8 Tips for Copy That Drives Leads

Most companies in one survey undervalued content as a lead-generating tool. Here's how to make the most of your content.

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You've created a product or service and now want to get it to the masses as quickly as possible. But which marketing channels should you invest in?

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Online marketing expert Neil Patel came up with some possible answers by studying 208 companies' marketing efforts; he found that nearly 60 percent of those companies' marketing budgets, on average, went into Google Adwords campaigns.

Meanwhile, almost 20 percent of those budgets went to Facebook Ads. "Content marketing" came in at less than 10 percent. Although Google Adwords and Facebook Ads had the highest conversion rates by far, content marketing had *over a 600 percent return* on marketing spend. The ads both came in at less than 350 percent each.

The obvious lesson here is that ads are effective but that you'll spend far less for higher returns through content marketing. And *this finding* makes mastering copywriting a necessity. So, the next question to ask yourself is, *How do I write effective copy?* Here are some answers:

1. Master the F-shaped pattern.

Many would assume that people read an article from left to right, and from the top to the bottom. However, back in 2006, Nielson Norman Group discovered the "F-shaped" reading pattern. This refers to how people scan content online and on mobile. More recently, the researchers decided to revisit this study to see how it had changed.

While the F-shaped pattern still exists, it's not the only way people scan content. First, it's important to understand this common reading pattern: Readers scan a line near the top of the content before jumping farther down the page to scan another line. Finally, they scan the content vertically on the left side, typically glancing at subheads. This gives you that "F" shape.

Since there are other scanning patterns, such as the spotted and marking patterns, it's important to format your text to accommodate a wide variety of readers. Some suggestions from Nielson Norman Group include:

- Use clear headings and subheadings.
- Put your most important words first, both in your intro paragraphs and the first few words of headings and subheadings.
- Boldface important points or words.
- Make small sections more visually appealing with borders, colors or images.
- Use lists and bullet points.

2. Skip the fluff and stick to facts.

Blowing your own horn is fun, but that's not what your customers care about. They don't have the time or patience for fluff. They want to know the facts, and they want to know them

now.

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So, list the facts and why they matter. How does your business help the consumer? What makes your product better than the competition's? Don't just talk about your opinion. And try to educate in an engaging way. If you keep your content short, sweet and easily digestible for busy consumers, you do better than you would trying to fill out a word count.

3. Keep your readers awake.

According to Nielsen data, Americans spend an average three hours and 48 minutes every day consuming content on their phones, tablets and computers. This means we're all eager to interact with content, but we want something interesting and engaging. If your copywriting is a snooze-fest, people are not going to make it past your intro.

Your job is to not only inform and educate but to keep readers awake! Not sure if those people are using your copy as a sleeping aid? Check your website and marketing data. Look for things like:

- High bounce rates
- High "unsubscribe" and "unfollow" rates
- Few interactions
- Little-to-no social sharing
- Traffic drops or no growth at all

Keep your readers engaged and awake by:

- Keeping articles short and to the point
- Making them scannable
- Interjecting personality
- Telling a story
- Adding visuals

4. Write and rewrite those headlines.

Your headline is the single most important part of your copy. If it doesn't grab the reader, he or she will never make it to your actual copy. Think about it as you would a product name. "Snuggie" sounds nice, "Blanket Wrap With Sleeves" not nearly so much.

CrazyEgg has a whole list of headline templates that you can use to get ideas flowing. And Foundr says that a good headline will:

- Tease without saying everything
- Fit your brand's tone
- Be SEO-friendly
- Skip spammy clickbait words
- Be descriptive.

5. Make it personal.

Storytelling is a brand's secret weapon if used correctly. Copywriting isn't an opportunity to write your dream novel. However, making the copy more personal can be more engaging. For example, Proclamation Jewelry tripled sales by writing copy that let its products be the sidekick to their hero customer.

Get creative. Tell your own story that relates to your product or service. Just go beyond the normal, "please buy my product because it's great" speech.

6. Figure out what's going wrong.

Maybe you're doing everything you can, but your copywriting just isn't helping your business. Don't give up! Instead, have a "conversion" copywriter take a second look. These

professionals don’t just write copy, they work alongside your marketing team to audit your current messaging, to figure out why it’s not working. For instance, Alli Blum offers to send you “marching orders” for how to fix your email copywriting if you hand her 10 of your marketing emails.

7. Write simply, yet purposely.

Before you write a single word, have a purpose. Your purpose isn’t just to sell. You need to make consumers feel as passionate about our product or service as you do. You only have a limited number of words to tell your story. Make them count.

Write simply and avoid jargon. Your purpose is to build a relationship with readers, educate them and make them see your product in the same light that you do. So keep your copy simple, short and engaging, and you’ll have done your job.

8. Research, plan and organize.

This part might sound boring, but it’s critical to better copywriting: Research your copy to add relevant details, such as tie-ins to current events, statistics and case studies. Plan out what you want to include, how long the copy should be and what strategy to use, such as storytelling or a fact list.

Related: 3 All-Too-Familiar Writing Patterns You Need to Eliminate From Your Marketing Copy Today

Finally, organize everything. Set up your headline and subheads. List the one or two most important points for each section. Then, build upon it. Great copy takes time, but quality content can continue driving leads for years to come.

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