



**13 proven copy secrets that will get  
people reading - and keep reading -  
your promotional messages...**

**...and a few common errors that will  
not...**

### **PART TWO of TWO...**

In 1930, industry legend J.Stirling Getschell said...

*"The agencies of today talk about the wonderful research they do and how statistics are important and all the rest of the hokum and bunk. Yet I'm damned if I can find over 6 or 7 agencies in the whole country that know anything at all about the biggest thing in advertising - the actual creative production of copy and layout".*

Nothing much has changed, has it? Actually, it's probably got worse.

These days, there's more hokum and bunk than you can shake a stick at.

Especially with regards to copy...

Most marketers don't understand it. They don't recognise its power, or its importance. To them, copy is just support to graphics.

(It's the other way around, actually...)

What's more, they feel it's easy to do. No need to put copy out.

*"Let the department do it. They're a bright bunch. After all, when I read what they produce, it seems OK to me..."*

But hang on a minute here. You know bugger all about copy.

You don't *understand* copy techniques or structure. You don't *understand* the do's and don'ts. You have never *studied* the art of copywriting.

So, if we're being honest here - you are not really qualified to approve, disapprove or comment on copy, are you?

Given that scenario (which exists in the vast majority of companies these days), it's not surprising that most of the copy produced, is lacklustre.

It's a simple case of the short-sighted leading the blind.

Ignorance is bliss, huh? Sometimes. But wasting money is stupid...

Which is one of the main reasons I decided to write this two-parter. It's my way of trying to advise, guide and educate those that need it, so their copy might just become a little *better*...

Those of you that are regular readers of Copycat don't need this education of course. But you'll probably agree with me, that it's important now and again, to revisit, reiterate and underline the basics of written communication.

These **13 proven copy secrets** are **FREE**. I'm sure that will please the marketers reading this. Because, in these tough times, I know you readily embrace that word, just like you do with 'cheap', 'discount' and 'reduction'.

Appears that way to me anyway, in the conversations I seem to be having these days...

So, everyone, I hope you find these cherry-picked tips valuable. I gave you the first six last month.

[http://www.andyowen.co.uk/pdfs/andyowen\\_co\\_uk\\_pdfs\\_13\\_proven\\_copy\\_secrets\\_1.pdf](http://www.andyowen.co.uk/pdfs/andyowen_co_uk_pdfs_13_proven_copy_secrets_1.pdf)

Here are the remaining seven.

## **7. Write copy that connects, has relevance and benefit - and stirs the emotions - making the heart beat faster.**

The copy you use on your website and in your sales letters, emails, newsletters, brochures, or anything else for that matter, has to connect.

If it doesn't connect, 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 is lost.

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.

That's a very difficult skill. But absolutely *essential*.

An emotional sales argument will always outperform an intellectual one.

Every time. Every *single* time. Until the world stops turning.

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".*

### **8. Include the words "you" and "your" as often as you can.**

Regular readers to Copycat might remember I wrote a full article about this earlier this year. It centred on the legendary Newsweek subs letter, which had 'you' or 'yours' 58 times in the copy.

[http://www.andyowen.co.uk/pdfs/pdfscopywriting\\_Power\\_Words\\_FREE\\_YOU\\_Ed%20McLean\\_Newsweek.pdf](http://www.andyowen.co.uk/pdfs/pdfscopywriting_Power_Words_FREE_YOU_Ed%20McLean_Newsweek.pdf)

In your copy, you must always put the reader first. You might not like to hear this, but your prospect doesn't want to hear about you, your company or, even less, your company's mission statement.

The reader only wants to hear 'what's in it for me'.

Include the words "you" and "your" 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 what you are offering, will benefit them.

By saying "Your order will be sent first class post..." or "...the benefits you will enjoy..." transfers ownership in a subtle, psychological way.

This will pull the reader into your copy.

## **9. Write your copy as if you were talking with a customer face to face.**

Your copy should not be about image or branding.

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.

Replace every intellectual word with an emotional one. Avoid trying to be someone else. You will be found out.

Just be yourself.

The best way to write is the simple way. Write it like you say it. Make your writing human.

No one talks in perfect English. We talk to communicate.

## **10. Short, short, short...**

Your copy is a communication bridge between you and the reader.

For maximum readability, it will be best if it contains a lot of short words.

1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 letter words are much easier to digest and understand.

Look at your current copy - if you have a long word - change it for a short one if you can.

Short sentences and short paragraphs are also essential.

Your sentences should average 12 -14 words or less. This way your copy will be easier to read - and understand.

Long paragraphs are instant death. They are just like when a salesperson rambles on at you. You know the result when that happens.

It's the same with your copy. We talk in short sentences. With short words. So try to replicate this in your copy.

The best copy reads just like an everyday conversation.

## **11. Emotional words are better than intellectual or pompous ones**

If you have any intellectuals in your company, keep them as far away from your copy challenges as possible.

Don't even let them see any copy and never seek their opinion.

They won't like 'selling' copy. They'll turn their nose up at short, snappy copy. They will try and replace everyday words with big clunky ones, just to show off.

I recently received a mailing from a leading private medical insurance company. In the letter, it had the word 'conundrum' in the first line.

I kid you not! Conundrum! Yes, in the first line of a sales letter.

Intellectuals also don't like emotion in copy. Emotional words give them an ulcer. They would change every one, given the chance.

Obviously, what you do in your company is up to you. My advice is keep them away. If you allow them to have an input in your copy, prepare for a disaster.

Charities understand the need for emotional copy. But, they still could do it better. I saw a letter the other day, which said: '*We'd be really grateful if you could help...*'

I think '*It would be lovely if you could help...*' is much warmer...

### **11. Use 'link' words and phrases to keep your copy flowing**

People have more time than they realise. Yet, they make pressure for themselves, because they are disorganised.

So, 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.

### **12. Make your copy benefit-led, not feature-led. Re-state your benefits before closing**

A Porsche 911 goes from 0-60 in just under 4 seconds. That is a feature.

Imagine you are in a Porsche 911 and a young buck sidles up alongside you in his souped-up Beamer at the traffic lights.

He looks across, then up at the lights and smiles – and you can see he fancies his chances.

The lights change – and 4 seconds later, the Beamer image in the rear view mirror is so far away, you can't even recognise it.

Now THAT'S a benefit.

What has just happened is one of the reasons you bought the car in the first place.

In your copy to your prospects, always sell the benefits of your product and service. Because that's what people buy.

Not the features. Very few people buy features.

And, in sales letters and emails, always try to re-state your benefits before closing.

This is 'make your mind up time' - so bolster their enthusiasm just before you ask for their money. Remind them what they'll get by replying, and what they'll lose if they don't.

In sales letters, a P.S. is now pretty much mandatory. Why?

Because 4 of 5 readers will read the P.S. first, before they read the body copy of the letter. So, always repeat your key benefit(s) and also tell them about closing dates too.

Remember, fear of loss is always more powerful than promise of gain.

### **13. Your copy needs to be long enough to tell your story**

There is so much tosh written about copy length.

Here's all you need to know.

Copy needs to be as long as is necessary, to do a complete selling job.

It's not about being long. It's not about being short. It's about being *interesting and relevant...*

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

I think that's still the case.

Don't be afraid of long copy. It still outpulls short copy in all the recent head-to-head tests I've either been involved with, or been told about.

If you are trying to sell something to someone, you have to be interesting and relevant. If it takes 3 pages to do the selling job, so be it.

If you cut those three pages down to one, you will be leaving valuable stuff out of the copy and probably making the letter look like a dog's breakfast at the same time.

However, if it only needs a page to do a complete selling job and you write two pages, you will be rambling and will almost certainly lose the reader.

Remember, it's not about being long. It's not about being short. It's about being *interesting and relevant*..

So, playmates, there you have it. A baker's dozen of useful copy tips for you to consider. As I said in the first article, there are many, many more.

Perhaps in the future, if there are enough requests – I might share another 13 with you. But, in the meantime, these are key ones and worth your consideration.

I hope you find them useful for the future.

### **HERE ARE A FEW MORE EXAMPLES OF HOW NOT TO DO IT...**

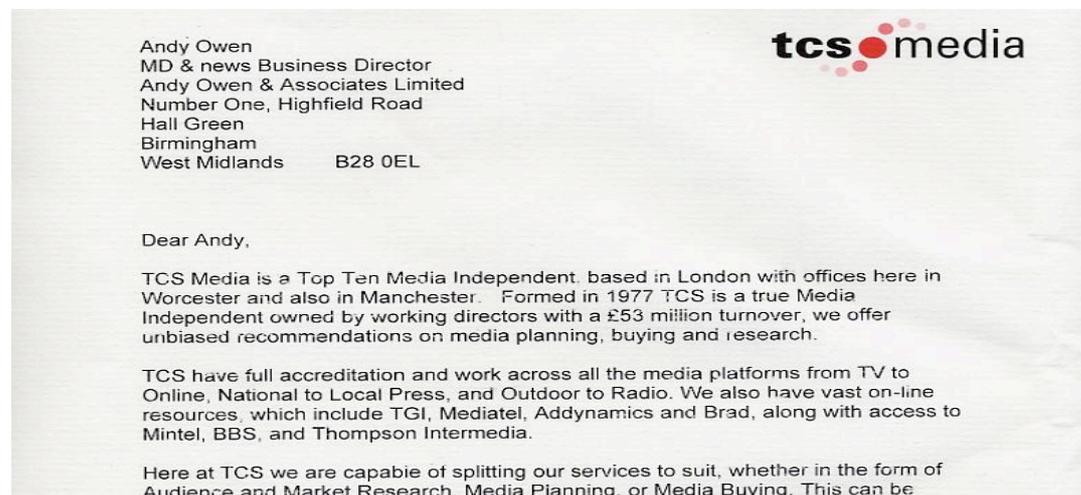
Thanks for all your feedback from Part One of this article. Seems like a lot of you were quite amused with the examples I provided.

As I said to a number of people, these are REAL examples. I have not made them up or modified them in any way.

Fact is, in the main, there are many, many people out there that simply waste money on a regular basis.

Here are a few more clear examples of that...

### **Talking about you, you – and more you...**



People buy benefits not features. How many times does it have to be said?

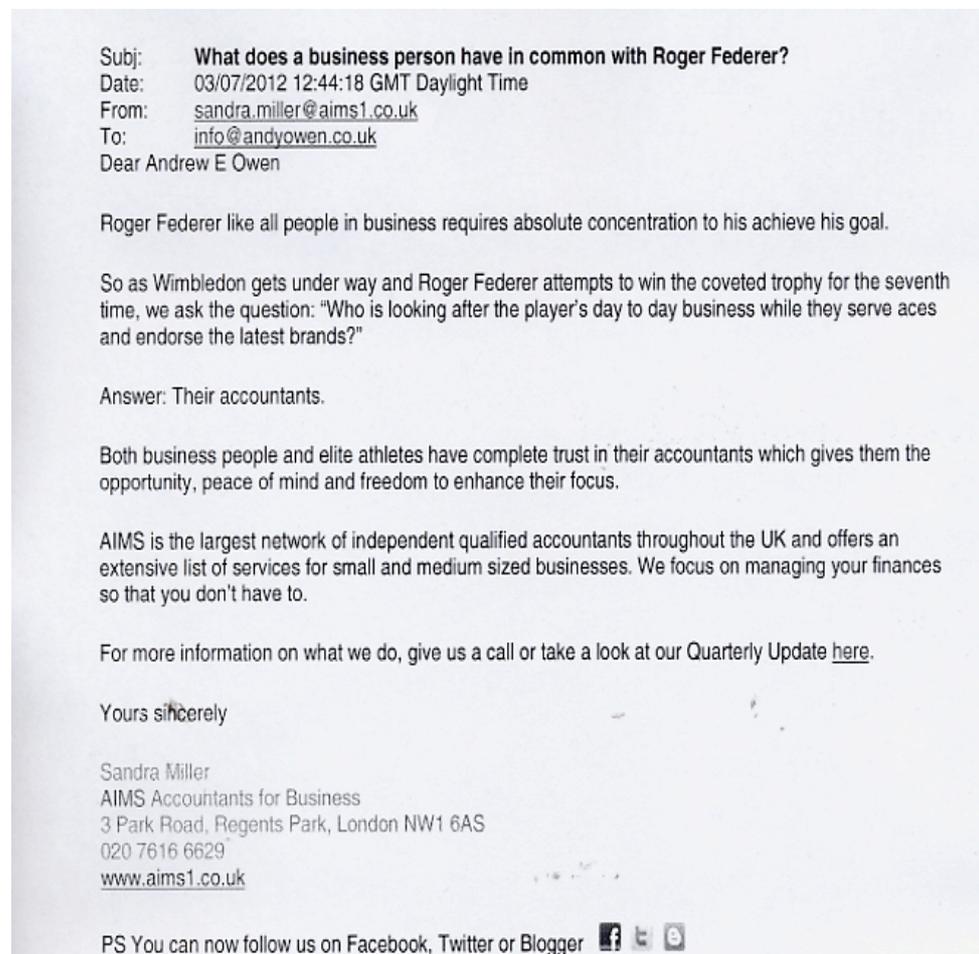
Nowhere in the first few paragraphs of this letter, is there anything resembling a benefit to me.

The writer is talking about his company, its size, its history and other irrelevant stuff.

I am not interested in any of that – only what his company can do for me.

The writer doesn't say...

**Writing so called 'clever' subject lines will result in abysmal opening rates. Add banal body copy and you have a turkey.**



As we are now mainly talking to a universe of sceptical know-it-alls, cleverness for the sake of cleverness is almost certainly unwise.

Cleverness in copy very rarely works. Poor copy never does...

**And, to wrap it all up – a classic. Just read it – and weep...**



For all your Insurance needs, contact Trident Insurance on 0800 038 9000 for a quote.

**At Trident Insurance you're in control**

It's not hard in these days of political posturing, rhetorical claptrap and clear cut buck-passing to feel disillusioned that no one is in charge. I would suggest it's not just a feeling but statement of fact!

Politicians only care about getting re-elected, economists seem to get is less right. Did they ever actually get it right? Do you remember no one had the answer to HM The Queen's question at the London School of Economics, when she asked why no one saw the 2008 disaster coming!!

With insurance in a way it's the same problem, to take from Donald Rumsfeld's Feb 2002 infamous Department of Defence news briefing : " There are things we know we know, and we know there are some things we don't know, but there are also ones we don't know , we don't know"

In other words there really is no certainty of anything, save as we all know death and taxes!!

So with insurance where do you go to get absolute cover in this upside down world? I would suggest there is no such thing, and in times of economic uncertainty, compounded by politicians who are brilliant at giving advice but not prepared to take it, I would question whether anyone is fit to give advice on anything anymore.

Insurers can change cover literally at will, and do incorporate exclusions that literally invalidate the policy which begs the question what are you actually paying for?

At [Trident Insurance](#) we have taken the view that to give advice may be as unhelpful as not giving it. So we have decided it's far better to simply inform our Clients based on what we know rather than state an opinion as fact and suggest it's advice. You may say, that's all semantics but it frees us where Regulatory tick boxing is concerned to give an opinion that is not advice. I'm sorry guys but I didn't make the rules, I just have to make sure we follow them.

Silly as all the above may all sound, regulation is killing the once relatively easy idea of buying insurance. I would even go as far as to suggest that present regulation is protecting no one when it really counts.

I personally believe less is more, but as a firm we're obliged to supply you with ever more paperwork, we know you won't read. We can't help that we have to comply, but if I may be so bold here's a few words of non-regulatory free advice:

**"If you want an independent firm to look after your insurance, getting you the cheapest cover available to us, who's prepared to inform you what we think and talk plain English, not some technical gobbledeygook that drives you mad. I put it to you no one beats [Trident Insurance](#).**

We're here to look after you as our Client and strike you the best deal for you. Thousands have realised us turning back the clock really works for them.

Aaaargh! Mercy, mercy!

The preacher man cometh...

What was the writer thinking, for goodness sake?

This reminds me of one of Drayton's quotes, which I paraphrase:

*"Have you ever wondered why so much copy looks as though it's been tossed off by three monkeys with typewriters sitting in an attic?"*

Yes, pal, I do. I wonder about that, every single day when I'm viewing my inbox and/or looking at my daily mail.

The examples above, highlight quite clearly a lack of knowledge surrounding copy and how it works. Those promotions could have been much better.

Writers that care, understand that to cut through and sell, they need to use oodles of passion, honesty and conviction. Plus, of course, emotion, authority and urgency - all underpinned by a structured delivery.

There's no place for verbal tricks. Never has been, never will be.

Your copy should be written to sound like you, talking.

If you accept that - and act upon it - you will find that it's not only easier to write than the very poor examples that you see above...

...it will also work a hell of a lot better.

Keep the faith



## About the Author

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

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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.

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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 enjoy, read and download at: [www.andyowen.co.uk/articles.html](http://www.andyowen.co.uk/articles.html)