

Copywriting

For Your Osteopathic Practice



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CONTENTS

Page 2

What is Copywriting?

Page 4

Turning Features into Benefits

Page 6

Turning Benefits into Emotions

Page 8

The Hierarchy of Needs

Page 10

Asking for the Sale

Page 11

Putting it all Together with AIDA

Page 14

Conclusion

What is Copywriting?

At first glance copywriting seems pretty straightforward. After all, we all know how to read and write and can all explain what we do, so what else is there to know?

There's more to copywriting than simply explaining what your service is or listing your USPs. Good copywriting seeks to take these basic selling points and turn them into emotive language that doesn't just convey information but incites an **emotional desire** to have this product or service, and spurs people into **taking action** in order to get it.

For years copywriters have used a common process to take them from USPs to emotive, attention-grabbing copy. In this guide we'll work through that process together, and see how to apply it to selling osteopathy.

Our Fictional Osteopath

Let's say we have a fictional osteopath, Beth. Beth has spent some time working through her USPs, and come up with these:

- Degree in osteopathy
- Back pain specialist
- Private practice for 5 years
- Continuous professional development
- Comfortable treatment room
- Friendly

Beth puts together an advert for her practice to place in the local newspaper, and it looks like this:



Osteopathic Treatment Available

My name is Beth Slater and I am an osteopath specialising in back pain. I have a degree in osteopathy and have been in private practice for 5 years.

I treat patients in my comfortable and modern treatment centre and regularly attend continuing professional development.

for more information call me on 020 1234 5678
or visit bethslater.com

Let's take Beth's copy and work through the copywriting process to see if we can make the advert more compelling, starting with **turning features into benefits**.

Turning Features into Benefits

The first step in the process of creating effective copy is to move from the **features** of what we are selling to the **benefits** of what we're selling. Features are simply describing the product, while benefits are 'why these features are important'. For example, if a feature of a car is that it has a powerful engine, the benefit of that is that the car can go fast.

The easiest way to start thinking about benefits is to ask of each feature 'so what?'. Let's take a look through Beth's features, asking 'so what?' for each one, which will lead us to identifying some benefits.

Beth has a degree in osteopathy. *So what?*

So she is a qualified and knowledgeable practitioner. *So what?*

So you get the best available care from a certified professional.

Back pain specialist. *So what?*

So she's an experienced expert at treating back pain. *So what?*

So you know you're getting the most appropriate treatment for your condition.

Private practice for 5 years. *So what?*

So she's established and experienced. *So what?*

So you know she's trusted by the community.

Continuous Professional Development. *So what?*

So she's always keeping up with the latest developments. *So what?*

So you're getting the benefit of the latest medical knowledge in your treatment.

Comfortable Treatment Room and Friendly Persona. *So what?*

So you will be treated in a nice environment by a friendly person. *So what?*

So you will feel at ease and not be nervous when receiving and discussing your treatment.

Now instead of a dry list of USPs, we already have a list of real-life reasons why you would choose Beth for your treatment:

- Get the best available care from a certified professional
- Get the benefits of the latest medical knowledge
- Get the most appropriate treatment for your condition
- Trusted by the community
- Feel relaxed and at ease receiving and discussing your treatment

You'll see we could have answered the 'so-what's in different ways. Instead of saying Beth is trusted by the community, we could have said she's probably treated your problem before. There's no right answer and as many 'so what's as you can find might all be useful later, so brainstorm away!

Before we go on, I'm going to add one more benefit to Beth's list, which is so obvious it's easy to miss, but is the real reason anyone visits you in the first place:

- I can cure your pain

Next we'll take our **benefits** and turn them into **emotions**.

Turning Benefits into Emotions

We already mentioned the importance of writing **emotive** copy. As human beings we don't make decisions with our heads but with our hearts, even (often) overriding the more logical decision for the one that's more appealing to our emotions.

When we write sales copy, we want to leverage this by giving our copy emotional appeal. Instead of the reader thinking 'that's interesting, that could be useful', we want them to think 'I want this' (and I want it now!).

We already have our benefits, which we defined in the last section, so the next step is to think about what emotions we can trigger with each particular benefit. Let's go through Beth's benefits and brainstorm what emotions we're tapping into.

I can cure your pain

Hope, freedom, lack of fear, power

Get the best available care from a certified professional

Reassurance, confidence, smart purchase factor

Get the benefits of the latest professional knowledge

Reassurance, confidence

Get the right treatment for your condition

Confidence, smart purchase factor

Trusted by the community

Congruence with tribe, smart purchase factor, trust, reassurance

Feel relaxed and at ease receiving and discussing your treatment

Pleasure, connection, trust, feeling valued

Now that we've identified our benefits and turned them into emotions, maybe we can start to play with Beth's advert and see what changes we can make so far:



Osteopathic Treatment Available

There's no need to suffer aches and pains.
Enjoy the freedom of a pain-free life with the
benefits of the latest osteopathic techniques.

For 5 years the people of Coventry have
trusted me to cure their ailments through
relaxed and friendly treatment.

For more information call me on 020 1234 5678
or visit bethslater.com

Already it feels a little better, the language is friendlier and more human, but we can still improve it a lot more. Let's move on to supercharging those emotions using the **hierarchy of needs**.

The Hierarchy of Needs

If you've ever studied psychology you'll have encountered *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*.

Maslow categorised our human desires into a hierarchy, going from physical safety, through to self-actualisation and living the fullest and truest life that we can.



Maslow's theory was that we would only start to desire one thing once we have achieved the thing below it in the pyramid. This is, of course, completely wrong, and many people will forego their safety or material comfort to pursue higher goals. But this is what makes the hierarchy so powerful to us as advertisers. People will forego their physical safety to pursue spiritual or ideological goals because *the higher up the hierarchy the emotional benefit, the more compelling it is*. This means we always want to be appealing to people's higher selves, their higher ambitions, the things that come higher up the pyramid.

Let's take a look at the osteopath's core marketing point, *I can cure your pain*, and see how we might change the way we put it across depending on what level of the pyramid we're focusing on.

Physiological Needs

I can cure your pain, making it easier for you to go about your daily life.

Safety Needs

I can cure your pain, allowing you to take care of yourself, perform better at work and prosper.

Love and Belonging

I can cure your pain, improving your relationship with your family and loved ones and making it easier for you to connect with other people.

Esteem

I can cure your pain, allowing you to live a proud and free life and gain the respect of others.

Self-Actualisation

I can cure your pain, allowing you to live life to the full and become the person you always dreamed of being.

Can you see how the messages become subtly more powerful as we work our way up? Going about my daily life easier is motivational, but not as powerful as improving my relationship with my loved ones, which isn't as powerful as being the person I always dreamed of being.

Some of these might seem to be bordering on the ridiculous: you're not going to gain the respect of others just for not being in pain, or are you? Imagine a commercial for pain relief cream, with a busy woman who is shown with colleagues at work listening respectfully to her, then with her kids looking admiringly and lovingly at her, then with her partner paying attention and agreeing with her. The slogan might be about getting on with a busy life, but the real message of the ad is "use this product and people will have more respect for you".

Now that we know how to incite desire in our audience, it's time to hold our nerves and **ask for the sale.**

Asking for the sale

One of the biggest failings of poor advertising and poor salespeople is not *asking for the sale*. As human beings we experience a large inertia to taking action and making a decision. We can be convinced that something is a good deal and know that it would be perfect for us, but often when purchasing we still need someone to quite literally tell us what to do, to outline the next step and encourage us to take it.

We also want to incentivise that step, to offer something for free in return for having taken it, which functions in the mind of the purchaser as an expression of our good faith and willingness to help.

You may think that you're not going to offer anything for free, but EVERY business offers something for free to new customers, whether they realise it or not. This could be free advice on the best product for you, a free quote from a builder, or in our osteopathic case, a free 10-minute telephone consultation. The fact you're going to have a chat with every potential patient on the phone anyway is entirely irrelevant. What we're doing is telling them the next step to take, and as a sign of our goodwill we're offering to do something in return for them when they take it.

So we should NEVER use phrases like "for more information call...", as we have done so far on Beth's adverts (tut tut), as only the most motivated customers will call. We need to say DO THIS, GET THIS, DO IT NOW. This is not the time for shyness.

In Beth's case, we can replace 'for more information call...' with 'call today for your FREE telephone consultation'. We've just removed a massive obstacle to purchase.

We're nearly there. Now we just need to learn how to put all these things together, the structure that creates compelling copy. That's what we'll do now, when we look at **AIDA**.

Putting it all Together with AIDA

Now we have all the raw materials we need to create some powerful copy, we just need a structure to put it in that makes sense. We don't want to ask for the sale before we've generated some desire for the product, we need to reel the customer in first. The formula copywriters use for this is AIDA, which stands for:

- Attention
- Interest
- Desire
- Action

First we need to get the potential customer's **attention**, then only once we have their attention can we start to develop their **interest** in our product. We then need to change that interest into an emotional **desire** to have our product, then spur them into taking **action**. Let's try it for Beth:

To gain **attention** we need a good headline. As we looked at in the first guide (the *attention bucket*), our potential patient is not wandering around looking for us, their attention is all over the place. If we can't grab their attention in a short headline, we're not going to get it at all. Instead of 'osteopathic treatment available', let's say:

Do you suffer from back pain?

If you do indeed suffer from back pain, I've got your attention and you'll read on to see whether this is something that **interests** you or not.

For the last 5 years I've been proud to practice osteopathy in Coventry, and to have the opportunity to help hundreds of local patients cure their back pain.

Ok, maybe you can cure my back pain too. I'm **interested**. What's next?

You too can experience the benefit of the latest osteopathic treatments in my comfortable private practice, helping you towards living the full and pain-free life you deserve.

Yes, I do want to live a full and pain-free life, and your private practice sounds really good. Now I actually **desire** what you have to offer.

Now we have **desire**, we just need **action**, by **asking for the sale**.

Call me today for a FREE private telephone consultation, and start putting pain behind you for good.

Let's see what we can come up for Beth with if we start putting these ideas together.



Back Pain?

For the last 5 years I've helped hundreds of Coventry residents cure their back pain.

You too can experience the benefit of the latest osteopathic treatments in my comfortable private practice, helping you towards the full and pain-free life you deserve.



Book your FREE private telephone consultation today
020 1234 5678 beth@bethslaterosteopathy.com

If I'm suffering from back pain, this is a much more powerful advert than any of the ones that come before. The same formula of AIDA can be used whether you're writing a small ad like this one, a newspaper article, web copy or anything else. The longer the copy, the more we embellish and drag out each section of AIDA, but the formula remains the same.

Last of all, let's wrap up with a couple of caveats and comments on what we've done for Beth.

Conclusion

Copywriting is an art. Although we have a formula for creating it, there's never a right answer. It comes down to psychology and what "feels" right and compelling, rather than what ticks the right boxes. As such there are a few things we have to bear in mind.

First of all, **where to draw the line**. Imagine if we took Beth's ad a step further, if we said that *our revolutionary modern techniques were guaranteed to quickly banish for good the pain that is stopping you being the person you always dreamed of being*. It sounds cheesy, salesy, over the top, and doesn't inspire confidence. Knowing how 'salesy' is enough and how much is too much is for you to decide as you find your unique voice and evolve the way you want to put your practice across to the world.

Secondly, **how much licence to take with the truth**. The example above is a bare-faced lie, no treatment is 'guaranteed' to banish your pain, and people know that, so they spot the lie. But we've also lied in the other ads. *'There's no need to suffer aches and pains'* is also a lie. You might not be able to cure the problem, so I might need to suffer aches and pains after all. Similarly, *'the full and pain-free life you deserve'* might be a reasonable goal for a 30-year old with backache stemming from a poor office chair, but not for an 80-year old with advanced arthritis.

The difference is that *people know this*. No 80-year old with advanced arthritis is expecting to be completely pain-free, and everyone knows there's no miracle cure, no matter how effective the treatment. We might have laid it on a little thick, but no-one can seriously accuse us of overplaying our skills. Again, the balance is down to you to decide.

Lastly, **we've been ruthless in picking our messages**. Along the way, we've dropped references to Beth's qualifications or CPD, because people will already assume she's a qualified professional who stays ahead of the game. We've also changed the message from 'osteopathic treatment available' to 'back pain', which is great for customers with back pain, but we could potentially lose out on patients with other problems who don't realise we could treat them as

well. Again, we discussed this in the first guide looking at *How Wide to Cast the Net*, and again the balance and how specifically to define your market for any given ad or copy is a decision for you to make. Happy copywriting!