AN INTRODUCTION TO SEO COPYWRITING

An SEO planning tool
by Bernadette Schwerdt
Writing for Online vs Offline

When people are online searching for a product or a service, they want quick results. They don’t have time to read large chunks of text.

People will scan web copy so you need to make sure it is short and sweet. If you don’t grab their attention and they don’t find what they’re looking forward within seconds, they’ll leave your site.

How do people read websites? Ground-Breaking study reveals astonishing results:

This is a very valuable piece of research information about how people read websites – information that only copywriting and web design geeks would bother digging for. The results of the study are astounding to say the least, and should affect the way every business owner structures their website.

This study, conducted by Jacob Neilsen from www.useit.com, tracked the eyeball movements of 232 people as they viewed a series of websites. Known as an ‘eyetracking survey’ the study revealed some fascinating information about the way people look at sites – where their eyeballs go, what they see, what they ignore, what they focus on, what they pay attention to.

People read website in an F-Shaped pattern:

To measure these eyetracking movements, he used a heatmap that showed the ‘most viewed’ areas down to the ‘least viewed’ areas. In a nutshell, he found that the eyeballs travelled in an ‘F’ pattern.

Interestingly, he found that there was a consistent eyeball pattern irrespective of the type of webpage being viewed.

What this study reveals is revelatory because it tells us exactly where we should position our text on our website. Knowing this, would this affect the words you put in those particular ‘hot spots’? You bet.

So, let’s look at a little deeper at the results of this study and then I’ll reveal some simple things you can do to adapt your website to take advantage of this new knowledge.

The best way to understand the results of the study is to look at the actual heat maps that were created. See the images below.

What you need to look for is the red area as this shows the ‘most viewed’ areas. Yellow is the next ‘most viewed’ areas and lastly, blue shows the ‘least viewed’ areas.

A quick tip: To see the F pattern most clearly, squint a little and they’ll be easier to see.
The images show three very different websites yet in each, you can see that the red area shows up in an F pattern.

To make it even easier, I have superimposed an F over the pattern so you can see it even more clearly.
So, what’s the big deal? What does it all mean? Here’s why it’s so important.

It’s generally acknowledged that it takes people three to eight seconds to work out if a web page is relevant to them or not. If we assume this fact to be true, then it would make sense to put your most important information (your keywords) in the ‘red’ areas - the ‘most viewed’ areas.

You see, when people land on a site, they have a specific goal that needs to be achieved. They may want to hire a luxury, private, beachfront villa at a Broome resort or they may want to hire the services of a business coach who specializes in preparing companies for sale - whatever their need, they have typed in some keywords to the search engine that they hope will bring up the most relevant results to help them achieve their goal.

**Keywords are the key to success:**

*IF you know what your keywords are (and that’s a big IF – most companies haven’t got a clue what their prospects use as their keywords) then you should be placing them in the red area i.e. the ‘most viewed’ areas on your home page.*

When the prospect scans your site they have got their keywords at the forefront of their minds and if they can’t find those keywords on your home page quickly, they will judge your site to be irrelevant and click out.

Conversely, if they instantly see a series of words that match the keywords they typed in – luxury, beachfront, private villas, Broome – then chances are they’ll think ‘Excellent! I’m in the right place – let’s dig a little deeper to find out what they have to offer” which is exactly what you want them to do.

What’s more, if you look at the heatmap overlays in the images above, this would mean that those words would need to appear in very specific areas – in the:

- Headline
- Sub headline
- First few words of the first two or three paragraphs

**Here’s how this research can improve your web copy:**

So, the heatmaps tell us *where* to place the words on the home page for maximum impact. They also reveal that the reader scans the first two words of the first two or three paragraphs. We know that if readers don’t see their keywords listed in these areas they will click out. Refer to the keyword documents for more information.
Understanding ‘WIIFM’ – the What’s In It For Me concept:

In today’s busy world, your customer will only be focused on themselves. The only thing they’ll be thinking when they land on your website is, ‘What’s in it for me?’ or ‘Will this work for me?’.

If a customer lands on your website and you don’t carry a product or provide a service that fully covers what they’re looking for, they are going to flip away to another website. And never expect your customer to work out your marketing messages – make it clear and concise.

You need to remember that you are not your customer! You may think you know what they need but unless you’ve asked for feedback, you may be guessing wrong. It’s a great idea to ask for customer feedback (or testimonials) so you know what your customers are looking for.

You can then work out their needs and desires and make sure your website copy answers all these needs and desires.

7 simple web writing secrets for business owners:

Writing web text (or copy) that gets people’s attention and converts them to customers can be tricky, but there are lots of ways to make it easier.

Here are a few techniques professional copywriters use to compel people to stay glued to a website and to eventually part with their money.

1. Do not use clever headlines that force people to think.

Tell the reader what the page is about. They have come there for information and will click out in seconds if they do not get it quickly. For example, if you have an online dating site, our headline should not say, “Are You Looking For A Romantic Walk On The Beach, Dinner By Candlelight And Passion Under The Stars?”.

When you dilly-dally around with a headline, you force people to decipher who you are and what you do – are you a cruise liner, a beach restaurant or a dating site? Get straight to the point and tell the reader who you are and what you offer – like this, “Find Your Soul Mate Using ‘Soul Mates R Us’, Australia’s Largest, Most Successful Online Dating Service”.

2. When quoting numbers, always use an odd number.

Take the test. What sounds more believable? “90% of farmers use Zitrus Fertiliser” or “93.2% of farmers use Zitrus Fertiliser”? The second one, right? As crazy as it sounds, research has shown that using even numbers sounds too neat and tidy to be believable. Woe betide me to suggest you manufacture statistics, but if you have odd or even numbers to choose from, always choose the odd number.
3. Make it simple.

For some reason when we write copy, we tend to use long and complicated words, when short and simple words would do. Maybe we think we should sound intelligent or we feel we need to impress the reader with our sophistication?

All this really does, however, is confuse the reader and waste their time trying to decipher it.

Here is what I mean:

On a recent camping trip, I saw this sign at a caravan park, “Illumination is required to be extinguished on these premises after nightfall”. In other words, “Lights out after dark”.

Have faith that you are intelligent and try to write as simply as possible.

4. Make sure there is plenty of white space on the page.

Layout is important and makes all the difference. The page has to catch the eye before it catches the brain. When people see a large slab of text with no headline, no sub headlines, no formatting or bullet points, it can be so off-putting that they do not even bother reading it.

Here is an example; which looks more appealing to you?

This:

Make them an offer they cannot refuse: To differentiate yourself from the competitors, come up with an offer that is interesting, relevant and, most importantly, useful. It could be a free report, a free CD, or an invitation to a seminar. The offer does not have to be expensive either. Why not add a free box of chocolates when selling flowers – they probably cost $3 wholesale yet most people spend $80.00 on flowers. It is a no-brainer: investing $3 to make $80.00 is good business.

Or this:

Make Them An Offer They Cannot Refuse:

To differentiate yourself from the competitors, come up with an offer that is interesting, relevant and, most importantly, useful.

It could be a:

• free report
• free CD
• an invitation to a seminar

The offer does not have to be expensive either.

Why not add a free box of chocolates when selling flowers – they probably cost $3 wholesale yet most people spend $80.00 on flowers.
It is a no-brainer – investing $3 to make $80.00 is good business.

All that I have done is add some bolding, a headline, italics, a few bullet points and a bit of white space in between sentences. This way, it not only helps the reader take in the ideas being presented, it makes it more appealing for them to read it in the first place.

5. **Rewriting is the key.**

Writing copy and uploading it to the web instantly is like writing a love letter under the influence of alcohol. Both can lead to embarrassment, regret and bad outcomes. What we think to be Booker-prize winning the night before is often not in the morning, so it pays to write, wait 24 hours, re-write, wait, and then rewrite again. Despite popular opinion, the first draft, and often the second, is almost never the best.

6. **Vary the length of your sentences.**

When you write sentences that all have the same number of words in them, the text tends to come across as dull and boring, even if the topic is interesting. But when you mix it up with sentences of all different lengths, the rhythm of the piece almost drives you along, willing you to keep reading.

Here is an example. “Annette, you are a liar. I know you do not want to hear that. But it is true. And so am I. And man I hate to say that. But it is true too. We all lie. To ourselves. Now in our defence, we do not mean to. And not only do we not mean to – we do not even know we are doing it. Because we are in a state of denial.

If you look closely, you will see that there is a diverse mix of sentence lengths, which makes this paragraph so easy to read, creates the rhythm and therefore makes it compelling.

7. **Delete fifty per cent of your text if transferring it from print to web.**

Writing for the web is very different to writing for print. When we read a brochure or advertisement, we tend not to skim or scan, but read it from start to finish.

With web copy, however, it is a completely different process. For example, do you read every word on the web page or do you scan the page looking for key words that are relevant to your search?

Chances are, it is the latter.

So, if you think you can take printed copy and just dump it on your web page, you will be in for a rude shock, because people just will not read it.

Here is what you can do to make it more scannable:

- break paragraphs into sentences and add a space between them
- add headlines that indicate what you are about to talk about
- add sub headlines that break up long sections and make it look more attractive
- turn long lists of benefits or features into bullet points
• put statistics or figures into a graph so the idea being presented is instantly understandable
• show photos of the products instead of talking about them
• use colour, bolding, italics and other formatting devices to add movement and texture (do not use underlining or people will think it is a link, click on it and be subtly annoyed they were led astray)

Take a few moments to review your website and see if you can put some of these tips into practice.

It will be time well spent.

**Use headline formulas to grab attention:**

Most people read headlines first, so concentrate on getting the headline right.

The headline must grab people. Prospects are in a hurry, especially when they’re surfing the net. They tend to skip or tune out any marketing message that looks like it will take too much time or be too much trouble to figure out.

When people read a headline, they are mentally saying to themselves:

“So what? What does that mean to me?”

You need to answer these two questions before the prospect will take the time to read any further.

Your headlines should be specific. Take a look at this headline. It’s not particularly clever but it’s very specific which helps attract attention and convey credibility.

This headline is from a site promoting an education fund for children.

“The Australian Scholarship Fund started in 1974 and now has $1.2 billion funds under management. It helps 32,000 families put their children through school every year.”

What gains your attention are the specific figures of 1974, $1.2 billion and 32,000. These figures create a sense of credibility and specificity that makes the headline memorable.

There are many ways to come up with a headline. The following headline formulas are listed in the chapter How to Write Headlines That Work. We have reproduced them here for your convenience.
Nineteen Successful Formulas for Creating Headlines

1. The How To

The simple “How To” headline is still popular for its simplicity and effectiveness.

They work very well because people love information that shows them how to do something. Just think of the thousands of book titles that begin with “How To...”.

Think of the benefits your product/service offers and then try creating some “How To” headlines. The benefit must be reflected in the headline.

In fact, using the ‘How To’ formula is one of the best places to start when writing headlines because it forces you to think of what your product/service actually does for the person.

Even just adding the word “How” in front of a headline gives it an additional appeal.

Compare these 2 examples:

1. A Strange Experience Saved Me From Bankruptcy.

Which one is more compelling? Most people would choose number two.

Examples:

- How to Get Thinner Thighs in 30 Days
- How To Buy A Car Without Getting A Lemon
- How To Live To 100 And Love It
- How To Set Up Your Website...Without Spending A Fortune!
- How To Avoid The Biggest Mistake You Can Make In Building Or Buying A Home
- How To Win Friends And Influence People
- How To Make Your Computer As Easy To Use As Your Telephone
- How To Fix Car

How to Headline Templates

Here are a few “How To...” headlines you can plug-in and use right away when brainstorming:
1. How to Get
2. How to Have
3. How to Keep
4. How to Start
5. How to Begin
6. How to Become
7. How to Improve Your
8. How to Develop
9. How to Get The Most Out Of
10. How to Avoid
11. How to End
12. How to Get Rid Of
13. How to Conquer
14. How to Enjoy

Why not spice it up by adding a little something before the ‘How To’:

- Here's HOW TO...
- Discover HOW TO...

Examples:

- “If you think a 12% annual return on your money is good, here's HOW TO set your sights on 100% or more.”

- “I'll show you HOW TO hit golf shots as straight as you can point, or this video golfing lesson is free... and I'll pay you $25 for wasting your time!”

Add “How You...” or “How I...”

Examples:

- HOW I earn my living in 4 hours a day
- HOW YOU Can Make Well Over $300,000.00 Per Year As A Real Estate Agent Working Less Than 40 Hours A Week... Have A Top Income AND A Life... And NEVER Have To Make A Call.
2. **Ask A Question.**

A question headline gets the reader to answer in their mind. This style of headline automatically gets the prospect involved in your message.

Many people will read further into your web site copy just to find out what answer or solution you provide.

This headline taps into the prospect’s problems. Your headline is the magic pill that fixes that problem.

Again, make sure the question focuses on the reader’s interest, not yours.

Examples:

- Are You Worried About Filing Your Tax Return This Year?
- Are You Worried About Your Financial Future?
- Are You Tired Of Being Alone?
- Are You Sick Of Being Exhausted?
- Do You Make These Mistakes In English?
- Have You Ever Wondered How Paris Hilton Stays So Slim?”

3. **Who Else Wants…?**

Starting a headline with “Who Else Wants…” is a classic social proof strategy that implies an already existing consensus desire.

While overused, it still works like gangbusters:

- Who Else Wants To Earn $150,000 Working From Home?
- Who Else Wants To Have Fun At Work?
- Who Else Wants To Eat What They Like When They Like?
- Who Else Wants To Have A Home Like This?

4. **The Secret of...**

This works on the principle that an expert has some information or insider knowledge that will translate into a benefit for the reader.

Everybody wants the inside running on how to solve a problem. It’s even more effective when the message is coming from an expert.
Examples:

- The 7 Secrets Of Highly Effective People
- The Secret Of Happy Children
- The Secret Of Successful Podcasting
- The Secret To Successful Pre Nuptial Agreements
- The Secret Of Getting Your Home Loan Approved
- The Secret To Staying Thin

5. **Here Is A Method That Is Helping... To...**

This style of headline is instructional and feeds upon people’s desire to have more information to help them in their lives.

All you have to do is identify your target audience and the benefit you can provide them, and then fill in the blanks.

- Here is a Method That Is Helping Homeowners Save Hundreds on Insurance
- Here is a Method That Is Helping Children Learn to Read Sooner
- Here is a Method That Is Helping Small Business to Save Money on Websites

6. **Little Known Ways to...**

This is a more intriguing (and less common) way of accomplishing the same thing as “The Secret Of...” headline.

- Little Known Ways to Save on Your Mobile Phone Bill
- Little Known Ways to Get Free Software
- Little Known Ways to Lose Weight Quickly and Safely

7. **Get Rid Of... Once And For All**

This is a classic formula that identifies either a painful problem or an unfulfilled desire that the reader wants to remedy.

- Get Rid Of Your Unproductive Work Habits Once And For All
- Get Rid Of Ugly Bitten Nails Once And For All
- Get Rid Of That Carpet Stain Once And For All
- Get Rid Of Acne Once And For All
8. Here’s A Quick Way to...

People love quick and easy when it comes to solving a nagging problem.

- Here’s A Quick Way to get over a Cold
- Here’s A Quick Way to Potty Train Your Baby
- Here’s A Quick Way to Backup Your Hard Drive

It’s even more effective when you add ‘Easy’ to the formula.

- Here’s A Quick and Easy Way to Lose Weight
- Here’s A Quick and Easy Way to Cook Dinner for 10
- Here’s A Quick and Easy Way to save for a Home Deposit

9. Now You Can Have [...] [...] great circumstance]

This the classic “have your cake and eat it too” headline — and who doesn’t like that?

- Now You Can Quit Your Job and Make Even More Money
- Now You Can Meet Sexy Singles Online Without Spending A Dime
- Now You Can Own A Cool Mac And Still Run Windows

10. Have... You Can Be Proud Of Build A... You Can Be Proud Of

These appeals to vanity, dissatisfaction, or shame.

- Build A Body You Can Be Proud Of
- Have A Smile You Can Be Proud Of
- Build A Website You Can Be Proud Of

It’s not the most creative headline style in the world, but it does work.

11. What Everybody Ought to Know About...

There is a big curiosity draw with this type of headline, and it acts almost as a challenge to the reader to go ahead and see if they are missing something. No one likes to miss out on information which means people can’t stop themselves from reading it.
• What Everybody Ought To Know About Superannuation
• What Everybody Ought To Know About Buying Options
• What Everybody Ought To Know About Low GI Diets

12. The Testimonial

Why not let your clients do the selling for you?

Their commendations can go a long way in convincing others to use your services.

They also provide proof and evidence that supports your claims. You can’t make wild or even mild claims, without backing them up. If you don’t back them up, the unanswered question in people’s minds is ‘Says who?’ This stops them from getting involved in the ad and ultimately means they stop reading the ad.

Examples:

• "Ian Smith’s consulting is pure magic – our sales have increased by 27%!"
  -Annette Bridie, Homewares Emporium, Brighton, Melbourne
• "This product really works! I’m happier and less stressed.
  -Marina Manson, Print On Demand, Richmond, NSW
• “My hair started growing back in two weeks!”
  -Jason Ronaldson, Mercury Finance, Perth, WA
• “I only use Nike”
  -Leighton Hewitt.

Do Celebrity Endorsements work?

Celebrity endorsements are very powerful but they are costly to source and you are reliant on the celebrity behaving in a manner that is consistent with your brand’s image. Michael Jackson and Pepsi? Say no more.

13. Issue a command.

Some classic headlines command readers what to do. They work best when you can turn your most important benefit into a commanding headline.

Examples:

• "Make More Money This Month."
• "Feel Better About Yourself."
14. **The News.**

Caution: This only works if you truly have something big to announce that is of interest to the reader; something that will make her life or business better.

Don’t try to make news out of something that’s not.

Once your readers know you have something they’re interested in, they’ll take the time to read your entire web page.

- Introducing Our New 7-Day Tax Service!
- Amazing New Medical Breakthrough For Fat Loss
- Introducing Our Zero Interest Rate Credit Card
- Introducing The No-Fat Cinnamon-Flavored Ice Cream

15. **Headline a deadline for a special offer.**

Most of us are busy and tend to put off taking action. If you don’t get the prospect to act now, you may never get the sale. Sometimes a simple headline compelling the reader to take action now can be very effective.

- Save Up To $2000 On An Apple Mac Computer
- Buy Now And Pay No Interest For 5 Years
- Register Now For Your Free Gift

16. **Free offers often pull the best response.**

There is a myth that affluent customers are turned off by free offers. Not true. They love a bargain as much as the next guy. How do you think they got rich?

Simply tailor your free offer to match the style of your customers or industry.

Examples:

- No-Cost Initial Consultation
- Bonus DVD In Each Package
• Free Installation
• Free Home Delivery
• Free Main Meal with Every Meal Purchased
• Free Upgrade
• Free Window Tinting

17. **Headlines that alert your target market.**

These headlines are very straightforward in their message.

They work on the principle that you are busy, are scanning the page for something of interest, and will only be stopped by something that is directly relevant to you.

They work best when they are specifically targeted at a particular group of people.

These headlines stop people in their tracks and force them to read. We are all motivated by self-interest after all.

Example:

• Attention Teachers!
• Warning: Don’t Take Out A Loan Before Knowing This:
• Property Owners – 5 Things To Know Before You Buy Inner City Apartments
• Single Women – Are You Tired Of Spending New Year’s Eve Alone?
• Tennis Court Owners – Do You Hate Mowing Your Court?
• Attention Boat Owners!

18. **The Fear of Loss Headline**

For many people, the fear of losing something is greater than the desire for gain.

The idea of losing money or missing out on something is too powerful for them to resist checking out your offer.

Examples:

• If You Don’t Act Now, You’ll Lose This Chance Forever!
• Enrolments End Tomorrow – Act Now!
• Just How Much Money Are You Losing?
• How Much Are Bank Fees Really Costing You?
19. The Intrigue Headline

This headline lets you flex your creative muscle yet does the important job of pulling the reader into your copy.

The important criteria are that the headline really does arouse interest and the interest is relevant to the sales message. The idea is to intrigue your prospect sufficiently to read the next paragraph. Don’t try to close the deal using the headline only.

Examples:

• Can You Pass The Cholesterol Test?
• I Can’t Believe It’s Happening to You Too?
• Do You Know What Color Best Suits You?
• Are You Ready To Slash Your Tax Bill By Half?
• Are You Scared Of Committing?

Sell your benefits, not your features:

I saw an advertisement a while back that promoted the benefits of getting your doona dry cleaned.

In fact, I liked the advertisement so much that I actually took my doona in to get dry cleaned, only to find out that the cost to dry clean it was almost double the price of what I paid for it. Needless to say, I did not proceed.

But here is what was interesting. The advertisement stopped me in my tracks and compelled me to say, “Gee, I need this service”, when, three seconds before, I had never even heard of it. It also highlighted a previously unknown ‘problem’ that I had (an unclean doona) which compelled me to take action and to visit the store.

So, what was it about this advertisement that caught my eye? I mean, how interesting can a dry cleaning ad be?

Well, the headline was great - simple but effective: ‘7 Reasons To Dry Clean Your Doona’.
The advertisement worked for me because I had not ever thought about getting my doona dry cleaned and here was this informative advertisement telling me that there were lots of good reasons to get my doona dry cleaned - and not just one reason, but seven!

So, it fulfilled rule number one with headlines - it grabbed the reader’s attention. The second thing it did was list the benefits of getting my doona cleaned. Now, this is where they really hit the jackpot and it is where most companies get it wrong. Here is a sample of what they said:

1. Your body drips approximately 75 milligrams of body fluid into your doona every night.
2. Bed bugs, dust mites and other nasty little creatures breed and nest in your doona and then burrow deep into your skin pores and bite you whilst you sleep.
3. Dust mites can cause asthma, so your doona could quite conceivably be the reason you or your children get asthma or unexplained coughs and colds.

They then went on to explain what they do to the doona when they dry clean it. They said:

- We puff it up with new feathers so it is like having a new doona without the price tag
- We steam clean it so that it looks and feels like new
- We deodorize it so that it smells as fresh and clean as the day you bought it
- We inject it with slow-release chemicals that will kill stray bed bugs for up to three months so you (and your children) will not get bitten ever again
- We give you an extra bag of feathers so you can top it up at regular intervals
- We aerate it to rejuvenate the feathers so it feels lighter and softer than ever before.

It is sounding good, is it not?

Now, I am not saying that this advertisement was not slightly emotionally manipulative (it was) or that it was not sensationalist and slightly extreme in its claims (it was), but it did a fabulous job of highlighting the features and benefits of a very boring product.
The key to marketing success - turning features into benefits:

Let us have a look at what they did and how they made this run-of-the-mill service sound so compelling and necessary.

The first thing they did was take a feature and then, by asking, ‘which means that’, they found their all-important benefit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We puff it up with new feathers</td>
<td>Which means that It’s like having a new doona without the price tag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We steam clean it</td>
<td>Which means that It looks and feels like new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We deodorize it</td>
<td>Which means that It smells fresh and clean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We inject it with chemicals</td>
<td>Which means that You and your family are kept safe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We give you an extra bag of feathers</td>
<td>Which means that You have a puffy, fluffy doona all the time without paying any extra for it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

...and so on.

This is good marketing and it is what you should be doing with any copy you write – state the feature, add the benefit. So, how do you extract the benefit from the feature? It is simple, but first you have to identify what is the feature and then work out why it is great. It is all about asking some key questions about your product and thinking laterally.

Key questions to ask to uncover your hidden benefits

Firstly, make a list of features of your product or service. The best way to extract the features is to ask some questions. By the way, this exercise does require you to have some passion for your product. If you do not, that is okay (for now), just fake it as best you can.
You also need to imagine that someone who is genuinely interested in your product is sitting opposite you and they have asked you to tell them more. (If that is impossible to imagine as well, then maybe you should be thinking about moving into a new line of work or scrapping your business altogether. Just joking. Sort of.)

So, as you imagine this mythical person sitting opposite you, waiting with baited breath to hear you wax lyrical about your product, here are the ‘launch questions’ you should use to get your creative juices flowing so you can work out what exactly your product offers:

1. I think this product/service is fantastic for you because... (and then fill in the blanks)
2. What is great about this product is...
3. The best part about it is...
4. What sets it apart from the others is that it...
5. If you do not buy this, you run the risk of...
6. If you buy this, this is what you are going to get...

Now, the reason these questions are so powerful is because they force you to consider even more questions:

- What is it I actually offer my customer?
- What will it do for them if they buy it?
- What will happen if they do not buy it?
- Why is my product better than the others?

These questions are even more powerful because they are the exact questions that consumers are thinking about (and need answered) before they can buy.

So, if you can figure out all the potential objections as to why people would not buy your product, and then answer them in a nicely worded way, you will have a never-ending supply of customers.

Tell the customer what is in it for them

One last thing about that doona ad. The reason it works so well and has been so successful is because they took features that every single other dry cleaner operator offers, shone the spotlight on it, outlined an emotive and relevant benefit, and told the customer what was in it for them.
I did a bit of research after that (clearly, I have nothing better to do than to talk to dry cleaners all day) and discovered that most dry cleaners do what this company are doing - fluffing, steaming, injecting, aerating and so on – but they just do not mention it in their advertising.

They just assume that people expect those things to be done to their doona when it is sent for dry cleaning.

**Never assume what the customer knows about your service**

And that is where all of those dry cleaners (and most other businesses) get it wrong - they assume too much and, as a result, fail to fully explain to the customer what their product is, what it will do, what is involved, why they do it, why it is more expensive than the others and what will happen if they do not use it.

So, here is your opportunity to find out what gems are lying undiscovered in your business - get out the spotlight, shine it on your business and see how many ways you can share the story of why your product is so brilliant.

**Create compelling offers that make people buy:**

Why have an offer?

Because offers, or incentives as they are otherwise known, make people sit up and take notice. Offers should stop the reader dead in their tracks and make them say, “I want that!” Without an offer, it is too easy for the reader to turn the page and move on. Even if they are interested in your product, they may not stop to do anything about it because they are just too busy.

In this section, you’ll discover:

- Why offers and incentives are vital to getting a response
- How they work
- How to motivate a consumer to ‘take action’
- Five versions of unconditional offers you can use
The principle behind offers

The principle behind offers is very simple. They:

1. Stop people from turning the page
2. Convince customers to choose you over others
3. Force the customer to take action

Once you have intrigued your reader enough to keep them reading until the end of the advertisement, you need to get them to DO something. This could be to fill out a form, make a telephone call, click on a website, send an email or go to a store.

What these all have in common is that they involve an action, which is your objective – to get your customer to do something, to take action.

But how do you get them to be sufficiently inspired to want to take action? You need to motivate them. Think about who they are, what they need, what is important to them and then come up with an idea that is relevant, timely, interesting and genuine.

Here are some examples of simple offers:

- A printing business may offer to provide an increased quantity at no extra charge
- A sales training company might offer a consultation or a free training session upon joining a course
- A security company might offer to do a free risk assessment for all new clients
- A corporate retreat might offer free use of sport and recreation facilities for weekend seminars
- A car dealership could offer two years’ free roadside assist for every new company car purchased.

The secret to creating great offers is to offer the customer something interesting and relevant to their needs; with the emphasis on relevant.

There is no point offering free printing with every corporate retreat package sold, or free use of gym facilities with every security system installed.

Neither of these offers are targeted or relevant to the consumer.
You will also notice that all the offers listed above cost very little to provide, yet have
great intrinsic value to the customer. Including a free sales consultation costs only
the time taken to do the consultation, but could lead to an increase in course sales
when clients see just how much more effective their team members can be.
The free use of sport and recreation facilities for seminars booked over weekends
may cost only a few extra dollars per person but could lead to your facilities being
used at times when they would otherwise sit dormant, bringing in thousands in extra revenue per year.

People love to get something for nothing, no matter how small the offer might be.
And if your target market is people with high disposable income, do not think they
do not like free offers just because they are wealthy. How do you think
they got wealthy!

In many cases, what you are trying to do is convince the customer to come with you;
to buy your product. There are other competing products bursting to get noticed, so
all you have to do is offer something that competitors are not offering, and you have
won your customer over.

Sometimes it does not take much to convert a customer, but there always has to be
a reason for them to do so. Providing a great offer can help bring that customer over.
Furthermore, it does not have to cost a lot to create a compelling offer.

**Unconditional offers**

There are lots of different types of offers, but the most popular are unconditional
offers. There are no strings attached to unconditional offers.

People simply fill out a form or phone a number and they receive the offer free –
usually a free report, information pack or a free seminar.

They generally act as lead generators, that is, they get prospects (people who have
never bought from you before) to say that they are interested.

Unconditional lead-generating offers are highly effective in attracting leads,
however, you must bear in mind that a large proportion of these leads will be
unqualified. A percentage of the population is simply responding just to get the offer,
not because they are in the market to buy your products or services. But there is
bound to be many qualified leads in there also, so it is definitely worth doing because
it provides you with a mailing list. If you keep in touch with these people, there is a good chance they will do business with you down the track.

Unconditional offers are ideal for businesses that are in a start-up phase where their aim is to gain a large amount of exposure in a short space of time.

Here are some examples of unconditional offers:

**a. Free report or information pack**

If you offer a product or service that is reasonably complex or requires some knowledge, like share trading, real estate investment or financial planning, a free report or information pack is ideal.

This builds your credibility by offering advice, and it educates your prospect as to what sort of things they should consider.

Information packs containing CDs or DVDs can be very effective too because people perceive them to have a high value, even if it only costs you a few cents to duplicate. And you get to promote your business as they are listening to you!

**b. Free consultations**

Accountants, interior designers, builders, marketing consultants and other services benefit greatly by offering a free consultation. Once you have met with a prospect and had a chance to show your wares, you are in a much better position to build a relationship and hence a sale. Some will be looking for freebie advice, but that is okay. You will quickly identify who they are and move on.

**c. Free trial**

Newspapers and magazines use this offer very successfully. If you agree to receive a free copy, chances are you will get to like it and then continue to buy it.

**d. Samples**

Women’s magazines use these to great effect. It has been said that sales of their magazines triple if there is a valuable sample attached to the front page, like a lipstick, perfume or a blush brush.
Free lessons help people overcome their initial inertia in getting involved with a product. Universities, schools and other educational institutions often hold open days to attract new people. This is a great way to add value to prospects and customers. An open day will involve ‘how to’ demonstrations that show prospects how to build, create or make things that relate to the products you sell. It helps people experience the product before they buy, thereby reducing their risk of making a bad decision.

Unique selling propositions

For many businesses, it is very difficult to find a unique selling proposition, that is, something that sets them apart from the competitors. By creating a unique, relevant, cost-efficient offer, you can make your business stand out from the crowd without spending a fortune. All you have to do is offer something that the others are not, and you have won the customer over. It is as simple as that.

N.B. To brainstorm your USP, please refer to the USP Worksheet.

How to write copy that converts traffic into customers:

Wouldn’t it be great to generate new leads and convert traffic into sales every time someone landed on your website? With just a few little tweaks to your site, chances are you can do just that and not have it cost you one extra cent.

Here’s how.

When people land on a website, what they really want to know is:

- Why this? (why would this product or service suit me?)
- Why you? (why should I buy it from you?)
- Why now? (why should I buy it now, and not later?)

If you can answer those three questions in the first few paragraphs, you have a great chance of converting traffic into sales.

But there’s one extra thing you do that will make the choice a no-brainer (and we all want no-brainers don’t we?)
And that’s to include an offer. Offers (or incentives) are imperative because they make people sit up and take notice. Offers should stop the reader dead in their tracks and make them say "I want that!" If you don't have an offer, it's too easy for the reader to click out and move on. Even if they're interested in your product, they won't stop to do anything about it because they're just too darn busy. They'll probably say, "That looks interesting - I must get around to getting one of those."

And of course, that day never comes. So how does it actually work?

**The principle behind Offers is very simple:**

1. Offers stop people from moving on.
2. Offers force the reader to take action.

Once you have intrigued your reader enough to keep them reading until the end of the page, you need to get them to DO something.

This could be any one of the following:

- Click on a button
- Send an email
- Go to a store
- Fill out a coupon/form
- Make a telephone call

What they all have in common is that they involve an action. That's our objective - to get our reader to do one or more of these things.

But the big question is:

How do we get the reader to be sufficiently inspired to want to take action? Well, we need to motivate them.

How do we do that? It's simple. We think about who they are, what they need, what's important to them and come up with an idea that's relevant, timely, interesting and genuine.
Here are some examples:

- A carpet cleaning business may offer a 4th room cleaned for free
- A fitness centre might offer a free dietary consultation or a free personal training session upon joining
- A florist may offer free chocolates with every Valentine's Day purchase
- A hairdresser might offer a free 15-minute head massage with every colour
- A hotel might offer a free meal in the restaurant with every weekend package purchased
- An interior designer could offer a free e-book about colour co-ordination for the bedroom

The secret to creating great offers is to offer the reader something interesting and relevant to their needs.

There's no point offering a free carpet cleaning with every gym membership sold, or a free 15-minute head massage with every bunch of flowers sold. Neither of these offers is targeted or relevant to the consumer.

You'll also notice that all the offers listed above cost very little to provide, yet have great intrinsic value to the customer.

**How to make a customer choose your product over the competitors:**

In many cases, what we're trying to do is convince the customer to come with us; to buy our product. There are other competing products out there, bursting to get noticed, so all we have to do is offer something that they're not offering, and we've won our customer over.

Sometimes it doesn't take much to convert a customer over to another supplier but there always has to be a reason for them to do so.

Providing a great offer can help bring that customer over. What's more, it doesn't have to cost a lot to create a compelling offer.

Example:

Including a few chocolates with the Valentine's Day flowers may cost under $5 but the value of the entire purchase of flowers could be well over $100.
The gym membership offer of a free dietary consultation may cost up to $30 but the gym membership could be worth well over $500 per year, or more.

People love to get something for nothing, no matter how small the offer might be.

If you haven’t already got an offer listed on your Home Page, have a think about something that’s inexpensive, relevant and provides great value you can provide your readers. It’ll be the best investment you’ve made in generating new leads and building your all-important database.

Use calls to action that work:

Without a call to action, you run the risk of the consumer moving on without actually doing anything. You need to tell the consumer exactly what you want them to do:

- Visit your free resources page
- Click on a link to a URL
- Fill out and submit a form
- Print out a discount coupon
- Request a free estimate

You need to be specific and tell your customer exactly what you want them to do to take the next step. You can give them multiple options and also offer them something for taking action.

For example:

“Go to www.interiordesign.com/report to download a free copy of our new special report, How to Make Your Tiny Apartment Look Huge.”

This serves three purposes:

1. It gets the reader involved with your site, increasing its ‘stick ability’ factor
2. It enables you to capture their details for further promotions
3. It gives you permission to ‘talk’ to them again
Quick writing rules:

Here are some quick rules when writing for the web:

- Be direct and to the point
- Replace the word ‘we’ with ‘you’
- Avoid jargon and slang words
- Contract your words – you will with you’ll, it is with it’s
- Remember your customers are human – talk like one
- Use short words (long words don’t make you sound important)
- Use short sentences and split longer sentences into two
- Use sub-headlines and bullet points to break up text
- Be consistent
- Avoid too many !, and don’t use speech marks for emphasis

For more information on SEO Copywriting, please refer to Chapter 13 of the ‘Learn How To Write’ course – Web Writing.