
COPYWRITING TNT! March, 2008

Resources, ideas, and tips for writers and copywriters, business-to-business, high-tech, industrial, Internet, and direct marketing.

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QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

"I saw a lot of guys come through the minor leagues who were blessed with all the ability that you'd want to be blessed with, but they lacked the desire to play the game. They lacked the dedication to work at the game. And they didn't make it to the big leagues. I saw some other guys come through the minor leagues who didn't have half the talent that some of these other people had, but they had great work habits, practiced correctly, and worked at their jobs. Eventually, they wound up going to the big leagues.

"In sports you have to be dedicated, you have to be disciplined, and you have to have the desire and determination to do it. You have to display those traits to succeed in every walk of life."

Cal Ripken, Sr., *The Ripken Way*, Pocket Books

*** FICTION WRITERS TAKE NOTE! ***

As you may or may not know, in addition to being a professional copywriter, I also write a considerable amount of fiction, some of which has been published, and I have a novel set to be released in hardcover next year. Just last week I launched a new feature on my blog, a series of interviews with established fiction authors. These interviews will focus on the day-to-day life and career of writing fiction in the trenches. While I would be delighted to talk to the likes of Stephen King or Chuck Palahniuk, I'm focusing more on the writers who are making it, but have not signed the million dollar book deals.

The first installment went up last week, and you can read it at www.travisheermann.com/blog . I have an exciting slate of authors already lined up to do interviews. Feel free to send me

suggestions, and I'll see what I can do.

*** WHAT TO TEST IN E-MAIL MARKETING ***

According to an article in The Marketing Report (10/27/03, p. 8), the top 5 things to test in e-mail marketing are:

1. The landing page.
2. The subject line.
3. HTML vs. text.
4. Personalization with name vs. non-personalized.
5. Long vs. short copy.

In my experience, you get the quickest return for the least effort with a subject line test. I have personally seen A/B splits where one subject line outpulled another by more than 50% as measured in click-throughs.

HTML can out-Pull text by 20% or even more. But in some cases, there is no lift in response. I have never seen HTML depress response, though I would guess that it is possible.

*** IF YOU'RE A COPYWRITER, YOU NEED TO READ THIS ***

Thirty years ago, freelance copywriting was a wide open market. But today, thanks to the efforts of copywriting pioneers like Bob Bly and Michael Masterson, the marketplace has become crowded. A simple Google search brings up dozens and dozens of freelancers.

In this overcrowded market, you need more than just copywriting ability to make it as a freelance copywriter.

You also need to know how to get clients!

And not just any clients. But clients who understand how valuable good copywriting is, appreciate your skills, and are willing to pay a fair price for it. And if you've ever used websites like Elance.com and Guru.com, you know how hard it is to find this kind of client.

If you're truly serious about increasing your client base with quality opportunities, you need to click this link and find out how the big boys and girls get the clients who pay thousands of dollars to write a single letter. A few minutes of your time

could change your writing career.

<http://www.ctcpublishing.net/cmd.php?Clk=2236893>

*** NICK USBORNE'S TIP FOR WRITING A GREAT HOME PAGE ***

"Keep your home page language simple," advises master Web copywriter Nick Usborne.

When visitors arrive at your site, they are in a hurry to find out if you have what they want. Your copy needs to communicate a great deal, quickly, and demand very little. In other words, don't make your visitors work to find the information they want.

A key element of simple, fast communication is the simplicity of the language you use. Start your site with short words, short sentences, and short paragraphs, advises Nick. Don't start with complex ideas or sentences that will make your readers scratch their heads and pause.

"Win their hearts and minds on the first page, and you'll have plenty of time to get into details on the next levels," says Nick. "At the beginning, keep it simple."

Note: Nick Usborne is the leading advocate of good writing on the Web. He is an author, copywriter, consultant, speaker, and the publisher of the Excess Voice newsletter for online writers. Read his articles at <http://www.excessvoice.com>.

*** 5 WAYS TO DESIGN DIRECT MAIL FOR GREATER RESPONSE ***

1. Bursts -Bursts are star like shapes that can be used throughout the design of a direct mail package. They contain type that highlights the offer or free item and are placed next to an image of the offer or free item. Red or bright yellow colored bursts stand out the most in a direct mail package.

2. Letters -A letter may be used in a direct mail effort as a separate piece for a component package or may appear on the inside front cover of a magalog or special report. When designing a letter, you should make it feel personalized. Some ways to accomplish this are: use Courier type (which looks like a typewriter font), show a photo of whomever the letter is from, or give it a stationery look with "From the desk of..." at the top of the letter. And, always use a handwritten signature to close the letter.

3. Folios -A "folio" is the space where the page number appears, Typically located at the bottom of each page in a magalog or special report. This is a key place to run a web address and/or an 800 phone number. This information is then repeated on each page of the magalog or special report, which makes it very easy for the customer to order. The folio space can also be used to highlight the name of the product or a special offer.

4. Free Bonus -When offering the customer a "free bonus," show an image of the bonus throughout the package. Keep the look of the bonus consistent (i.e.: color, design element, type treatment, etc.) throughout. Show it again on the order form to remind the customer of the free bonus incentive when ordering.

5. Credit Card Icons - In the payment method section of an order form there is typically an option to pay by credit card. Use credit card icons (pictures of the credit cards offered) instead of writing out the name of each credit card. This gives the customer a visual reference to help her quickly and easily choose the preferred credit card payment.

Source: Jennifer Osterhouse Graphic Design, phone 410-798-8585, e-mail: jenn_o@comcast.net.

*** HOW TO MAKE THE LEAP FROM AMATEUR TO PROFESSIONAL WRITER ***

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*** HOW TO SELL IN ASIA ***

When selling to Asians, technical competence is a prerequisite for

your negotiating team. It is best to begin with middle managers and technical experts. Your counterparts will match whatever level of management is present in the visiting team. Continuity and relationships are important, particularly when dealing with Japanese companies, so always send the same team to continue negotiations.

Foreigners should establish the agenda and get agreement on major points at the outset. Present your proposal in detail and back it up with technical and factual data. Asians are slow to divulge information. Be patient, but persistent. Be prepared to make sizable concessions. But, do so only at the end of the negotiations, rather than as the negotiation progresses.

Never show that you are under time constraints. Patience is essential. If the Asian businessmen know that you are under pressure to return home with a signed agreement, they will use this to their advantage in extracting concessions. Senior executives should be brought in if needed to speed up approval or break an impasse.

If negotiations break down, do not formally end them; employ a euphemism like "temporary cessation" to save face. If the deal falls through, do not speak badly of your Asian counterparts, because you may want to do business with them in the future.

Cited in *CEP* magazine

*** DONALD TRUMP'S 10 SECRETS OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS ***

1. Realize that being an entrepreneur is not a group effort. You're in charge. Everything starts with you.
2. Whatever happens, you're responsible. If it doesn't happen, you're responsible.
3. Think of yourself as a one-man army. You're not only the Commander-in-Chief; you're the soldier as well. You must plan and execute your plan alone.
4. Don't expect anyone to be on your side.
5. Use your imagination. Use your intelligence to execute what your imagination presents to you.
6. Put everything you've got into what you're doing. Nothing should be haphazard.
7. Ask yourself: What is it I can provide that does not yet exist?
8. See yourself as victorious. This will focus you in the right direction.
9. See other people saying: "I wish I'd had that idea."
10. Never give up. Be tough. Apply your skills and talent, but above all, be tenacious.

Source: New York Enterprise Report

*** TELL ME YOUR THOUGHTS ***

I welcome any feedback from my readers, positive, negative, or in-between. What kinds of articles would you like to see more of? Got something to say?

Throw me some compelling comments, or stories of your own. Maybe they'll appear in future issues.

A 60-SECOND COMMERCIAL FROM THE WRITE LINE:

Travis is available for copywriting of direct mail packages, sales letters, brochures, ads, e-mail marketing campaigns, PR materials, and Web pages. We recommend you call for a FREE copy of our updated Copywriting Information Kit. Just let us know your industry and the type of copy you're interested in seeing (ads, mailings, etc.), and if Travis is available to take your assignment, we'll tailor a package of recent samples to fit your requirements.

Call Travis at 402-830-0913 or e-mail travis@thewriteline.biz

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