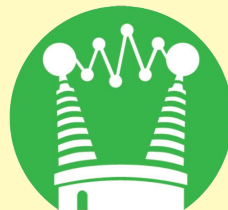




21 Quick and Easy CRO Copywriting Hacks to Skyrocket Conversions

By Sean Kirby

Compliments of



**CONVERSION
SCIENCES**

Writing copy that converts visitors into prospects and prospects into customers takes years to learn and decades to master. If you're selling a product or service, you probably don't have that long to wait.

That's why I put together this list of time tested copywriting hacks. Most take just a few minutes. And you can use them right now to improve your conversion rate today.

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How to Test Your Copy

The tips in this book will improve your copy. By "improve" we mean increase leads and sales from your readers.

Some of these choices may be controversial in your organization. Some may seem counter-intuitive.

There are simple and inexpensive ways to measure the *business impact* of changes to the copy, layout, and images you use in ads, websites and landing pages.

Why add a little science to your marketing?

- Manage "helicopter" executives
- Keep creative agencies honest
- Steal only the best ideas from other sites
- Make yourself more valuable as a digital marketer
- Add creative ideas back into your mix

I invite you to join our growing tribe of marketer-scientists who put data behind their decisions and budgets. You don't have to be a data scientist to be a great digital marketer, but you can't ignore data.

It starts with our online training: [Everyday Behavioral Science for Marketers](#).

Visit www.ConversionLive.com and watch the video that introduces you to the course.

Use the code CROCOPY to get \$100 off of your tuition.



Brian Massey teaches [Everyday Behavioral Science for Marketers](#).

IMAGINE YOU ARE WRITING TO ONE SPECIFIC PERSON

In most cases, you want your copy to sound conversational. It's more engaging. It's easier for people to understand. And it feels less like a sales pitch.

That's why a lot of copywriting gurus tell you to write like you talk. But this advice is flawed.

For one thing, it doesn't provide enough context. You likely speak differently when talking to groups of people versus a single person. And you probably talk differently to friends than you do to colleagues.

For another, it makes the writing all about you. Remember, prospects don't care about you. They care about themselves. You want to write like *they* talk, not you. What if they don't use the same jargon or sayings as you? What if how you normally speak is a turn off to them?

This technique is a better way to ensure you are writing in a conversational tone that prospects are more likely to respond to favorably:

Imagine your ideal prospect sitting in front of you. Picture a specific person, not just a general audience description. If you have a buyer persona, use that. If not, then just use your imagination based on what you know about the ideal buyer.

Now write directly to this person. Focus your message on the things he or she cares about most. Use the words and phrases that person uses.

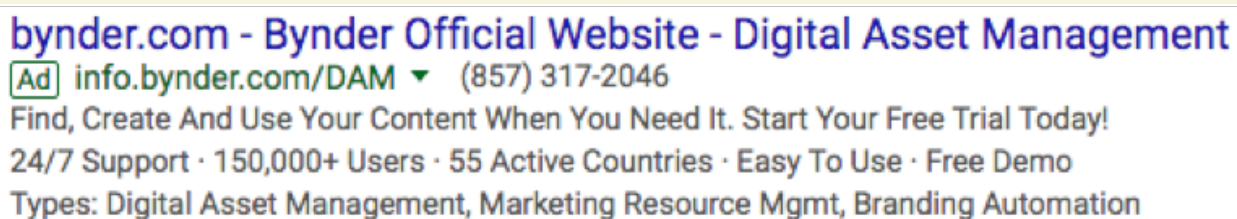
You'll find that you're left with a stronger first draft than you may be used to.

“Envision your ideal prospect sitting in front of you.”

REPEAT YOURSELF

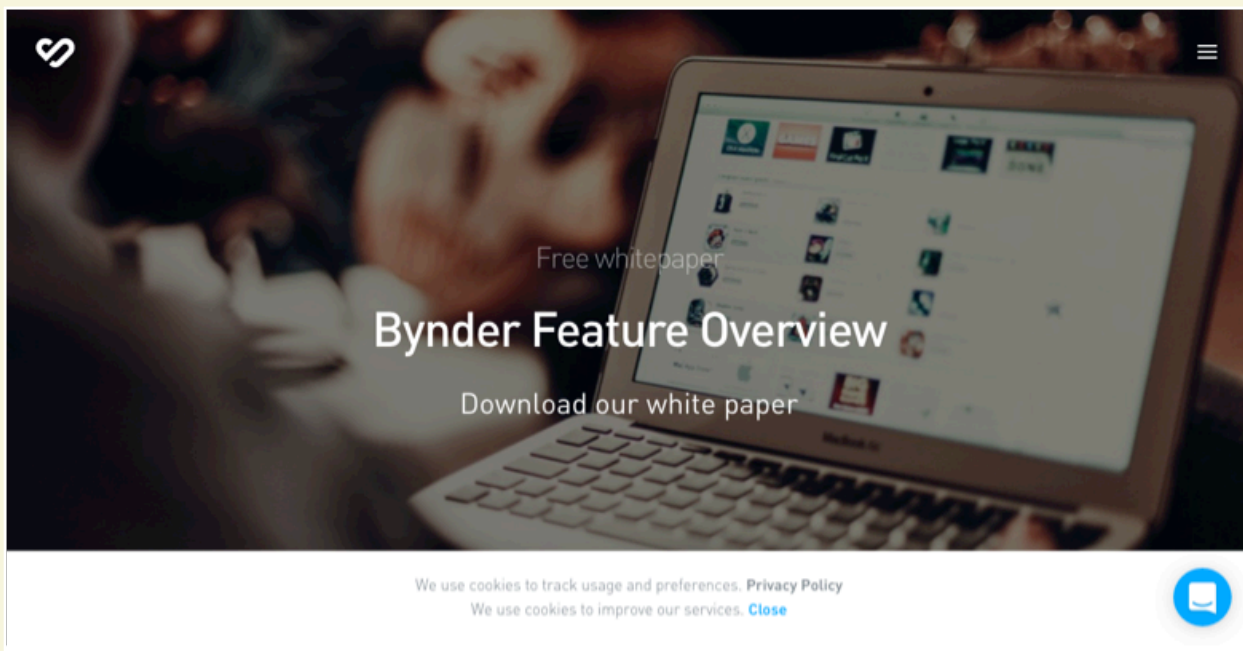
Conversions are rarely impulse decisions. Instead, the visitor moves down a path toward that desired action. Inconsistency knocks potential prospects off that path.

Imagine you see this ad.



bynder.com - Bynder Official Website - Digital Asset Management
Ad info.bynder.com/DAM (857) 317-2046
Find, Create And Use Your Content When You Need It. Start Your Free Trial Today!
24/7 Support · 150,000+ Users · 55 Active Countries · Easy To Use · Free Demo
Types: Digital Asset Management, Marketing Resource Mgmt, Branding Automation

It piques your interest, so you click through and see this:



Free whitepaper
Bynder Feature Overview
Download our white paper

We use cookies to track usage and preferences. [Privacy Policy](#)
We use cookies to improve our services. [Close](#)

Huh? You'd probably wonder if you went to the right page. There's nothing about a white paper in the ad. And there is nothing about finding, creating and using content on the landing page.

What if they had simply repeated the copy from the ad? You'd continue reading, or at least scanning the rest of the page, wouldn't you?

But repetition does more than just provide consistency across components.

Studies show that people believe information more when it's repeated.¹

You don't have to rewrite copy word for word, but try to restate your most important message (such as your value proposition) multiple times. You can usually work it into the headline, body copy and call-to-action.

¹http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/v33/v33_10345.pdf and http://www.psych.utoronto.ca/users/hasherlab/abstracts/hasher_etal_JVLVB_77.htm

“People believe information more when it's repeated.”

REPEAT YOUR CUSTOMERS/PROSPECTS

You may have heard that you should write like your customers speak. It builds rapport and credibility. Readers are more likely to think to themselves, “This company gets me and my issue.”

But rather than just guess what your target audience would say, use their actual words.

That’s what Sarah Peterson did when promoting her Etsy course.

The highlighted phrase stood out among responses to a survey she sent to prospects.

how do i even start? there are so many shops similar to mine - how do i make mine stand out?

10/29/2015 3:44 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

How can I ensure that the copyrights on photos that I take and sell on Etsy are protected? How do I determine how to differentiate my product from the hundreds of other people selling on Etsy?

10/29/2015 3:35 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

1. How to attract customers

10/29/2015 3:05 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

1. Is it possible to have a successful etsy business if you are 'allergic' to social media? 2. How to deal with issues of (a) expensive postage of products from Australia (etc) to customers and (b) dealing with sales tax for us folk living overseas if we used someone in USA to stock and send our items. (I know you're not tax agents :) But apparently this is a little known issue that seriously affect people overseas selling via Amazon etc)

10/29/2015 3:00 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

She used that exact phrase to resonate with prospects in her sales email.

I wanted to send you a quick email to let you know that the **window is closing on my brand new comprehensive training program, the [Etsy Selling Success Blueprint](#)**, where I paired up with Maria, a full-time vintage goods Etsy seller to **teach you how to earn \$1000/month on Etsy.**

We'll teach you everything from:

- How to make your product stand out among thousands of others
- How to craft compelling product descriptions for your products
- A simple process for finding out whether anyone will even *buy* the product you're thinking of selling
- How to use **social media** to boost your sales for your shop (even if you're **allergic to social media**)
- How you can get noticed without spending a ton of money on advertising
- How to price appropriately and determine the perfect pricepoints for your products
- Everything you need to know about shipping, from packaging to setting a shipping policy to costs and timelines

There are several ways you can do this same thing.

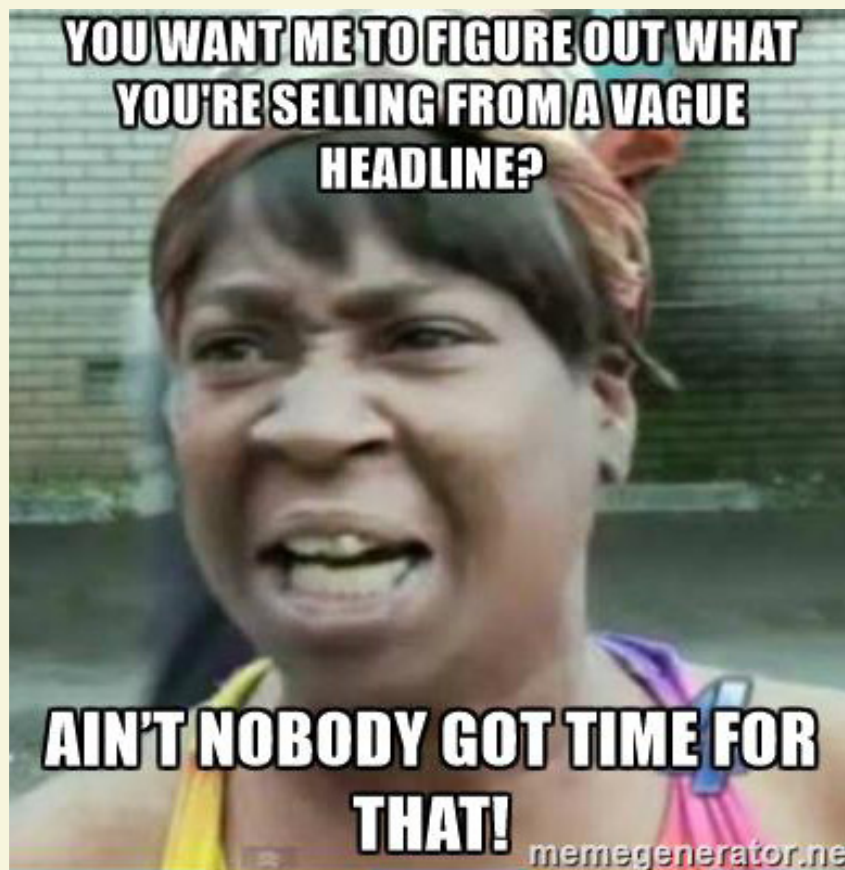
1. **Speak with your customers and prospects.** Pick up the phone and have a quick chat. Do more listening than speaking, and write down what they say. Or, if the person gives you permission, record it so you can transcribe it later.
2. **Survey your audience.** This could even be as simple as a one question survey that you put on your website. Make sure that it's open-ended.
3. **Search reviews and forums.** See what people are saying not just about your offering, but your competitors as well. This can be a great way to uncover pain points.

“Rather than guess what your audience would say, use their actual words.”

SWAP YOUR HEADLINE AND SUBHEAD

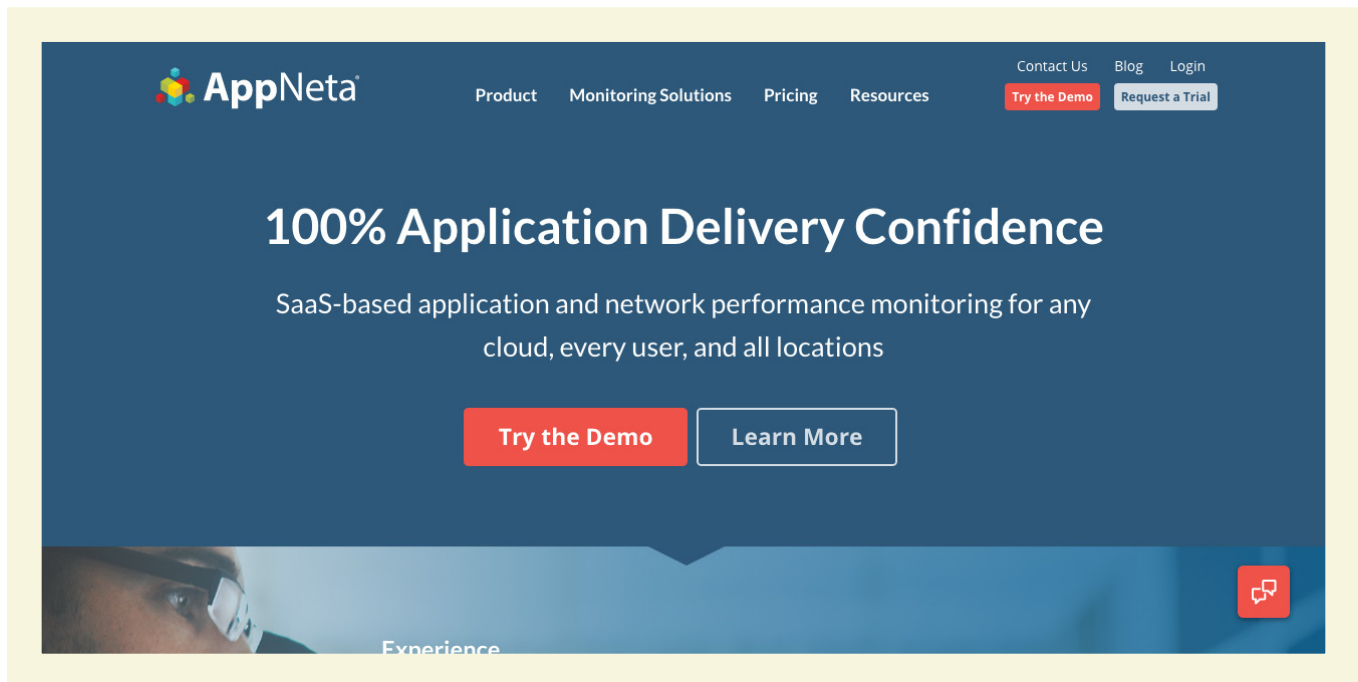
It's amazing how many times I see a landing page where the subhead is stronger than the headline. Maybe the writer is trying to be clever or creative. Perhaps they think the headline shouldn't be more than a few words long.

Whatever the reason, it's killing conversions. If it's not immediately clear what you're offering me, why should I read on?

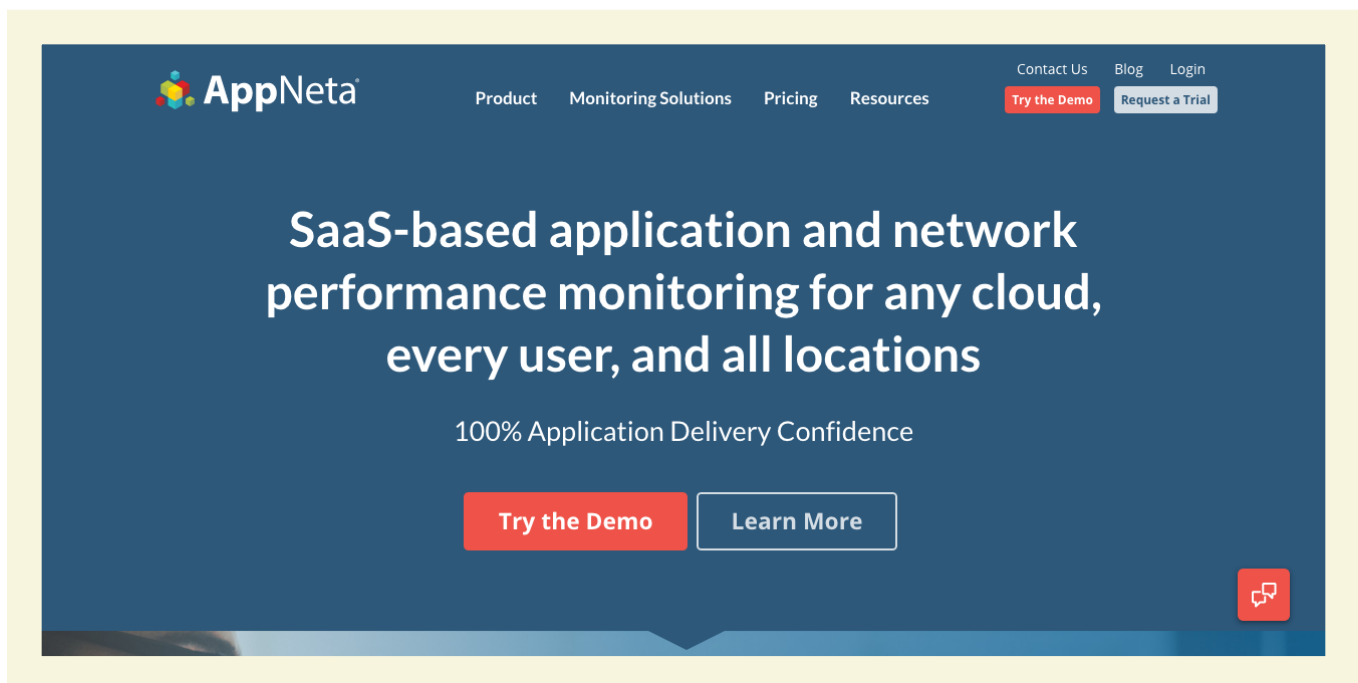


Fortunately, the subheads usually have this information. So an easy fix is to just make the subhead your headline.

Here's a good example:



Original Page



Revised Page

See how much clearer this page is when the subhead and headline are switched?

CUT YOUR FIRST PARAGRAPH

This is a hack that goes back to the heyday of direct mail. It's designed to help you get right to the point.

Getting to the point quickly sounds pretty obvious. But you'd be surprised how many marketing pieces waste words trying to introduce themselves or state the obvious.

People don't care about that. They care about themselves. What is it your offer is going to do for them? Tell them right away why they should care.

If your first paragraph doesn't do this, scrap it and start with the next one.

“People don't care about that.
They care about themselves.”

CHANGE “WE”S TO “YOU”S

Most people make the mistake of thinking that their product marketing should be all about the product. In fact, it should be all about the prospect.

Nobody outside of your company cares about your company. They don't care about your product or service. They care about themselves and what your product or service can do for them.

That makes this one perhaps the single most valuable hack on this list.

Look through your copy and find everywhere you use the words “we,” “our” or some other variation. Now rewrite those sections in the second person. For example:

“Our widget comes with a 30-day money back guarantee” could be rewritten as “Your satisfaction is guaranteed. If this isn't the best widget you've ever used, return it within 30 days for a full refund.”

“That makes this one perhaps the single most valuable hack on this list.”

WRITE INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS IN THE FIRST PERSON

You might be thinking, “Wait, you just told me to switch from the first to second person.”

I did. But elements that your reader actively interacts with are an exception. Here’s why.

When the prospect is reading, you are the one doing the talking. So “I” and “me” refers to you, not the reader.

But if the reader is taking another action, such as clicking a button or signing a form, he or she becomes the person talking, so to speak. “I” and “me” refers to that person.

Technically, you could stick with second person voice. But switching to first person signals the shift in the conversation. It puts the focus on initiating the action. It helps the reader better envision him or herself as an active participant. And it mentally moves him or her forward in the process. Consider these two buttons:

START YOUR FREE TRIAL

START MY FREE TRIAL

Notice how the second option makes you feel like all the hard work is already done? That free trial is already yours. You just have to start it.

“Switching to first person signals the shift in the conversation.”

ADD ASSUMPTIVE PHRASING

Here's a nifty little psychological hack.

Write your copy as if the conversion is a foregone conclusion.

Simply look through your copy and add phrasing like this to some of your statements:

“When you start your trial...”

“You’ll love how...”

“As you’ll see...”

The power of this hack lies with the endowment effect, a phenomenon where we value what we already own more than something we never had. By writing as if your prospect already owns what you’re selling, he or she imagines that situation.

Presuppositions are another type of assumptive phrasing you can use to add persuasive power to your copy. These statements infer something else is true. For instance, if I ask, “Which of these copywriting hacks are you going to use first?” that infers that you are indeed going to use them.

You must accept the inference to be true in order to avoid incongruence within the sentence. We’re wired to avoid incongruence, because it requires more brain power.

Use this to your advantage by creating presuppositions with words such as:

Finally. “You can finally get in shape without spending hours in the gym.” (Presupposes that you had to spend hours in the gym to get in shape.)

Start. “Start earning the income you deserve.” (Presupposes that you aren’t currently earning what you deserve.)

“The power of this hack lies with the endowment effect.”

Stop. “Stop wasting time on diets that don’t work.” (Presupposes that you are wasting your time.)

Again. “This car makes driving fun again.” (Presupposes that you once enjoyed driving but now find it to be a chore.)

Anymore. “Getting your kids to do their homework won’t be a battle anymore.” (Presupposes that getting your kids to do their homework is a battle.)

How will you use assumptive language in your marketing? (See what I did there?)

CALL OUT YOUR AUDIENCE

Legendary copywriter Victor Schwab shared an anecdote that sums up this hack perfectly.


One day Max Hart was arguing with his advertising manager, George L. Dyer, about long copy. To settle the issue, Dyer made a bold claim: “I’ll bet you \$10 I can write a newspaper page of solid type and you’d read every word of it.”

When Hart scoffed at the idea, Dyer replied, “I don’t have to write a line of it to prove my point. I’ll only tell you the headline: ‘This Page is All About Max Hart’.”

Wouldn’t you read a page that was all about you? Sure you would. And while you can’t always personalize your marketing to that extent, you can signal to your prospects that your offering is specifically for them.

How?

Call out an affinity, profession, location or anything else a prospect might use to identify himself or herself. These are a few examples:



Introducing Melbourne's Most Sought After Bookkeeper For Tradies

Go on admit it: you HATE bookkeeping.

But you know you HAVE to get it done. No bookkeeping, no money, no business...

But what is your bookkeeping really costing you? More time away from your family, more time away from a few quiet ones with your mates, more time away from simply chilling on the couch after a hard day at work.

Hand over your invoicing, bank reconciliations, creditors/debtors, BAS lodgements, receipt inputting and much more.

Ready for regain freedom? Call Emily (PA 4 Tradies) today on or email emdobell@gmail.com.

Guaranteed to save you time – or I'll shout you a beer at knock-off time.

<http://www.>

For people who are almost (but not quite) satisfied with their own cooking — and can't figure out what's missing.

- If your crêpes are delicious but too heavy, see page 263.
- The gourmet uses of kosher salt? See page 3 and page 22.
- If your cooked shrimp gets dry or rubbery when you keep it overnight, see page 136.
- If your fried eggplant tastes oilier than it should, see page 176.
- If you sauté chicken livers perfectly but they come out tough, see page 152.
- How to make bottled horseradish taste like the fresh kind. See page 211.
- How to keep sour cream from burning when you cook with it. See page 23.
- What to add to domestic paprika if you can't find the imported kind. See page 69.
- A substitute for champagne sauce that isn't perfect, but works. See page 97.



"Chef Louis' 'secrets' are gems of purest common sense that put even the most intimidating foreign dishes within the reach of any intelligent person."
—SILAS SPITZER, Food Editor, Holiday Magazine

The Chef's Secret Cook Book

By Louis Szathmary

You may be thinking, sure this can get people to read the copy. But will it really move them to action?

Consider this scenario. You're cruising around in your Jeep when it starts to make a funny sound. The engine light comes on and it starts bucking. There are two mechanics nearby, across the street from each other. The one on the left has a sign that reads "Over 5,000 vehicles serviced since 2010." The one on the right has a sign that says, "Over 2,500 Jeeps serviced since 2010." Assuming all other factors (price, wait, etc.) are the same, which would you choose?

If you're like most people, you'd choose the one on the right, even though the number of vehicles serviced is half of what the mechanic on the left advertises. That's because it specifically mentions your make (Jeep).

“Signal to your prospects that your offering is specifically for them.”

USE THE WORD “BECAUSE”

We like to think that we're rational. That's why we like to have a reason for doing things people ask of us. But here's the interesting part. Simply having a reason is often more important than the reason itself.

Consider this famous social experiment:

In 1978, researchers approached people in line for the copier machine and asked to cut in front. They tested the effectiveness of three different phrases.

1. “Excuse me, I have 5 pages. May I use the Xerox machine?” was successful 60% of the time
2. “Excuse me, I have 5 pages. May I use the Xerox machine, because I'm in a rush?” was successful 94% of the time
3. “Excuse me, I have 5 pages. May I use the Xerox machine, because I have to make copies?” was successful 93% of the time

It's not surprising that people let the researchers cut in line more often when a reason was given. What is surprising is that whether that reason was valid or bogus had no significant impact.

Look at that third phrasing again. Of course they had to make copies. So did everyone else in line. That's what a copier is for. So why did that excuse work?

Often with small requests we take a mental shortcut. Instead of processing the actual request and reason, we recognize that a reason was given, and we comply.

“Whether that reason was valid or bogus had no significant impact.”

It's important to note that the reason for the request becomes more important as the request gets larger. When the researchers repeated the experiment with 20 pages instead of 5, giving a bogus reason had the same effect as giving no reason. Both were successful only 24% of the time compared to 42% when a valid reason was given.

To use this in your marketing, look for areas where you want the reader to do something and add a "because."

"Act now *because* this offer expires in 10 days."

"*Because* you're the type of person who..."

"We're giving away free samples *because* we want you to see for yourself."

REPLACE SOME OF YOUR ADJECTIVES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Every company says that their product is the best. All technology is cutting edge. Every feature set is robust. As a result, these mean nothing to the reader.

Think about it. When is the last time you responded to an offer because the marketing said that it was cutting edge? Probably never. But if they demonstrate that and you come to that conclusion on your own...

That makes this a powerful hack. And it's amazing how underused it is—especially when you learn how easy it is to do.

Step 1. Look for all the adjectives in the piece you're trying to optimize. Generic benefits and clichés are the best ones to change, but just about any should do.

Step 2. Prove it. What evidence can you present to back up what your adjectives claim?

Step 3. Edit your copy. Use concrete messages in place of the offending adjectives to demonstrate value.

For example, if you're selling aerogel insulation, you would look for lines like this:

“This cutting edge material is four times more efficient than fiberglass insulation.”

And replace the phrase cutting edge. So it could say something such as:

“Because aerogel was created for NASA to withstand the harsh temperatures of space, it is four times for efficient than fiberglass insulation.”

See the difference?

“Every company says that their product is the best.”

TURN SOME OF YOUR STATEMENTS INTO QUESTIONS

Questions are great involvement devices. As soon as readers start contemplating the answer, they become active participants.

However, not all questions will improve conversions. In fact, asking the wrong questions can actually decrease conversions.

So what are the wrong questions?

Any that can be answered other than the way you want. Take this, for example.

“Asking the wrong questions can actually decrease conversions.”



If the reader isn't actively working on a campaign, the answer could be “no.”

Here are three types of questions that do work:

Rhetorical questions. These are designed to get your readers saying “yes” early on. It’s important to phrase it so that the only obvious answer is the one you’re looking for, like in this example.

Do you want more traffic?

Hey, I'm Neil Patel. I'm determined to make a business in your city successful. My only question is, will it be yours?

Curiosity gap questions. These are designed to get readers thinking “I don’t know, but I want to find out.” You need to strike the right balance with these. Give too much of the answer and people won’t be curious. Make it too vague and people won’t care. Consider this example:


Do You Make These Mistakes in English?

Sherwin Cody's remarkable invention has enabled more than 100,000 people to correct their mistakes in English. Only 15 minutes a day required to improve your speech and writing.

MANY persons use such expressions as "Leave them lay there" and "Mary was invited as well as myself." Still others say "between you and I" instead of "between you and me." It is astonishing how often "who" is used for "whom" and how frequently we hear such glaring mispronunciations as "for MID able," "ave NOO," and "KEW pon." Few know whether to spell certain words with one or two "c's" or "m's" or "r's" or with "ic" or "ei," and when to use commas in order to make their meaning absolutely clear. Most persons use only common words—colorless, flat, ordinary. Their speech and their letters are lifeless, monotonous, humdrum.

Why Most People Make Mistakes

What is the reason so many of us are deficient in the use of English and find our careers stunted in consequence? Why is it some cannot spell correctly and others cannot punctuate? Why do so many find themselves at a loss for words to express their meaning adequately? The reason for the deficiency is clear, Sherwin Cody discovered it in scientific tests which he



SHERWIN CODY

For instance, statistics show that a list of sixty-nine words (with their repetitions) make up more than half of all our speech and letter-writing. Obviously, if one could learn to spell, use, and pronounce these words correctly, one would go far toward eliminating incorrect spelling and pronunciation.

Similarly, Mr. Cody proved that there were no more than one dozen fundamental principles of punctuation. If we mastered these principles, there would be no hodgepodge of punctuation to handicap us in our writing.

Finally he discovered that twenty-five typical errors in grammar constitute ninety-per cent of our everyday mistakes. When one has learned to avoid these twenty-five pitfalls, how readily one can obtain the facility of speech which denotes the person of breeding and education!

When the study of English is made so simple, it becomes clear that progress can be made in a very short time. No more than fifteen minutes a day is required. Fifteen minutes, not of study, but of fascinating practice! Mr. Cody's students do their work in any spare moment they can snatch. They do it while to work at at home. They take fifteen minutes from the time usually spent in profane reading or amusement. The results really are phenomenal.

Sherwin Cody has placed an excellent command of the English language within the grasp of everyone. Those who take advantage of his method gain something so precious that it cannot be measured in terms of money. They gain a work of business that cannot

19

Don't you want to know which mistakes they are?

Assumptive questions. This is a form of assumptive phrasing (see chapter 8). With these, the answer is not as important as the question itself. When I asked, “Which of these copywriting hacks are you going to use first?” it doesn't matter which you choose. It only matters that you make the leap to imagine yourself using one of them.



This assumptive question makes it seem as if it's a fact that renting is throwing away money.

BREAK UP YOUR COPY

Which of these would you rather read?

Technology has made testing easier in a lot of ways. Today's solutions can automate most of the process. Tools like [Optimizely](#) and [Visual Website Optimizer](#) can save you a ton of time and effort. But like any tool, they are only as good as the person using it. It's easy to look at the early results of a test and draw a conclusion. Take this example from [Peep Laja of Conversion XL](#). What would you do if this was your test? Call the control a winner and start implementing the learnings throughout your site?

That's what most would do. After all, it says right there that the test version has a 0% chance of beating the control. A couple of weeks later, the results looked quite different. That's right. The version that had no chance of winning was now significantly outperforming the control. What's going on here? How can that be? Scroll back up and look at the sample size again. A little over 100 visitors isn't enough to get valid results.

So what size do you need? That depends on a few factors, such as your conversion rate, minimum detectable effect and acceptable margin of error. But the answer is probably higher than you think. Plugging your numbers into a sample size calculator such as [this](#) or [this one](#) is the easiest way to determine the minimum sample size you'll need. But this isn't the only reason to keep your tests running.

Timing is also a variable that could skew results. Some businesses see conversion rates vary significantly between days of the week. There could also be events or other external factors that temporarily skew results one way or the other.

Mistake #1: You end your tests too soon

Technology has made testing easier in a lot of ways. Today's solutions can automate most of the process. Tools like [Optimizely](#) and [Visual Website Optimizer](#) can save you a ton of time and effort. But like any tool, they are only as good as the person using it.

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What would you do if this was your test? Call the control a winner and start implementing the learnings throughout your site?

Variations ?	Conversion Rate Range ?	Percentage Improvement	Chance to Beat Original ?	Conv/Visitors
Control	8.66% ±3%	-	-	11 / 127
Variation 1	0.91% ±1%	-89.50%	0%	1 / 110
Average Case	5.06% ±2%	-	-	12 / 237

A more important question might be, would you even bother to start reading the one on the left? Or does it simply look like too much work?

If people don't read your copy, they won't convert.

This is an easy fix, though. Try these three techniques:

1. **Use short paragraphs.** As a rule of thumb, try not to go over three or four lines deep for any paragraph. Don't be afraid to use single sentence paragraphs.
2. **Add bullets and numbered lists.** These draw attention, so think carefully about your wording. Make sure to include benefits or tease readers into the rest of the copy.
3. **Include subheads.** Treat these like mini headlines. The goal isn't just to break up the text. You also want your subheads to build interest and intrigue.

If people don't read your copy, they won't convert.

USE PATTERN INTERRUPTS

Attention spans are short these days. Even if your copy is great, most readers will start to lose interest if you don't shake things up a bit. Pattern Interrupts are a great way to do just that.

Pattern Interrupts are a neuro-linguistic programming technique designed to break the expected pattern of thoughts or behaviors. There are a couple of ways to use it in your marketing.

The first is to keep readers engaged. In a long form piece of marketing, the reader expects paragraphs to follow paragraphs and on. This familiar pattern allows the brain to go on autopilot. You don't want this. You want readers' attention.

Break the pattern by adding testimonials, sidebars, callouts and other devices that temporarily interrupt the narrative of your text. Take a look at these examples.

Growth without effort, growth without resources, growth without spending money. You get the idea.

Morgan Brown, co-author of the upcoming [Hacking Growth](#), says it best...



[Morgan Brown](#), Inman News:

“They look like they’re silver bullets, right? They’re full of unicorns and pixie dust and promises of like, ‘Hey, do these 9 things and you’ll get remarkable growth.’

No great company was ever built on the back of a listicle.” [\(via CXL Live\)](#)

By just taking a minute to segment the non-openers, change the subject line and reschedule the email I was able to **increase both the open and click-through rates over 100% and send an additional 300 people to the post.**

If you have an email list, this is the EASIEST way you can get more traffic TODAY!

Author's note:

If you have sent an email in the last 4 weeks, go into your email service provider, change the subject line and resend it to all the non-openers.

Let me know how you did in the comments below.

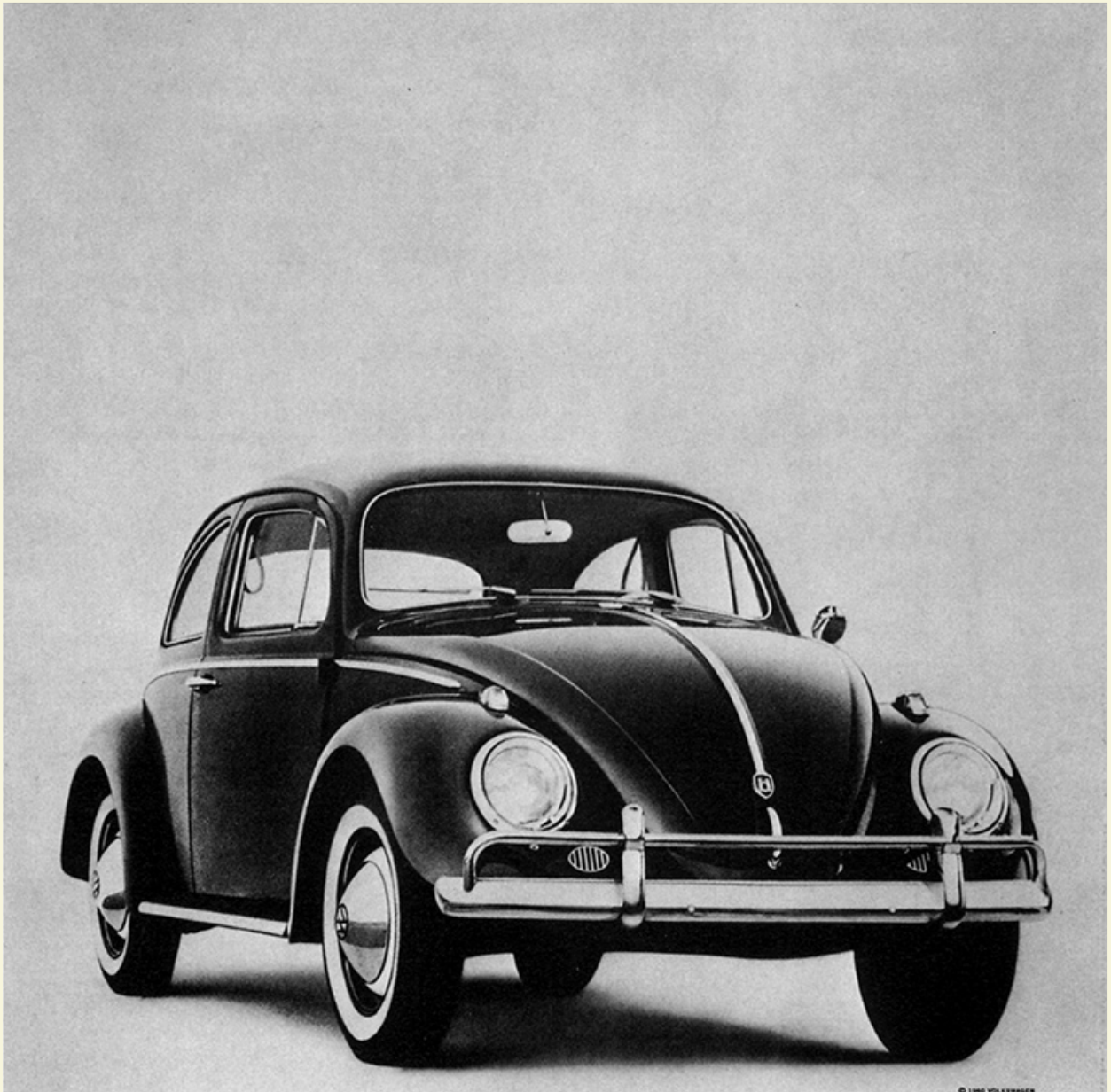


“Use a Pattern Interrupt to disarm readers or refocus their attention.”

You can also use a Pattern Interrupt to disarm readers or refocus their attention. People don't like to be sold to. As a result, they reflexively put their guards up when they expect a sales pitch.

But what if your copy doesn't start off as expected?

Readers expecting a typical sales pitch will probably have a different mindset when they read something like this:



Lemon.

This Volkswagen missed the boat.

The chrome strip on the glove compartment is blemished and must be replaced. Chances are you wouldn't have noticed it; Inspector Kurt Kröner did.

There are 3,389 men at our Wolfsburg factory with only one job: to inspect Volkswagens at each stage of production. (3000 Volkswagens are produced daily; there are more inspectors

than cars.)

Every shock absorber is tested (spot checking won't do), every windshield is scanned. VWs have been rejected for surface scratches barely visible to the eye.

Final inspection is really something! VW inspectors run each car off the line onto the Funktionsprüfstand (car test stand), tote up 189 check points, gun ahead to the automatic

broke stand, and say "no" to one VW out of fifty.

This preoccupation with detail means the VW lasts longer and requires less maintenance, by and large, than other cars. (It also means a used VW depreciates less than any other car.)

We pluck the lemons; you get the plums.



REMIND READERS OF THEIR FREE WILL

A team in France first proved how effective the “But You Are Free (BYOF)” technique is with this social experiment.

One of the experimenters would stop people in a mall and ask for change to ride the bus. In half of the instances, he or she added the phrase, “But you are free to accept or to refuse.”

Significantly more people gave money when the BYOF technique was used. Not only that, but the amount they gave was twice as much.

“Significantly more people gave money.”

Follow-up studies have proved BYOF effective in requests for donations to a tsunami relief fund, participation in a survey, and many other situations.

It works by combating something called psychological reactance. Wikipedia describes it this way:

REACTANCE OCCURS WHEN A PERSON FEELS THAT SOMEONE OR SOMETHING IS TAKING AWAY HIS OR HER CHOICES OR LIMITING THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES.

REACTANCES CAN OCCUR WHEN SOMEONE IS HEAVILY PRESSURED TO ACCEPT A CERTAIN VIEW OR ATTITUDE. REACTANCE CAN CAUSE THE PERSON TO ADOPT OR STRENGTHEN A VIEW OR ATTITUDE THAT IS CONTRARY TO WHAT WAS INTENDED, AND ALSO INCREASES RESISTANCE TO PERSUASION.

With this one simple phrase, you remove reactance and open your prospect’s mind to your persuasion.

Note: The specific wording doesn’t matter as much as the sentiment. You can also use variations such as:

- The choice is yours
- You may do as you wish
- It’s completely up to you
- But obviously do not feel obliged

GREASE THE SLIDE

Grease-slide copy is one of my favorite copywriting tricks.

Why?

Few other techniques provide so much value for such little effort.

But what the heck is grease-slide copy?

It's one term for words and phrases that create smooth transitions between paragraphs and sentences, moving readers seamlessly through your copy.

These phrases build anticipation, acting essentially as mini-cliffhangers. Let's take a look at a few in action:

“Few other techniques provide so much value for such little effort.”

It sounds so simple, doesn't it?

Reach out to influencers in your industry. Get them to spread the word with their followers. Watch your traffic, conversions, and brand recognition skyrocket overnight.

Only it's not that easy. In fact, it's damn hard. But you know that.

Since you're reading this, you've probably tried it and failed. You reach out to the influencers on your list and... nothing. Not even a "Thanks, but no thanks." It's as if your email went into a black hole or wherever it is all my mismatched socks end up after going into the wash.

Why are influencers ignoring you? Clearly, you're doing something wrong. Chances are it's one of the following.

You're coming off like a jackass

Picture this:

You're at a party. People are having a good time. You're laughing with some friends you haven't seen in a while, when a stranger walks up and introduces himself.

That's right. The version that had no chance of winning was now significantly outperforming the control.

What's going on here? How can that be?

Scroll back up and look at the sample size again. A little over 100 visitors isn't enough to get valid results.

So what size do you need?

That depends on a few factors, such as your conversion rate, minimum detectable effect and acceptable margin of error. But the answer is probably higher than you think.

Plugging your numbers into a sample size calculator such as [this](#) or [this one](#) is the easiest way to determine the minimum sample size you'll need.

But this isn't the only reason to keep your tests running.

Timing is also a variable that could skew results. Some businesses see conversion rates vary significantly between days of the week. There could also be events or other external factors that temporarily skew results one way or the other.

Notice how you slide effortlessly to the next paragraph?

Here are a few other words and phrases to try:

- Why?
- Let me guess
- Be honest
- Admit it
- Listen:
- Get this:
- Then it hit me
- Still not convinced?
- What's the catch?
- Sound Familiar?
- Or is it?
- Let me explain
- Here's why
- Here's the thing
- Here's the best part
- Guess what?
- You're probably thinking...
- That's not all

Simply insert one of these grease-slide phrases anywhere people may lose interest or between paragraphs that don't transition smoothly.

You can even use them at the beginning of your marketing content to draw readers in. The Volkswagen Lemon ad from chapter 14 is a good example. Look at the first sentence:

“This Volkswagen missed the boat.”

We wonder why that is. And why is the company telling us this?

Fun Fact:

Grease-Slide Copy is also known as bucket brigades, after the way firefighters used to pass a bucket from person to person. In the same way this connected the source of the water to the fire, these phrases connect the initial hook through to the call to action. I prefer the visualization of a greased slide moving people through the copy though. If done right, readers can't help but continue on.

BE EXCLUSIONARY

This one sounds counterintuitive to most marketers. The goal is to get more customers, not turn them away.

Here's the thing, though:

If you try to be everything to everyone, then you end up being everything for no one.

When your prospects self-qualify themselves, your offer instantly becomes more relevant and more desirable. That increases the likelihood those people will convert. The lift in response is usually higher than any loss from people who are turned away.

Obviously you don't want to break any discrimination laws. That would cross the line. But don't be afraid to weed out people who aren't the best prospects for your offer. Here's how.

Read through your copy and cut anything that doesn't drive your ideal prospects to your goal.

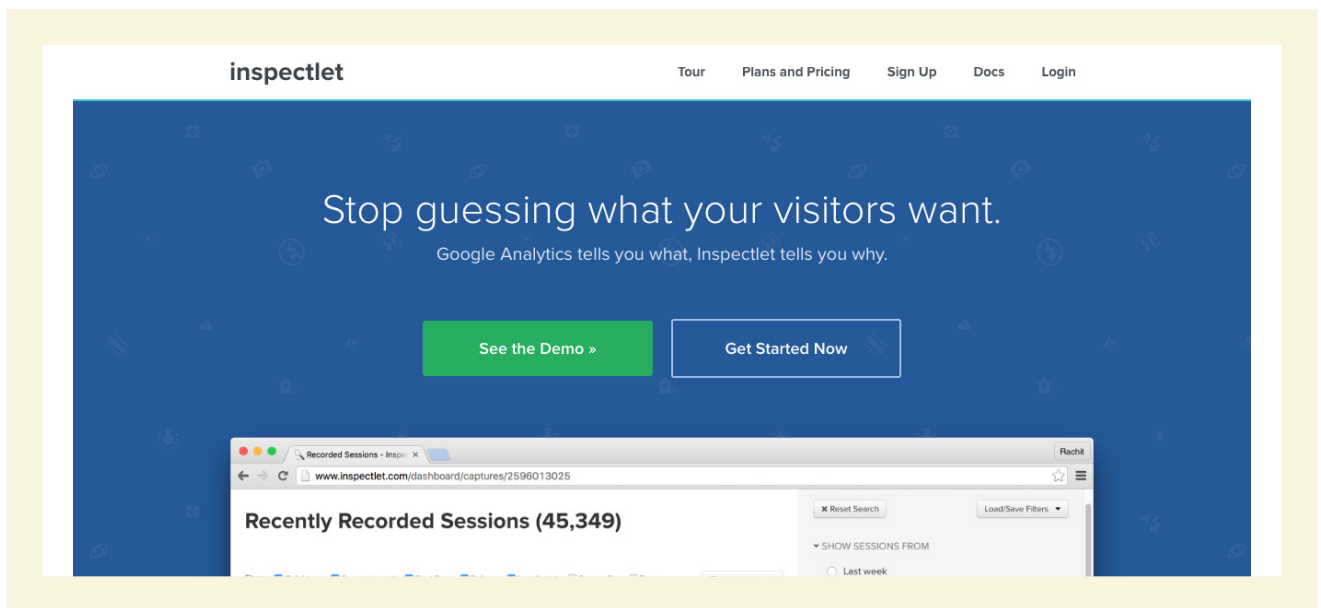
Here's a common example involving the call to action.

No single offer is going to appeal to everyone, especially when the product is complex or the sales cycle is longer. So some marketers hedge their bets and include a second CTA. (See example on next page.)

They hope people not interested in the first offer will click on the second. However, this approach usually decreases conversion rates.

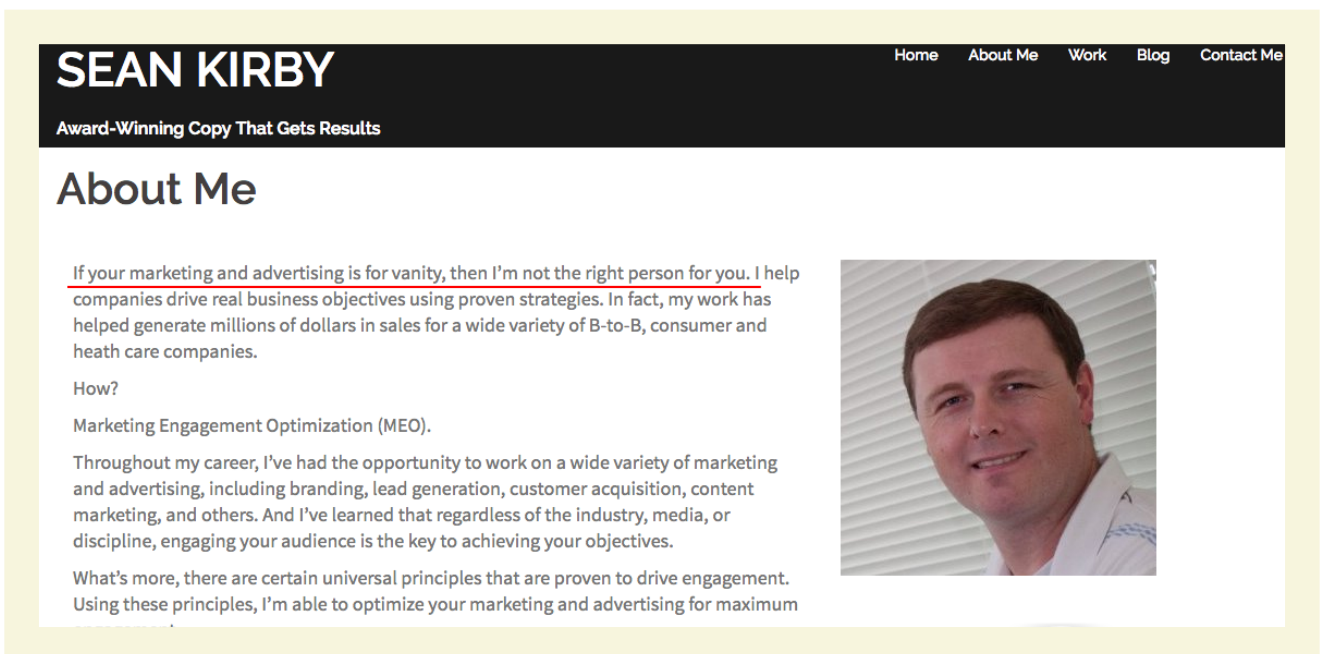
Readers may not know what it is you want them to do. And if they can't decide, they are likely to abandon it altogether.

“Cut anything that doesn't drive your ideal prospects to your goal.”



Don't try to be all inclusive by introducing multiple offers. You'll only confuse prospects.

If you want to take the concept even further, actively call out exclusions like I do on my about page.



EMPLOY THE RULE OF THREE

Great writers and speakers have long recognized the power of three. Consider these famous excerpts:

- Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness
- Friends, Romans, countrymen
- Veni, vidi, vici (I came, I saw, I conquered)

“What makes groupings of three so powerful?”

And it's not just for phrases. It's no coincidence that most plays, movies and TV shows have three acts. The story of Goldilocks wouldn't work as well with only two bears. The four little pigs wouldn't hold attention as well as the three little pigs.

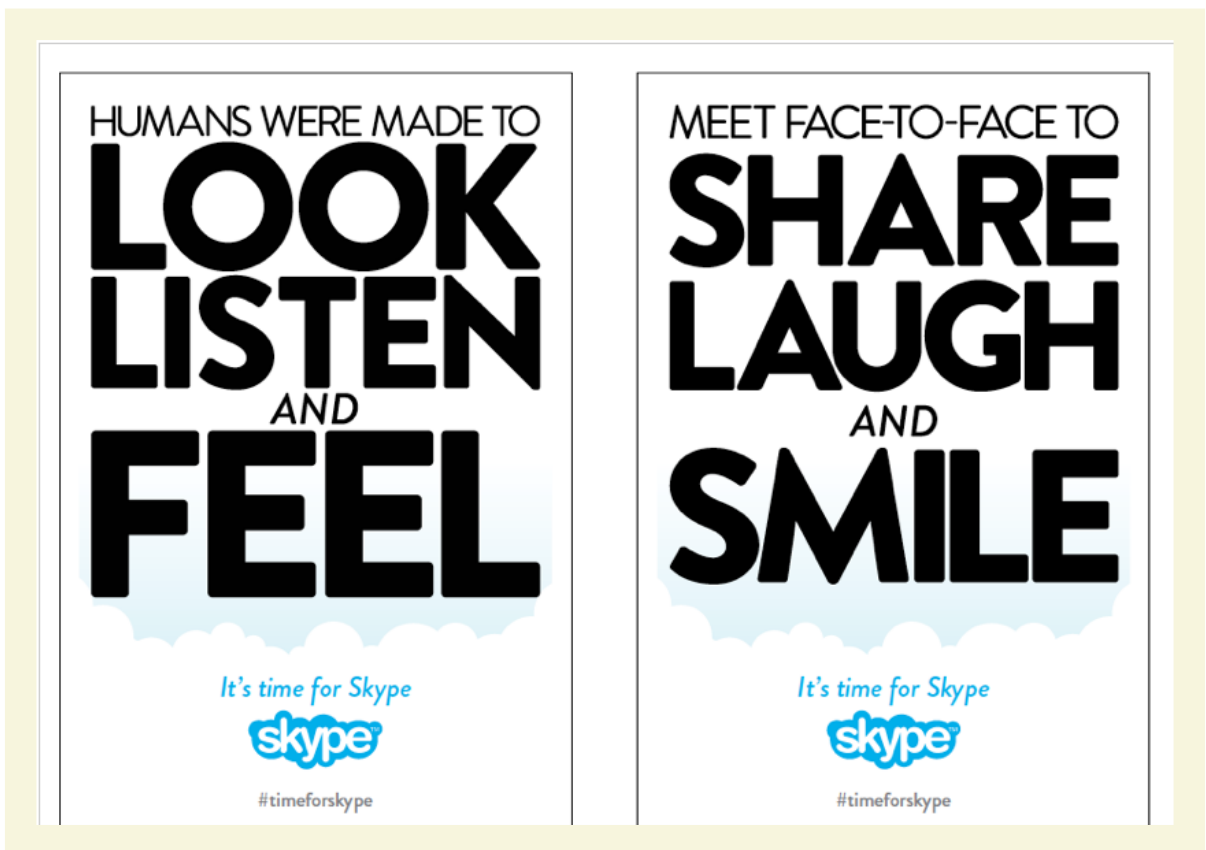
But why does it work? What makes grouping of three so powerful?

It has to do with the way the brain processes information. One occurrence is chance. Two is coincidence. But three is a pattern. And superior pattern processing is one of the main unique traits of human brains. It's largely responsible for intelligence, language, imagination and invention, among other things.

So why couldn't it be the rule of four, five or six? Those are patterns too.

But three gives you a pattern with the fewest items. This brevity makes it easier to process and remember. It keeps the information fresh and interesting. And it has a natural rhythm.

Here are a few examples of ways you can use the rule of three in marketing.



READ YOUR COPY OUT LOUD

Sure, it feels a little silly. And it may look like you're hearing voices in your head. But reading your copy out loud will help you strengthen your copy. You'll pick up things that you wouldn't if you just read it in your head.

You'll find phrases that could potentially trip up readers. You'll hear when sentences run on too long or you sound too robotic. You'll notice places where you need better transitions.

Mark down all of these insights and then go back and fix them when you are done. Then read your new improved copy out loud and repeat the process until there is nothing left to fix.

“Your brain can more easily fill in blanks or skip over mistakes.”

Pro Tips:

Read your copy all the way through without stopping at least once so that you don't break the flow. You can always read it a second time if you need to stop and mark up the places you need to edit.

If you can convince someone else to read your copy to you out loud, that's even better. You know what you wrote, so your brain can more easily fill in blanks or skip over mistakes. And you know the intended inflections. Someone unfamiliar with your copy is more likely to read it as your prospects will.

PUT THE MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION AT THE BEGINNING AND THE END

Studies have shown that people remember items appearing at the beginning and end of a list more than those in the middle.¹ This is known as the serial position effect.

Here are a few ways to take advantage of this effect:

Include a strong opening and a strong call-to-action.

Spend a little extra time and effort nailing down these parts of your marketing content, whether it's a sales letter, landing page or any other format. Find your most persuasive line of copy and move it to one of these areas.

Present your two most compelling benefits first and last.

Most marketers present benefits in order of importance. This is great for the beginning of your marketing. But it leaves the ending weak. Make sure to leave readers with a strong benefit to consider.

Use it in bulleted lists.

Don't just list bulleted items in a random order. Put the most compelling ones at the beginning and end of the list.

¹<http://www.simplypsychology.org/primacy-recency.html>

“People remember items at the beginning and end of a list.”

FRAME YOUR COPY

The same message can be vastly different depending on how it is presented.

If I talk about a baseball player batting .300, most would say he's a good hitter. But if I were to say that player gets out 70% of the time he's at the plate, he sounds pretty bad.

Notice the difference? The context of the first statement is positive (getting a hit). The context of the second statement is negative (getting out).

But does this really have an impact on behavior? You bet it does.

Famed psychologists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky conducted an experiment where participants had to choose between two hypothetical treatments for 600 patients affected by a deadly disease. The researchers stated these options in two ways.

With a Positive Frame:

“If program A is adopted, 200 people will be saved. If program B is adopted, there is a one-third probability that 600 people will be saved and a two-thirds probability that no people will be saved.”

With a Negative Frame:

“If program A is adopted, 400 people will die. If program B is adopted, there is a one-third probability that nobody will die and a two-thirds probability that 600 people will die.”

“The difference in results was dramatic.”

The difference in results was dramatic. When framed positively (lives saved) 72% of people chose treatment option A. But when the options were framed negatively (people die), 78% opted for treatment B.

Note, too, that participants were less risk averse when the question was framed negatively. That's because avoiding loss is usually a stronger motivation than gaining something of equal value.

But positive vs negative positioning is only one way to frame your message. There are numerous ways to frame the way readers perceive your message.

Here are a few ideas to try:

Add negative frames to let readers know what they will lose by not responding.

SPECIAL OFFER


Are you interested in making extra income ?

- ✓ Set your own hours, work from home
- ✓ Join thousands in the L.A. area who already participate
- ✓ Suitable for those interested in owning their own business

YES!
Please contact me with more information

NO, thanks
I don't need any extra money

Frame the price using smaller figures. Here's an example.



\$100,000 LIFE INSURANCE FOR LESS THAN A CUP OF COFFEE A DAY.

**GOVERNMENT OF
GUAM EMPLOYEES:**

You may be eligible for **\$100,000** in **life insurance coverage** for as little as **53¢** per day. Compared to GovGuam's existing Supplemental Life Insurance Program, that is \$30,000 more in coverage for less, when you insure with **Moylan's Netcare Life**.

COMPARE & SAVE!

Moylan's NetCare Life
\$100,000 Coverage for \$7.43 bi-weekly
— VS. —
GovGuam's Supplemental Life Program
\$70,000 Coverage for \$8.07 bi-weekly

*Premium is based on a 35 year old male, non-smoker who is also at standard health. Plan is for a 10 year term plan with \$100,000 in coverage.

m **Life**
MOYLAN'S

Julale Center, Suite 200 • 424 West O'Brien Drive • Hagatna, Guam 96910 **NetCare**

Framing the price as a smaller daily expense makes it feel like a less significant investment.

Pro Strategy: Change what the decision is about

Note: This is an advanced strategy that will require more than a few minutes of work, which is why it is separated out. However, it is an effective way to make your marketing more persuasive.

Most of the time prospects are deciding whether to accept the offer (purchase the product, download a lead magnet, etc.) or not. But you can shift this by focusing on the main benefit.

Let's say you're trying to convince someone to choose green energy over fossil fuel. The green energy costs more and doesn't give any additional power. So if the person looks at it from an ROI standpoint, it's a difficult sell.

But if the person you're trying to sway is a parent, you could frame it as a choice about the welfare of their children. What parent wouldn't choose cleaner air for their children to breathe and purer water for them to drink?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean Kirby is an award-winning copywriter and marketing strategist whose work has helped generate millions in revenue for a wide variety of B-to-B, Consumer and Healthcare companies.

When he's not writing about himself in the third person, you can find Sean helping clients get more out of their direct response, branding and content marketing using a blend of psychology, data-driven strategy and good old-fashioned wordsmithing.

Sean lives in Bucks County, PA with wife and twin boys.

Feel free to [drop a quick note](#).

Follow Sean on social media:



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