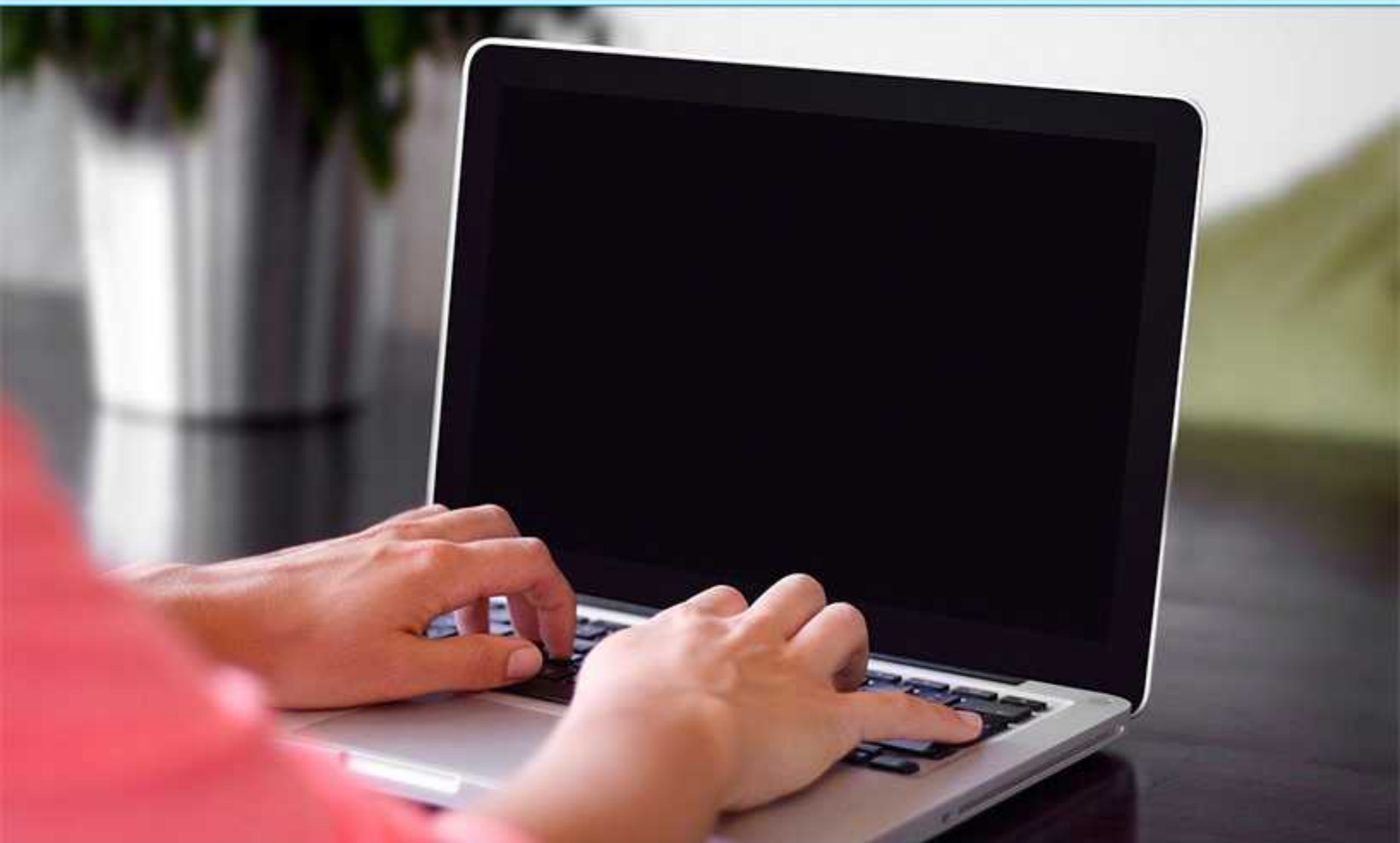# *Essential Guide to*
ONLINE
COPYWRITING

ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO ONLINE COPYWRITING

What is Online Copywriting?

There are many different types of writing and writing specialties. There are people who write poems, text books, and advertisements. There are people who write newspaper articles, horror stories, and legal documents. One type of writing specialty or writing skill is copywriting.

Copywriting is essentially any content that promotes a product, service, or organization. An advertisement is copywriting and so too is a landing page. Copywriting can be an email that you send to a list of subscribers or the opt-in that they download.

Most often, we think about copywriting as being specific to a sales page. For example, you want someone to buy your services as an accountant so you have a brochure or a sales page that promotes your services. Products have sales pages too.

Copy isn't exclusively created to make sales. Copy has a goal and that goal is to motivate the reader to take action. That action can be anything from sharing on social media to subscribing or downloading to motivating a purchase.

What Makes It Different From Offline and Print Copy?

The fundamental difference between online copy and offline copy or print copy is that online copy is exactly that…it's online. While offline copy may be a flyer that you can hang in the local coffee shop, online copy exists online at a website address.

Offline copy may be mailed, tucked under porch welcome mats, or under windshield wipers. Offline copy can be handed out at conferences or written on the side of buildings, packages, and even cars.

Online copy needs a website address. It can be emailed, shared on social media, downloaded and visited. Online copy isn't just different in where you find it. Online copy has a few special requirements. For example, it's more challenging for people to read using a computer, cell phone or other digital device so online copy needs to be easy to read. That often means embracing formatting to help guide your reader's eyes through the material.

Online copy also needs to be scannable – because most people don't spend more than a few seconds deciding whether to read a page and even when they do decide to read it, they generally scan the information and look for words and ideas.

There's another difference that makes online copy much more powerful than offline copy and that is the simple fact that all your reader generally has to do to take an action is click on a button or link. You can't do that with offline copy.

Clicking a button means that you as a business owner may have the opportunity for higher conversion rates and it's easier to measure the success of your copy because you can track how many people read the material, how many clicked on your link, and how many took action.

We just mentioned the phrase "conversion rates." This is the term that's used to define how many people took the action that you intended. For example, if 1000 people read your page promoting your newsletter and 100 of those people signed up then you have a 10 percent conversion rate. You converted 10 percent of your readers into newsletter subscribers. This is the ultimate goal for your copy. You want to motivate readers to take some type of action.

How Does It Work?

Copy works by appealing to your reader's emotions. We buy based on our emotions. The product or service you're considering purchasing or trying out must connect with you on some emotional level. And it's not just that we buy from brands and people that we like or trust.

Think about when you buy a shirt, you might buy the shirt because you like the way it looks and you believe that by wearing the shirt, you'll look good. Some people might buy the shirt because of the name brand; they believe that the brand name will give an impression of who they are or who they want to be.

And there are folks who buy a shirt because of the price. It's a low price so they feel like they're being frugal and making a smart purchase. Copy, effective copy, taps into the emotions that your prospect may be feeling or may want to feel.

But good copy doesn't stop with an emotional pull. Most people tend to look for facts and information to back up their purchase decision. We decide we want to buy based on our emotions and then we strive to support that decision with a logical argument.

This is where testimonials and reviews can often be effective in copy. And we'll take a look at how to approach both the emotional and the logical components of your copy in just a bit. First, why does copywriting matter?

Why Does It Matter?

As a business owner you likely spend tremendous time, energy, and money writing content. Generally, the goal for your content is to drive traffic to your website, engage your readers and prospects, build your brand and to offer some type of value or benefit to your reader. The value may be in the form of information, entertainment, or you may help them solve a problem.

But what happens next?

Assuming that you now have your prospect's undivided attention what do you want to do with that attention? How do you transition them from a prospect to a customer?

Copywriting

Think about this…have you ever included a call to action at the end of a blog post or email? You might have said something like "leave a comment and let me know what you think" or "click on this link and check it out."

That's copywriting. You're striving to motivate your reader to take some sort of action. Without copywriting there is no way to convert prospects into customers. Copy is what motivates them to make a purchase, to sign up for your email list, to follow you on Facebook and more.

As you can see, copywriting is more than writing a sales page. It certainly includes writing sales pages and promotional content. However, it also encompasses many other types of writing and content.

Different Types of Online Copy

First and foremost, it's important to realize that you can incorporate copywriting concepts into any writing that you do. You can integrate some copywriting into blog posts, into newsletter articles and into your information products and downloads. This helps you give form and function to every piece of content that you produce and publish.

Sales Page

When most people think about copywriting they probably think about the sales page. This is a page that you send your prospects to and the specific goal of the page is to sell a product or service. Below is a screenshot of a sales page for the folks over at Basecamp.com. As you can see, the goal is to get people to sign up for their project management system.

Chaos, Organized

Basecamp helps you wrangle people with different roles, responsibilities, and objectives toward a common goal: **Finishing a project** *together.*

Use Basecamp free for 2 months — it's on us

4,909 companies signed up to use Basecamp just last week

You need to get a project done.

I need to pull the right people together, divvy up the work to be done, and show we're making progress.

This type of sales copy may be one of the most well-known formats, but it's not the only one and it probably won't be the format that you utilize most often. You will, however, use it any time you need to sell a product or service.

Opt In Copy

An opt-in page has the unique goal of motivating people to sign up for your opt-in offer and email list. It's usually much shorter than a sales page, which can be just a few hundred words to a few thousand. Below is a screenshot of an opt-in offer. As you can see, the copy is brief and to the point. It focuses specifically on the benefits of grabbing that free report.

Product & Service Description

If you have a catalog of products available or a variety of services or service packages that you offer, then you'll want to write compelling descriptions – copy that motivates your readers to buy the item. In the screenshot below, you'll see that the product description page almost reads like a complete sales page. It's an extensive bit of product description. Much like a traditional sales page, your copy can be as long or as short as it needs to be to get the job done.

Email Promo

An email promotion is an autoresponder message that has a goal of inciting action. You probably receive a few of these every day in your email inbox. They often read like a short conversational message and they may have some information in them. For example, an email message might have the subject line: 3 quick tips to make today a better day. In the body of the message you may see a few quick tips and a link to buy a product or to download a free report.

Advertisement

Any advertisement that you create for your business, whether it's on social media, published on a relevant blog or website, or even a search engine ad like AdWords, is considered copy. In just a few short words an ad can incite action.

Here's a quick example of an AdWords advertisement:

Potty Training A Dog
www.modernpuppies.com/ ▾
(855) 303-4538
Over 50,000 Dogs Potty Trained.
Easy & Works as Fast as 3 Days!

As you can probably see, copy is different from content. Content is generally meant to provide value. It can inform, educate, or even entertain. While some copy may include some of those elements, the heart of copy and its sole purpose is to incite action, usually in the form of a purchase.

So now that you know where you can use copy, why you want to use it and how it works, let's start looking at the fundamentals of what makes copy successful.

Fundamentals of Successful Online Copy

Copy generally has five core components. While shorter pieces like a PPC ad may not embrace all of these components or fundamentals, most other formats will and a sales page most certainly needs to. The fundamentals of successful online copy include:

1. Identify The Problem
2. Know Your Audience
3. Benefits/Value
4. Credibility/Logic/Facts
5. Call To Action

Let's start with identifying the problem and look a little closer at each fundamental.

Identify the Problem

What problem does your product or service solve? If you go back and take a look at the opt-in offer to lose 10% of your body weight then the problem is relatively apparent. The problem is an inability to or a desire to get rid of unwanted body fat.

What problem does your product or service solve? This is an important step and it's the foundation for which the rest of your copy will be written on. Your headline and all of your supporting copy will show your reader how your product or service solves this problem.

Know Your Audience

Sales copy needs to be able to not only speak to the problem that your audience is challenged by but also to their emotions. You need to know your audience so that you can speak their language and communicate with them in a way that they feel connected to you.

You also have to know what motivates them and why they buy. Knowing your audience is just as essential to good copywriting as being able to identify the problem that they're having and how your product or service solves the problem.

Benefits and Value

In the world of online marketing and entrepreneurship you probably hear a lot about benefits and value. In addition to understanding what benefits and value your products or service offer, you want to be able to connect them with your audience. Learn the difference between features and benefits and then leverage the information in the body of your copy.

For example, the benefit of an alarm clock is that it helps you make it to work on time. A feature of an alarm clock might be the blaring sound it makes when the alarm goes off.

Credibility, Logic & Facts

Earlier we mentioned that people buy based on their emotions and they back up those buying decisions with logic and facts. You can use customer testimonials and reviews to support your copy. You can also provide charts, statistics, and other relevant data. The keyword is "relevant." Any facts or data that you provide must be related to the problem your audience is facing and the solution you're offering.

Call to Action

A call to action is a statement that tells your reader or audience member what steps they can take next. It's the simple "buy now" button or invitation. Copy cannot succeed without it. It's an essential element and it may likely be one of the components of your copy that you test most often.

These five fundamentals are the core of any sales copy. Understand them and make sure they are integral to your copy. You'll be well on your way to creating great copy for your business. Of course, there are some other elements of good copy. It needs to be persuasive and while we've talked about why and how people make a decision to buy, we haven't talked about what you can do in your copy to help them make that decision. We're talking about persuasion.

Tips To Create Persuasive Copy

The more persuasive your copy is, meaning the more it connects with your reader and motivates them to take a desired action, the more conversions you have. Ultimately this means more sales, which is always good. There are dozens of different variables that can make copy more persuasive. We're going to take a look at 7 of them.

Inject Emotion

Remember that we buy based on our emotions. Neglecting this fundamental fact can result in low conversions. So it's essential to integrate emotions into your copy. But how do you do that? Use emotional words, tell stories, and speak conversationally with your reader.

For example…

- Do you feel paralyzed by the fear of paying for your retirement
- Are you furious that you could actually be saving twice as much for retirement if only you'd known how?
- Imagine feeling confident about your retirement savings plan.
- What would it mean to you if you knew you would be able to retire comfortably?

Do you see how each of those sentences speaks to the emotions of the reader? In fact the words "Feel" and "feeling" are used a few times. It puts the reader into the right state of mind to want to resolve those feelings and take action.

Make It Easy To Read/Scan

It's a well-known fact that you have about 20 seconds to grab your prospect's attention before they click away. People tend to read the headline first. If it's interesting enough they'll either read the first paragraph and then they'll scan the copy or they'll just scan it. If your copy isn't easy to scan, they'll click away. So what makes something easy to scan?

- Bullets
- Subheadings
- Short paragraphs
- Bold print for keywords and important phrases
- Underlined words and phrases
- Buttons for action steps

There are other things that can make your copy easier and more interesting to read including the colors and font that you choose as well as images throughout your copy. It's important to keep your copy clean and easy to read. It's easy to gunk it up with too much formatting.

Create Attention Grabbing Headlines

We just talked about having about 20 seconds to grab your reader's attention before they click away. And the headline is the first thing that they read. Your headline is important. You might spend as much time on your headline as you do the rest of your copy. There are a few different headline approaches that are proven to work. They include:

- Numbers – 30 Days to a bulletproof retirement plan

- Emotions – Stop letting financial institutions control your future.

- Promises – Finally, a proven step by step approach to a secure financial future

Headlines are also often strengthened with subheadlines. Here's a quick example of a headline and a subheadline from AWAIonline.com that are quite effective.

The Top 5 Deathbed Regrets of Writers

And a simple way to make sure you <u>never</u> have them …

Leverage Psychological Devices

Psychological devices are essentially persuasive strategies that have been proven to work because of how they impact your prospect. For example, did you know that by simply using the word "Because" you can persuade people to comply? It's called the "Reason Why" device and it's a psychological tactic that works. Don't just tell people to do something, tell them why.

Another device, called the Zeigarnik Effect, basically tells us that when we write in a linear fashion, with one message and one subject, we're more persuasive. By focusing on a single message, your reader's mind stays focused on what you're saying. They're not distracted and thus, they're actually more relaxed.

There are other psychological devices as well; in fact there are enough that it'd be easy to fill a book with them. Many of them are more advanced and you'll likely embrace them once you become comfortable writing copy but let's look at one last device before we move on. It's the Embedded Command tactic. Here's an example,

"Here's what you'll learn when you <u>subscribe to this service…</u>"

The embedded command is underlined. It states what you want the reader to do and it's embedded into a sentence so they don't read it as a command yet it can help persuade them to take that desired action. Try it in your next sales copy and test its effectiveness.

Make Them an Offer They Can't Refuse

Your prospects are going to have excuses. They're going think…

- I'll come back later to buy this
- I'm not sure about the price
- What if it doesn't work?

And so on. You can combat these potential objections right up front. For example, if you think that many of your prospects will hesitate and maybe consider coming back to buy it later then you'd add a sense of urgency. You might say, "Limited time offer," or "Only 20 products remaining,"

If the price may be a concern, make it a limited time offer with the price increasing in a few days or consider adding bonuses to make the price easier to justify. And a guarantee always helps those who doubt whether the product or service will solve their problem. Generally, these components come at the end of your sales copy as you're inviting them to take action and buy now.

Testimonials

Testimonials are fun. They add credibility to your copy and can be a nice way to integrate word of mouth marketing. We tend to trust our peers more than a business owner so it makes your claims seem more trustworthy. You can also add reviews and any relevant awards or recognition that you've received. For example, if your product was highlighted on CNN then say so.

How to Talk About the Price

The price is a core component of any sales copy as well. People want to know how much the product or service is going to cost them. Don't hesitate to talk about price but consider reframing it. For example you've undoubtedly heard the price of something compared to a cup of coffee.

"For less than a cup of coffee a day, you too can have…."

You can also compare your prices to help make them seem lower. For example, if you are offering a membership service you can compare the membership price to what it would cost to get all of the components of the service individually. This demonstrates cost savings to your prospect and reframes the cost of your product or service.

You now have the fundamentals of writing copy and a handful of techniques and tactics to make it persuasive and effective. Let's lay it out into a formula or template so that you can begin creating copy that converts and helps you grow your business and bottom line.

4 Step Formula for Online Copy

There are many formulas for online copy. AIDA is one approach that you may come across often. It stands for Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action. We've used the same fundamental approach but clarified it for your benefit.

#1 What Is The Problem And Why Hasn't It Been Solved? (Attention)

This goes back to the very beginning where we talked about the problem that your product or service solves for your prospect. Before you start writing your copy, make a list of problems that your product solves and how it solves them. Also brainstorm ideas on why the problem hasn't been solved. This is also often referred to as the three P's: pain, problem, and predicament.

#2 What's Possible? (Interest)

Here is where you talk about how your prospect's life will be changed when they buy your product or service. The benefits are addressed here and you may share case studies and quotes from testimonials. The goal here is to begin to pull your reader deeper into your copy. They're no longer scanning as much as they are looking for information that they can connect with. Storytelling works well here because it allows you to begin to paint a picture for your reader.

#3 What Makes You Different? (Desire)

Now that you have piqued your reader's interest it's time to position your product or service as the only solution. This is where you'll use that USP, Unique Selling Proposition. It's also where you'll begin differentiating your product from any other possible solutions. What's your competitive advantage? What makes you different and why should they buy from you? Benefits are often reiterated here and supported by features and facts.

#4 What Should They Do Now? (Action)

Now is when you begin to close the sale. What steps do they need to take? Where the "buy now" button is and what objections do you need to overcome? You might include a guarantee, bonuses, or a sense of scarcity or urgency to help seal the deal.

When writing your copy you might start with a good plan and a rough draft. Most often, an initial draft may go through several revisions until you're ready to launch. Additionally, consider identifying a few components of your copy to test. For example, you might try two different headlines to see which one gets the best response. Button colors, calls to action, and even the images on your page.

Copywriting is a part of your business. As the business owner you know your audience and your products or services better than anyone. That makes you a great person to write copy for your business. From advertisements to long sales pages, you now have the tools you need to convert prospects to customers.