

Top tips for snappy copy

When it comes to writing marketing copy, less is often more...



Who are you writing for?

Write for one person. Assess their motivation for reading the piece: to be informed, excited, engaged, motivated to act? Assess the time they have to read it and their knowledge level.

Get the knowledge:

If you don't have knowledge of the subject matter, get it or interview someone who has – or find someone who does and get them to draft it. At the very least, you need to know as much as your reader. Your copy must always be credible and add value.

Ask questions which can provide the structure:

Ask the 'Who, Why, When, Where, What' and answer those questions in bullet-point format. Leave the questions as subheads for now. Structure the Q&A text in a way that will form the basis of your logical or persuasive argument.

Does it serve your purpose as well as theirs?

Even with thought leader pieces, what is it you are trying to say here? Your copy must add value to the reader but does it also support your company messages? Make sure your copy always underlines a key value proposition. If it doesn't, why are you writing it?

Ok, you should have a first draft now. This is possibly the longest it is going to get, so don't worry about word count yet.

So what?

Read it through; anything missing? Ask yourself, 'Why do I care?', 'So what?' and, 'What's so exciting about that?' If you're bored by your own copy, imagine how everyone else feels.

Show not Tell:

Don't gush. Use observation, facts and stats to *show*. Not subjective adjectives and opinion to *tell*. Your reader wants to form their own opinion, not have yours thrust upon them. You need to present your argument in a way that any sensible reader, now apprised of all the information they need, would naturally conclude that your service is the one for them.

Imagine the building is on fire:

This is a press release rule, but also applies to marketing copy. Imagine the building is on fire and you cannot leave the office until you have shouted the piece from the window. This exercise will ensure you unravel your sentences and only use the words you need to say what must be said.

Is it conversational?

Could you weave your copy into a conversation or would it sound like a set of terms and conditions/you swallowed a dictionary/you've been abducted by brand Y? Keep it natural and make life easy for your reader.

Every time you read it cut it:

Ok, so now look at word count. Aim to reduce the word count every time you review it (three to five times), with decent breaks in between reviewing sessions. This allows the creative brain to mull over the project, and find the right phrase and the most perfect word.

Read final draft out loud:

Now print off the copy and read it out loud. This really helps spot the 'silly' mistakes that your eyes haven't seen but your tongue will trip over. It will also help you with punctuation. If at all possible, give it to someone else to proof - everybody loves spotting other people's mistakes!

