

TheCopywritersCoach.com

Headline Secrets That Can DOUBLE Your Response

By veteran copywriter and
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If you want to “ramp up response” from your ad, consider revising the headline. Many business owners don't realize how critical the headline is to an ad's success.

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 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 & Belding's forerunner, Lord & 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. **An 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’s 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.

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