



Improve your copy and you will sell more...

It's an unarguable fact - and here's how you can do it

Knowledge is power.

I know, that statement has been overworked.

But, if you are employing a copywriter to grow your business, it is so relevant to the challenge you are facing. So, stay with me...

For what it's worth, I believe most copy fails these days, because writers don't work anywhere near hard enough, to study the product or service they are selling.

To sell anything, a writer has to know *everything* about it. They have to *drown* themselves in knowledge.

The first thing they need to understand, is what is better or different about it.

Because, THAT is what they are selling.

They need to fully understand the market area, what makes it tick, where the particular product or service fits into it - and the people that might have a propensity to be interested in it.

Who are they? What turns them on and off? Why could this product or service be of interest to them - and what alternatives do they have to consider?

When a writer understands all of that, then - and only then - are they in a position to start writing copy that delivers every reason why someone should buy it - and also positively addresses every reason why they think they shouldn't.

Here's a great example. The classic Rolls Royce ad, written by David Ogilvy.



The Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud—\$13,995

“At 60 miles an hour the loudest noise in this new Rolls-Royce comes from the electric clock”

What makes Rolls-Royce the best car in the world? “There is really no magic about it—it is merely patient attention to detail,” says an eminent Rolls-Royce engineer.

1. “At 60 miles an hour the loudest noise comes from the electric clock,” reports the Technical Editor of *THE MOTOR*. Three mufflers tune out sound frequencies—acoustically.
2. Every Rolls-Royce engine is run for seven hours at full throttle before installation, and each car is test-driven for hundreds of miles over varying road surfaces.
3. The Rolls-Royce is designed as an *owner-driven* car. It is eighteen inches shorter than the largest domestic cars.
4. The car has power steering, power brakes and automatic gear-shift. It is very easy to drive and to park. No chauffeur required.
5. The finished car spends a week in the final test-shop, being fine-tuned. Here it is subjected to 98 separate ordeals. For example, the engineers use a *stethoscope* to listen for axle-whine.
6. The Rolls-Royce is guaranteed for *three*

years. With a new network of dealers and parts-depots from Coast to Coast, service is no problem.

7. The Rolls-Royce radiator has never changed, except that when Sir Henry Royce died in 1933 the monogram RR was changed from red to black.

8. The coachwork is given five coats of primer paint, and hand rubbed between each coat, before *nine* coats of finishing paint go on.

9. By moving a switch on the steering column, you can adjust the shock-absorbers to suit road conditions.

10. A picnic table, veneered in French walnut, slides out from under the dash. Two more swing out behind the front seats.

11. You can get such optional extras as an Espresso coffee-making machine, a dictating machine, a bed, hot and cold water for washing, an electric razor or a telephone.

12. There are three separate systems of power brakes, two hydraulic and one mechanical. Damage to one system will not affect the others. The Rolls-Royce is a very *safe* car—and also a very *lively* car. It cruises serenely at eighty-five. Top speed is in excess of 100 m.p.h.

13. The Bentley is made by Rolls-Royce. Except for the radiators, they are identical motor cars, manufactured by the same engineers in the same works. People who feel diffident about driving a Rolls-Royce can buy a Bentley.

PRICE: The Rolls-Royce illustrated in this advertisement—*f.o.b.* principal ports of entry—costs **\$13,995**.

If you would like the rewarding experience of driving a Rolls-Royce or Bentley, write or telephone to one of the dealers listed on the opposite page.

Rolls-Royce Inc., 10 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y., Circle 5-1144.

March 1959

When David won the Rolls Royce account, he got in his car and went to the factory. He stayed there for weeks, finding out everything he could about the car.

When he got back, he wrote the above ad, which is now recognised as one of the greatest ever written. Classic layout, abruptive headline and brilliant copy.

It sold thousands of cars.

This is how they do it in the automobile industry today.



This is the BMW X4. Apparently, they launched it on Twitter.

Do you know what the promotional strapline was?

"Don't chase dreams. Hunt goals"

Makes me despair. They haven't learned much in over 60 years, have they?

Many years ago, I used to know a fantastic guy called Aubrey Watson. Aubrey was the MD of a leading Sales Promotion Agency based in Golden Square, London, called Watson, Lane and Keene.

They had a superb client list, including British Airways. And it was a direct mail campaign for BA, that brought 'Aubrey the Strawberry' and myself together for the first time.

Aubrey was an inspirational character, a gentle giant of a man, who used to travel in to London every day on the train, from Gloucestershire.

One day, I had an early meeting with him and met him in his agency's reception, as he came in from the station. He had an armload of magazines and newspapers.

I was intrigued, as the variety of these magazines was surprising, to say the least. There were men's mags, women's mags, specialist mags, children's mags – you name it, it was there...

I asked him why he had purchased all these different magazines.

His answer was an eye-opener to me. And it stills stays with me to this day.

I paraphrase obviously...

"I run a very successful agency" he said. "Our clients are very varied and cover a wide range of markets. I feel that I cannot advise them correctly and produce effective strategic and creative solutions, unless I understand both their marketplace and their prospective customers within it"

"Reading magazines that service each market, gives me an insight and a feel for what's going on in there. On most occasions, I learn a lot more this way, than I ever can from the market research"

If I recall correctly, he used to spend around £100 per week on all this stuff, which was a lot of money in those days. But the success he and his agency enjoyed, repaid it back in spades.

But, that was then, when our business was populated with committed and enthusiastic professionals.

People who woke up in the morning, swung their legs out of bed (very often not their own) with an enthusiasm to achieve or learn something that day, greater than they did the day before.

Groundbreaking work was everywhere and it was an inspirational time.

How things have changed. Now we are stuck in a cesspit of an industry - if you can even call it an industry anymore - where no one appears to care and very few want to study and get better.

I wonder how many agency bosses, copywriters and creatives these days, would even think of doing what Aubrey did all those years ago?

I will answer that question for you. None. Zero. Zilch.

Anyway, what's this got to with copywriting, you may ask?

A hell of a lot. And here's why...

If you want great copy, hire a proven copywriter with a well-furnished mind. An individual who is well read and street-smart. Someone who continually explores and investigates - and has a hunger to always challenge and find out more.

About *everything*.

Someone who listens and learns.

Someone who is smart.

Your copy will thank you for it...

In any business, if you stay in your particular silo - and talk your particular silo talk and little else - you become a boring bastard. Blinkered. Dull.

We all know a few of those, don't we?

They have little breadth or depth of knowledge - or understanding of the world around them and the people in it.

Jerry Della Femina, who wrote an excellent book on advertising called "From Those Wonderful Folks Who Brought You Pearl Harbor" had an interesting view on this.

"Young creative people start out hungry. They're off the street; they know how people think. And their work is great. Then they get successful. They make more and more money, spend their time in restaurants they never dreamed of, fly back and forth between New York and Los Angeles. Pretty soon, the real world isn't people. It's just a bunch of lights off the right side of the plane. You have to stay in touch if you're going to write advertising that works".

Jerry was right. You have to stay in touch. Aubrey knew that too...

Any copywriter who wants to be good at writing selling copy, has to know what's going on in the real world. Not only that, he/she has to have the ability to understand human psychology and how to use that knowledge to structure and create an effective selling message.

Most copywriters these days, would laugh at that suggestion. They haven't the faintest idea about why knowledge of human psychology is important, let alone how to use it.

That's why, in the main, we all have to suffer communications in all media, that is polluted with lazy, pedestrian copy that doesn't sell.

It's all about understanding human psychology, this selling business. After close to 35 years working at the sharp end of this industry, I have no doubts about that at all.

Whatever you sell, however you sell it, as well as product knowledge, you must have an understanding of the people your message is aimed at. The more you know about them, the more you will sell.

You must link the benefits and advantages of your product or service with what people want to gain, be, do and save. If you do that, you will take giant strides in influencing them to respond and buy.

But, to do that, you have to study, listen and learn.

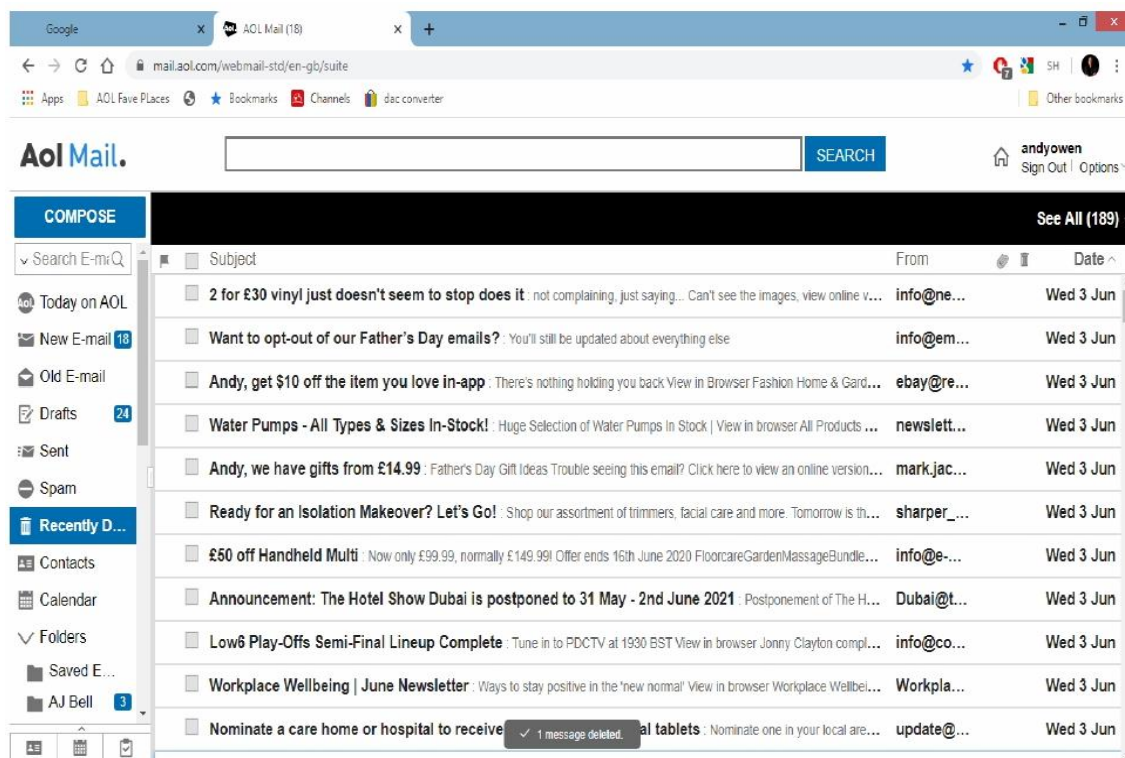
I always say to any new client briefing me about a campaign, *"I need to know as much about your business as you do, before I can write anything effective for you. Give me everything you can lay your hands on and provide links to anything or anyone you think can help me".*

In my eyes, so much of modern marketing is execution-driven. Created with a tick-box mentality. It suffers and fails because the quality of the copy is so poor.

I still get significant amounts of direct mail, hundreds of emails and a ridiculous amount of astonishingly bad social media and digital messages, every day.

Nearly all of it waffles and says nothing. It doesn't connect to me and it gives me no reason to buy. No 'reason to believe', as Tim Hardin said, all those years ago.

Here are just a few of the emails I received on June 3rd.



All dross. Every single one of them.

Written by people with absolutely no talent, no idea and no future.

What do they teach them these days? Surely they know the importance of a good subject line? One that grabs and interests the reader?

Surely they know that if the subject line doesn't do this, the email won't even be opened?

None of these will be. Just like 90% of emails these days.

What you see above, happens every day in millions of inboxes around the world.

I think it's a bloody disgrace.

It happens, because the copywriters involved, are simply naive and don't have the skill, knowledge or discipline to produce good work.

It is vital that copywriters amass the information they need before they start writing. Bill Jayme, probably the greatest copywriter that has ever lived, admitted that he spent 90% of his time preparing and 10% writing.

Most of the best writers work this way.

Copywriting, as an art, is no different from any other specialism. Those who are very good at it, tend to be those that spend great amounts of their time studying it.

As top US copywriter and creative, George Tannenbaum said recently in his inspirational blog, *"If you believe, as I do, that great creative - whether you're writing a blog post, a novel, a banner ad or a website, or a sonnet, or writing a song, or painting en plein air- knowing your subject, is about 98.7 percent of the game.*

It's knowing whereof you speak".

An awful lot of money is wasted every year, because people confuse *what* they are selling, with *why* people should buy it.

The professionals know that what you write **MUST** connect to the reader. And quickly. It has to be relevant and interesting. It has to offer benefit.

These are real people you are writing to. People who are streetwise and savvy. They see you coming a mile off.

They have built-in bullshit detectors. Their portcullis is up and secured - and the guards are patrolling on the ramparts.

To get in that castle, you have to be very, very good.

As Herschell Gordon Lewis observed over two decades ago, to create initial rapport, the copy has to engage the reader *"within the reader's experiential background"*. In other words, the copy has to "talk the talk". The reader should feel that the writer understands.

That creates an immediate connection. *" He's one of us..."*

The only way the copywriter can do that, is by linking the knowledge gained on product benefits and product positioning, with the knowledge he or she has, on the individuals that are the targets of the message.

A professional writer will go to enormous lengths to create this situation.

A committed 'pro' will know, that it is an essential element to success.

Using the correct words in the right way is vital, of course. But, knowledge of the product, the marketplace and an understanding of the mind of the reader, are also massively important.

Linking all that together, can deliver *extraordinary* results. Ignoring it can cost a load of money. Valuable budget - down the toilet.

If you can afford it, then fine. It's your money. If not, here's some FREE advice, learnt from 35 years in the trenches.

Advice that will make you money. Probably lots of it.

Study, study - and then study some more.

Knowledge is power.

I was very lucky to learn that early...

Thank you, Aubrey. I owe you.

Keep the faith



ABOUT YOUR AUTHOR

Andy Owen is MD of **Andy Owen Copy & Creative Ltd**, one of the most respected and experienced International direct marketing consultancies, specialising in all aspects of creative, copy and strategy for direct and digital marketing.

Andy has been writing selling copy for over 33 years. He writes traditional and digital marketing campaigns, including direct mail, sales letters, emails, SMS's, PPC ads, media ads, websites, landing pages, brochures, radio scripts and much more.

He works with clients in three continents and was inducted into the **Direct Marketing Hall of Fame** in February 2015, one of only two individuals in Europe with that honour.

Visit www.andyowencopyandcreative.com

Andy launched an innovative new copywriting service late in 2019, called **Copy Chief** - which guarantees professionally written copy every time - for a fraction of the normal rate card cost.

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

Don't forget to visit Andy's **personal website** where you will find many interesting tales, amazing yarns and wonderful stories - completely devoid of any corporate claptrap.