



Business communications with a personal Touch

Great Headline Ideas

Explanation and examples

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Whatever marketing piece you're working on, make sure you have a great headline. The headline will determine whether your prospect scans, reads or leaves. Furthermore, the headline and copy must tie together. If they don't, you'll lose your reader very quickly. Here are two tips for creating captivating headlines.

Here are two tips for creating captivating headlines:

- ▶ Write the copy for your ad, letter, flyer (any communication) *first*. Then build your headline. (*More on this in March newsletter*).
- ▶ Apply a 4-part test to each headline idea. The higher your score, the more likely the headline will entice your reader into exploring the real message.

The rest of the article

The top producing copywriters spend more than half their time on the headline and lead. Why? Because if you fail to capture your prospect's attention quickly . . . if he or she is not compelled to read more, all the benefit statements and powerful features of your product or service may as well be written in hieroglyphics.

That's how important a powerful headline and an engaging lead (or subheadings) are.

Whether you're writing a sales letter, postcard, webpage or email, the headline, sub heading and lead-in are the most important elements. We'll get into when to use a sub heading and more about lead-in copy in future articles. For this article, we'll focus on just the headline.

Follow these rules and you'll increase your chances of getting your prospect into the message and, more importantly, to the call to action.

- ▶ Keep your headline to **one main idea**. Avoid the temptation to introduce competing ideas in the headline even when your product is complex with many benefits.
- ▶ Know your prospect . . . really, really know him and what's important to him or her. Don't try to capture everyone. Great headlines attract the target audience they're after and, in fact, let others know the message is not for them.
- ▶ Apply what's called the 4 U's test. This advice comes from a copywriting instruction program published by [American Writers and Artists Inc.](#) and written by Michael Masterson, an extremely successful marketing guru. Here are the 4 U's:
 - Is it **Unique**: If it's something your prospect has seen and heard many times, he'll toss it without reading any further.
 - Is it **Useful**: There must be a good chance the reader will get some value if he/she keeps reading. Think benefits, not features.
 - Is it **Urgent**: Sometimes this will be direct - stating some form of "you need this now". Other times it will imply having this service, product or benefit will make your life better. Everyone wants that sooner than later.
 - Is it **Ultra Specific**: this one's tricky. Sometimes curiosity trumps specificity. Most of the time, however, if a specific benefit is stated, you'll have a much better chance to capture the reader's attention.

Apply the 4 U's and give a point or half point to each test it meets. If your score is 3 or better, you likely have a winning headline.

Here are some headlines that have been very successful.

1. **"What Never . . . Ever to Eat on an Airplane!"**
2. **"Profit from 'Insider Trading' - 100% Legal"**
3. **"Why Most Small businesses Fail - and What You can do About it"**
4. **"The Three Most Important Things to Know About Buying Insurance"**

How do these headlines measure up? Keep in mind; all these headlines are targeting a specific audience. So, we're evaluating them based on who they're aimed at.

Is there **one main idea**? Yes, all 4 present one idea. Here are a couple examples that have competing ideas:

"Lose weight by avoiding this on airplanes" (losing weight and airplane food).

"Insurance is for your security - get the most for your money" (security and value).

Unique? They all raise curiosity. 1,2 and 4 present ideas not commonly heard. #3 may or may not be unique. We've heard that businesses fail for lack of funds, no marketing plan, etc. So, at best we might score a half point on uniqueness.

Useful? Absolutely. All four have information the target audience can use.

Urgent? If I'm a target for 1-travel, 2-investing, 3-running a small business, 4-needing insurance . . . I want to know this information now, not later.

Ultra specific? Sounds like I'm going to find out about specific foods; at least one reason small businesses fail (and what I can do about it); insider stock trading; and three things about insurance. All are pretty specific. I might give a half point to the small business headline. I'm not sure if this is general information or something specific.

Okay. Now it's your turn. Apply these tests to your headlines and see how they measure up.

In the next issue of TWTI Communication Tips and Tools, we'll look at more examples and a step-by-step process of how to actually develop winning headlines.

Thanks for reading Communication Tips and Tools.

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