

FREELANCER'S BUSINESS BULLETIN

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Dear Subscriber,

Welcome to the July 2004 issue of Chris Marlow's Freelancer's Business Bulletin. This is my vacation month so I'm reprinting an article I wrote for a business journal on the power of headlines.

Successful copywriters know that strong headlines and a good offer have everything to do with a winning mailing for a client. Apply those same rules to the copywriting for your own mail and Web marketing materials and I guarantee you'll see a huge difference in your success in gaining clients.

(One of my star students recently received 10 replies from his first mailing to about 230 niche companies...an almost unheard of response rate! And why? Largely because of the irresistible title of his free report!)

Here's the article that will help you write stronger marketing materials for your own prospecting:

Headline Secrets That Can DOUBLE Your Response

Over the years, marketers have tested what works and what doesn't in print ads and direct mail. And tests have proven many times that the headline is responsible for at least 50% and as much as 75% of an ad's success.

So what guidelines can you use in creating your next letter headline or ad? Here are some powerful ways to create an ad that gets noticed:

1. Appeal to self-interest. Providing a benefit is the most powerful technique you can use in a headline. That was the conclusion of early marketing pioneer Claude Hopkins, who would

test nearly 2,000 headlines for just one product during his time at Foote, Core and Belding's forerunner, Lord and Thomas.

Benefit-oriented headlines also tend to "select" the audience - that is, by its very nature, an IT manager would be attracted to a headline that promised, "Job tickets never stack up with new SuperHelpDesk."

2. Appeal to news. People are always interested in "the news" and "what's new." In business, "new" could mean a competitive advantage or perhaps something that can solve a problem.

According to research, the "news" headline is second only to the "self-interest" headline in pulling power. Headlines that are news-oriented often use the words, "new," "now," "finally," and the ever popular, "announcing." However, there are other ways of implying "new," as illustrated by this fictitious headline: "Hungry Market Snaps Up Latest Jaguar Model."

3. Appeal to curiosity. Humans are innately curious, so headlines that appeal to curiosity can be very strong. However, they're not usually as strong as headlines that contain a benefit or that imply news. The best way to use curiosity is to combine it with an appeal to self-interest, or newsworthiness.

Compare, for instance, the headline that provokes curiosity, "Here's one question you should never ask your CEO," with one that stimulates curiosity and offers a benefit: "Here's one question you should never ask your CEO before you get your raise." See the difference?

While self-interest, news, and curiosity lead the pack for powerful headlines, there are other strong approaches, such as:

- Question-based headlines. These are more powerful than statement-based headlines, but be sure not to ask a question that could elicit a "no" response.
- Problem-based headlines. These are more powerful than solution-based headlines. Why? Because problem-based headlines tap into the reader's pain. For instance, note the difference between "Having ROI Troubles?" (problem-based), and "Get a Better Bottom Line" (solution-based).

- If your product or service makes something "faster," or "easier," or both, try to convey these powerful benefits in the headline. Tests prove that readers respond well to "fast and easy."

And what about headline length?

There are always those who say a shorter headline is better. And it may look better on the page. But that doesn't make it pull better. Tests continually prove that a good headline can be short, or long, or even very long...20 or 26 words. The best headline is the headline that attracts readers' attention, and pulls them into the copy.

According to the direct marketing industry bible, Scientific Advertising, it's not uncommon for a change in headlines to multiply returns from five to ten times over. That's 500% to 1000%!

So why does the headline for this article say a good headline can double response?

Because there's another time-tested rule of headline writing and that's "make it believable." You can always modify your message in the body copy to match the facts. But if your facts are hard to believe and you use them in your headline, tests prove you're flirting with disaster.

Other Important Stuff:

- Send this newsletter to your freelance friends! The Freelancer's Business Bulletin was conceived for copywriters, but contains the same information any business freelancer can use to build their business.

- Got a burning question about some aspect of building your freelance business? Send it to chris@chrismarlow.com and it may become a newsletter topic!

- Did a friend send you this newsletter? Get your own subscription at <http://www.TheCopywritersCoach.com> where you'll also get the valuable complimentary Report, "The Secret to Successful Projects Every Time - Guaranteed!"

To your freelance prosperity,

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Veteran freelancer and award-winning copywriter, Chris Marlow has written for the nation's leading businesses for 20 years. She also offers business coaching and master-level copywriting to new and aspiring copywriters and other business freelancers who want to accelerate their success. Check out the benefits of coaching at <http://www.TheCopywritersCoach.com>

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