

# Seven Tips for Writing Copy That Sells

From David Ogilvy - advertising legend.

*Often described as the “Original Mad Man,” and “The Father of Advertising,” Ogilvy is known largely for his advertising work while serving as the founder of Ogilvy & Mather. In addition to building a multibillion dollar company, he also helped create hugely successful campaigns for clients such as Dove, Shell, and Rolls-Royce.*

## 1. Go Big or Go Home

*Don't bunt. Aim out of the ball park. Aim for the company of immortals. -David Ogilvy*

The product you represent is depending on you, and if you allow yourself to take shortcuts or present a less than compelling argument, then you've failed. As an entrepreneur or business owner, you simply cannot afford bad copy. If you cannot achieve perfection on your own, then you should hire someone who can.

## 2. Do Your Homework

*Advertising people who ignore research are as dangerous as generals who ignore decodes of enemy signals. -David Ogilvy*

Ogilvy spent years working for George Gallup, founder of the Gallup Poll, and it was during this time that he realized the true value that comes with knowing exactly what your target audience is thinking.

You cannot write copy unless you know:

- Who you're writing it for
- How that person thinks
- What that person needs

If you haven't done your research, then you're simply faking it, and it's that type of copy that gets marketers in trouble, either with the government or with their boss.

To write great copy, you need to understand your audience to the letter, so that you know how you can best serve them. Nothing else will do.

### **3. Never Talk down to Your Customers**

*A consumer is not a moron. She's your wife. Don't insult her intelligence, and don't shock her. -David Ogilvy*

This is a great Ogilvy quote (for the video, [click here](#)), speaking on behalf of consumers everywhere. As great as your product may be, speaking down to your audience is going to turn them away, and as much as you'd love them to be infatuated with your charming pitch, understand that, at the end of the day, they simply want to solve a problem.

Treat your customer with respect and dignity. You're on equal footing, or perhaps a bit lower, considering you're the one who needs the sale. Reflect that position in your copy.

#### **4. The Headline is 80%**

*On the average, five times as many people read the headline as read the body copy. When you have written your headline, you have spent eighty cents out of your dollar. -David Ogilvy*

Headlines are as close to a magic bullet as you're going to get, and if you're going to be perfect in only once place, do it here. Write a strong headline that works.

Here's how:

- Use headline templates, which are based on headlines that have worked in the past
- Lead with a strong benefit, making them want to read more
- If you can, split test different headlines to see what works best

## **5. Don't Get Distracted from Making the Sale**

*If it doesn't sell, it isn't creative. -David Ogilvy*

Couldn't be more true. Marketers love to be cute and funny, original and innovative, but it's also dangerous.

People don't set aside time to read ads; they are probably in a hurry, just taking a quick glance before they move on to something else. If your point isn't immediately obvious, chances are they won't get it, and you'll lose them forever.

If you want people to buy, you need them to see your product in their hands and be able to envision how it'll improve their lives. Everything else is secondary. If you can awe them with your words in the process, fine, but don't do it at the expense of the sale.

## **6. Explain Why They Should Buy**

*The more informative your advertising, the more persuasive it will be. -David Ogilvy*

You've hooked them with the headline, and you're telling them all about the product, but before they decide to buy from you, they want to know one thing:

Why?

Why is the product important? Why is it a good deal? Why should they be interested? Why should they buy it from you? Why should they buy it now, rather than later? Why should they trust you?

Consciously or subconsciously, all of those questions are going through a customer's head. If you want them to act, you need to answer them, and that means making your copy informative.

## **7. Your Copy Is Important. Treat It That Way.**

*Like a midwife, I make my living bringing new babies into the world, except that mine are new advertising campaigns. -David Ogilvy*

All too often, business owners treat their sales copy like an afterthought. They scribble down a few notes, have someone check it to make sure it's grammatically correct, and send it out. Then they wonder why it doesn't get results.

Looked each of your campaigns like your babies. Nurtured them, fight for them, help them develop.

The truth is, writing great copy takes time and energy. Some of the best copywriters will spend weeks just crafting the headline, and

they might take months to write the body copy.  
It's not because they're slow. It's because they  
know the importance of getting it right.

Are you committed to that type of excellence?  
If not, you should be.