

## 5 Smart Reasons To Hire An Expert to Train Your Copywriting Staff

By veteran copywriter and copywriter's coach, Chris Marlow

Companies routinely invest in their sales staff, sending them through powerful sales-oriented courses such as Dale Carnegie...but what do they do for their copywriters?

Because they're desk-bound, copywriters often get short shrift when it comes to company-sponsored education and training. And even when they do get to attend the occasional industry conference, they're limited to what's "on the menu." A copywriter who's been at it for five years isn't going to get much out of a "Copywriting 101" breakout session.

It takes continued experience, education, and effort to achieve a level of copywriting skill that ramps up ROI. Some smart marketers are now hiring veteran freelance copywriters to teach their staff industry-specific copywriting, strategy, offer development, format, and more, at a masters level...where "copywriter ROI" can most quickly be realized.

Here are a few reasons you should consider expert-level training for your copywriters:

**Reason #1. Expanded Point-of-View.** Staff copywriters experience everything from one vantage point (the company's point of view), while freelancers are working with many companies, and have a wider frame of reference. Because of his isolation, the staff copywriter will often gravitate toward "safe but sure" formats and offers based on "what's worked for us in the past."

An experienced teacher can share a broader, more accurate point of view that not only educates, but that builds the copywriter's confidence in what's possible, supporting a higher level of knowledge and creativity. The copywriter learns what else has worked, and what else is working now, in his or her particular field, via the teacher, or "coach." The "insider info" that an experienced "in the trenches" copywriter can share is a powerful catalyst to growth and learning in the dedicated staff copywriter.

**Reason #2: Stronger Ideas.** For some campaigns, coming up with big ideas or "concepts" is key to the success of the promotion. Yet for all its importance, there are few, if any, mainstream resources on "how to concept." Because of this, many copywriters are insecure about their ability to concept (come up with a "big

idea", and consider this the most stressful part of their job.

The huge chasm between junior-level and master-level concepting has less to do with creativity than it does with experience. Experienced copywriters who are successful at creating strong, hard-hitting concepts see "creativity" as only part of the process, and look other places than their own head for clues to successful ideas. Student copywriters can learn a great deal about creating winning concepts from those who have moved past the position of "how creative is my concept" to "how powerful is my concept."

**Reason #3: Smarter ROI.** Children rarely appreciate the value of a dollar until they pay their first rent check. In much the same way, the staff copywriter can be shielded from the realities of cost. But freelance copywriters often compete on metrics. If one freelance copywriter writes a beautiful package that does well, but another writes a package that isn't as "pretty" but costs less, and it also does well, then the "winning" copywriter is the one who brings in the better ROI.

Expert copywriters know where to spend money and where to save. They know what techniques are likely to bring a better response, how to spec a package for lowest production costs, and what tests are sensible. The master-level copywriter will seek out every possible way to increase response and decrease costs...even if it means interviewing prospects for feedback on camera-ready comps. Coaching a staff copywriter on copywriting metrics is practically unheard of but long overdue, and can yield obvious ROI in terms of savings.

**Reason #4: Better Copywriting Skills.** As with any staff position, getting the work done is priority, and becoming better at copywriting is generally not on the corporate syllabus. Yet the singular act of creating a more powerful headline can increase response as much as 1,000%! Tests and studies conducted since the advent of direct marketing have proven that headlines alone can make or break an ad or campaign.

The fact that no one is born a copywriter proves that becoming masterful at the art of headline writing is a matter of instruction, study, and practice. A staff copywriter can benefit immensely from instruction from a master who is willing to share her tools, techniques, resources, and semi-scientific methods for crafting the most powerful headlines, teasers, fascinations, subheads, titles, call-outs, quotes, and other key copy conventions. The creative manager who understands the potential of great copy will understand how training in this area will contribute to corporate ROI.

**Reason #5: "Copy Chiefing."** If the company and the staff copywriter agree, the copywriter's coach can review an entire mail package or other promotion, before it launches. In the world of freelancing (and in many ad agencies) this is called "copy chiefing."

In the upper echelons of high-stakes copywriting, where copywriters are paid more like sales reps, on a percentage basis, it's common for the key writer to hire as many as five copy chiefs to go over his or her work. At this level, ego must be

checked at the door because it can affect response, and therefore, the copywriter's income. Here, even the pros recognize that two, three, or even five heads are better than one. Having a seasoned copywriter pro who is an expert in your industry look over an apprentice's work offers the dual advantage of teaching the student, while improving the product's chance for success, at a very affordable rate.

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