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Copywriting Sweetie

21 Copy Mistakes



Over the years, while helping website owners improve their website copy, I've seen a lot of copy. Some was great, some pretty good, some mediocre and I'm sorry to say...some pretty bad. In this journey of helping people improve their online marketing messages, I've come to see that many people make a lot of the same mistakes over and over again.

This guide has been written to help you cut your learning curve and eliminate those mistakes that are so easy to make.

Side Note: Get more information on how to write to sales copy that sells without being salesy right here: <http://www.writingtosellonline.com>

Before You Write Copy

Especially when you first start writing copy, there is plenty of background work you need to do before you write your copy. This may be something that you do in your head or it might be something you spend some time brainstorming on paper to get your desired results. When you get good at writing copy, it's something that comes very naturally to you as you'll already have a deep understanding of what you need to know to write good copy.

Here are some common mistakes people make before they even start writing:

- 1. Not Understanding Their Target Market:** Without understanding who is reading your marketing messages, whether it be emails, sales copy, articles, etc. it's virtually impossible to sell or even "warm-up" your audience effectively.

You can't be everything to everyone. If you sell a product for women that does not mean all women are your customers. You need to find out exactly which women you need to target.

Think about your product, what is THE single most important reason your target audience would want to buy it? You need to be able to empathize with your target market, identify their problems and show how your product solves. If you think your product solves everyone's problems, the passion is lost in your copy and it's tough to get anyone excited about anything.

Still, it IS possible that you have more than one very targeted market for your product. If that's the case, you should make separate sales pages to drive the appropriate traffic to. For example, if you sell a high-end wrinkle cream and discover that not only are certain types of women buying the cream, but men are interested too, you can create different pages to target the problems and interests of each group. That way, when you have different advertising campaigns or affiliates who send you traffic, the traffic can be directed to the appropriate page.

You will sell more to a highly-targeted group of people than trying a lukewarm approach with the public in general. Leave general marketing to Amazon and other huge companies...or do they really do general marketing?!

(Note: I mention Amazon and yes, they target a general audience overall, but a visit to their website will show you they customize their marketing right down to the individual visiting. They will show you like items based on what you are looking at on their site and they remember this the next time you visit and try to offer you complimentary items. They are about as specific in their marketing as they can get.)

If you are still struggling with your target marketing, make sure you refer to the training audio for more help.

2. Not Having a Unique Selling Position (USP): Here's one of the most important questions you'll ask yourself before you start trying to write copy ->

- **“Why would my customer buy my product instead of a competitor’s?”**

Now, we already know that in most cases we don't want to say, “Because I offer the best price,” because that might just send your business into complete bankruptcy. You need to find something more unique about yourself that allows you to sell your product at a profitable price.

Some of the best customers you can have, don't worry about price. In my experience, the best customers are the ones who are more concerned about quality, exceptional service or that just buy because they plain old trust you and feel you understand them.

Really take the time to craft your USP before writing the copy for any product you sell and refer to the training audio for further tips.

3. Not Understanding The Product: Even if it's your product and you think you know it intimately, make sure you get to know every detail so you can answer every possible question your target audience might have. Know it's every feature...but more importantly, know the benefits of those features. Couple that with your understanding of your target market & USP, you'll be a sales force to be reckoned with.

Page Layout

How you design your page is very important to how well you'll sell your product. Let's talk about some of the common errors in page layout:

4. **Too Many Distractions:** Not every piece of sales copy has to be a full-on sales letter with no logos, navigation, etc. In many cases, it's very appropriate to sell a product on a traditional "shopping cart-type" website. In those cases, it's still important not to take the distractions to an outrageous level.

Here are some tips to reduce distractions:

- Keep your website navigation to a minimum. Create sub-categories to your website sections if necessary to minimize menu distractions.
 - If you're selling your own product on a particular page, remove all banners going to outside pages. Whether it's paid advertising, an affiliate link, a web ring (ICK!) or anything else, it doesn't belong on your sales page. Of course, you can do some testing on whether making other product offers increases your bottom line, but generally speaking, get rid of this stuff.
 - Keep your page header or logo simple and small. Don't let it take over the whole "above-the-fold" space on your website. A logo or page header can help with branding and can convey a more professional image, but it doesn't have to be huge to do that. Most of the above-the-fold space should be reserved for selling your product.
5. **Content & Selling in the Same Place:** Good sales copy should be informational, but sometimes people drown their sales website in articles and other information because they've been told that information generates traffic and trust. Maybe you've even heard me say that, but I hope my message wasn't misunderstood.

Generally speaking, your content and your sales information should be kept separate. This might mean that you have a separate domain for all your content where you generate leads for your products and get people to sign up for your mailing list. Or you might have content on the same site as your product information so that visitors from search engines can find it. If you do this, keep the links to your content subtle and away from your product links and information. Perhaps, you can place links to your articles on the bottom navigation of your site.

6. **Hyperlinks That Don't Look Like Hyperlinks:** Don't get cute with links. People are accustomed to blue underlined links, use them. If you insist on using a different color, at the very least, make sure they are underlined all the time (and not just on a mouseover). If your links don't look like links, people just aren't going to click them as readily.

Headline Problems

Once you understand your target market and have crafted your USP, it's much easier to make the copy flow from your typing fingers. But sometimes it's not that simple and it's easy to get stuck on the headline right off the bat. Here are some common headline problems:

7. **Headline is Missing:** By now, since you've listened to the training audio, you wouldn't do this. Still, many websites and web pages are completely missing a headline or they have something mundane and meaningless like, "Welcome!"
8. **Headline is Too Long:** There are some highly-skilled and popular copywriters that have written some amazing long headlines. Unfortunately, most people are not highly-skilled and famous copywriters that can perform such a feat. Keep your headlines focused on one idea and say it as quickly and concisely as you can.
9. **Headlines That Are Not Capitalized:** Capitalize your headlines. It makes them easier to read and it's what people are accustomed to when they read a newspaper or magazine for example.
10. **Headlines Sprawl Across the Page:** As with all writing online, when it sprawls across the page, it makes it hard to read. A headline that goes straight across the page is even more difficult to read and loses its oomph. Your headlines and subheadlines should be narrower than the rest of your copy. You want people to easily read these parts of your copy, so they can be drawn in and read the rest of what you have to say.
11. **No Subheadlines:** Subheadlines break up your copy and make it easy to read. It's also good for people who are scanning your page. If someone is scanning, it's less likely that all the tiny print is going to make him stop and read, but if you have an attention-getting sub-headline, it's easy to get them to stop in their tracks and pay attention.

Crafting the Rest of Your Copy

Now let's get to the meat of your copy. Here are some mistakes you definitely want to avoid:

12. **Not speaking to your audience:** This problem largely stems from people not understanding their target market. If you don't take the time to understand your target market, it stands to reason you won't really speak to them in a way they understand. A lot of sales copy is too focused on the business who is doing the selling:

"We sell this..."

"We're great at this..."

“We believe in customer satisfaction...”

By now, you know that your visitors only care about one thing – their own problems. They want to know how you can fix them, but you really are irrelevant to that equation. Going through your copy and drastically changing the “we’s” to “yous” and rewriting your copy based on that can go a long way.

13. **Loooooong sentences and even loooooooooonger paragraphs:** We’ve talked about this one before. Throw grammar rules out for the sake of readability. Keep sentences short and simple. Break up your paragraphs, even if traditional grammar rules don’t dictate you do so.

Viewing a screen can easily product eye-fatigue. It’s definitely not like reading something on paper. Be considerate of your reader and make it easy for them to get your message.

14. **No segue ways to the next section:** Sometimes when people craft sales pages, they think that adding a subheadline gives them an excuse not to make their copy flow. One section should go right into the next and keep the visitor reading.

You can use wording like:

“and that’s why...”

“until I discovered...”

“that’s when I knew...”

or anything that brings them from finishing one section of your sales page to reading the next.

15. **Survey and opt-in pages that try to sell:** If you are writing a survey page, you’re only goal is to collect information and questions. Make sure that’s clear from the outset, so you get as many responses as possible. With an opt-in page, if you want the most opt-ins as possible, make sure they know they’re going to get a free offer of some kind from the outset.

16. **Opt-in pages that are too long:** It’s true that people don’t give up their email addresses as readily as they used to and you have to “sell” them on signing up for your mailing list. However, it’s still easier to get an email address than to get someone to open their wallet and generally speaking, it doesn’t require as much copy. Tell them you’ve got free help for them, give them a bit of background, add bullet points about the list and then ask them to sign up. You can include a testimonial or two and a P.S. or two, but don’t get too complicated...just get to the point.

17. **No bullet points outlining features/benefits:** Bullet points are easy to read and thank goodness, they’re pretty easy to write. Use bullet points to show detailed benefits of your product, mailing list, ebook or whatever you’re trying to sell. As

long as it's information that would be of interest to your potential buyer, you can include it.

18. **Bullet points that give away information, instead of teasing:** This is common to people selling information products. A good bullet point teases about what's included and gets them excited to buy, but doesn't give away the actual information.

For example (Purely fictional, of course!):

- **Bad bullet point:** Passionately kiss your husband each morning and he's sure to stay faithful.
- **Good bullet point:** Do this one thing each morning and your husband's eyes will never stray to another woman.

The first bullet point gives away what's in your information product. The other one tells the BENEFIT of what's included (the faithful husband), but doesn't tell you how to do it.

19. **Unnecessary Repetition or Not Being Succinct:** There's a difference between summarizing your offer and just repeating yourself over and over again. Although it's true that detail is what really sells your product, you want to make sure your copy is succinct and receives proper editing attention. If you start out with really long copy, go over it over and over again, until you've fine-tuned it into a well-oiled selling machine.
20. **Meaningless Testimonials:** If your customer said you can only publish her first name and she simply said, "This is the best XXX I've ever tried," you probably shouldn't post it on your website. Testimonials need to come from real people with real names and talk about real things. Make sure your testimonials have concrete detail about what your customer liked about your product and what results it produced for her.
21. **Not asking for the sale:** You've worked so hard up to this point; when you're done telling them about the product, ask for the sale. Tell them why the price is good and then ask them to order. Going wishy-washy at the end of your copy isn't going to convince too many people to buy.

There you have it – 21 common copywriting mistakes. Take some time to go through your own copy and see where you might make some improvements and watch your sales improve.

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