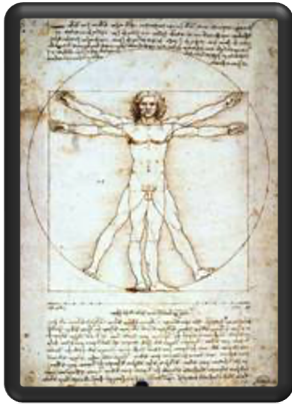


Writing for the Life of Your Business

During the initial rush to get an advertising project off the ground, it's easy to forget the importance of addressing your customers wants and needs in marketing materials. As professional copywriters are aware, the "unique selling proposition," or USP, is at the heart of all winning advertising, whether it be for flea collars or fancy yachts.

Picture, if you will, Da Vinci's "Vitruvian Man" as our copywriting symbol. The USP is the "heart," and the five appendages are labeled: "promise" at the head; "picture" and "proof" at either arm; with "close" and "offer" at either leg.

Each of the six elements is critical to your message, and, when written in proper combinations, can persuade, then lead, your customers to purchase your product or service. If written effectively, your customer will have a deep emotional response to the advertisement, and their purchase will be followed by a logical rationalization of that purchase, the psychological justification of why they really needed it.



As the heart of all effective copywriting, the USP is what distinguishes your product or service from others of like kind. Since the realm of choices has grown exponentially over the years, careful consideration and an active imagination are called for when deciding what your USP finally will be. If you can "see" how your product or service will help make your customers' lives better or easier, your unique selling proposition will come to you in a flash of insight.

Know your customer. Using what is known in the copywriting industry as the "barstool approach," write as if you were talking to your best friend. Writing from the heart, your "promise" of a superior product or service, of greater benefits or better service, becomes more intimate and immediate.

Overcoming your customers' initial reluctance is the first step toward making the sale. Your writing, when infused with a degree of emotion and intimacy, helps you establish a relationship with your buyer.

Some people are gifted when it comes to telling stories, or "painting a picture" with words. If you're not one of those fortunate souls, don't worry. Like any art, it takes practice. But practice you must, for your customer must be able to "see" themselves or a friend or relative in the picture, clearly using your product or service.

Testimonials are among the highest and best “proofs” available to advertisers. Professional figures with the “voice of authority,” like doctors, engineers, lawyers and so forth, are at the top of the list when designing your ad copy. Testimonials can be scattered throughout your sales materials with great effect, but should be offset from the regular copy by such devices as text boxes, indents, and sidebars, etc.

Contrary to popular belief, the closing statements don’t always come at the very end of your copy. True, there is a closing at the end, but at times—depending on the length and nature of your advertisement—a “call to action,” or asking for the order, sets up a false closing. In turn, the false closing makes your customer anxious to know more about your product or service.

Asking for the order should take place at least five times within the body of the sales message to be effective. If your USP is outstanding, and your offer is particularly appealing, then the opening paragraph is not too soon to ask for a call to action.

The true closing includes not only another request for the order and your signature, but uses a post script (P.S.) to further inspire your customers’ interest in your offering. Discounts, coupons, and other incentives work well in the P.S., and further your goal of securing the sale and adding another satisfied customer to your accounts.

So, like the “Vitruvian Man,” maintain a balance among the parts of your advertising copy. When “promise, picture, and proof” are developed in equal fashion around the heart of your business, or the USP, the “closing and order” come as a natural outflow, and your message will be “visually” powerful and remain in your customers’ minds long after the initial sale.

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