

Shape Up Your Sales Letter

Avoid these mistakes and keep your sales letter out of the trash



By Sonya Carmichael Jones

Too many sales letters end up being thrown out because they lack significant elements that establish your readers' trust and interest. Avoid these common mistakes.

Failing the "why bother" Test

If your headline doesn't include a compelling and specific benefit, chances are your reader is going to assume the rest of your letter doesn't offer much either. This headline "Tired of Bad Hair Days? Walk-in to Mona's salon and Walk-out with a look you'll love." states both a benefit and compelling offer.

No Sense of Urgency

What happens if your customer prospect doesn't respond quickly? Nothing is what they'll assume if you don't give them a clear reason why they should respond and tell them when they should respond by. If your close-out sale ends next Monday—say it in your sales letter. If your fees go up in April, tell customers how much they'll save by hiring you now.

Being Impersonal

Remember direct marketing is all about personalization. A salutation that begins with "Dear home owner" sends the message that you don't know who you're talking to.

A formal tone that screams corporate boardroom is also a no, no. Think of your reader as a friend you'd invite into your home and write as if you were telling him about an exciting event that recently happened in your life.

Too Much Information

Resist the temptation to tell all in one sales letter.

Too much information all at once can be hard to digest and can cause your reader to become distracted.

Strive to communicate a main idea and focus on linking it to sub-points that enhance clarity. This will make your sales letter much easier to follow and keep the reader's interest growing from beginning to end.

Failure to Make an Emotional Connection

Ever listen to National Public Radio fund drives? They always make you want to fork over your last dime, even if you only listen once in a blue moon. When you know your customer, you know their hot buttons and understand why they value what they do. For instance, if you're an accountant trying to convince small business owners to let you prepare their tax returns, appeal to their special interest by explaining what they stand to lose if they walk into an IRS audit unprepared.

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Crowded Copy

Even a well-written sales letter won't see the light of day if the reader rejects it because it looks long and boring. Create the impression of an interesting letter by breaking up text with call outs, bullets, ellipses, and meaningful graphics.

It also helps to keep paragraphs fewer than six sentences.

Not Sharing Anything New

Wasting your readers' time and energy is the fastest way to lose credibility. Establish trust early on by sharing new information.

Even if the information can be found easily elsewhere sometimes it's helpful just to give readers a new perspective. Another way to build reader rapport is to sprinkle your sales letter with content that educates, entertains or even uplifts their spirit.

Sonya Carmichael Jones, direct response copywriter and direct marketer wants to help you propel your company profits.

Read the "The Art of Smart Marketing: What small business owners must know to get customers and sell products" for tips on differentiating your products, targeting customers, and successful networking

www.marketingbuddha.com/Ebook.html