COPYWRITING

FRAMEWORKS, FORMULAS and CHECKLISTS

21 WAYS TO CREATE BETTER COPY, FASTER PLUS 35 TEMPLATES, CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES THAT WILL HELP YOU EVEN MORE

KIT SADGROVE

FRAMEWORKS, FORMULAS AND CHECKLISTS

21 ways to create better copy, faster

Plus 35 templates, concepts and strategies that will help you even more.

Kit Sadgrove

Who this book is for

This book is for anyone who's involved with creating ads, and is short on time.

Whether you're an aspiring copywriter, an ad agency account director, or a client-side CMO, this book is for you.

It gives you an overview of the frameworks used by copywriters and marketing people, along with the most widely used concepts.

Next time you're creating a campaign, or re-positioning the business, have a flick through these pages. They're bound to give you some ideas, just when you need inspiration.

What you'll learn from this book

- Why frameworks improve your ads, and help you write faster.
- Who needs copywriting frameworks?
- The top 21 frameworks and systems. Choose the ones that meet your specific needs.
- Advertising systems for different media, from billboards to press ads, and from Facebook to email campaigns.
- How to apply copywriting frameworks to meet your specific needs.
- Examples of frameworks with explanations as to why they work.
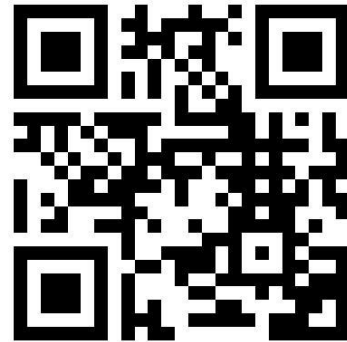- Software that can help you write even better.

And so much more!

Why listen to me?

Hi, I'm Kit Sadgrove. I've written copy for a wide variety of clients, from financial services to FMCG and everything in between. I've worked for two top-10 ad agencies and for much smaller ones. And I run the world's best copywriting course at inst.org/copy. So I speak from practical experience.

Free Cheat Sheet

Thank you for buying this book. As a token of my appreciation, here's a free cheat sheet: '18 Hidden Benefits that People Buy'. Download it [here](https://www.inst.org/AR/18), at https://www.inst.org/AR/18 or point the camera on your phone at the QR code.

Contents

SECTION 1: 19 FRAMEWORKS AND FORMULAS

WHO NEEDS A FRAMEWORK?

If you have to write, commission or approve marketing copy, this is for you.

You might be a copywriter, a brand manager or a content specialist. You could be a PR person, a social media expert or a digital marketer. Our various paths cross and converge as we toil to shift product, build footfall and grab eyeballs. And we all need to produce content. So this book is here to help you.

WHY USE A FRAMEWORK?

Have you ever suffered writer's block? Stuck for a headline? Been unsure where to start?

Not knowing what to write means you take longer to write copy, and that reduces your income or productivity. You also might produce work that isn't persuasive.

That's why we use a framework. It saves you time and ensures you make the right points. And it's based on universal principles.

So it follows you should never to write copy from scratch; you should always use a framework.

Use one of the examples in this booklet, and your copy will always be right first time.

Did you see what I did there?

I used a copywriting framework. In this case it's PAS, standing for Problem, Agitate, Solve.

I told you about a problem you have. Then I reminded you about the disadvantages it brings. Finally, I told you how this book solves the problem.

Neat, eh?

That's the beauty of a copywriting framework. It makes life so much easier.

To achieve its result, your information has to be structured and logical. Otherwise you end up with disorganized waffle and you risk leaving out necessary information, content that supports your case.

About the frameworks

The frameworks work in similar ways. They all seek to persuade you of something, whether to buy a product or sign up for a good cause. But each has a slightly different angle, and some will be more applicable to one type of assignment than another.

Some frameworks suit long form copy, notably direct response letters. Others work better for brand-building, for example in billboards and press ads.

How shouty do you need to be?

It's worth noting that many frameworks originated before the internet, when 'sales letters' were what copywriters spent most of their time writing. Nowadays direct mail has massively declined, but there's a big increase in writing content for websites and emails. So the kind of copy that's needed is somewhat different. It's often a bit more subtle. A prospect arrives on your website because they know you've got something they want. They've invited you in. So there's no need to shout.

Similarly, we make more use of permission marketing (as I mention in my forthcoming book Marketing Frameworks).

In the old days, marketing communications worked through advertising, often in TV ad breaks or magazine ads. They were what we call 'interruption marketing'. The consumer had to sit through commercials, or flip the page, to get to what they wanted.

Nowadays we use 'permission marketing' where we offer to provide the consumer more information, in return for their email address.

But we still use interruption marketing a lot. Much of TV uses ads, as do newspapers and magazines. And often they need to be concise and sharp, such as in online display ads where you need to stand out and make your point quickly.

So, use the frameworks with caution. Treat them as a lamp post - to light the way, not to support you when drunk.

If used carelessly, the frameworks can produce clunky copy. Great ads come from inspiration, not from writing by numbers. But, nevertheless, frameworks ensure you're on track. They're good for producing concepts and strategies. And you don't need to re-create the wheel. And there's never enough time to think too long about the words you need.

Is your market different?

Clients sometimes say that X strategy won't work in their market, often because they're B2B (business to business) or it's a complex sale.

There can be some truth in that, but the answer is to amend the framework so it suits your market.

How I've structured the book

The major important frameworks are in Section 1. If you need to string coherent text together in a persuasive way, frameworks are your friend.

In Section 2 I've added some checklists and systems you can use after writing your copy, to ensure you haven't missed something.

Section 3 has a set of principles that copywriters keep at the back of their mind, such as the word 'You', and writing in triplets. After a while they become second nature.

Section 4 provides strategies or common themes that you can use as the basis for a campaign. They include story-telling, celebrity endorsement and even fear. These are evergreen strategies that have wide appeal.

In Section 5 I've added a bunch of frameworks that are based on AIDA, and don't bring a huge amount to the party. AIDA was the original copywriting framework, first mentioned by CP Russell back in 1921. And it's still in use,

albeit sometimes criticized for being dated. AIDA has attracted many alternative versions, as their creators try to update and broaden the formula.

So, to save you time I've corralled the AIDA derivatives into Section 5. There are at least eight of them, mostly saying the same thing. You can ignore them if you want, but I've included them for the sake of completeness.

What I've omitted

I've excluded a few frameworks on the grounds they're simply trying too hard, and are aiming to squeeze some copywriting principles into a clever acronym. HELLYEAH and SCAMPER, are two examples. You can find them on the Internet if you really want to; but I won't bore you with them here because they don't add much.

I've also excluded heading templates. They're lines like this:

- How I improved... [problem] without [objection] in just [time]
- Discover the [benefits] you get with [results]
- Whoever heard of [target market] having [results] without [objection]

If you search Google, you can come across lists of subject lines.

Mostly they're from the days of direct mail, and they tend to be hard-sell.

I used to think headline templates would give me inspiration but that's never happened. It's probably because they rarely relate to my current work, they tend to be clichéd, and the size of the lists are overwhelming. But if I get a call for them, I'll add them to the book.

Let's get started!

Let's remind ourselves that copywriting frameworks can help you produce better campaigns, faster. So, here are 56 copywriting frameworks and templates to help you. We'll start with one that's really fab.

FAB

FAB stands for: Features > Advantages > Benefits

Features: Start with what your product can do.

Advantages: Explain why it's helpful.

Benefits: Elaborate on what it means for the reader.

This framework expands on the principle of 'Sell the Benefits, not the Features'. It reminds us not to talk about what a product *does*, but what *benefits* it conveys.

Your work should emphasise 'What's in it for me?' (something we talk more about later).

You probably wouldn't use FAB in an ad. That could be dreary. But it has its place on websites, where you identify a feature, then explain why it's useful, and finish with the benefits to the user.

For example my washing machine has a bubble button. It separates the washing powder or liquid (a feature). That means the liquid is dispersed more evenly (advantage). And specifically, my clothes wash cleaner (benefit).

Example: Deere tractors

The Deere ad is a creative way of saying 'This tractor is reliable. It won't let you down'. The one thing farmers and contractors need is something that starts first time, every time. Down time means lost revenue and more complication. Deere says, "We understand your needs".

Note also how the headline is shown as a notice pinned to a rough and ready timber structure. It's the kind of shed you keep your ride-on mower in. So it's using imagery that the target market recognizes.

PAS

Problem > Agitate > Solve

Problem: identify the most painful problem your target has.

Agitate: make the problem hurt, show why it is bad. Remind people why they're hurting. It's a slightly risky route, because you can offend people or make them cross.

Solve: Quick! Let's move forward! Present your product as the logical solution to the problem.

This is also known as Pain > Agitate > Solution.

Using PAS you empathize with the prospect's problem. Then you escalate the issue by providing more details or examples. Finally, you reveal how your product or service removes the problem.

Australian ad agency Reef Digital said using PAS achieved a big increase in sales for a hair treatment business by focussing on the problem of a bad hair day, expanding on the problems that a bad hair day brings, and then suggesting ten easy hairstyles to solve the problem.

Various people have come up with extended versions of PAS. There are two in particular, which we cover next.

PADS

- **Problem**
- **Agitate**
- **Discredit**
- **Solution**

PADS is a slightly humorous alternative to PAS, involving the addition of the letter D, standing for 'Discredit other solutions'.

The point is reasonably sensible, however – in certain circumstances. Before deciding to buy, most people will consider alternative products or solutions, including not buying anything! Therefore you need to overcome those options.

Whether or not you mention them by name, you need to sow doubt in the consumer's mind about the cost or quality of the competitors' offerings. And as for

not buying, you deal with that either by mentioning the disadvantages of delay or by introducing the principle of scarcity (such as a limited time discount).

And there's a more detailed version, PASTOR:

PASTOR

Problem – Amplify – Story – Testimonials – Offer – Response

P: Identify the **Problem** people are having.

A: **Amplify** the consequences of not solving it.

S: Tell a **Story** related to the problem. Or outline your **System** which will solve the problem.

T: Include **Testimonials** from happy customers.

O: Present your **Offer**.

R: Ask for a **Response**.

Accredited to copywriter Ray Edwards, Pastor expands on PAS by adding a story in the middle, followed by testimonials. It works best when you can write long copy.

Pastor reminds us to write detailed copy wherever we can. Don't skimp on the content.

PASTOR Alternatives

There are a few different versions of PASTOR. This one works well for consultancy and coaching, and B2B:

P: Identify the **Problem** people are having.

A: **Amplify** the consequences of not solving it.

S: Offer a **Solution**. Or outline your **System**.

T: **Transformation**: explain how you've solved the problem for other clients.

O: Present your **Offer**.

R: Ask for a **Response**.

In that version, the PAS section is the same as the original PAS. But then you show how other companies have been in the same situation and benefited from your client's work (Transformation).

When a business development person goes to see a prospect, they usually seek to demonstrate familiarity with the prospect's market. It sets the client at their ease. We've all experienced that feeling of reassurance when talking to an expert who's understands your problem because they've seen it before. And so it is for writing copy.

Note that the Solution and Offer are presented here as different issues. It could be that the Solution is a broad brush one, whereas the Offer is more detailed, as the prospect goes further into the funnel.

Many B2B websites have sections devoted to specific verticals, such as engineering, education or FMCG. And that allows you, the copywriter, the space to create case studies that get the prospect nodding.

BAB

BAB stands for: Before > After > Bridge

Before: Present the current situation with the problem.

After: Talk to the reader about how great it would be without the problem.

Bridge: Show them how to get there.

The **Before** is the problem you're facing. A typical example is detergent commercials where the children are having fund – but getting their white T-shirts dirty. After the wash they're clean. The voice over tells us it's because of the special ingredient in our washing liquid.

The Tide commercial (below) shows a 'Before' with children with messy T-shirts following a pasta meal. As if by magic, they come clean (the After), with the help of Tide (the Bridge).

Before and After also works in small ways, when you compare You're scrolling though Amazon or eBay, looking for

BAB works like 'Gap Analysis' (a formula I cover in my forthcoming book: Marketing Frameworks and Formulas).

People buy things only when they have a problem to solve. That problem needn't be a practical thing like insurance, a more reliable car or hiring a building to fix the roof. You might be feeling low and in need of some retail therapy. But feeling low is a problem that a retailer might be able to solve.

So, all advertising has to identify a problem that the product or service will solve.

AIDA

Attention – Interest – Desire – Action

Attention: get the reader's attention with a bold statement.

Interest: present information that appeals to the reader.

Desire: state the benefits of your product.

Action (OR Agreement): ask for a sign-up/purchase.

AIDA is grandad of the copywriting frameworks, and it still works. We copy-writers have to break through the large number of distractions and competing ads that people see.

A former boss of mine used to talk about 'breaking the glass case of indifference' that surrounds people. And he was right. There are so many messages competing for our attention that we need to block out all u-nnecessary ones. And we marketers have to break through that glass case be-fore we can present our offer.
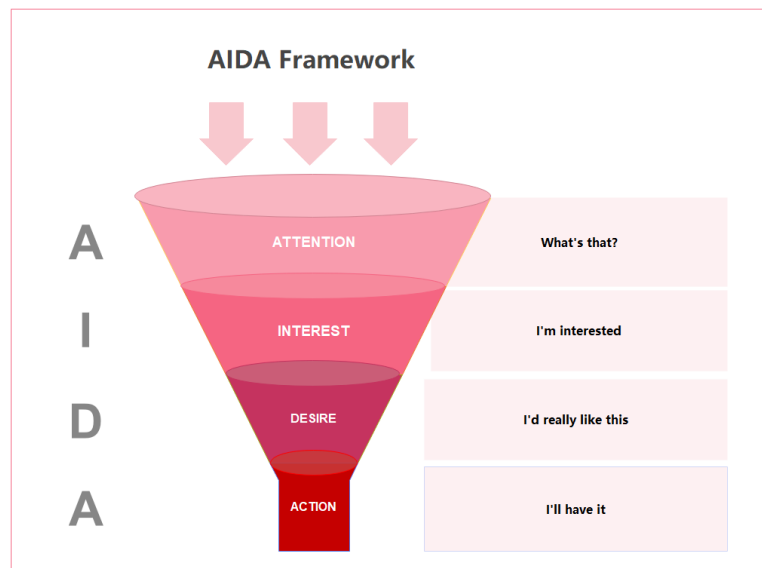
Hence we need something dramatic to gain their attention. This tells us to avoid dull, matter of fact content. Pick up a magazine or newspaper, and you'll usually see a gripping first sentence. It encourages you to read further. That's what AIDA does.

AIDA DERIVATIVES

As I mentioned earlier in the book, many people have sought to improve AIDA. Here are some derivatives. If you want, you can skip through them to the more interesting ones.

Many copywriting formulas are extended or modified versions of the AIDA. They follow a similar process. We'll start with AIDCA and IDCA

AIDCA AND IDCA

Attention
Interest
Desire
Conviction
Action

AIDCA expands on AIDA, by adding conviction just before you give the reader a call to action. 'Conviction' really means 'Proof' or 'Evidence'.

It's designed to add more information to the copy, to overcome objections and to reduce disbelief or skepticism.

You can add conviction through testimonials, endorsements, statistics, guarantees or demonstrations.

But you might decide to go with the more abbreviated form, **IDCA**, by dropping the Attention part. That would happen if the prosect had already engaged with you, for example by signing up for more information. So it would look weird if you came jumping out, waving your arms and shouting. In summary, if the prospect is warm, use IDCA.

THE 4 PS

The 4Ps are: Picture > Promise > Prove > Push

Picture: paint a picture that gets attention and creates desire. Drawing a picture involves storytelling, something that humans are drawn to. We want to know how it all works out.

Promise: describe how your product will deliver.

Prove: provide testimonials that back up your promise.

Push: give them a little push to take action.

You may have seen headache commercials. where the person holds a hand to their head, signifying pain. That's the Picture part of the 4 Ps.

The voice over tells us the tablet will cure our hangover. That's the Promise.

The screen flashes up a message telling us that it works 10% faster than before. Or that it's the best-selling brand on the market. They're giving us the Proof.

And finally, if it's a commercial, you may see a list of places you can buy the product. That's the Push.

THE 4P'S (VERSION 2)

Others use this version of the formula:

Problem: What's the issue on the customer's mind?

Promise: How we'll make it better.

Proof: Here are people who've used our product and enjoyed it.

Proposal: Now it's your turn to have that same benefit.

The 4P's are a straightforward 'Problem – Solution' framework. It's good to tell people about their problem, because it gets them nodding. Once they're nodding, you're half way to a sale.

Identifying the problem encourages them to read further, at which point you explain how your service solves it. Throw in some social proof, and ask for the sale

SLAP

Stop. Look. Act. Purchase.

This is a quick, sharp acronym. SLAP has an immediacy about it. It recognizes that people are whizzing past messages. How do you stop them rushing past your message?

• You **Stop** the prospect by getting their attention (AIDA again). If they're scrolling through social media posts, they need to halt.

• Make them **Look** at you're offering, in other words read it.

• Make them **Act**. This could be calling you, or giving you their email address.

• Get them to **Purchase**. It implies that you want an immediate buy. It's not a complex sell.

In some circumstances, Act and Purchase could be the same thing, that's to say Buy the product or service. So one of them would be superfluous. But in other markets, there could be an intermediate step, where Act is signing up for more information, and Purchase is the result of a return visit, a sales call or an email sequence.

For example, you're advertising a plumbing service on Google ads. The person types in 'emergency plumber'. Your ad Stops them because it stands out. They briefly Look at what you have to say. Then they Act by clicking on the phone number in your ad. So they call you and Purchase, by asking you to fix their plumbing problem. This is an example of where you have to fight loud and fast in a crowded market place.

POSA

- **Problem** What's the problem?

- **Origin** What caused it?

- **Solution** Here's the solution.

- **Advantage.** Look at the benefits you'll get.

I created POSA because instead of emphasizing a problem it describes what's caused it.

That's useful because people with a problem want to know more about it, not necessarily be told how awful it is.

When faced with a problem, we always need to know the cause before we can move to a solution. If you have a high temperature, the doctor needs to know whether it's caused by a virus or bacterial infection before they can treat you.

A teen who has acne will search for information about the problem. Is it oily skin, eating too much chocolate, hormones or something else? If you, the copy-writer, attribute the problem in part to oily skin, you can tell the reader how your lotion can dry their skin, thereby reducing the problem of acne.

THE THREE Ss

Star > Story > Solution

Star: introduce the main character of your story.

Story: tell a compelling story to keep the reader hooked.

Solution: an explanation of how the star wins in the end.

The client's product should be the hero of the story. You can do this by showing how the product solved a problem. A story is more engaging than an explanation. And it involves the screenwriting principle of 'Show, don't tell'.

3 Ss example

Here's one of a series of UK TV commercials that uses a dramatic story to illustrate the slogan: 'We won't make a drama out of a crisis'.

The man at the door is the Star. He's waded through the floods to reach a client.

Along the way we learn that the client is flooded. That's the story.

And at the end we hear the Solution: the insurance company agrees to pay out fast.

https://www.hatads.org.uk/catalogue/record/aa15fe14-52fd-4461-8e29-fe42b1a3e2ab

THE STRING OF PEARLS

You've got lots of points to make about your offer? Why not devote equal attention to each, and string them altogether. Throw away the attention-seeking ideas and the big headline claims, and just talk about the many great attributes of your product.

The String of Pearls offers overwhelming evidence of the many benefits you offer.

This especially suits web content where you can briefly identify several features or benefits. Clicking on each will lead to a more detailed explanation.

The String of Pearls also works in print by using bullets or a numbered list. Your headline could talk about eight reasons to buy your product, followed by the list.
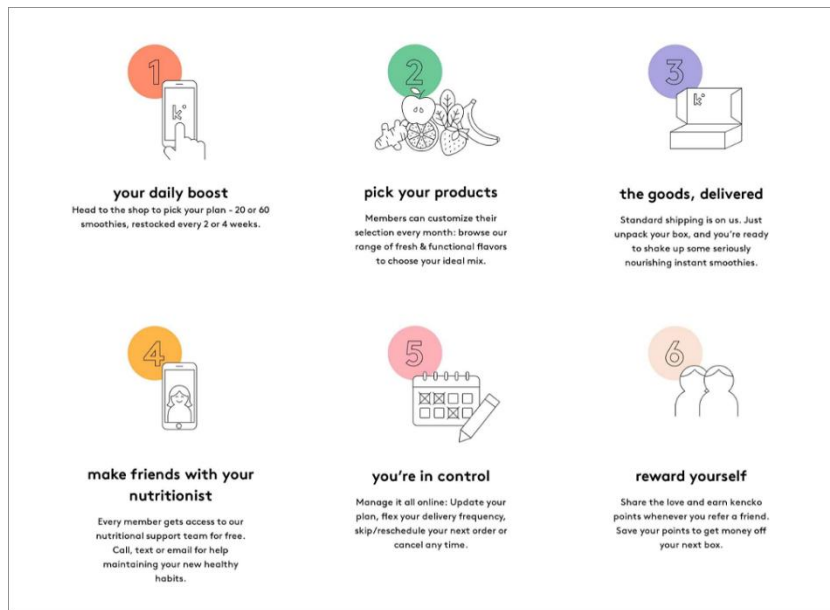
In the image above the business has outlined six benefits, allowing the reader to pick and choose which to learn more about. It puts them in control.

THE 3 WHYS

1. Why are you the best?

2. Why should I believe you?

3. Why should I buy right now?
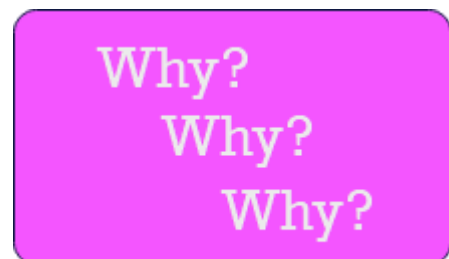
This is a less well-known framework which deserves a bit more to be more widely known.

Why are you the best? The first question is blunt. The reader will only buy one product. Therefore it has to be the best. So you have to *re-position* all the other products.

The 3 WHYs call to mind an important but overlooked word: 'Only'. What is your product's USP (Unique Selling Proposition)? What makes it stand out above all the rest? What is the one thing that others can't claim?

Why should I believe you? We know that consumers are advertising savvy. They are cynical. Their first response is likely to be, 'Oh yeah? Really? I doubt

that." So in your body copy you have to justify the claim. This could be a more detailed explanation, or evidence from a pierce of research.

Why should I buy right now? This is the call to action. You might need to offer an incentive or produce some element of scarcity, whether of time or money.

1-2-3-4

1. What I've got for you
2. What it's going to do for you.
3. What am I?
4. What do you need to do next?

'What I've got for you' tends to be a 'Hey look at this', kind of offer, for example a discount or a similar announcement. It's not a very sophisticated approach but it can work, especially if the headline looks like you're offering a bargain or something special.

This is followed by the benefit, 'What's it going to do for you'. This is about the benefits of the offer, whether nice new clothes or a romantic meal at a restaurant.

'Who am I?' provides reassurance about the supplier. It's appropriate for less well-known suppliers, and in such cases might include the company's experience or the details of refunds.

Finally, 'What do you need to do next?' is the call to action. Click the link or give us a call.

1-2-3-4 is a little unusual because it is written in the voice of an individual. In the mid-20th century and since, TV and press ads have featured the company boss, which isn't a bad strategy, since it puts a human face of the company

Wendy's founder CEO Dave Thomas featured in 800 commercials

and suggests they'll take responsibility for the quality of what they're selling. There was Victor Kiam and his Remington shavers, and Dan Hesse, the CEO of Sprint, not to mention many used car dealers.

THE 5 QUESTIONS

Some copywriters extend the 3 WHYs to 5 Questions. These are the questions people ask before buying a service:

5. What's in it for me?
6. How are you going to do this?
7. Why should I believe you?
8. Who have you done this for?
9. What will it cost me?

This framework works well in B2B markets where the product is complex, and intangible. That can include construction, engineering or other business-to-business markets.

Some companies tend to remain aloof, finding it hard to get down and dirty on a website. Maybe they want to appear professional rather than chatty and cheerful? Perhaps they feel the details of their work are self-explanatory. And maybe they assume the client knows it all. Let's examine the five questions:

What's in it for me? is a powerful appeal to self-interest. It should remind us that no one cares about your product, only what it can do for them. You might say that some want to engage with your brand; but that would be for reasons of belonging to a tribe, or gaining the prestige associated with the brand.

How are you going to do this? meets an often-overlooked problem – we don't explain in sufficient detail what steps we'll take. Meeting this need can be powerful. The reader doesn't want your grandiose but generic claims. They want to know about your process. They're seeking reassurance that you know what you're doing.

I was recently seeking to award some work on Fiverr, a freelance services site, seeking someone to make my text look more professional. One contractor stood out. He explained he would deal with 'widows and orphans', start new sections on a right-hand page, and several other improvements. Doubtless the competitors would have done that, but they didn't mention it. So he got the work.

Why should I believe you? Is about the prospect's natural hesitation and disbelief. They need you to supply proof. I once asked a building owner if my

client could do a case study on the work they'd done on his building. His gruff reply was "Everyone who's ever screwed a single bloody light into this building wants to do that." But it demonstrates that some industries recognize the need for social proof.

Who have you done this for? Is a sub-set of 'Why should I believe you?' It emphasizes the need for case studies and testimonials. In consumer markets, some businesses actively seek videos showing how customers have used their product, and display them on their website. It tells the browser that there is a tribe of happy customers.

'What will it cost me?' is a question that's often not answered, particularly in enterprise-level websites. It's not surprising, because you probably can't tell the reader in advance what a job will cost without knowing more about the scale of the project. But how many clients are put off by not even having a glimpse of the price? Like a couple gazing in to a jeweler's window, some prospects will say to themselves: 'If I have to ask the price, it probably means I can't afford it'. So the business never gets the opportunity to parlay. Equally, if small businesses are going to waste your time, want enterprise-sized

HIC AND HICC

Nothing to do with drinking beer too fast, HIC stands for:

Headline – Image – Body Copy

And the extended version (HICC) is for:
Headline – Image – Body Copy – Call to Action

HIC and HICC are the fundamentals of copywriting. Every piece of work that seeks to persuade needs a headline, because a headline has stopping power whereas an image doesn't. An image can look pretty or interesting, but it doesn't arrest the brain as words do. That's because the brain has to read and interpret what the words mean. On seeing an image, by contrast, the brain simply says, 'That's a beach', or 'That's people eating supper', or 'That's a car'.

The image is, nevertheless, important, because it conveys information in a way that words can't. People relaxing on a beach? Chances are it's about holidays. A three-quarters view of a new car? It's a new car ad. The image says 'Stay with us because this is about you'.

And then there's the body copy. Too often, the agency or its client think it's enough to show their product, dramatically lit, and no explanation as to why you should buy it.

And if you think is mundane, I tell you it isn't, because I see so many wretched ads that simply don't work. Whether it's through ignorance or arrogance on the part of the people who created it, it's a sad indictment on all those responsible for it. Let me tell you how they fail:

Headless ads: Many ads don't have a headline, or they just put the name of the brand where the headline should be. You think I care about your brand, enough to stop and read. Nope. There are maybe half a dozen brands that I really lie, and yours isn't one of them. If you want to persuade me to buy your service, give me a reason.

Image-free ads. Words are hard work. They make you engage your brain. And your brain is a very lazy thing. Scientific fact. It will do anything to save energy, which is why it sees lots of words and whispers to you, "Move on, nothing interesting to see here".

But show it a picture, and it says to you, "Yes, I get that. It's floor tiles. Do we need floor tiles? That kitchen you've been moaning about?"

No body copy. Or some half-hearted couple of lines, usually about features not benefits. If I'm going to buy something, I need a reason to believe. Prove to me that what you said in the headline is really true. Tell me more.

I created HIC and HICC because I'm tired of bad ads. Step forward jewelry companies. And you, too, auto companies. Yes, and you, movie companies with your useless posters.

HIC works for press ads and brand imagery, while HICC is more suited to direct response content where you want the reader to respond straightaway.

DASER

Dream > Ask > Solution > Evidence

Dream: Offer the dream of what life could be like. "In just 4 weeks you could be…" or 'The joy of living in these luxurious setting…"

Ask Three Questions, such as: "Do you suffer from...?", "Would you like to ...?" "Have you thought about...?" This gets people nodding in agreement. It tells them they are reading about *their* problem.

Solution: Tell them how your product solves their problem. 'Our XYZ product overcomes these embarrassing problems."

Evidence: Give the reader more details.

Require Action. Ask for the sale.

I created this framework because we need a framework that addresses the reader's dream.

All of us want something we haven't got. It could be a better job, a car that doesn't break down, or a reduction in corporate costs.

Each of these has some sort of pain attached to it (an irascible boss, an unreliable car or mounting costs).

So we paint the Future in the headline. In the example below, we're offering the reader the

You them use three bullet points to reinforce the need. These might point out the challenges that prevent the reader from reaching their dream: "Are you held back by ...?"

Or the bullets can be small elements of the dream, as in "Would you love to...? Can you imagine ....?"

Or it can be a combination of dream and pain points.

Then you go into the Solution, which is how your product will achieve their reader's dream. And you finish with a mountain of Evidence to support the proposition.

In the skincare example below, we reach out to people who want to create their own skin care products. The headline states the Dream in a straightforward, no-mess way. We follow that with the bullets, succeeded by the Solution and Evidence.

Make your own skincare products and launch your own brand!

- Are you tired of shopping for skincare products, only to be disappointed by the number of chemicals and preservatives found inside?
- Interested in creating your own natural skincare products?
- Are you looking for a way to transform your creative passion into a potential business?

Whether you'd like to develop a skincare product for personal use or to launch a new business, a Diploma in Natural Skincare will get started on the right track and set you up for success.

Creating your own products is one of the most satisfying things you can do. You'll be taking control of your life. You'll know exactly what you're putting on to your face and hands. You'll be protecting your family. And best of all you'll be able to express your creativity in a meaningful way.

Imagine being able to say "Have this moisturiser. It's my gift to you. I made it from only the purest of natural

DASER in action. Offer the reader a dream. Then fire three questions to which they will nod in agreement, assuming you've targeted them correctly. Then go into the Solution, Evidence and CTA.

QUEST

The QUEST copywriting formula aims to use messaging to empathize with the audience and put yourself in their shoes. When you implement this framework, prospective customers get the sense that you understand their issues and concerns. QUEST stands for:

- Qualify

- Understand
- Educate
- Simulate
- Transition
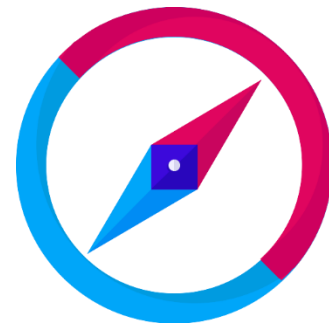
Let's take a look at each step of this copywriting strategy.

Qualify: The goal of this stage is to allow the viewer to decide whether the offer, product, information, etc., is useful. While you may lose some individuals, those that remain are qualified leads interested in your offering(s).

Some professionals call this step "**Question(s) that qualify**," suggesting you lead by asking the audience something. This leading query will either pique their interest or lose it, achieving this stage's objective.

Consider the Voya website, below. The copy poses a clear question with the intent of qualifying leads. If someone feels secure with their retirement savings or simply doesn't care, they'll click away. Those that remain represent qualified leads interested in Voya's financial services.

Understand: The next step is to empathize with the viewer and show that you understand their problems. You may bring up common pain points or propose a hypothetical scenario familiar to the audience that captures their frustrations. You want to make the audience feel heard.

Educate: At this point in your messaging, only qualified leads are still reading. It's time to position your brand as the solution to their problems. This is the stage where introducing your features and benefits is key. It will get the audience thinking about you as the answer.

Stimulate: Also known as the selling phase, you want to encourage the audience to take action, whether making a purchase, reading more, submitting a contact form or otherwise. The educate and stimulate phases often work simultaneously.

Transition: The final phase is the point of conversion. You transition (hence the name) the individual from a lead to a customer.

ATR

ATR is for:

- Awareness
- Trial
- Reinforcement

The ATR framework explains the three stages of consumer behavior regarding ad messages. That's important because understanding the steps of brand choice behavior allows you to facilitate the purchase more efficiently.

By following this framework, you can foster stronger connections with new customers and generate long-term buying.

Andrew Ehrenberg developed the ATR concept in 2000 to explain what motivates people to buy which products. He disagreed with long-standing beliefs that consumers are more likely to purchase based on the last ad they saw.

Ehrenberg's counter was simple, people buy things they want and keep buying things they like.

The beauty of ATR is its simplicity. It boils down brand choice decisions into just three easy steps. Your ad messages create awareness for your product, causing consumers to trial the item. If they like it, future ads reinforce their want to buy from you.

Ehrenberg doesn't deny that smaller steps may take place before these stages. After the awareness stage, for instance, the consumer may research, consult friends or take other steps to learn information before committing to the trial stage.

However, Ehrenberg's ATR framework focuses specifically on stages in control of an advertiser that will generate long-term loyalty and buying behaviors. You

can apply these steps to your ad copywriting strategies to achieve greater success.

THE FAN DANCER

The idea behind the Fan Dancer is that you don't re-veal exactly what you're offering. You merely tease by showing elements of what they might get, and invite them to ~~buy you more champagne~~ learn more.

It's a truly odd choice which goes against everything I cover in this book (and it's somewhat gendered and tacky). But it's so tantalizing I couldn't leave it out.

You allow the reader to imagine what delights are involved, rather than unveil everything here and now.

Markets that might benefit from the Fan Dancer might include packaged holi-days where you're selling a dream (never mind that the beach will be crowded and the beer over-priced).

Alternatively, your introductory copy for almost any product could lead the prospect deeper into your snares, by giving them a glance of what's to come ('Soon we'll be looking at the Ogilvy Formula'). This format is also used on TV and radio stations trainers ("Coming up soon, why Tom Cruise has turned down his latest film offer. But now let's look at the weather forecast").

THE OGILVY FORMULA

David Ogilvy, one of the advertising greats from the 1950s and 60s, had a for-mula for how print ads should be laid out. And that in turn will affect the copy.

He said every print ad should have five elements, as listed above – and dis-played in that order.

- **Visual**
- **Caption**
- **Headline**
- **Copy**
- **Signature**

This was, he said, because his research showed that people responded most to the visual element first and most profoundly.

I'm not sure how true that is now, if it ever was. But he was working in an era of busy, even overcrowded, pages.

So the image was supposed to take up the top three-quarters of the page, which is an extraordinary requirement, and creating a huge amount of blank canvas.

Immediately underneath is a snappy caption. And below the caption is the headline comes in a larger typeface that's designed to catch the eye.

And if you run out of gas, it's easy to push.
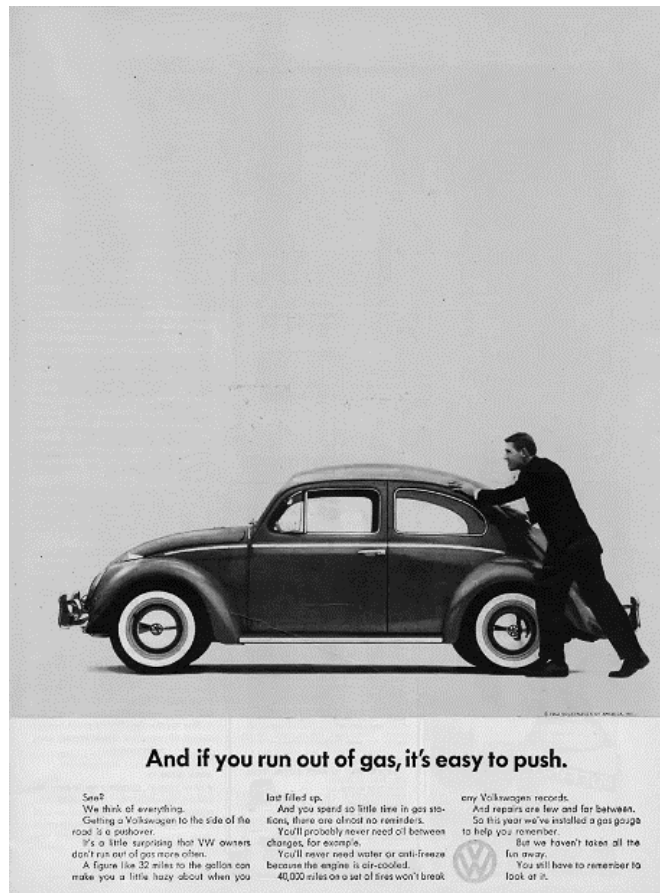
Then comes around 240 words of editorial-style copy, followed by a signature (the company contact details, etc.).

As the image to the right shows, not all Ogilvy ads conformed to that prescription (this one lacks a caption). But it has wit, using the car's small size as a selling point, and giving it a distinct identity at a time when cars had huge fins and big headlamps.

The ad has a modernist look and, if nothing else, it tells us we can stand out by looking different.

SPIN

- **Situation**: Establish buyer's current situation.
- **Problem**: Identify problems the buyer faces that your product solves.
- **Implication**: Explore the causes and effects of those problems.
- **Need Payoff**: Show why your product is worth it.

Taken from Neil Rackham's 1988 book, 'Spin Selling', this is a sales framework, used in complex sales. Specifically, it's the questions that a sales person should ask the buyer.

But it has some relevance for us copywriters. It certainly looks like a PAS copywriting formula, which Is why I've included it. The SPIN acronym encourages us to:

- Investigate the buyer's needs
- Demonstrate our capability
- Obtain the buyer's commitment

SPIN is different from other frameworks because it focuses not on seeking attention, but on understanding the buyer's world. Many copywriters never get to talk directly to the agency's client, let alone spend time with the client's customer.

While working at an ad agency, I once spent a day in a butcher's shop, one of a chain of 240 stores the client company owned. The aim was to understand the market. My main recollection is accidentally feeding a plastic spoon into the mincer, thus ruining a quantity of expensive beef; and at the end of the day being handed a goody bag of the most exquisite sausages, lamb and bacon.

But the point is this: if you don't understand the prospect's world, you can't write good copy. I can always tell when content has been written by someone without insider knowledge. It'll be generic and lack flavour.

The slightly odd phrase 'Need Payoff' is used to gain commitment, by getting the prospect to consider using your product. It links the buyer's need to your solution. Typically, a sales person would ask, 'If you used [my product], would that help you to [solve your problem].

The rest of the SPIN formula broadly works like PAS. But the thoughtful wording of the acronym suggests it works well for B2B long form copy.

Section 2: Copywriting Checklists

Frameworks have one weakness: they don't work for every kind of copy.

In particular they don't work for billboards, transport posters, and some ads on social media. Nor do they work well for content marketing, which isn't exactly copywriting but is its sibling.

So it's worth exploring some of the checklists we use when writing copy.

A FOREST

- Alliteration
- Facts
- Opinions
- Rhetorical questions
- Emotive language
- Statistics
- Three (rule of)

Used in schools to teach pupils how to develop persuasive essays, A FOREST lists seven powerful devices that can be used in persuasive writing. Always happy to borrow from other sources, many copywriters have taken this to heart.

The A FOREST list provides a checklist you can use to improve your marketing copy. It thus helps you develop more compelling arguments by varying these devices.

The acronym lets you vary and boost your argument. It also reminds us about the details we can include to support our argument.

Marketers must create writing that encourages the audience to convert (whether to purchase products or subscribe to services). The A FOREST acronym ensures we trigger the type of response from viewers that lead to these valuable activities.

Here's a summary of what each component of the acronym means:

Alliteration: Repeating the initial sound or letter in a series of words. 'Many monkeys making marching music' is an example of alliteration because it repeats the letter 'm' at the beginning of each word. Some brands include alliteration in their names, such as Dunkin Donuts.

Facts: Supporting your persuasive arguments with factual evidence.

Opinions: You can also use opinions (non-factual evidence) to support arguments.

Rhetorical questions: Posing a question not to get an answer but to make a point or argument.

Emotive Language: Emotions are powerful motivators and can add a critical punch to your writing.

Statistics: Numbers are easy to understand and help show quantifiable evidence to support your writing.

Three (rule of): This rule states that using three items in a series or three examples in your argument is most appealing to audiences.

THE 4C'S

- Clear
- Concise
- Compelling
- Correct

The 4Cs aim to make your writing more effective and professional. It does that by helping you write more readable copy.
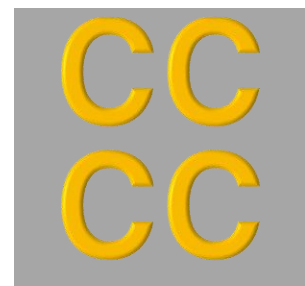
The 4C's describe the essential cornerstones that all acceptable content needs, especially in copywriting. It needs to be **clear**, meaning people have to understand it and be able to make sense of the information you're delivering.

Next, you want your writing to be **concise** and free of filler words, fluff and unnecessary details. Consider the following sentence: "I want to learn how to become better at writing copy." It's a good sentence, but it isn't concise.

A stronger way to say it is, "I want to write better copy." Remember, the reader's time is valuable. Concise writing doesn't waste any of it with unnecessary *stuff*.

The third 'C' stands for **compelling**. In other words, your writing needs to engage the audience. Have you ever read a sentence or paragraph and thought, "Wow." That's a sign of compelling writing. It's the stuff that makes you keep reading and *feeling* things about the writing.

Finally, your writing needs to be **correct** and free of errors. Some people will stop entirely when an obvious error is left in copy. It sends a message to the reader that the writer couldn't be bothered to proofread, so why should you bother either? Always correct for errors!

Word and, to an extent, Apple Pages have a good spell and grammar checker which allow you to choose options such as formality, gendered words and clichés. You can also use standalone tools such as Grammarly and ProWritingAid, which may give you a more in-depth solution (albeit at a cost).

People need to know what you're talking about by the time they are done reading. Don't assume they already know things critical to your messaging. They may not and making these assumptions will leave the audience confused.

On the following page, the UNEEK shoes product description is an example of the 4Cs.

OATH

- Oblivious
- Apathetic
- Thinking
- Hurting

This acronym helps to improve cold marketing messages.

Specifically, OATH might let you craft better copy that's intended for people unaware of your brand, products or services.

Ultimately, this means increasing the number of people entering your conversion funnel.

Many copywriting devices you'll find aim to improve the effectiveness of your lead-nurturing writing. Mainly, they help you engage audiences already in your funnel, encouraging them to take action and ultimately convert.

UNEEK adapts to your feet for the perfect fit, with innovative two-cord construction and a free-moving cord junction that provides freedom of movement, security and structure. The lightweight midsole delivers durability and comfort, while the higher-traction rubber outsole keeps your step secure. Two cords and a sole—now that's UNEEK.

The 4Cs in action. This shoe description is factual and detailed, yet succinct.

However, these tools and formulas neglect another crucial audience — the people who aren't in your funnel. These individuals may not even be aware of your business and products or feel they aren't relevant enough to their needs.

The OATH acronym explains some conditions you must address when writing copy for cold leads. **Oblivious** describes the notion that the audience doesn't know who you are or that they have a problem you can solve. Even if they know the problem, they're too **Apathetic** to pursue a solution. The problem isn't significant enough.

Some cold prospects are just starting to **Think** about the problem and may be considering possible answers. Alternatively, they may be **Hurting** from past options that didn't adequately solve the issue.

Addressing these four conditions will improve your ability to engage these unaware or seemingly uninterested parties.

THE 4 U's

The 4Us represent:

- Urgent
- Unique
- Useful
- Ultra-specific

They're a formula aimed at making writing more engaging to online audiences.

Using the 4Us should attract more attention to your headlines, titles and other short messages. This means improved open rates, content views and other crucial messages, due to more enticing hooks.

Many copywriting formulas focus on making the *body* of your content better. The 4 U's, on the other hand, are primarily about enhancing your hooks, headlines, titles, subject lines, etc. It's about grabbing the viewer's attention, so they open and continue reading.

To achieve this, your headlining information should create a sense of **urgency**. This will entice the viewer to act immediately, whether continuing to read or investing in your solution to their problem.

The headline and body content should also be **unique**. If the individual is too familiar with the approach or has seen the messaging before, they will likely ignore it like a bad pickup line.

Usefulness and relevance often go hand-in-hand. If your headlines or body content aren't useful to the viewer, they'll stop reading. It's as simple as that. To improve usefulness, be sure to be as specific as possible. Ultra-specific content gets to the point and lets the reader quickly recognize whether the messaging is relevant to their needs and problems.

THE 5 BASIC OBJECTIONS

The 5 Basic Objections are:

- I don't have enough time.
- I don't have enough money.
- It won't work for me.
- I don't believe you.
- I don't need it.

This is a list of five reasons or excuses a customer will use instead of converting. It helps you address the common objections and dispel customer apprehensions about the topic. As a result you can encourage more conversions.

People don't like to waste their time, money or energy. In fact, they'll find any reason to avoid it. The 5 Basic Objections are the primary reasons people cite when disengaging and refusing to convert. Identifying them and addressing them in your copy can have a profound impact.

Money and **time** are the two most common objections — for a good reason. These are two resources that always seem limited. Spending either one of them (or both) can feel like a big ask.

There are clever ways to address each. For instance, you might mention there's "no training necessary" to use the product, or that it will "save time and money in the long run." Mentioning free trials or payment plans in the copy will also help address the money objection.

Some individuals will feel their needs are too specific to be solved. This is where the **"It won't work for me"** objection appears. You can mention there are functions for all types of users or offer a warranty/guarantee, allowing people to test it for themselves. In B2B markets, the buyer often says 'My market is unique'. Sometimes it is, but often it isn't. You overcome that by investigating more closely the needs of that market, and demonstrating that your service is relevant.

"I don't believe you" is all about credibility. Customer reviews and testimonials are vital here. Let past customers convince new leads for you!

The hardest objection to address is **"I don't need it."** Some customers are right in this claim. It may just not be right for them. The best way to counter this point is to address the competition and demonstrate why your offerings are superior.

The 5Cs tell us to meet people's objections head-on. There's no point in simply ignoring them, or hoping the buyer won't have any reservations. In all but the most impulsive of low-cost purchases, there are little voices at the back of the consumer's mind telling them to back away from the sale.

Finally, the list isn't the final word on objections. There may be others for the product or service you are working on. Unearth them and tackle them.

FIGS

- Fear of loss
- Instant gratification
- Greed
- Sense of urgency

FIGS is simply a list of factors you can use in your landing pages to drive impulse actions. It can generate a boost in conversions, especially in direct marketing. And it helps to counter decision fatigue and hesitant customers by triggering their impulses!
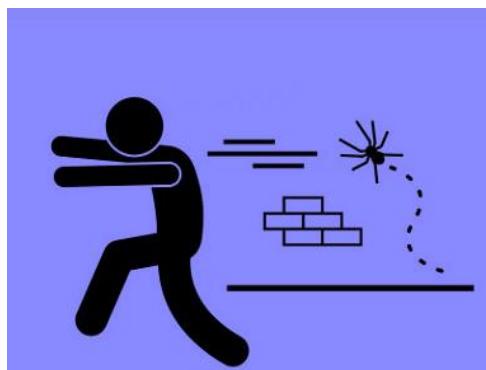
Impulse buying is a powerful motivator we all succumb to now and again. Think how often you leave the grocery store with something that wasn't on the list, or you see something in a store window that catches your eye.

Creating high-conversion copy requires you to trigger these impulses in your audience. FIGS states the four best ways to achieve this objective.

Fear of loss triggers the urge to keep what you already have because there's a chance of losing it. Insurance companies lean on this impulse heavily. B2B companies target prospects' fear of losing their customers.

Instant gratification means supplying the audience with immediate value in your offers. Naturally, the best gratification comes from free or discounted offers, highlighting the **"Greed"** impulse. If you offer the chance for the reader to make more money, it's immediately enticing.

Finally, the **sense of urgency** encourages the user to act immediately. Special edition products, sales countdowns, limited-time offers and other tactics trigger this impulse. FOMO, the fear of missing out, also applies theatre tickets and other events where the supply is limited.

Ideally, you want to weave all four criteria of FIGS into your landing pages to maximize your chance of triggering an impulse response.

CAN

CAN stands for:

- Connected
- Appropriate
- Novel

CAN gives us a checklist for creating effective ads and marketing messages. And it's one of the most concise formulas for improving your advertising messages. Since it only includes three components, it's easier to remember and follow compared to other methods. We encourage audiences to engage with our content by appealing to these three powerful influences.

Connected is about establishing a link between the viewer and your messaging. When casting actors for a commercial, companies spend many hours finding the perfect individual(s) that represent their customer base. Connectedness helps viewers picture themselves using your products and services.

Appropriate means your messaging has to be relevant and valuable to all parties. This means that the focus or intent of your advertisements should serve one of your specific marketing objectives. Meanwhile, the audience experiences appropriateness through the content of your messages and the value of what you offer.

Novel relates to making your ads compelling and engaging to viewers. People want to see fresh, unexpected and exciting content. They have an expectation of what a 'typical' ad looks like. When you can break that mold and deliver something unique, it instantly makes your copywriting messages stand out.

SECTION 3. COPYWRITING PRINCIPLES

If the Frameworks are how we physically build a piece of copy, the Principles are the ideas that inform our writing.

They're what give your writing style and flair. Look at any advertisement and you'll see crisp words. You can feel there's a brain at work. There's no unnecessary text, no waffle, and it feels a bit like music – with rhythm and flow.

Most people can't identify what the copywriter has done to achieve that effect, but there's undeniable magic. Here then are 12 copywriting principles.

THE RULE OF ONE

Not a dystopian thriller, The Rule of One aims to make your writing more specific and direct by focusing on just one detail.

In doing so, you improve clarity in your copywriting by making your messaging direct and focused.

In short, it empowers your writing *and* content strategies.

The Rule of One states that **you should focus on one topic, idea, audience or call-to-action for each piece of content**. In simpler terms, don't do too much with a single page.

For example, when you try to write a blog post explaining seven complex topics, there's a good chance the audience will walk away, not really having a clear idea of any of them. It's too much *stuff* all at once.

Instead, you should focus on just one essential subject and explain it thoroughly and completely. This is why the Rule of One should be applied to your overall content strategy.

As you plan out topics and article titles, think about whether you're addressing topics one at a time. Similarly, each content asset should have a single goal or call to action. If you ask someone to subscribe to your newsletter *and* download a demo, they'll only have enough motivation for one (if that). So, think about which action is most valuable and focus on it.

The same can be said about the audience you're targeting. It's better to create landing pages for each audience segment, rather than selling to everyone through just one portal. This allows you to adjust your message to fit the concerns of each individual. Casting the net wide leaves you with fewer prospects.

"SO WHAT?"

"So What?" is a simple test to ensure that your copy is engaging and addressing the audience properly.

It should let you write meaningful copy that matters to your audience and keeps them reading. This will improve the effectiveness of taglines, landing pages and feature-benefit descriptions.

Engaging audiences is never easy. You can write clear copy that details every feature a product offers, but, so what? Why should the audience care? The "So what?" test poses this question to determine if, from a reader's perspective, there's real value conveyed.

Consider this statement. "Google lets you search keywords." This is true and explains the core function of Google, but so what? If you had no idea what Google is, you'd have no idea how this provides you with any value.

What if the statement read, "Google connects you to answers to any question you have, from anywhere, instantly." That's a much greater value statement.

The "So what?" test is crucial in refining marketing and sales copy and maximizing its potency. It's about presenting the information *for* the customer, not

to them. You don't want to just list what your product does. Instead, you want to discuss how it will benefit the person and improve their life.

Beyond product copywriting, the "So What?" test is valuable whenever you're presenting information to an audience. It's a point where you put yourself in the reader's shoes and consider, "If I was them, would I care about this?"

STICKY

"Sticky" is the holy grail of advertising. Our work must stay in viewers' minds if we are to build a brand and get repeat purchase. Sticky encourages us to avoid platitudes that are instantly forgotten.

Audiences remember sticky copy long after they've left the page. Think of any campaign or catchphrase that sticks in your mind, and it will lead you to a brand you feel warm about.

"Sticky" helps to nurture leads and increases brand recall, ensuring audiences are more receptive to future messages and content.

The best breakdown of sticky content comes from Chip and Dan Heath in the book *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*. It's a great read if you want to write captivating marketing and advertising messages that audiences remember.

You might expect the Heath brothers to have created an acronym from the word "Sticky." But alas they didn't. Instead they gave us SUCCESs:

Simple
Unexpected
Concrete
Credible
Emotional Stories

As an acronym, it's ever so slightly bland! And it's only got one "S"! Maybe you've got a final S in mind? Write and tell me at KitSadgrove@gmail.com.

Writing sticky copy means achieving several goals in your messages. It needs to be **Simple** (let's not confuse the customer. Keep the message straightforward). **Unexpected** is always good in marketing, because it makes people look twice. It produces a response, perhaps an intake of breath. **Concrete** involves giving people factual or supporting information, usually to reinforce

your message. And let's tell them a **Story**, because that's a great way to encapsulate your message.

Put all this together and you have copy that is both sticky and successful!

SOCIAL PROOF

Social Proof gives the audience evidence from outside sources that your claims are true. It's what used to be called "Unsolicited Testimonials", but these days we tend to solicit their support.

Social proof helps to eliminate skepticism and the "I don't believe you" objection. It can turn past customers into one of your most effective marketing voices.

You're immediately dubious whenever you receive a telemarketing call or have a door-to-door sales person on your doorstep. This skepticism can be well-founded. We're on guard against scams, false promises, and spending money on stuff that just doesn't work.

This negativity carries over into any ad or marketing message we see. We naturally look for a reason not to believe a selling attempt. So, how do copywriters overcome this defense system? Social proof.

There are many ways to establish social proof:

● Expert or celebrity endorsements
● User testimonials and reviews
● Awards and credentials
● Social media engagement

The purpose of all of these materials is to provide evidence from an outside source. Essentially, when an audience says, "I don't believe you," you can turn around and say, "You don't have to. Here is our social proof from third parties!"

Displaying social proof from customers also shows you have a standing commitment to listening to their feedback. This can be another valuable selling point to capture in your copywriting. Consumers love brands that make them feel like their voices are heard!

YOU

'You' is the most powerful word in the English language.

Yet it's a word that many writers shy away from, because it's so personal. When you use 'you', you're making yourself vulnerable. You're engaging with the prospect on a personal, one-to-one basis.
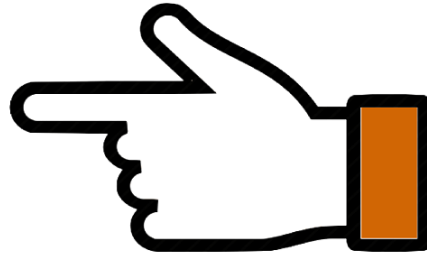
You're speaking directly to that one person. It forces you to think about them, who they are and what their needs are.

It's so much easier, less stressful, to remain cool and aloof, because you don't risk rejection or abuse.

People who want to protect themselves avoid the word 'You'. Writers who want to distance themselves use the third person: He, She, It and They.

Instead we have to be friendly. We're accessible: a good friend, not a bank manager. And that comes over in the way we talk to our prospects.

A variant of 'You' is the 'imperative mood', as in 'Do this. Get it now. Click here'. Again, you're speaking directly to the prospect.

FORCEPS

Concerned about bland advertising assertions that people can ignore, Michel Fortin created the FORCEPS principle. It represents seven types of proof:

- Factual proof
- Optical proof
- Relational proof
- Credential proof
- Evidential proof
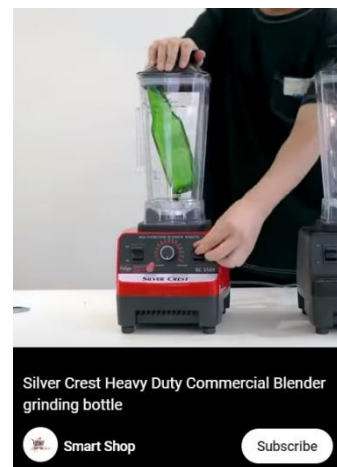- Perceptual proof
- Social proof.
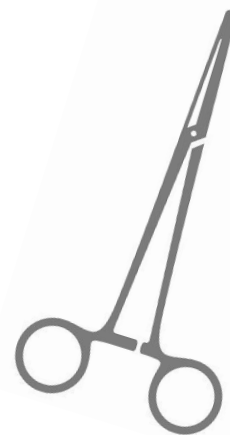
Factual Proof. Here we're talking numbers: statistics, size, results, dimensions, ingredients and measurements. Avoid rounded numbers because they lack stopping power. Note the numbers in the title of this book.

Optical Proof means Visuals. You can use 'before' and 'after' images. Compare competitors' products with yours. In online direct marketing platforms, such as eBay and Amazon, you need to prove that your product is better than the hundreds of look-alikes.

Relational proof is about comparing your product with others, possibly in words rather than the images mentioned above. Fortin likes Reverse comparisons, which is what happens if you don't buy. Don't get this book and write bad copy. Don't take the bus and you'll be stuck in traffic. Buy a cheaper axe and it'll get blunt faster. Maybe the letter R in Forceps should be Reverse Proof?

Credential Proof. Have your products been certified? If your client is a consultant, has she passed some exams? Has your product featured in the media? Do authorities recommend it?

Evidential Proof involves tests and trials. You validate your claims by putting your them to the test. This means tests that validate the product, process or results. To the right is a Silver Crest blender grinding a glass bottle, to demonstrate its ruggedness.

Silver Crest glass crushing test

Perceptual Proof, according to Fortin, means Stories. It's a softer form of proof than numbers, and it's one that people can relate to. In this category are anecdotes, analogies, examples, metaphors, and personal accounts.

Social proof is something we've talked a lot about. Other people opinions of your product speak much louder than your own.

THE RULE OF THREE

The Rule of Three (ROT) involves writing three points. It's elegant, engaging and efficient – just like the preceding clause. A ROT sentence ends with a satisfying clunk. Some examples are spread lightly across the text in this book.

The ROT can be just as simple as three words, or in its more complex form, as three clauses or three sentences. The choice is yours.

There is something satisfying about reading a ROT sentence. You feel you're in competent hands, someone who knows what they're doing. That makes the reader feel well disposed to what they're reading. It's like seeing a carpenter working in a practiced way.

The human brain is wired to see and hear harmony and patterns, and it will intuitively recognise a ROT sentence, even if its owner doesn't fully comprehend what's happened. It's like walking into a tastefully decorated house. You might not immediately recognise that the walls are painted in a color that matches the curtains, or that the cushions are in a complementary color. But the brain sees it as simply satisfying.

You don't want to overdo the Rule of Three, because it can become obvious. It looks as though you're trying too hard. Look at the neat example on the right.

Myers + Partners

PAIN POINTS

People buy a product to ease pain. You might lack something (such as having insufficient time). You could be trying to simplify your life (for example, outsourcing a business service). Or it could be a physical hunger (the need for food).

But the pain point isn't necessarily obvious. Take the outsourcing example. You may assume your prospect lacks expertise in that area. But maybe management wants to reduce its costs. Perhaps they want better reporting. Or it could be something else.

In one case, an institution wanted to remove an in-house welfare department whose staff were, in the opinion of management, siding with the employees, and granting them excessive time off and not holding them to account. Hence the reason for outsourcing the work, although they never publicly admitted that.

When you highlight your prospect's pain, they'll say 'That's the problem I have'. They feel you understand their problem and are on their side. It creates a bond between you and them.

THE DOUBLE PYRAMID

The double pyramid is a method used primarily by journalists to get your interest. And it can just as easily be applied to copywriting.

Assume you've got to write 2,000 words in a corporate newsletter about grain distribution. Pretty dull, huh? So, instead of wheeling out facts about transportation methods, you start with Emma who's driving a big rig across the Mid-West prairie with a load of wheat. That's your first pyramid.
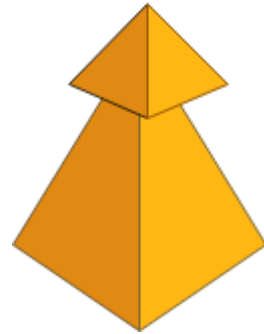
Then you pull back to talk about the real issue: transportation. You devote the main part of the article to it, before finally returning to Emma in her truck, bringing the reader back to a satisfactory end.

Check out any broadsheet newspaper, and you'll find they employ this trick all the time.

Side note: The other famous double pyramid is Lepsius XXV, a pair of adjacent monuments located on the south-eastern edge of the Abusir necropolis in Egypt, south of the Lepsius XXIV pyramid. The pair of monuments was built during the mid-Fifth Dynasty, during the reign of Nyuserre Ini, for two female members of the extended royal family. That's from Wikipedia, and needn't detain us here.

KISS

'Keep it Simple, Stupid' is a mantra that applies to almost every sphere of life, but especially to copywriting.

The consumer has a limited attention span, and is bombarded by marketing messages. Social media has served to increase the pressure on people's time and attention.
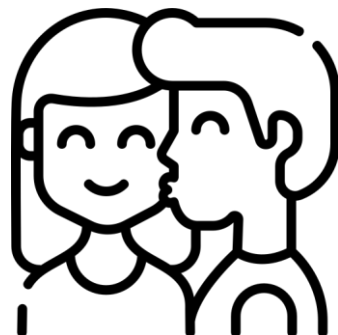
Simple headlines, crisp copy and a taut strap line help the prospect to understand what you're promoting.

That's not to rule out long-form copy. The more expensive the product, the more the consumer needs to know. And lack of detail is a common fault. That

might sound paradoxical. But as the prospect's interest grows, they need more information and evidence, especially for high ticket and B2B items.

WIIFM

What's In It for Me?

Hard to pronounce (whiff 'em), and not memorable, nevertheless WIIFM is really important.

It encourages you to check that your copy tells the reader why they'd buy the product.

When it comes to purchasing, people are interested in the benefit a product will bring them.

So, explain WIIFM, what's in it for me, not WYO (what you're offering).

There are many WIIFM possibilities. Your product could give the customer prestige, extra time, a saving in money, oral satisfaction (we're talking chocolate bars here), or relaxation on a sunny beach. For business-to-business products, it could be better internal communications, a happier workforce or less time spent solving IT problems.

DIFFERENTIATION

When working on a Mars chocolate product, I found they had a 'top-secret' advertising manual that said all its products had to have a USP (a unique selling proposition).

This led to clunky phrases such as 'M&Ms melt in your mouth, not in your hand' and 'A Mars a day helps you work, rest and play'.

Catchy though, you'd have to admit.

But while the idea of a USP is, yes, pretty essential, it can lead to horrible, dull phrases like the ones above. You can just feel the dead weight of Mars' senior management insisting the creatives build campaigns around such hogwash.
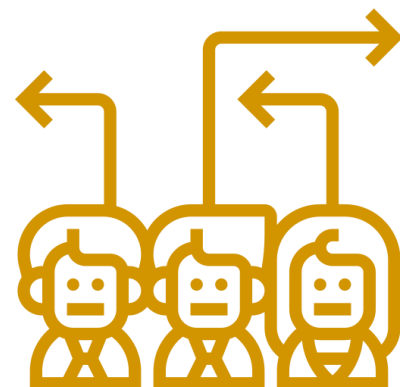
The trouble is, many industries have products that aren't very differentiated. Mid-scale hotel chains generally give you a clean room with clean towels, and a nice comfy bed. And that's it. That leads us to promote a feature that is common to all competitors but which we single out. This could include price, product features or functionality, design, service or customization.

In the early 20th century, a milk supplier said its bottles were 'washed in steam'. That was a sterilizing process used by all companies at the time, but one that no other brand had mentioned as a USP. The claim went viral.

THE REASON WHY

Copywriter Gary Bencivenga is keen on using The Reason Why. He calls it 'The Most Persuasive Tool in Advertising'. Here are his three 'Reasons Why' you should include:

1.   A reason why your product or service is better than other solutions
2.   A reason why your claim is true
3.   A reason why the reader should take action immediately

If you offer 20% off the price, state why you're doing that. Otherwise, the reader might assume the product is just unpopular, or old stock.

Personally, I like the word 'Because'. I keep it at the back of my mind when writing copy. It summarizes what you should be saying to the reader, in one form or another. Every time you make a claim or ask the reader to take action, you need to justify it.

L'Oréal struck gold when they came us with 'Because you're worth it'. Created way back in 1971 by Ilon Specht, a 23-year-old female copywriter at McCann's, it boosts the viewer's self-confidence, and gives them permission to buy the product. They don't need to justify the purchase to anyone. It gets past "Should I or shouldn't I?" And it tells the consumer to value themselves, which allows them to buy a more expensive product.

SECTION 4: CREATIVE STRATEGIES

In this section we discuss the common themes or vehicles we use to package our copy.

Several, such as Humor and Slice of life, work well for campaigns, especially videos and TV commercials, because they need a 'reveal', or punchline, which takes time to get to.

Others are simpler, such as endorsement ads, where someone merely lends their authority to a product or becomes a mouthpiece for the business.

Let's start with drama and impact, something no copy should lack.

DRAMA AND IMPACT

Dull advertising goes against the laws of nature but it's all too common, often put together by people who don't really understand how copywriting works. After reading this book, however, you'll never be accused of that.

All copy should have an impact. It doesn't mean shouting at the reader or using clashing colors. It just means we have to gain their attention. Otherwise, the message fails to achieve its goal.

One way to do that is to employ drama. We use dramatic effect to leave a lasting impression on the audience. Drama is a good way to deliver powerful messages and evoke emotional reactions.

Drama helps to capture and hold an audience's attention. Multiple soap operas have existed for decades because of their ability to continuously create drama between characters. Reality TV shows use the same approach. And dramatic ads can have the same effect.

Dramatization in ads appears in several formats, often depending on the effect you want to create. For instance, you can use drama and impact to highlight customer pain points (and how your brands solve them).

Drama through storytelling is another effective method. This often runs alongside sadvertising, humor and other emotion-driven copywriting approaches. Again, the power of dramatic storytelling is how it holds attention. In advertising, this is crucial. You must hold the viewer's eyes long enough to compel them to act or purchase.

You can use drama in any format, from TV and radio ads to written copy on landing pages or blog posts. Don't be afraid to get creative and be bold in your dramatic copy decisions!

HUMOR

Copy doesn't have to be hard sell or earnest. In fact, that can be off-putting. 'Oh no, not another earnest front man on the TV!" says the consumer. And that's why humor works well, especially in video and TV.
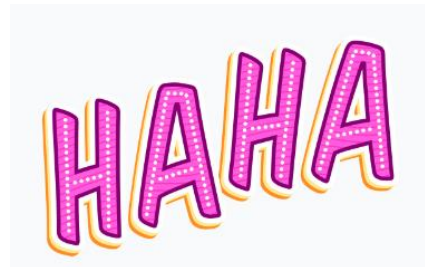
It appeals to light-hearted emotions (laughter, fun and silliness) to be more memorable and engaging. People love to laugh and share things they find entertaining, so your messages may reach more potential customers.

Humor generally involves a story, something that engages people, as we discuss later. They also like to watch and re-watch the denouement, because they know it's coming.

Things that make us chuckle have an immediate, lasting impact. And this is what you want in commercials and videos, as well as cheeky billboards. You want to create a memorable experience that fosters brand recall.

You could argue that humor advertising is the opposite of sadvertising (for which see later), but with a very similar result. Instead of triggering sad

emotions and tugging on their heartstrings, you're attempting to strike their funny bone.

Many famous brands use the humor emotion effectively in their copy and ads. Old Spice shows you the man you could smell like. Meanwhile, Snickers humorously displays the dangers of being 'hangry' in its "you're not you when you're hungry" ads. There are tons of examples of humorous marketing messages.

Some even use it to shape their entire brand persona. This means that all messaging and campaigns feature a heavy dose of humor and silliness. People tend to like your brand if you don't take yourself too seriously, which is just another reason to use humor in your copywriting tactics!

Elton John is 'hangry' util he gets a Snickers.

SLICE OF LIFE

Slice of Life involves incorporating your product into an everyday life scenario. This approach lets the audience imagine your brand as part of their daily routine. It can be used to show how your product works in a normal setting.

This ad strategy tries to showcase products in everyday situations. You want the audience to envision their daily routine improved thanks to your brand and products. You can also show how your offerings solve problems, giving the audience an insight into how it works.

Many ads and commercials incorporate the slice-of-life strategy, whether it's Mom reaching for a Kleenex tissue to conquer a stuffy nose, or a backyard barbeque saved by easy-lighting Kingsford Charcoal.

You can also include slice-of-life scenarios in your landing page and blog writing. These examples will demonstrate the uses and impacts of your prod-

ucts, even when the reader can't visually see them in action. Real-life examples help put your words into a familiar context for the audience.

Slice of Life is especially useful when presenting complex products or features. It allows you to show them in a normal setting that dispels notions that it's too complicated for the consumer to use properly. You want to persuade the audience that anyone can achieve your product's promised outcomes, regardless of experience or training. DIY and garden equipment companies sometimes use Slice of Life to show how easy it is to use their products, and how they save time and effort.

SURPRISE

You want to get the readers' attention? Surprise them! By producing a sensation of shock and amazement, you create memorable content.

An unexpected headline or commercial will catch the consumer by surprise, immediately engaging the audience and creating a memorable experience.

Not everyone likes to be surprised, but everyone remembers a jump in logic and reacts to it in some way. That's why including a surprising element in your copywriting is so effective. It achieves two of the critical goals of advertising and copywriting: engaging the audience and being memorable.

Any content you create should have *some* element of surprise on its side. After all, who expects to feel anything from a commercial, landing page or blog post? Whether it's sadvertising, triggering humor, delivering drama or a slice-of-life approach, you want to engage the user by being unexpected. That's the core principle of surprise messaging.

Biology is involved when you incorporate a surprise into your message. Research shows the brain lights up when taken by surprise. It's immediately engaged and ready to take action.

If you can effectively align your product or service alongside a surprise, you're sure to have the lasting effect copywriters dream of!

SADVERTISING

Sadvertising is an odd-looking but neat term that combines sadness and advertising. It covers those advertising strategies that create a sad or heart-felt emotional response from the audience.

These deep emotional responses to ads make messages memorable and powerful motivators. It means we can encourage the audience to act by pulling on their heartstrings.

All ad messages aim to stir up some kind of emotional response. Sadvertising specifically creates sad, melancholy or sorrowful emotions in its audiences. While these feelings are uncomfortable, they are also memorable for the same reason. And by sitting through them and emotionally participating, we achieve catharsis, a feeling of release. This makes such campaigns powerful motivators.

It's a particularly effective tool for charity campaigns. These sad ads can position the brand or product as the solution to an otherwise bleak situation.

One of the great examples of sadvertising is the SPCA's appeal for donations, featuring Sarah McLachlan's "Angel" playing over pictures of abused animals fading in and out on the screen. To this day, many people immediately connect the song to animal abuse and this commercial, making it a truly effective campaign.

EXAGGERATION

Exaggeration takes a claim and magnifies it. In the image below, the company claims its cooking oil recycling service is as fast as a Ferrari. It's tongue in cheek, and no one is expected to take it literally. But it catches the eye, and encourages the reader to check out the body copy.

It can go wrong. An ad agency, briefed to produces some ads for a type of flooring that had modest fire protection, produced a scamp (or sketch) that

showed a man in a hazmat suit firing a flamethrower at the flooring. It was rejected on the grounds that the flooring might be laid in unsuitable areas, and the client would be sued when the building burnt down.

Meyers+Partners

STORY TELLING

There's something magical about stories. Used in advertising, they remove the hard edge of selling with something softer, something that people can relate to.

A story can imbue even the most bland of services with warmth and personality.

The narrative arc often involves a challenge or a problem that isn't resolved until the end. So it engages us.

In the commercial below, Jane has her talent and spirit crushed by the grownup world of business. But, hurray, HP will rescue her.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZSkB03z4oU

© Kit Sadgrove. Pre-publication copy. Not for distribution

Storytelling requires sufficient time (whether a 30 second commercial or long form copy) to tell the story. That makes it harder to use where time and space are in short supply, such as social media. Nevertheless, you could offer a story in a headline ("What did Mike do when faced with [problem]?" and a link to the longer ad.

CELEBRITY AND INFLUENCER ADS

Utilizing celebrities in ads is an ancient strategy that has stood the test of time, and for good reason. People love their favorite celebs and will trust and follow anything they do or say. As silly as it sounds, some people will buy a product just because a celebrity tells them to.

Shaquille O'Neil has endorsed everything from insurance to athlete's foot spray. Actor Matt Damon recently did a TV advertisement for Crypto.com, reminding the audience that "fortunate favors the bold." The list goes on and on.

Unfortunately, celebrity advertising isn't a strategy everyone can take advantage of because receiving these endorsements carries a costly price. After all, they are some of the world's most in-demand individuals.

That said, *influencer* advertising has closed this price gap considerably. This strategy carries the same value and works in a similar fashion. The difference

is that influencers aren't always a mainstream commodity. Yet, they may have considerable online followings worth tapping into to drive more conversions.

Asking lesser-known influencers to endorse your products carries a smaller price. And it can be an effective strategy if you can find influencers whose audience aligns with yours.

Here's an example from Outdoorgearviews, an Instagram user with close to 15,000 followers.

This review of a Teton Sports product line allows this company to get itself in front of the OutdoorGearReviews' following.

With so many niche influencers online, you should have no problem finding an influencer or two to match your products or services.

COMPARATIVE COPY

As the same suggests, comparative ads make comparisons between multiple items. It's useful for helping consumers in the research and consideration phases. These individuals are likely evaluating different options in pursuit of making a purchase.

In comparative advertising, the objective is to pit your product or service against your top competitors. Your copy persuades the individual that your brand is the better option. You've likely seen many examples of this, like showing how one brand of paper towels absorbs more mess than a competing brand.

Here's another example of comparative advertising, from Amazon.
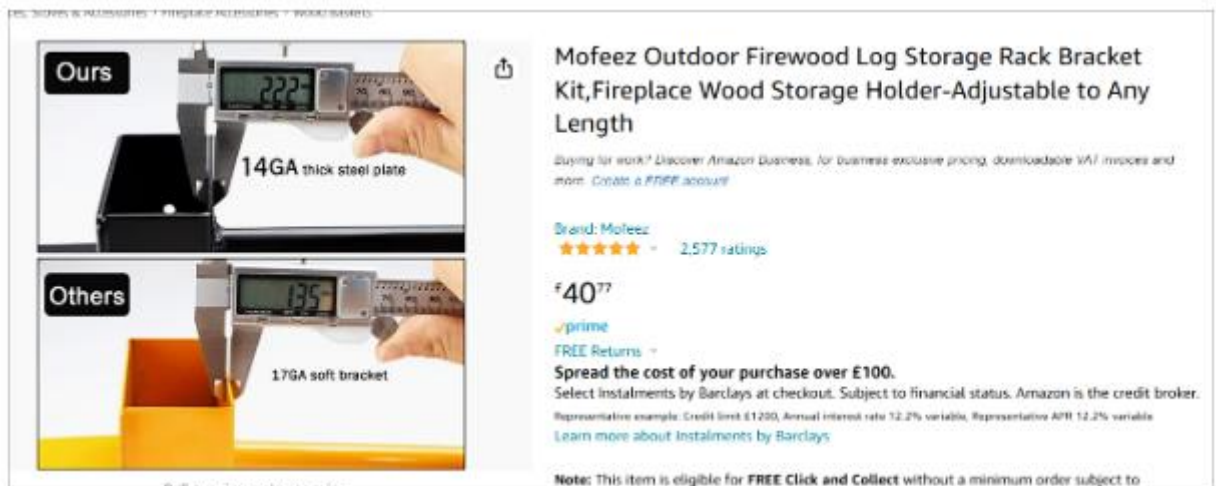
Here the company is making a direct comparison between the sturdy materials it uses versus the weaker metal used in other brands.

Miller Lite makes a more direct comparison, telling prospective customers that its beer contains less calories and half the carbs of Bud Light, an immediate competitor.

There are many ways to implement comparative messaging in your copy. The best approach is to think about how your product best differs from what's available or known in the market. If you offer a low-price option, highlight this benefit in your comparative ads. Alternatively, you may want to showcase your features that other products neglect.

Comparative advertising works well for new brands that don't have the same reputation as their competitors. You can use this strategy to position yourself as the newest and better option against established products. It can also help you "steal" loyal customers from competitors.

FEAR

Earlier we saw a reference to fear in the FIGS framework.

Appealing to any emotion in advertising is a winning strategy. Fear is arguably one of the best motivators. There are a few ways to trigger a fear response from the audience. The most common is to alert them of a danger that they may not be aware of.

For example, any toothpaste brand will likely mention the hazards of cavities, gingivitis, plaque, etc. Or, they may tell you about how bad breath can send your friends and coworkers running for the hills — an embarrassing event no one wants to experience.

Once the audience realizes this fear, the next step is easy; you present your product or service as a way to protect against the issue. The toothpaste company makes you afraid of having bad breath, thereby compelling you to race to the store and buy their odor-conquering product.

Another powerful fear motivator is FOMO, or the fear of missing out. In this case, the danger isn't necessarily something hazardous or embarrassing, like cavities and bad breath. Instead, you're convincing the audience that there is something incredible that they'll miss out on if they don't act quickly.

FOMO is a powerful and popular tool when selling limited edition products that are only available for a short period. If the consumer doesn't hit their local store quickly and buy the item, they'll miss the opportunity.

It's also a compelling motivator when selling an experience or vacation destination. You're selling an experience that not everyone will get to enjoy. The viewer won't want to miss their opportunity to share in that event.

SECTION 5: AIDA DERIVATIVES

I've included these additional versions of AIDA because they're reasonably well-known; and if I'd omitted them it might look like an oversight. So this section is just for the nerds, of which I'm happy to be called a member.

APPROACH

You want your copywriting to persuade the audience and encourage them to perform an action valuable to your business and its goals. The APPROACH acronym outlines a detailed formula for achieving compelling and effective copy. It stands for:

● Arrive
● Propose
● Persuade
● Reassure
● Orchestrate
● Ask

Arrive: This is your introduction — the point where you set the stage and present the problem facing the audience.

Propose: With the problem stated, you now want to introduce your solution.

Persuade: Next, you have to present compelling arguments to persuade the audience to *believe* your solution is the best answer.

Reassure: Persuasive arguments alone aren't enough. You need to back those points with credible facts and evidence. This builds trust with the audience and eliminates any apprehensions.

Orchestrate: At this stage, the audience is effectively persuaded and reassured, but they may still walk away. This step is where you bring it all together and demonstrate how easy it is for the viewer to take the next action.

Ask: This phase is your call to action. It is where you directly tell the reader what to do next and request that they act.

6 + 1

The 6 + 1 formula looks at six primary elements that closely relate to the typical AIDA guidelines. The added '1' is to represent that you should establish credibility throughout the message.

The design of the 6 + 1 approach is to make your brands and products appear more trustworthy. By making credibility a common theme throughout, you don't give the audience the opportunity to build any distrust or apprehension.

The six other steps are:

- **Context:** Make it clear what the purpose of the message is. Who are you and why is the audience seeing this copy?
- **Attention:** Create a hook or initial claim that encourages the viewer to continue reading the copy.
- **Desire:** Make the reader want to convert. Demonstrate why they shouldn't live without this product, experience, service, etc.
- **Gap:** Showcase what happens if the individual *doesn't* act.
- **Solution:** Offer a solution to the audience's problem(s), backing up your claims with credible evidence.
- **Call to action:** This one is self-explanatory. Make a clear call to action that the audience should follow.

AICPBSAWN

This is the longest copywriting formula you'll find, making it the most thorough and comprehensive. It may not be as easy to remember as simpler acronyms, but it does the best job at encapsulating *everything* your copywriting messages should achieve.

Attention: Make a bold claim, ask a question or make an intriguing hook for your headline that draws the viewer in.

Interest: Build on the initial attention hook with added value to keep the viewer interested and reading further.

Credibility: Demonstrate your expertise and reputation, giving the reader a reason to believe you.

Prove: Provide evidence that further establishes trust, making the audience believe your specific claims.

Benefits: Inform the audience about the direct benefits your product or solution provides.

Scarcity: You can motivate action by suggesting that the offer or product is limited in some way.

Action: Make it clearly known what the audience needs to do to act, whether it's purchase, subscribe, leave an email address, etc.

Warn: Further encourage action by suggesting what will happen if the audience *doesn't* take the next step.

Now: Including "now" in your copywriting creates a sense of urgency. It compels the user to act immediately, rather than later.

AIDPPC

Attention, interest, description, persuasion, proof and close are the six parts of the AIDPPC formula. This alternative to the AIDA approach lays out a step-by-step guide to present an offer, eliminate objections and, ultimately, make a sale.

Attention: Like many AIDA alternatives, 'attention' is the first item. You need to hook the viewer.

Interest: Next, your goal is to build on your attention-grabbing hook, generating curiosity that keeps the audience reading.

Description: You've got the audience intrigued; it's time to describe what you bring to the table.

Persuasion: Describing your offerings is not enough. You need to make persuasive cases for why the reader should convert.

Proof: Many people won't believe your claims without some evidence or proof.

Close: The final piece of the puzzle is to end with a call to action. It should be clear what the viewer needs to do next to proceed and capitalize on your offer.

AAPPA

The AAPPA framework mirrors the AIDA formula closely. The critical difference is that this derivative puts extra emphasis on establishing proof.

AAPPA is for:

- Attention
- Advantage
- Proof
- Persuasion
- Action

The start of this approach is the same. You want to grab the person's **attention** through a compelling hook and interesting follow-up copy.

Next, you need to state your unique selling proposition. What is the **advantage** of your product or service versus others?

How does the audience know that you're truthful in stating your advantages. This is why providing **proof** is so vital. It ensures that the audience believes your claims.

This trust also makes the audience more receptive to persuasive attempts. If your **persuasion** is successful, you can move the lead towards action by including a CTA.

Some people consider the Proof and Persuasion steps as one. After all, establishing your proof is an act of persuasion. That said, you may want to make additional points to compel the viewer to act that don't relate to establishing proof.

The Motivating Sequence comes from copywriter Robert Bly. There are no fancy acronyms here and, truth be told, it's a bit similar to AIDA. But it has some twists or improvements, so it's worth a look.

The Sequence has four stages:

1. Get your reader's attention
2. Identify a problem or need
3. Position your answer
4. Prove your answer
5. Ask the reader to take action.

Yup, that's pretty recognizable. But let's look at in in more detail.

1. **Get the reader's attention**. In his book The Copywriter's Handbook, Bly emphasizes the need for a strong headline. It needs to be the most powerful thing you can say about your product that will move the reader.

2. **Identify the need**: Having gained the reader's attention, you have to explain why the reader needs your product. At this point, we're moving from the product to the consumer. We're changing our reference from Me to You. Let's say you're selling breakfast cereal. So you remind the viewer they need a hearty start to their day.

3. **Satisfy the need**. Now we have to explain why and how the product or service satisfies the need that we identified in #2. Maybe your cereal is packed full of oats that will keep you going longer?

4. **Prove your answer**. Now we need to back up the assertion with proof. It could be more benefits, testimonials, or comparisons with other brands.

5. **Ask for action.** At this point you're asking them to click a button, visit a store or ring a phone number.

ACCA

Awareness > Comprehension > Conviction > Action

Awareness: Present the situation or problem.

Comprehension: Help your readers understand the problem.

Conviction: Help the reader develop a growing conviction that your solution in the best one.

Action: Make them take action.

ACCA works on the same principle as AIDA, but it suits long form copy, where you have enough space to let the reader engage with your copy. It works for more important, higher ticket products or ones that are technological.

With ACCA you're unfolding the information, one thing after another. You're building a massive, incontrovertible pile of evidence. It works well where people need reassurance that they're making the right purchasing decision.

SECTION 6. YOUR NEXT STEPS

1. Write a quick review. If this book helped you, please review it on Amazon, so other people can find it and benefit from it.

2. **Consider registering on the world's best copywriting course** here: inst.org/copy. You'll get one-to-one tuition from your tutor, who will be a working copywriter, and a set of marked assignments that help you get to grips with the real world of copywriting. And lots more besides.

3. **Write to me at support@inst.org**. Tell me about your copywriting journey. I read every email I get.