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Million Dollar Marketing

How to Instantly Double the Response to Any Ad, Letter, or Web Page

Special Report from Jim McCraigh:

Here's tip from professional copywriters that most people don't know. Headlines will make or break your sales letters, ads, and web pages! They will account for 80% of your success or failure. Five times as many people read the headline as read the ad or letter. Well conceived changes in headlines have produced increases of double or even triple or more in sales!

In fact, test after test has proven that a promotional piece with a headline - any headline - will outperform a promotional piece without a headline. And if you can craft a headline centered on the major benefit you bring to your customers, the difference in response can be stunning.

Still Not Using Headlines?

Recently, I had this proven to me beyond a shadow of a doubt. About a year ago, a new inner circle member called me to say that she had to reschedule our first phone consultation because her website was down and that she would reschedule as soon as the problem was resolved. After I hung up, I went to her site to find it working perfectly. I called her back immediately to relay the good news.

She told me it was still down as she had not received any sales for two days and something must be dreadfully wrong. I asked her if she had changed anything. She said that she had improved some of the graphics. I went back to the site to discover that the headline on the page had been replaced with a graphic. Once she replaced the headline on the page, the flow of sales began once again. The simple act of removing the headline took her response rate to ZERO! Putting it back got things going again.

We have been conditioned to decide what to read based on the effect a few choice words have on our thoughts and our feelings. With books, it's the title. With the newspaper, it's the headlines. With a magazine on the newsstand, it's the teasers on the cover. Whether you know it or not, we decide whether or not to read ads, letters and web pages the same way.

A great headline should have all the targeted power of a smart bomb that locks in on its target and explodes upon impact. The reality of copywriting is that you have just two seconds to get their attention. (Forget the four second rule... it's too long, the world moves twice as fast now). If you don't, you lose the reader in a heartbeat. Make sure your headline is crystal clear and promises a real benefit so the reader will respond.

So, How do you Write Great Headlines?

The first big success I had as an ad copywriter came in the early 1970's when I was the young marketing director of a Chicago area bank. The project assigned to me was the opening of our new drive-through facility. I wanted to use a premium, but was given a modest budget of only \$1.00 per item. After surveying ad specialty catalogs, I found nothing that seemed to make sense at that budget. A few days before the ads were to run I put my head in my hands, stared at the wall, and wondered how I would tell my boss I hadn't come up with anything yet.

Then it came to me! Since I'd started as a teller a couple of years earlier, I remembered that some regular customers would ask if I had any free samples. I also knew the bank had some of those new unpopular dollar coins in the vault that were gathering dust. So, without hesitation I wrote:

"Bank Offering Free Samples:

We'll Give You \$1 to Try our New Drive Through Banking Center"

The rest of the copy consisted of times, dates and location of the new facility. I closed the ad with the bank's logo, sent the ad out for publication on the following Sunday.

Early the next Monday morning, I was in my office with a loan applicant when I noticed a police officer approaching my open door. He seemed agitated. He quickly made eye contact with me and told me he needed to talk to me. I quickly finished up with the customer and asked if I could help him.

"I wonder if I might see your city permit for the event outside?" I told him that the project had been signed off on by building inspectors weeks ago. "No", he said, "I mean for the cars lined up out of the parking lot, on to the street, into the intersection and down the road, and blocking highway traffic." My boss was so elated that he didn't seem to mind paying the city for an off duty police officer to direct traffic that day.

Finally, there's an easier way to write great sales letters...

A powerful sales letter is the ultimate marketing tool that will boost your sales and profits. Learn how to quickly write words that sell with this step-by-step guide.

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Great headlines get your attention and promise a benefit all within the space of a few words. They appeal to your desire to gain something, such as increased income, social status, security, and love or show you how to avoid undesirable things like pain, financial loss, unnecessary work, or embarrassment. (I usually favor headlines that take the "fear of loss" approach... recent research shows that most people are more motivated to avoid loss than they are to do something for gain.) The best headlines go a step farther and suggest that the solution is simple and easy to obtain.

Great headlines DEMAND the target prospect stop and read them. They appeal to a specific individual, not everyone. They shout "this is for you, Mary." Great headlines select those people who will be interested in the your offer and cause them to read the rest of your copy. They raise your eyebrows!

The best moneymaking headlines are often taken from the requests and words of your customers own mouths... Like my free money samples.

Because your headline can be 80% of your success or failure, you should spend at least that much of your copywriting time on writing headlines. Develop 10 or 12 headlines for each letter, ad, or web page you write, then write 5 more. The chances that your first headline you write will be the best one possible is extremely unlikely. Be ruthless in your critique of what you write. Readers will be!

(By the way, some of those discarded headlines can form the basis of your body copy!)

A headline is meant to do two very important things. First, it needs to grab your reader's attention... RIGHT NOW! I can't state this too strongly. All the ads, brochures, catalogs, flyers, direct mail pieces and web sites people see everyday are just a big blur to them. Your headline must be prominent and effective enough to pull the reader into the copy and compel them into reading further. To do that, it must cater to a specific emotion or a relevant condition - - one to which the reader can easily associate. To illustrate, here's a list of "triggers".

Fear, Pain, Loss, Health, Love, Greed, Longer Life, Pride, Power, Ego, Ease, Anger . (These are in rough rank order-- strongest first)

The purpose of a headline is to stir the emotions of your prospect in the direction of buying what you have to sell... and to get your prospect interested in reading what comes next in your copy. Without headlines, you'll cheat yourself out of sales that you could have had!

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