

Tune Up Your Writing Skills

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John Spindler
Spindler Marketing Communications
john@spindlermarketing.com

Before you begin writing

- Understand the big picture
 - What are the other campaign components?
 - Do all the pieces fit together well?
 - Does this communication make sense?
- Know your audience
 - What is the industry/vertical?
 - State of that industry?
 - Whom are you writing to?
 - What things (pain points) keep him or her up at night?
- Define the action you want taken
 - How do we want the prospect to respond?
- Make sure your list is solid

Six attributes of good copy

- Grabs attention
 - Use a snappy headline
 - Try an attention-grabbing graphic
 - Ask a challenging question
- Is engaging
 - Write in friendly, conversational tone
 - Pretend you're explaining to mother
- Focuses on the customer
 - Demonstrate how to alleviate their pain
 - Don't fall in love with your company or product
 - Make sure any "We" statement is followed by a "You" statement
- Brings the benefits to life
 - Easy to confuse features/benefits
 - Tip: Add "which means" to end of sentence to force focus on benefits
- Differentiates
 - Length of time in business
 - Innovative product aspects
 - Employee expertise
 - Guarantee
 - Customer testimonials
 - Don't bash competitors!
- Inspires action
 - Demonstrate why audience must do something
 - Make it easy for them to do it

Strategies for writing better copy

- Use good grammar/spelling
 - Pay attention to easily confused words
 - Don't rely on spell check
 - Get a fresh set of eyes
- Be conversational
 - Use regular English
 - Mix in some industry specific terminology
 - Avoid "technospeak" and excess jargon
- Make it personal
 - More powerful because they speak directly to reader
 - Use "We" and "You" statements
- Use active voice
 - Active sentences are shorter, easier to read, more powerful
 - Active = subject does action
 - Passive = subject doesn't
- Use power words, such as:
 - Information-packed
 - Strong
 - Dependable
 - Solid
 - Informative
 - Guaranteed
 - Tried-and-true
 - Outstanding
- Add immediacy
 - Want reader to respond "Now," "Today," "Immediately"
- Keep things short
 - Wring out unnecessary words
 - Make your point and move on; don't overwrite!
- Borrow from others
 - Create a "Swipe file"
- Set it aside; revisit next morning

Quick tips for improving marketing materials

- Direct mail
 - Get attention: Show/tell what's inside
 - Attack the pain
 - Personalize
 - End with a P.S.
 - Make call to action early/often
- Whitepapers
 - Avoid using as standalone offer; instead use as part of kit
 - Use an Executive Summary
 - Be conversational
 - Don't forget call to action
- Brochures
 - Use engaging headline
 - Think "chunks" of copy
 - Use graphics/images

- Add testimonials
- Case studies
 - Use Situation/Solution/Benefits setup
 - Always contrast old and new
 - Use lots of quotes (but make sure they sound natural)
 - Emphasize benefits
 - Use honesty to build credibility