Especially the first one.

Even if the headline of your communication is a 'stopper', if your opening paragraph is too long and daunting, 99% of your readers will leave right there.

And, they will never come back. Another costly mistake.

Long paragraphs are instant death. It's just the same when a salesperson rambles on at you. You know the result when that happens

Short and snappy is where it's at. Always has been. You have to get the reader into the communication *quickly*.

In his tremendous book 'Advertising Secrets of the Written Word' my good friend and legendary marketer Joe Sugarman, reckoned that the copywriter's challenge could be put very simply.

The object of the first sentence - Joe said - is to get the reader to read the second.

"If the purpose of all the elements in your communication is to get the recipient to read the copy, then what we are talking about is reading the first sentence. If the reader doesn't read your very first sentence, chances are, that he or she won't read the second."

A big block of copy in the first paragraph is a total turn-off. As it is anywhere else in your communication. This is a particularly common mistake on web pages.

Big blocks of badly written copy, with little or no visible benefit – and, in a lot of cases, white copy on a coloured background, which is difficult to read.

But, no matter how often they are reminded, they *still* do it...

6. Always try to do a complete selling job

Many copywriters fail badly at this.

It is imperative that you cover every sensible and logical reason why the reader should respond to your selling proposition.

People only want to know "what's in it for me?"

Be sure to tell them quickly, clearly and appealingly.

In addition – and this is just as important – don't forget to tell them what they will miss, if they don't respond.

Fear of loss, is much more important than the promise of gain.

7. Recognise the four bases of success in contemporary copywriting

These are:

(a) Connectivity (b) Clarity (c) Benefit (d) Verisimilitude

(a) You have to connect and quickly. I have covered the reasons why, earlier in this article.

(b) You have to be clear. If your copy is muddy and confusing, the reader will not understand what you are offering – and leave.

(c) People want to know the benefits of your product or service, not the features. Because it's the benefits that will influence them to buy...

(d) The appearance of truth. Does it look the part? Sound the part? And feel the part?

Once a reader spots an inconsistency, or has reason to doubt something, they're out of your communication in a heartbeat.

8. To write effective sales copy, you need to write like you talk

Your copy should be about selling your own unique product or service story in a language that appeals to your prospect's needs, wants, desires, fears and vanity.

Try to talk with them, just as if you would do if you were sitting in front of them.

Use everyday words, everyday phrases.

The best way to write is the simple way.

Write it like you say it.

Make your writing human.

Let your words flow easily and with a natural rhythm.

Great communications, when read aloud, sound just like a friend talking to you.

That's exactly why this copy approach works.

Because its warmth and connectivity at reader level, disarms the reader and makes the selling approach more effective.

No one talks in perfect English.

We talk to communicate.

9. An emotional sales argument, is always more powerful than an intellectual one

Always.

Without exception.

Remember the words of industry legend Bill Bernbach:

“You can say the right thing about a product – and no one will listen. You’ve got to say it in such a way that people will feel it in their gut. Because, if they don’t feel it there, nothing will happen.”

Your copy must have benefit and relevance - and connect with your prospect's emotional 'hot buttons' to persuade and influence that prospect to take the action you want.

If it doesn't, your message is history - within the first few seconds. The recipient will leave your website, bin your letter, zap your email, or close your brochure.

And your selling opportunity will be lost.

We all buy for emotional reasons and justify those decisions with logic.

Emotional words are much more effective in a selling situation, than intellectual or pompous ones.

If you have any so-called intellectuals involved with copy – or heaven forbid – actually writing or approving copy in your organisation, get them away from it, right now.

Intellectuals can't handle emotion in copy. Emotional words give them an ulcer. They would change every one, given the chance, with big clunky ones, just to show off.

10. The most important word in the copywriter's armoury is YOU

Regular readers to Copycat might remember I wrote a full article about this a few years ago.

It centred on the legendary Newsweek subs letter, which had 'you' or 'yours' 58 times in the copy.

https://www.andyowencopyandcreative.com/pdfs/copywriting_Power_Words_FREE_YOU_Ed_McLean_Newsweek.pdf

Include the words "you" "your" and "yours" as often as you can. Try and replace as many "we", "I", "us" and "our", with the reader alternative.

This will give the reader an immediate benefit. They will see how whatever it is you are offering, will benefit them.

By the way, the second most important word, is FREE. The power of this word will never wane.

Do you know some people are still afraid of FREE?

I continue to have conversations about it. *“Could damage our brand” “Not our image”*. And other crap like that.

These are the same cretins who want to spend 75% of the message delivery talking about who they are, how long they’ve been in business and how many of this and that they have - and other useless stuff.

When they should, instead, be telling the reader the benefits that he or she will enjoy as a result of all these things.

11. Five totally useless words you should replace in your sales copy

(a) Quality (b) Value (c) Service (d) Caring (e) Integrity

These are all neutral words that have absolutely no place in selling copy.

When we read these words, our eyes glaze over. They make no impression on us whatsoever.

Everyone offers quality and value. All offer great service. Everyone cares. Integrity is a given.

Those of us in the real world, know this is total bollocks.

Very few companies offer anything of the sort.

Quite the opposite, in fact.

Every one of those 5 words can be replaced with something more meaningful.

Think about it...

12. Use 'link' words and phrases to keep your copy flowing

When a prospect starts reading your copy, he/she is only looking for a way to get out of it. That stopwatch starts ticking from the first look...

Don't give them that opportunity.

You need to ensure your copy has pace and momentum. A proven way is by using carrier words and phrases at the end of paragraphs.

This keeps the copy flowing – and the reader reading.

Words and phrases like 'And', 'What's more', 'Better still', 'Actually', 'Also' and 'But' are proven link words.

You might also want to try and ask a question at the end of one paragraph that needs to be answered in the first line of the next.

Another thing. Try not to end a page at the end of a sentence or paragraph. Give them a reason to turn over, to find out more. Say, *'(please read on)'*

13. Words that work best in copy

Words that work best in copy, are words that have relevance and benefit, delivered with energy, passion and emotion.

Words that make people pay attention. And words that stimulate action and purchase. Words just like these:

First-ever, Startling, Hurry, Free, Proven, Magical, Bargain, Offer, Wonderful, Save, Unique, Exclusive, Exciting, Classic, Miracle, New, Introducing, You, Stunning Guaranteed, Amazing, Powerful, Superb, Remarkable, Announcing, Breakthrough, Now...

Words like that - and words that mean the same things, tend to work best.

Why they work is simple; they relate to 3 very important things:

1. They relate to the single most important thing that makes copy work – and that is 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. Emotional words always work best in selling copy.

14. Don't be shy about the offer

In these tough times, there has to be an offer.

In fact, I passionately believe, that if there is no offer, there will be no sale.

"In direct marketing you should be as generous as you can afford on offers. It almost always pays." Graeme McCorkell

Everyone wants an offer. They *expect* an offer. So, give them one.

But you must offer something that is better or different to what your competitors are offering. If you don't, there's no reason why they should buy from you.

As we know, people aren't loyal anymore. They're as promiscuous as hell.

They'll leave you in a heartbeat for the competition across the road, if they're offered a better deal. Believe it, because it's true...

In these competitive times, an offer is essential. No campaign should ever be created without one.

Why would you, anyway?

Your offer should hit them between the eyes. And early.

It should obviously be relevant, should be restated at least 3 times - and be impossible to ignore.

It doesn't have to be 50% OFF. It could be added value – like a gift or free delivery or a million other things. But there has to be *something* of value.

Ignore this at your peril.

15. Don't forget the importance of clarity. Be clear and confident

It is imperative that what you are offering is clear to even the dumbest recipient.

If it is vague and 'cloudy', it will fail. People will not take the time to figure it out.

And, once you have made it clear, deliver it with *belief* and *energy*.

If you don't believe it, then you can be pretty sure the recipient won't, either.

Some people think that if they write a general copy line that says something like - '*Buy this today and we guarantee you will be more successful*' - then the world and his uncle will beat a path to their door.

They won't. And I'll tell you why.

Because firstly it's a lazy line that says *nothing*. Plus, a lot of people who read a line like that, will be saying '*how successful?*' '*And how long will it take?*'

But, of course, the vast majority won't even bother.

They'll just move on to something else, because they believe the claim is a load of tosh. Which it almost certainly is.

The internet swamp is full of garbage like that.

So, don't beat around the bush. Tell people exactly what they're getting – and what they will miss if they don't respond.

16. Don't forget that there must be something for the reader wherever that reader looks

This is especially important when you are creating a mailing pack with a number of elements, or a web page or digital ad with links.

Whatever element the reader is looking at, the benefits of doing business with you should be bold, visible and appealing.

And consistent. This is *vital*.

Inconsistencies cause confusion. And, as we know a confused person will not buy.

Remember, benefit means *benefit*.

Features do not sell without a relevant benefit.

17. Don't have dinosaur views about long copy

It's not about long or short. It's about interesting or uninteresting.

David Ogilvy said, many years ago, "*The majority of campaigns fail to give consumers enough information.*"

Use as many words as you need, to make the complete sell.

If you take two pages to write something that should be on one page – you will lose the reader because you'll be rambling.

But if you need two pages to sell something and you cram it on one, your layout will be unattractive and you'll lose them as well.

If your copy is written well and you 'hook' the reader early and hold that reader, then you are well on the way to getting a positive response.

Use long copy as much as you can. It sells better than short, because you can give every reason why they should act – and it allows you to overcome every objection.

Every good salesperson knows, the longer they can keep a prospect listening, the more likely they are to get a sale. Top retailers have known for decades, that the longer they can keep a customer in store, the more likely they are to buy.

The same applies to selling copy.

Good copy that sells, always has the 'nod factor'.

Keep them reading and keep them nodding in agreement – and you will have total control. They will be putty in your hands.

18. Don't forget the vital importance of effective punctuation

Commas, dashes, colons, underlines, parentheses and others, are all key weapons for the knowledgeable writer.

In fact, they are absolutely essential arrows in the copywriter's quiver.

Why? Well, because good use of punctuation allows the writer to control the pace of the selling delivery. The pros have known this for generations.

The comma is my best friend. I take it everywhere with me.

The dash, too, offers so much, but is not recognised by many. If it used within a sentence like this – everything after it - re-emphasises what has gone before.

16. Pay enormous attention to detail

Many fail badly with this.

It was said to me recently, that standards have slipped. *"No, they haven't", I said, "they've gone through the floor."*

People just don't seem to care anymore.

Spelling mistakes, bad grammar, poor layouts, upper-and-lower case errors and typographic inconsistencies are the order of the day now.

Be under no illusion, they are the harbingers of failure. Make any of those errors and you deserve to fail.

It's simply shabby and unprofessional.

17. Talk about the benefits and value you offer, not about you

This has turned into an epidemic in recent years.

I've lost count of the communications I've received and continue to receive - from companies, that go on and on about themselves – instead of what they can offer me.

Why can't they realise that people are not in the slightest bit interested in how long a company has been in business, what machines it has, what its mission statement is?

People are only interested in benefits and value. But still these berks keep doing it, droning on about their history, infrastructure and other totally useless piffle.

Your prospect cares little for such details. They seek benefits, value, and solutions to their problems.

Always tailor your message to answer the all-important question that the recipient of your communication will be asking - *"What's in it for me?"*

18. Recognise the enormity of the challenge

Don't kid yourself that you are important and that the recipient of your communication is waiting to hear from you.

Nothing is further from the truth.

You are writing to someone you don't know, who doesn't want to hear from you, about a product he/she doesn't really want.

That is an incredibly difficult challenge. Probably the biggest in marketing.

But please recognise it, because that's the way it is.

Once you do accept it, you will work a lot harder in writing copy that connects, engages and influences, than you are doing now.

19. Be brave and take responsibility

When you brief a copywriter and you receive the first draft, proof it yourself, or at the very worst, with one other colleague.

(Not an intellectual).

Don't put it around the office.

Don't ask for opinions that have no relevance – like the Financial Director, MD or Operations Manager.

They know less about how copy works, than you.

And don't show it to the wife, husband or lover.

(Don't laugh. People do it).

20. Marketing and advertising is all about SELLING

Don't ever forget that.

But so many do.

As I have said many times in previous articles, don't try and be subtle or clever – or try to entertain. That's not the objective.

The objective is to SELL. It has no other purpose.

As my chum Drayton Bird said to me many years ago *"Your letter is not written as an artistic endeavour. It is written to build your business..."*

Andy is now recognised as one of the most influential direct marketers of his generation. He has worked in direct marketing for over 40 years and his renowned speciality is copywriting and creative for direct and digital campaigns.

He was inducted into the [DMA Hall of Fame](#) in February 2015, one of only two copywriters in Europe with that honour.

He writes traditional and digital marketing campaigns, including direct mail, sales letters, emails, SMS's, PPC and FB ads, media ads, websites, landing pages, brochures, radio scripts and much more.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of copywriting and creative for direct marketing, please contact Andy personally at andyowen@aol.com

All Andy's [previous Copycat articles](#) are available to download and enjoy

What clients have said about Andy

"Andy, you are an expert in direct marketing copy - a true artisan who understands how to write copy that engages and makes a real customer impact." Russell Morris, Board Marketing and Analytics Director Amazon Prime Video

"I can honestly say I am amazed. You took a promotional approach that was proven and that had been running very successfully for over 8 years and transformed it. Your letter produced our best-ever single performance in 75 years of trading. I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it for myself." Scott Mackay, CEO, Richard Mackay & Sons, Edinburgh

"The talent to craft effective persuasive communication is rare and highly valued. Andy Owen is one of those exceptional communicators - and the proof of his skill is demonstrated time and again in measurable results." Glenmore Trenear-Harvey, Writer & Broadcaster

"If you want to ensure your copy grabs and holds attention then elicits a positive response, Andy Owen's your man. His work is consistently of the highest calibre and has made a demonstrable difference to the success of my direct marketing campaigns."Huw Williams, Marketing Director, Leger Holidays, UK

"Andy is a professional wordsmith of the very highest order." Ged Rowbottom, Managing Director, Solarlec, Burnley, UK

"The art of contemporary copywriting, has now got its own Grand Master. Once Andy has written a sales letter for you, you will never consider anyone else." Mohamed Safieddine, Director of Marketing, Effemex, Saudi Arabia

"We have taken regular advantage of Andy Owen's superb copywriting skills during the past year and have been delighted with the results." Ian Fairservice, Group Editor and Managing Partner, Motivate Publishing, Dubai

"Copywriting for response is clearly an art form - and Andy is one of the industry's greatest exponents". Jamie Wren, Circulation and Marketing Director, Prospect Publishing Ltd, London, UK.

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