



## **Sample Book Proposal**

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Resource: Sample Book Proposal

Copywriting Success Secrets

- Words: 60,000
- Complete ms: three months.

Author's Name

E-mail: [email@address.com](mailto:email@address.com)

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## Overview

*Copywriting Success Secrets* shows writers how to set up their own copywriting services business in seven days. Its target market is writers, professional or aspiring, who want to make money from their writing skills. Melanie Rigney, editor of *Writer's Digest* magazine, estimated that ten per cent of the US population aspires to write.

From the book's Introduction:  
*Want to make **REAL** money writing?*

You know you can write. Maybe you're even making money writing. But are you making *enough* money writing? Or is it just a hobby, costing you more in computers, postage and paper than you're earning? According to writers' organizations, 95 per cent of writers never make enough money to quit their day job.

What about the top five per cent of writers — they're making big money, right? A small proportion of the top five per cent sure are. They're the headliners — brand name writers like Stephen King and Dean Koontz. Journeymen (and women) writers are doing OK too. They're the genre writers, writing romance, mystery and suspense, and non-fiction. Writers in this group spend a lot of time looking over their shoulder. Will their publisher accept their next book? Are they writing enough? (Gotta turn in at least two books this year.) What nasty reviews of their latest book will they find on Amazon.com today? Magazine writers may do well too if they combine magazine writing with writing books.

If you want to make real money from your writing skills, you can. And you can do it easily and quickly, in seven days. How? Start a copywriting services business.

I've been making good money as a copywriter for over 25 years. It's fun, creative and lucrative.

**The business writing market is invisible to most writers. Most writers aren't skilled at business, and don't know how business works. They're unaware that businesses hire writers, so they pitch their work to overcrowded markets. Copywriters (business writers) write to meet the communications needs of large and small businesses. The material they write includes marketing communications, proposals, public relations material, and Web site content.**

If copywriting does register as a potential market, writers don't have any easy, practical guides to help them to access this market. While

bookshop shelves are packed with how-to guides to writing novels and magazine articles, the small number of available copywriting books is dry and dull, and make copywriting sound about as much fun as doing your own dentistry.

*Copywriting Success Secrets* aims to correct this. It's aimed at both professional and new writers. At the end of seven days, the enthusiastic new copywriter will have all the information and experience she needs to set up her own copywriting services business and make money.

Does the material work? Yes! I've been teaching this material in online and offline classes, and selling it online as an ebook. I'll be including many exercises and samples: sample exercises written by my students, sample ads, sample press releases, templates, and check lists. And because the material is based on my own 25 years of copywriting experience, I'll be including lots of anecdotes and insider information.

## **Writers need this book**

True to its "easy money" title, the book focuses on teaching the reader how to get copywriting work, not just on copywriting techniques. As far as I can tell, none of the other copywriting books currently available teach copywriters how to prospect for new business. And yet, going by my experience with students and my monitoring of writers' groups online, this information is what writers need most.

Other copywriting books just don't provide the nitty-gritty of self-promotion and marketing. Writers need details and encouragement to market themselves and their services, so I'll be making this book as forceful and motivating (and fun) as I can. One of my students said that she until she did one of my free sample courses, she wasn't aware that copywriting was something she could do. Now she knows that it is.

That's the takeaway I want to give readers: *you can make money, easily, from your writing skills, and you can make it very quickly, no long apprenticeship needed.*

## **The book's structure**

Readers will find it easy to work with this book. It's set up in the form of days and weeks, with tasks and exercises for each chapter. As the

reader does the exercises for each day, she's doing the work involved in setting up her own copywriting services business. No wasted time – she's working on developing her own small business from the very first day!

*Each chapter contains:*

- Samples, written by my students, so that readers feel more comfortable with the work.
- Copywriting techniques for the reader to refer to as she begins to work as a copywriter.
- Exercises. The reader will use the exercises to build her copywriters' portfolio.

### **What's not in the book**

I've left out material which is widely available elsewhere, such as:

- How to set up a home business; and
- Small business technology.

## **[ Author's Name ]'s Background**

### **Quick Bio**

Australian author and journalist [ Author's Name ] has been writing successfully for 25 years. She writes about business, technology, women's issues, and creativity. Her books include: *LifeTime: Better Time Management in 21 Days*, *Home Sweet Office: Your Home Office*, *Improve Your Memory in 21 Days*, and *Making the Internet Work for Your Business*. Her feature articles have appeared in magazines like *Energy for Women*, *The Australian Women's Weekly*, *Woman's Day*, *New Idea*, *Vogue*, and numerous other print and online magazines.

She's also a working copywriter, writing copy for businesses ranging from international corporations to small businesses with less than five employees.

## **Partial list of publication credits**

- Feature articles for mass market women's magazines in Australia and the US, including The Australian Women's Weekly, Woman's Day, New Idea, Energy for Women, Writer's Digest and Vogue;
- Feature articles for computer and technology magazines;
- Computer manuals;
- Content work for Web sites and Internet newsletters (her online articles number in the hundreds, find them by entering the search query "[ Author's Name ] +articles" into Google.com);
- Business books for major publishers, including many books in Prentice Hall's WorkWise series (translated into several Asian and European languages);
- A series of romance novels for Macdonald Futura UK.

## **Web site**

At her Digital-e — Info to Go Web site: [http://www.mywebsite.com/\[ Author's Name \]](http://www.mywebsite.com/[ Author's Name ]) publishers three popular ezines: Creative Small Biz and Your Everyday Write, which are free to subscribers, and Freelance Copy Write, which has paying subscribers. She also teaches writing courses via email.

## **Why this author for this book?**

[ Author's Name ] is a writer, a business person and a teacher. She knows copywriting both from the writer's and business owner's points of view, and because she teaches writing, she knows how to pass her skills on to others.

She has written professionally for most of her adult life; everything from romance novels to computer manuals. She understands how writers work and think. She has also managed several successful small businesses. She first developed her copywriting skills when she managed a dog training and boarding business, and found advertising so expensive that it was vital that each ad pulled, and pulled well.

Her love of writing and fascination with the creative process also led her to teach popular writing courses at community colleges, and now on-line. The material in *Copywriting Success Secrets* has been tested by her students, and it works.

## Competition

The following three books are *Copywriting Success Secrets*' competition.

### **1. The Elements of Copywriting: The Essential Guide to Creating Copy That Gets the Results You Want**

by Gary Blake, Robert W. Bly

Publisher: Longman; 1st edition (September 1, 1998)

ISBN: 0028626303

This is a good general reference to copywriting techniques. It's aimed at small business or marketing people who want a simple copywriting guide. It's not directed at the same market (writers) as *Copywriting Success Secrets*, and provides no instruction on how to set up a copywriting services business.

### **2. Teach Yourself Copywriting**

by J. Jonathan Gabay

Publisher: McGraw-Hill/Contemporary Books; 2nd edition (January 31, 2001)

ISBN: 0658012010

Another general reference to copywriting techniques, aimed at business and marketing people. Again, it's not aimed at writers, nor does it help in setting up in business as a copywriter.

### **3. The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency As a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less**

by Peter Bowerman

Publisher: Fanove Publishing; (September 2000)

ISBN: 0967059844

This book comes closest to targeting the same market as *Copywriting Success Secrets*.

Peter Bowerman has written a useful book. His background as a marketing executive gives him a strong sales emphasis. However, because he has a sales and marketing background, and not a background as a writer, he doesn't cover the marketing of a copywriting services business. (He calls copywriting freelance commercial writing.)

His experience with marketing make marketing processes self-evident to him, and he tends to gloss over them. However, marketing doesn't come naturally to many writers, as I've seen with my students. They struggle with marketing, and need instruction in basic marketing processes and concepts.

## **Who will buy *Copywriting Success Secrets* and why?**

The strongest target group likely to buy this book is writers, whether employed or freelance, who want to diversify, and develop another income stream. Aspiring writers are also likely to buy it, seeing it as an opportunity to earn while they learn and develop their writing skills.

Additional target groups include:

- colleges which teach writing courses;
- people laid off from corporate marketing jobs – they will already have an awareness of the work done by copywriters; and
- early retirees, who want to develop an income, but don't want or need full employment.

## **My promotions plan for *Copywriting Success Secrets***

My primary focus will be on online promotions. For two reasons: I'm located in Australia, which means I can't go the usual book store/

speaking venue route to promote the book. I also have a greater depth of experience in the online world. I've been online since 1993, pre-World Wide Web, and know how to promote online. (I wrote a book called *Making the Internet Work for Your Business*, which is about setting up a small business online (1998, Allen & Unwin)).

I have a popular Web site (<http://www.mywebsite.com/>) and three email ezines, and I'll be promoting *Copywriting Success Secrets* heavily in all of them. I now spend ten hours a week working on my site and my ezines, and on promotional activities for them, so I'll increase that to 15 hours, so that I regularly spend considerable time on the book's promotion.

### **My plan outline**

- I will create a mini-Web site for *Copywriting Success Secrets*. This will be a three page sales site, the name of the site to be taken from the book. Such mini-sites are called "buy, bookmark or leave" sites. The entire site is similar to a direct mail letter: its only purpose is to encourage the reader to buy the book. The beauty of such sites is that if they're efficiently linked from other sites, such as my business site, Digital-e, and other sites in which I have an interest, they quickly rank #1 in the search top search engines, that is, in Yahoo! and Google.com.
- I'll write a long sales page on Digital-e for *Copywriting Success Secrets*. (See an example: <http://www.mywebsite.com>)
- I'll develop an email newsletter for the book's buyers, and prospective buyers. This monthly newsletter will update the information in the book, and will include a link for readers to buy the book online.
- I'll subscribe to a press release Web site, so I can send out monthly online news releases for the book to thousands of media outlets in the U.S., and if the book gets a Commonwealth sale, in the UK and Australia. With the phone, email and fax, doing long-distance interviews for newspapers and radio will be easy. Several of my books have attracted radio and newspaper interviews, and I'm

comfortable doing them.

- I'll interact in online chat rooms, conferences, and in mailing lists, subtly promoting the book.
- I'll create a private discussion group for the book's readers in the "Talk" forums section of my Digital-e Web site, so that readers can ask questions and interact with me directly. As this forum grows, I'll appoint reader-moderators for the various discussions.

## **Chapter Outline**

### **How to get the most out of this book**

A brief chapter to help the reader get the most out of the day-by-day chapters.

#### ***Includes:***

- How long it takes to work through the material.
- How to get the most out of each day's chapter.
- What you'll learn in Weeks Two, Three and Four.
- "Help! I can't complete the material in a week!" How to proceed if you can only work with the material on weekends.
- Confidence-builders, and encouragement for the reader to act on her ideas.
- Information on how to obtain a password and join the online forum for the book at the Digital-e Web site, and interact directly with the author.

### **Week One: Start Your New Business In Just Seven Days!**

#### **Introduction & Day One: Getting Started**

The Introduction and Day One are included in the proposal, please see the Sample Chapters.

## Day Two: your portfolio, prospecting and marketing

On Day Two, the reader takes the first steps in marketing her skills. She creates her bio, and begins to compile her portfolio, and writes a direct mail letter to sell her skills.

### *Includes:*

- Copywriter's bio. The reader learns how to leverage her current experience and skills, and writes her first copywriter's bio. Her current experience and skills also show her which businesses she could begin targeting in her marketing. Includes sample bios. (*I include sample bios written by my students – real-life student samples are included right throughout the book.*)
- Copywriter's portfolio. The reader begins creating her copywriter's portfolio by creating writing samples. An explanation of an electronic portfolio.
- Market research. The reader learns how to find markets, and a prospecting routine is discussed in detail.
- First direct mail letter. The reader writes her first direct mail letter to send out to prospects; a sample letter is provided.
- Day Two copywriting techniques.
- Day Two Exercises.

## Day Three: Writing Longer Copy

Day Three's theme is "news." The reader learns to write longer copy, including news releases and newsletters. She writes a news release for her new copywriting services business, and collects sample newsletters to study. She also learns the "Brain Dead" writing process, so that she can quickly write copy, to order, and to deadline.

### *Includes:*

- News releases step-by-step. The reader learns to write a news release. She also targets media outlets to which she'll send her first news release.
- Publicity is better (and cheaper) than paid advertising, so the reader writes a news release for her new copywriting services business. A sample news release is provided.
- Newsletters are excellent promotional tools. The reader discovers the elements of a newsletter. A sample online newsletter is provided.
- Day Three copywriting techniques. Includes how to follow up on initial contact, and turn prospects into clients.
- Day Three Exercises.

## **Day Four: Public Relations Copywriting**

In Day Four, the reader will become more comfortable with writing long copy PR, and develop skill creating and working with ideas. She'll price her services. She will also create a tagline (slogan) for her business.

### ***Includes:***

- Concepts and communications plans. The reader learns how to develop a concept and communications plan for a client with a new product or service.
- Pricing. The reader learns how to price her copywriting services.
- Day Four copywriting techniques. How to use incentives in copy. Create a Public Relations media kit: the reader discovers how to create a media kit for her new business, and for her clients. More on writing news releases — how to avoid having a news release perceived as an ad.
- Sidebar: What should a copywriter know? A method for the reader to become comfortable writing the kinds of copy she's never written before.
- Day Four Exercises.

## **Day Five: Specialist Copywriting**

In Day Five, the reader considers her past experience, and her interests, and considers building a copywriting specialty. The reader also

learns to build her copywriting practice one client at a time, and how to use each client's circle of contacts to build her own contact base.

***Includes:***

- Copywriting specialization — yes or no?
- Build a specialty in three easy steps.
- Networking and partnering with others. Copywriters who work completely alone limit themselves to small projects — and a smaller income. The reader learns to become comfortable sub-contracting work like graphic design, and also how to work as a sub-contractor for others.
- Difficult clients. The reader learns to rely on her copywriting services agreement.
- Day five copywriting techniques. Add punch to copy. Find copywriting jobs online. Create a mini-proposal.
- Day Four Exercises.

## **Day Six: Focus on Marketing**

In Day Six, the reader works on marketing her new business. The reader realizes the importance of marketing every day, and that all the marketing she does is cumulative. The reader creates a marketing plan. We discuss ten easy marketing tools.

***Includes:***

- Create a marketing plan for your copywriting business. Why creating a marketing plan is important, what to include in the plan. Regular review of the plan for what's working and what isn't.
- Ten marketing tools you can use. Includes: Internet job boards, building a Web site, writing promotional articles, and joining organizations.
- Day Six Exercises.

## **Day Seven: Copywriting for performance**

In Day Seven, the reader discovers performance copywriting: writing for radio and television, and writing speeches and presentations, as well as writing for video and multimedia (CD-ROMs). Performance copywriting is a huge field.

***Includes:***

- Conversational style. The importance of developing a natural, jargon-free, conversational style when writing for performance.
- Video scripts, speeches and sales presentations.
- Copywriting for radio and TV.
- Copywriting how-to: writing radio spots; working with multimedia companies.
- Day Seven Exercises.

## **Week Two: Your copywriting services marketing plan and more**

In Week Two, the reader continues to build her business, by creating a more comprehensive marketing plan. She continues with the work of Week One, marketing her business.

### ***Includes:***

- More information on marketing.
- Marketing using online resources. The reader learns to build an "almost instant" Web site, which she can use as an online portfolio.
- The reader learns about pitching, and how presentations can build her business.
- Strategic alliances. The reader learns how to partner with other people like graphic designers so that she can target larger businesses.

## **Week Three: Copywriting for the Internet**

In Week Three, the reader learns to write for the online environment.

### ***Includes:***

- Why writing for the Web is different from writing for print.
- Various types of Web sites, and how to write copy for them.
- Understanding a Web site's target audience.
- How to write Web pages step by step.
- Tips for the reader to market her copywriting services business online.

## Week Four: Writing bios (biographies) and creating your own media kit

In Week Four, the reader will do more work on promoting her business. She will develop a media kit for her business.

This chapter includes a final section: "The end of this book; the beginning of your new life as a successful copywriter." This section is a final wrap-up, with some reminders, and encouragement and motivation for the reader.

## Sample Chapters: Introduction and Day One

### Introduction

Want to make **REAL money** writing?

You know you can write. Maybe you're even making money writing. But are you making enough money writing? Or is it just a hobby, costing you more in computers, postage and paper than you're earning? According to writers' organizations, 95 per cent of writers never make enough money to quit their day job.

What about the top five per cent of writers — they're making big money, right? A small proportion of the top five per cent sure are. They're the headliners — brand name writers like Stephen King and Dean Koontz. Journeymen (and women) writers are doing OK too. They're the genre writers, writing romance, mystery and suspense, and non-fiction. Writers in this group spend a lot of time looking over their shoulder. Will their publisher accept their next book? Are they writing enough? (Gotta turn in at least two books this year.) What nasty reviews of their latest book will they find on Amazon.com today? Magazine writers may do well too if they combine magazine writing with writing books.

If you want to make real money from your writing skills, you can. And you can do it easily and quickly, in seven days. How? Start a copywriting services business.

I've been making good money as a copywriter for over 25 years. It's fun, lucrative and creative.

## **Can YOU make money freelance copywriting?**

Copywriters write for business. They write the words that educate, sell and instruct— everyday words. The words on ads, leaflets, brochures, press releases, product instructions and labels, newsletters, direct mail, and on Web sites. These words are everywhere, and are invisible to most people. To copywriters, all these words indicate a market. Copywriters can make excellent money: the most experienced, enterprising, and productive copywriters scoop in a comfortable six figures annually.

There's nothing fancy or magical about the words copywriters produce. In fact, if you can write clear instructions or a letter, you can write copy. You don't have to be a great writer to be an excellent copywriter, but you do need to recognize and be able to use the attributes of both fiction (evoke emotion) and non-fiction (be clear) in your writing.

Of all the writing I do, I love copywriting most. It's fun, it's easy, it's creative — and the biggest plus of all, it's usually short. Whatever writing you're currently doing, whether it's novels, short stories, or magazine articles, you'll feel at home with copywriting, and it will be an additional income stream for you. If you're a new writer, the skills you learn while writing copy easily transfer to other kinds of writing.

### **Here's the successful freelance copywriter's mindset. You:**

- know that you're surrounded by copy every day, everywhere you look. Radio, TV, the Internet, newspapers, food product labels, signs: they all contain words, and a copywriter wrote them. To most people, copy is so ubiquitous it's invisible. To you, copy signals a market. You're observant and aware, and every time a message catches your eye, even if it's only a street sign, you're thinking: "Hmmm... a potential market";
- are interested in getting your client's message across;
- are prepared to market, and then market your services some more.

## **First must-do: get your client's message across**

When you're writing copy, you're writing it for someone else, to do a specific job. That job may be to get someone to buy something, or to do something. In the case of a news release, you may be trying disseminate information or to change someone's opinion. Whatever you're writing, the message is the client's, and your job as copywriter is to make that message crystal clear.

If the copy fails — and you won't need to look far to find poor copy — it's because the copywriter failed to deliver the message. When I catch myself thinking about a print ad or a TV commercial: "Woeful writing"! I ask myself: "Did I get the message?" If the answer is "I have no idea what they're selling and I could care less," it's bad copy. On the other hand, if my answer is: "I hate everything about it, but I know what they're selling and what they want me to do," it's good copy.

## **Second must-do: market your copywriting services**

There's a huge market for copywriting services. Every business uses copy. You may need to educate smaller businesses on what you can do for them, but the market is there. If you've tried to sell other kinds of writing, like novels or magazine articles, the openness of the copywriting market will come as a huge relief. It's not hard to find copywriting work.

However, you do need to market. As a group, we writers are not the world's hustlers. We're not pushy or extroverted. We'd rather write than sell our services by telemarketing or by appearing unannounced in a prospect's office.

Take heart. If you're by nature shy, you can make initial contact with clients via postal mail or e-mail, or by some other gentle, but resourceful method of self-promotion. You don't have to change your personality to find effective and fun ways to promote your services.

That's all it takes to make money freelance copywriting. Know that copy is everywhere and that it's all a market, get your client's message across, and market yourself.

## **How much can you earn?**

It's no exaggeration to say that the sky's the limit on your earning potential as a copywriter. If you want to push your marketing, within a couple of years, you can be earning a six-figure income without breaking much of a sweat.

When you're just starting out, you'll charge somewhere between \$50 and \$100 an hour. As your experience grows, you'll charge more. If you have expertise in areas like finance, real estate, and multimedia, you can charge much more right away.

Of course, your hourly rate is not all gravy. You need to figure your expenses and overheads into that tally before you start to calculate the profits. But you can make money copywriting, a lot of money, because all businesses need to communicate and you're an expert communicator.

Welcome to the wonderful world of copy! Let's get started.

# **Day One: Getting Started**

## **Your Day One Objectives**

On Day One, you'll learn about the client brief, and will develop your own briefing sheet. You'll also learn a nifty technique to help you write copy anywhere, anytime.

### **Sections:**

- The client brief.
- Writing copy step by step.
- How to Write A Perfect, Selling Ad.
- Day One Exercises.

## **The brief, and your Writing Services Agreement**

In copywriting, you don't need to do it all yourself. In fact, you can't. Your copy is based on whatever you're trying to sell. This is a huge plus,

because the product always gives you somewhere to start writing. And the more you know about the product, the better. Your client hands you the product, or tells you about it, or explains the service, or gives you a guided tour of the factory, and tells you what he wants: a sales letter, a brochure or a news release. This is "the brief," your instructions.

After he's explained the brief, the most important question to ask your client is: "What do you want the reader to do after he reads this?" (Or the viewer or listener to do, if you're writing broadcast copy or for a Web site.) You're asking what the customer's response should be. Getting the customer's response is your goal. The response could be: to call a phone number, to attend a sale, or to order from the catalog.

Write down the customers' required response. While I'm working on a job, I like to stick a reminder note onto my computer monitor: "Call client number," for example, or "order product." When you get into the excitement of writing the copy, your thoughts can get tangled. It's easy to forget the response. Writing the required response down, and keeping it visible, means that it's always at the forefront of your mind.

## Your briefing sheet

If you've been hired by an agency, you'll be given a brief. If you're hired by a business unused to working with copywriters, you'll need to fill out your own briefing sheet. The sample briefing sheet below contains information that's useful to have. Tailor it to your own requirements. Computer-format your briefing sheet with adequate spacing so it's easy to fill in, then print out some copies and keep them by the phone.

### SAMPLE BRIEFING SHEET (Figure 1)

Type of product or service:

Promotional name of the product or service:

Any other names?

A short description:

What three major points do you want to make?

What's the primary reason the customer would be interested in this product or service?

A technical description (or ask for the manufacturer's specification):

Options (colors, material etc):

Used for, and how?

Target audience:

Benefits over competing products:

Comments:

Customer response required:

Are there any disclaimers, or legal requirements which need to be mentioned in the copy?

## **Your Writing Services Agreement**

ALWAYS SEND THE CLIENT YOUR WRITING SERVICES AGREEMENT, as soon as you accept the brief. Yes, it's in caps, and I'm shouting, and the reason is this: all the hassles you're likely to encounter during your copywriting career can be countered with an effective agreement, signed by the client, BEFORE you start work. Whenever I accept a brief, and omit this vital step, something goes wrong. So do it. Always. No exceptions.

When you're working as a sub-contractor with an agency, whether the agency is for advertising, Public Relations, or multimedia services, the agency will usually have its own agreement that you'll be asked to sign. Most agency agreements are straightforward. Sometimes they're not. Strike out anything in the agency agreement you don't agree with, initial your strikeouts, sign the agreement and send it back.

Here's the Writing Services Agreement I use. It's not fancy, but it does the job. Feel free to use it, or parts of it, to create your own agreement.

### **SAMPLE WRITING SERVICES AGREEMENT (Figure 2.)**

## Agreement for Writing Services

REF: XXXX

DATE:

Client:

Project:

Fee:

Advance retainer:

Balance due on completion:

Notes:

Your signature below authorizes me to write copy for the project above, for the fee stated. (You can return the agreement via postal mail, fax, or e-mail.)

Two revisions are included if requested within five days of your receipt of copy, and are not based on a change in the assignment brief made after copy is submitted. Balance of payment is due on receipt of the invoice.

You understand that the assignment is work done for hire, which gives you the copyright. You release me from any responsibility for legal or regulatory problems that may arise from the use of any copy I write for you.

Payment options:

Check, Direct Deposit

### **(Sidebar) The copywriter's formula: AIDA**

Memorize this. I don't know who to credit for this copywriting formula, but AIDA (Attract, Interest, Desire, Action) is a handy copy checklist. All the copy you write should include these elements.

Attract = get the reader's attention.

Interest = keep his attention.

Desire = evoke emotion.

Action = get a response.

## Writing copy step by step

The more copy you write for clients each day, the more money you make. Therefore, you need a method to get copy written fast, without dithering and wasting time wondering what to do next. The following method works. I recommend that you use it on every job. More play than work, it's fun and stress-free. Try it.

### Step One: Research

After you've been briefed by the client, your first step is research. Even if you're sure that you have all the information you need, doing a bit of hunting and gathering for more information lets your subconscious mind brood on the task before you start writing.

My aim when I research is always to get what I call "the Click." The Click is part concept, part inspiration, part structure, and part my subconscious mind waving at me and yelling: "Yooohoo! We're ready, you can get started."

Your research period may be only a few minutes. When I was asked to do a fast rewrite job on five 30-second radio spots for a jewellery store, out of the two hours I had, I spent half an hour on research. Although I'd worked for the client previously, and knew what he was selling, I wanted to get a new angle, a unique fact – something different that I could base the copy around. I found it. I learned that gold is eternal: it's older than our solar system. That nugget of info inspired me, and let me breeze through writing the five spots.

Unless I'd been prepared to "waste" time on the research, I would have had a much harder time writing the copy, and the copy wouldn't have had any creative sparkle.

### Step Two: Prepare by getting a conversation down on paper or on the computer screen

The biggest stumbling block for a writer is the blank page or computer screen. Writers get performance anxiety just like actors get stage fright. Luckily, that block is easy to conquer when you're writing copy.

Copy is conversational. If you're used to writing novels or non-fiction, this can be hard to achieve at first. Good copy is simply communication, rather than literary elegance, and you don't have to agonize over

grammar. If you're getting your client's message across, you're writing good copy.

Here's a handy trick to get words on the page. When you start writing, imagine you're talking to someone, telling her about the product. It helps to type something like: "Jeannie, I just found this great new thing, let me tell you about it..." Then describe the product.

Or, if you're writing longer copy, longer than a typical page of 250 words, talk into a tape recorder, and pretend to tell someone about the product, then transcribe the tape. Either of these techniques will stop you using a stiff and formal voice. You'll be using an informal conversational style and tone, which is appropriate for copy.

You'll also notice you've conquered the blank page.

### **Step Three: Brainstorm with word associations**

You've got a page of conversation. Print it out if it's on the computer. Without thinking about it too much, circle any words which appeal to you. Circle five words. At this stage, you're nowhere near writing the final copy. You're making creative connections. This method of brainstorming uses your right and left brain.

Starting with the first word, write down 20 word associations you come up with. You can use a cluster diagram, or just make a list.

The key to getting results with this method is lack of effort on your part. Just do the process mechanically, and write down the first words which pop into your mind.

When you've done this, go and do something else for a while. Have a cup of coffee, or take the dog for a walk. Sometimes you'll get a rush job, and you won't be able to take much time away, but no matter how rushed you are, take at least ten minutes.

### **Step Four: First draft: write it fast**

When you sit down at your desk, write a first draft as quickly as you can. Don't refer to any of the word lists you made. Be casual, be confident, and get those words down.

Your first draft is your first take on the job. This gives you something to work with, and you can tweak it until you're satisfied.

As you become more experienced, your first draft comes close to being your final draft. I usually send my second draft to the client as the "Initial

Draft.” I offer two free revisions of this draft in my writing agreement. I’ve found that if I’m working for the client directly, then either the client accepts my Initial Draft, and says “Great! Just what I want,” or I do one minor revision. When working with an agency, I rarely get asked to do revisions.

My feeling is that because I’ve done a lot of preparation (research, getting a conversation down, and brainstorming), I’m pretty much on target when I send the Initial Draft. Therefore, the preparation work you do is important. Don’t try to jump into a final draft that you intend to send to the client when you sit down at the computer. You’ll freeze up. Having a process that you work through leaves plenty of room for discovery —and all writing is discovery — and creativity, and this shows in the final results. Even if you don’t use any of the material you created in your preparation in the final draft, the preparation process loosens you up and helps you to write creative copy day after day, because you’re not working — you’re playing, and your subconscious mind loves to play.

## **Copywriter's How –To: Five Easy Tips To Write A Perfect, Selling Ad**

( Each chapter contains Copywriter's How-Tos, copywriting reference articles.)

A perfect, selling ad? I lied. There's no such animal as the perfect, works-every-time, selling ad. But I got you to read this far, didn't I? That was the title's purpose — see Tip Two: Write an attention-grabbing headline.

I didn't lie about these tips, though. They're easy and fun to use.

### **Tip One: who's the reader? (Or viewer, or listener if you're writing for broadcast.)**

Although you're writing for a crowd, it's easiest to write if you imagine you're talking to one particular person.

You can even start writing your first draft with a salutation, as if you were writing a letter: Start with “Dear Elli,” and keep writing.

Who is this person? Is she old, young, married? Where does she live? What's her life like? What does she want most? What's she scared of? Why would she be interested in your product? What difference would it make in her life?

Professional copywriters spend a lot of time in this phase of the writing process. You can't motivate someone if you don't know who they are.

### **Tip Two: Write an attention-grabbing headline**

Your headline is vital. No one is looking for your ad. You've got to wave and yell at them to get their attention. If you don't get their attention, no sale.

Write a trial headline to get yourself started. This probably won't be the headline you'll use. However, with a trial headline, you've got a corral for your copy. You're writing to that headline.

When you've written a draft of the ad, force yourself, with a timer, to write another twenty headlines in five minutes. (Read the rest of the tips and write the benefits and the response before you write a draft.)

Don't try too hard. Who cares if they're all junk? You're writing lots of headlines to get your subconscious mind to take you seriously, and throw up the PERFECT headline. You'll never achieve this perfect headline with conscious thought. It's a gift from your subconscious, but you have to goose it into cooperating.

You may find a headline you like more than your initial headline. Just substitute it, if it fits. If it doesn't you can write another version of the ad to fit that headline's concept.

### **Tip Three: Write the features first, then work out what the benefits are**

Nobody buys a product (or a service) for its own sake. They buy because it benefits them in some way. The benefits are what you're selling.

- You're not selling a German Shepherd puppy, you're selling an intelligent, loyal companion and family protector.
- You're not selling a car, you're selling travelling comfort, prestige, and a sure-fire babe-magnet.
- You're not selling a book, you're selling the adventure of a lifetime, love, romance, and sex.

To get a handle on this, take a sheet of paper and briefly list the features of your product or service on the left.

Then beside the feature, write the corresponding benefit that each feature provides.

Remember — use the benefits in your ad.

### **Tip Four: Don't forget the response!**

I've lost count of the number of ads I've seen everywhere from the Yellow Pages to full display ads costing thousands in magazines, where the copywriter and everyone else forgot the response.

You must tell the reader what you want him to do. You must ask for the sale. Ask the reader to do something: call a number, come into the store, go to a Web site.

This is so important that when I'm writing an ad I always write the required response on a sticky note and tape it to a corner of my monitor. I tape it onto the screen itself, so I can't miss it. (Yes, I have been guilty of forgetting the response. And very embarrassing it was too.)

### **Tip Five: Read it out loud**

You've finished the final draft of your ad. Before you show it to anyone else, read it aloud.

You'll pick up redundancies, awkward sentence construction and other nasties when you read the copy aloud.

## **Day One Exercises**

### **Exercise One: Write a brief**

In this exercise, you'll put yourself in the client's shoes. You're a furniture manufacturer. Your business is expanding. You're inserting a quarter page display ad in your local Yellow Pages. You pick up the phone and call a local copywriter. (You know her because she called you and left her contact details.) What instructions do you give the copywriter? Write 100 words of the manufacturer's instructions to the copywriter.

## **Exercise Two: Getting (conversational) words on paper: Tell me about your favorite pen**

A pen manufacturer has hired you to write copy for a newspaper display ad. Pick your favorite pen, and do some research on pens. Next, in 150 words, tell me about the pen. Start with "Angela, let me tell you about this pen..." Remember, that you're talking, not writing. Write as you'd speak. Also remember that this is not copy, this is just you, telling a friend about your pen.

## **Exercise Three: Write ad headlines from the brief you created**

In Exercise One, you wrote a brief. Now write 30 headlines you could use for the ad which you'll write from the brief. Remember, this is a quarter page ad for the Yellow Pages. Read the Yellow Pages, and check out some of the ads before you start.

(When you're writing copy for clients, it's good practice to write at least 20 to 50 headlines (some master copywriters write 150 headlines), before they set to work on the ad itself.)

## **Exercise Four: Create the ad from the brief and headlines you wrote**

Create the ad from the brief. Tell me what graphic you'd use, the headline, and the body copy.

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