**Chapter 10**

# Promotional Writing

◆***CHAPTER CONTENT***

**Key OBJECTIVES**

1. Describe the writer’s role in brand communication.
2. Name the types of brand communication writing.
3. Explain how to write for various media.
4. Identify some challenges that writers face.

## Chapter Overview

This chapter discusses the role of promotional writing in marketing communications and how brands use multiple platforms to communicate their message and engage their customers. Words and pictures work together to produce a creative concept. However, the idea behind a creative concept in communication is usually expressed in some attention-getting and memorable phrase. Finding these “magic words” is the responsibility of writers who search for the right way to warm up a mood or appeal to the audience. This chapter describes the role of the writer as part of a team and explains the practice of writing in advertising, public relations, and direct response in various types of media.

**Chapter Outline**

**the writer’s role in brand communication**

Writers in the different areas of brand communications have specialized skills. Advertising copywriting is a major job category. The ability to write well is equally critical for public relations and direct marketing. All of these areas have specialists,   
but in some agencies and corporate departments, writers are expected to handle all different types of marketing communication.

**The Language of Brand Communication**

* The most important word selection in marketing communication is the brand or corporate name, and this responsibility can lie with the advertising department, corporate communication, or an outside branding consultant.
* There is a science to letters, as well as words. Research has determined that letters with a hard edge like T or K suggest effectiveness, X and Z relate to science, and C, L, R, P, and S are calming and relaxing.
* Many brand names are made up, but it’s not just names that are created by marketing communicators. For example, the “uncola” position was created for 7UP and, more recently, the True Value hardware chain has proclaimed itself “masters of all things hardwarian,” a phrase that suggests mastery of a traditional art or skill.
* **Slogans** are a long-term brand or corporate identity effort. They must be catchy and memorable. It is a distinctive catchphrase that serves as a motto for a campaign, brand, or company and is used across a variety of marketing communication platforms and over an extended period of time.
* The word **tagline** is often used to refer to a slogan, but technically it means a line at the end of an ad that wraps up the creative concept. It’s more of a campaign theme than a brand slogan, so it is less enduring than a slogan.
* Slogans have to be original. Unfortunately, many corporate slogans fall back into marketing language or clichés, and for that reason, come across as leaden. A list of distinct and memorable slogans is featured in the textbook.
* Writers can increase the memorability of slogans with a variety of literary techniques. A list of ideas for accomplishing this are provided in the textbook.

**Writing Styles**

* Writing in brand communication can be formal or informal, personal or impersonal, and it uses all possible types of media. We discuss three types of promotional writing in this chapter: advertising, public relations, and direct response.

Advertising

* In almost all situations, advertising has to win its audience, which is no small task, given that it usually competes in a cluttered environment and the audience is generally inattentive and uninterested. For that reason, the copy should be as simple as possible.
* Every word counts because both space and time are expensive. Ineffective or overused words and phrases waste precious space. The challenge of writing verbal diamonds in 140 characters predates Twitter: consider that the average billboard has always been around eight words.
* Ad copy is usually written in a conversational style using the language of real people. You can listen to the legendary David Ogilvy talk about his views on advertising on YouTube.com. Copywriters try to write the way the target audience thinks and talks, often with personal language and direct address.
* Writing or print, video, audio, the internet, and social media demand that advertising copywriters apply styles appropriate to the media they employ and audience with which they communicate.

Public Relations

* A variety of styles of writing are used in public relations because there are so many different types of communication tools. Publicity, for example, is designed for news media and uses the basic stylistics of journalism. Corporate publications may be journalistic, while magazines may be more unconventional.
* Public relations professionals also produce corporate videos and news releases. The news releases and video news releases are more like television news, while corporate videos may function more like films with action and dramatic stories.
* Public relations departments also produce advertisements that may be created as part of a public relations campaign but also as corporate or advocacy point-of-view ads, or *public service advertising*.

Direct Response

* There are also a number of media formats used in direct-response writing – everything from direct-mail letters and brochures to online social media and customer service or technical support. For that reason, the writing style can be more or less formal, depending on the target audience.

**Strategy and Legal Imperatives**

* One thing that is common to all forms of brand communication is that it always has an objective and is designed to reach a particular audience. Even beautiful writing has to make strategy sing.
* In addition, claims must be tested to meet the basic requirements of the truth.   
  Are consumers being led astray by health claims on food packages, websites, and advertising? This presents a problem for public relations as well as advertising.

**types of brand communication writing**

We will start with copywriters because the other marketing communication areas also use advertising as part of their campaigns. Furthermore, many of the advertising writing practices apply to all forms of promotional writing.

**Advertising Copywriting**

* The person who shapes and sculpts the words in an advertisement is called a **copywriter**. *Copy* is the text of an ad or the words that people say in a commercial. Copywriters begin with the strategy and creative brief. Then, working with an art director and perhaps a creative director, the creative team searches for Big Ideas that translate the strategy into a message that is attention getting and memorable. A truly great Big Idea comes to life through the interaction between the words and pictures.
* Although advertising is highly visual, words are crucial in four types of advertisements:

1. ***Complex.*** If the message is complicated, words can be more specific than visuals and can be read over and over until the meaning is clear.
2. ***High involvement.*** If the ad is for a high-involvement product, meaning the consumer spends a lot of time considering it, then the more information the better, and that means using words.
3. ***Explanation.*** Information that needs definition and explanation, like how a new wireless phone works, is better delivered through words.
4. ***Abstract.*** If a message tries to convey abstract qualities, such as justice and quality, words tend to communicate these concepts more easily than pictures.

Love of Language

* A successful advertising copywriter is a savvy marketer and a literary master, sometimes described as a “killer poet.” Many copywriters have a background in English or literature. They love words and search for the clever twist, the pun, the powerful description, the punch, the nuance, as well as the rhythm and rhyme of speech.
* In addition to having an ear for the perfect phrase, copywriters listen to the way people talk and identify the tone of voice that best fits the target audience and the brand.
* Like poets, copywriters may spend hours, even days, crafting a paragraph. After many revisions, others read the copy and critique it. It then goes back to the writer, who continues to fine tune it. Copywriters must have thick skins, as there is always someone else reading their work, critiquing it, and asking for changes. Versatility is also a common trait in copywriters.
* According to Professor Karen Mallia, copywriters can rejoice because even with the new visual media, the power of words remains strong. She explains, “The power of words does not rest in their volume, but in their clever combination. In fact, the fewer the words, the more important every single one becomes.” The skill, she explains, is to “distill a thought down to its most concise, precise, and unexpected expression. That’s the reason that great copywriters will always be in demand.”

How to Write Effective Ad Copy

* The tighter the writing, the easier it is to understand and the greater its impact. Simple ads avoid being gimmicky, full of clichés, or too cute; they don’t try too hard or reach too far to make a point. The following list summarizes some of the guidelines for writing effective copy:
* ***Succinct***. Use short, familiar words, short sentences, and short paragraphs.
* ***Specific***. Don’t waste time on generalities. The more specific the message, the more attention-getting and memorable it is.
* ***Personal***. Directly address your audience whenever possible as “you” rather than “we” or “they.”
* ***Single focus***. Deliver a simple message instead of one that makes too many points. Focus on a single idea and support it.
* ***Conversational***. Use the language of everyday conversation. The copy should sound like two friends talking to one another, so don’t shy away from incomplete sentences, thought fragments, and contractions.
* ***Original***. To keep your copy forceful and persuasive, avoid stock advertising phrases, strings of superlatives and brag-and-boast statements, and clichés.
* ***News****.*News stories are attention-getting if they announce something that is truly newsworthy and important.
* ***Magic phrases****.*Phrases that grab and stick add power and memorability.
* ***Use variety***. To add visual appeal in both print and TV ads, avoid long blocks of copy in print ads. Instead, break the copy into short paragraphs with subheads. In TV commercials, break up monologues with visual changes, such as shots of the product, sound effects, and dialogue.
* ***Imaginative description****.* Use evocative or figurative language to build a picture in the consumer’s mind.
* ***A story with feeling****.* Stories are interesting and they have a structure that keeps attention and builds interest. But most importantly, they offer an opportunity to touch emotions.
* To develop the right **tone of voice**, copywriters write to the target audience. If the copywriter knows someone who fits the audience profile, he or she may write to that person as if they were in a conversation. If the writer does not know someone, one trick is to go through a photo file, select a picture of the person who fits the description and write to that person.
* Humor is a type of writing that copywriters use to create entertaining, funny ads. The idea is that if the humor works, the funny copy will lend a positive aura to a brand. It is particularly important to master funny writing if you are trying to reach an audience that is put off by conventional advertising, such as young males. The *Practical Tips* feature provides some suggestions on how to use humor in brand communication.

Grammar and Adese

* Copywriters are attuned to the niceties of grammar, syntax, and spelling, although sometimes they will play with a word or phrase to create an effect, even if it’s grammatically incorrect. To be avoided are meaningless words and words made meaningless by overuse.
* Formulaic advertising copy is one problem that is so obvious that comedians parody it. This type of formula writing, called **adese**, violates all the guidelines for writing effective copy. It is full of clichés, superlatives, stock phrases, and vague generalities.
* The pompous, overblown phrasing of many corporate statements doesn’t work – it does not get attention, it’s not memorable, and it is not read. We call it **your-name-here copy** because almost any company can use those words and tack their signature on the end.To see more advertising clichés, visit www.the-top-tens.com/lists/msost-overused-advertising-cliches.asp and vote for your favorite.
* Another type of adese is **brag-and-boast copy**, which is “we” copy written from the company’s point of view with a pompous tone. Because people are so conditioned to screen out advertising, messages that use this predictable style are easy to ignore or parody if you’re a comedian.

**Public Relations Writing**

* Writing is a fundamental skill for public relations professionals. Like copywriters, public relations writers need to be able to write in various forms and styles across media platforms. Their work includes writing news releases, pitch letters, features, and op-ed pieces. They also need to be able to communicate interactively on social media.
* Key to writing effectively in these many forms is writing simply in language the reader understands. It sounds easy, but in practice, it is very challenging. Public relations professional Fraser Seitel offers the following tips for success:
  + The idea must precede the expression. Identify what you want to communicate.
  + Don’t be afraid of the draft. Write and revise.
  + Simplify, clarify.
  + Write to a specific audience.

News Releases

* A primary way to communicate public relations messages is through a **news release**. According to Seitel, a news release is “the single most important public relations vehicle.” News stories are written for both internal corporate media, such as newsletters and magazines, and for external media, such as newspapers and television stations.
* The primary criterion for a news story is newsworthiness. Editors judge news value based on such considerations as *timeliness*, *proximity*, *or impact*.For news stories, the traditional journalism “five W” form is followed. In other words, the first sentence clearly states the facts in such a way that the focus, as well as the importance of the news, is immediately obvious. Video news releases are distributed to broadcast media with footage that explains the story.

Features

* Less reliant on news, **feature stories** focus on *human interest*. Although the formats may differ slightly, news and feature stories are written for and distributed to print and broadcast media, as well as the internet.

Social Media Opportunities

* Good communicators in social media have the ability to create a direct relationship between a brand and consumers. In the context of marketing communication, the content distributed across the social media network helps users and the brand engage in a dialogue.

**Direct-Response Writing**

* Direct-response messages are often longer and contain more explanation and detail than other forms of marketing communication. That is because if the message does not provide enough information and motivate the receiver to respond in some way, the message is wasted.
* Because direct-response messages can be individually targeted, the more personalized the message, the better. Most important is that the message needs to counter consumers’ reluctance to buy. Most will include copy intended to put the buyer’s mind to rest. Guarantees and warranties are important, but other strategies, such as testimonials, are used to reassure buyers about the company’s reliability.

**Writing for various media**

Different types of media have different styles, restrictions, and audiences. Writers adjust their presentation to accommodate the stylistic differences of the medium.

**Basics of Writing for Print Media**

* The two categories of copy that print uses are display copy and body copy (or text). **Display copy** includes all elements that readers see in their initial scanning. These elements - headlines, subheads, call-outs, and taglines - are usually set in larger type sizes than body copy and are designed to get attention and to stop the viewer’s scanning. **Body copy** includes the elements that are designed to be read and absorbed, such as the text of the ad message and captions.
* Although we have suggested that ad copy should be succinct, some respected copywriters, such as David Ogilvy and Howard Gossage, were successful in writing long copy ads that intrigued their audiences.
* The most common tools in the print writer’s toolkit are:
* The **headline** is a phrase or sentence that serves as the opening to the ad. It’s usually identified by larger type or a prominent position, and its purpose is to catch attention.
* **Overlines and Underlines** are phrases or sentences that either lead into the headline or follow up on the thought of the headline. They are usually set in smaller type than the headline.
* **Body Copy** is the text of the ad. It’s usually smaller-sized type and written in paragraphs or multiple lines. Its purpose is to explain the idea or selling point.
* **Subheads** are used in longer copy blocks to begin a new section of the copy. They are usually bold type or larger than the body copy. Their purpose is to make the logic clear to the reader. They are usually used by people who scan copy.
* **Call-outs** are sentences that float around the visual, usually with a line or arrow pointing to specific element in the visual that they name and explain.
* **Captions** are sentences or short pieces of copy that explain what you are looking at in a photo or illustration. Captions are not used very often in advertising because the visuals are assumed to be self-explanatory.
* **Taglines** are short phrases that wrap up the creative idea or creative concept. They usually appear at the end of the body copy and often refer back to the headline or opening phrase in an ad.
* **Call to action** is a line at the end of an ad that encourages people to respond and give information on how to respond. Typically, the response information is an address, email address, toll-free number, or a web address.

Display Copy

* The **headline** is a key element in print pieces. It conveys the main message so that people get the point of the message. It also works with the visual to get attention and communicate the creative concept. Headlines come across best when a picture and words are working together.
* People who are scanning may read nothing more, so advertisers want to at least register a point with the consumer. The point has to be clear from the headline or the combination of headline and visual. That is particularly true with outdoor boards. Researchers estimate that only 20 percent of those who read the headline in advertising go on to read the body copy, so if they take away anything from the ad, it needs to be clear in the headline.
* Headlines need to be catchy phrases, but they also have to convey an idea and attract the right target audience. Agencies copy test headlines to make sure they can be understood at a glance and that they communicate exactly the right idea. Split-run tests (two versions of the same ad) in direct mail have shown that changing the wording of the headline while keeping all other elements constant can double, triple, or quadruple consumer response.
* Because headlines are so important, some general principles guide their development and explain the particular functions they serve:
* ***Target.***A good headline will attract only those who are prospects. In other words, use the headline to tightly target the right audience.
* ***Stop and grab.*** The headline must work in combination with the visual to stop and grab the reader’s attention.
* ***Identify.*** The headline should identify or suggest the company, product, or brand. The Big Idea should also be evident in the headline.
* ***Change scanning to reading.*** The headline should lead readers into the body copy. For this to happen, readers have to stop scanning and start concentrating. This change in mindset is the reason why only 20 percent of scanners become readers.
* Headlines can be grouped into two general categories: **direct-action** and **indirect**-**action**. Direct action headlines are straightforward and informative. They are highly targeted, but may fail to lead the reader into the message if they are not captivating enough. Indirect-action headlines are not as selective and may not provide as much information but may be better at drawing the reader into the message and building a brand image.
* Some common types of direct-action headlines are:
* ***Assertion:*** An assertion is a headline that states a claim or a promise that will motivate someone to try the product.
* ***Command:*** A command headline politely tells the reader to do something.
* ***How-to heads:*** People are rewarded for investigating a product when the message tells them how to use it or how to solve a problem.
* ***News announcements:*** News headlines are used with new-product introductions, but also with changes, reformulations, new styles, and new users. The news value is thought to get attention and motivate people to try the product.

Some common types of indirect-action headlines are:

* ***Puzzles:*** Used strictly for their curiosity and provocative power, puzzling statements, ambiguities, and questions require the reader to examine the body copy to get the answer or explanation. The intention is to pull readers into the body copy.
* ***Associations:*** These headlines use image and lifestyle to get attention and build interest.
* Sometimes indirect headlines are called **blind headlines** because they give so little information. A blind headline is a gamble. If it is not informative or intriguing enough, the reader may move on without absorbing any product name information. But if it works as an attention getter, it can be very effective.
* Next to the headline, **captions** have the second-highest readership. In addition to their pulling power, they provide information. Copywriters also craft **subheads** that continue to help lure the reader into the body copy. Subheads are considered display copy in that they are usually larger and set in different type than the body copy. Subheads are sectional headlines and are also used to break up a mass of gray type into a large block of copy.
* **Taglines** are short catchy phrases and particularly memorable phrases used at the end of an ad to complete or wrap up the creative idea.

Body Copy

* The body copy is the text of the ad and its primary role is to maintain the interest of the reader. It provides information, states the argument, summarizes the proof, and provides explanation. It is the information, and in the case of advertising, the persuasive heart of the message. The *Matter of Principle* feature in this chapter explains the logic and message strategy behind Nike’s women’s campaign, which focuses on self-awareness.
* Two paragraphs get special attention in body copy: the **lead** paragraph and the **closing** paragraph. The lead, the first paragraph of the body copy, is another point where people test the message to see if they want to read it.
* **Closing** paragraphs in body copy serve several functions. Usually the last paragraph refers back to the creative concept and wrap up the Big Idea. Direct-action messages usually end with a **call to action** with instructions on how to respond.

Print Media Requirements

* Media in the print category, which include newspapers, magazines, outdoor boards, and product literature, all use the same copy elements, such as headlines and body copy. However, the way these elements are used varies with the objectives for using the medium.
* Magazines offer better quality ad production, which is important for brand image and high-fashion advertising. Consumers may clip and file advertising that ties in with the magazine’s special interest as reference information. This type of magazine ad can be more informative and carry longer copy than do newspaper ads. Publicity writers and copywriters take care to craft clever phrasing for the headlines and the body copy, which may sometimes read more like poetry.
* Directories that provide contact information, such as addresses or phone numbers, often carry display advertising. In writing a directory ad, copywriters advise using a headline that focuses on the service or store personality. Complicated explanations don’t work well because of space limitations. Putting in information that is subject to change can become a problem because the directory is published only once a year.
* Posters and outdoor boards are primarily visual, although the words generally try to catch consumers’ attention and lock in an idea, registering a message. The most important characteristic of copywriting for outdoor advertising is brevity. The copy must catch attention and be memorable. An effective poster is built around a creative concept that marries the words with the visual.
* Sometimes called **collateral materials** because they are used in support of a campaign, brochures, pamphlets, and other materials provide details about a product, company, or event.
* Typically, **product literature** is a heavy-copy format or at least a format that provides room for explanatory details along with visuals; the body copy may dominate the piece. For a pamphlet with folds, the writer must also consider how the message is conveyed as the piece is unfolded.

**Radio Messages and How to Write Them**

* Advertisers use radio to build brands because DJ endorsements and on-air chatter can help build trust. Radio can also remind consumers close to their time of purchase, when advertising is most effective. Today, radio is no longer a medium that communicates only with mass audiences. It is also capable of delivering enhanced personal interactivity to listeners through text messages, mobile apps, and time-shifting listening through podcasts.
* Ads that are broadcast on either radio or television are usually 15, 30, or 60 seconds in length, although 10- and 15-second spots may be used for brand reminders or station identification. This short length means the commercials must be simple enough for consumers to grasp, yet intriguing enough to prevent viewers from switching the station. That’s why creativity is important to create clutter-busting ads that break through the surrounding noise and catch the listener’s attention.
* Radio is pervasive in that it surrounds many of our activities, but it is seldom the listener’s center of attention. Because radio is a transitory medium and listeners are usually in the car or doing something else, the ability of the listener to remember facts is difficult. That’s why copywriters repeat the key points of brand name and identification information.
* Radio’s special advantage, referred to as **theater of the mind**, is that the story is visualized in the listener’s imagination. Radio copywriters imagine they are writing a musical play that will be performed before an audience whose eyes are closed. The writer has the theatrical tools of voices, music, and sound effect, but no visuals.

Tools of Radio Writing

In radio advertising, the tools are the audio elements the copywriter uses to craft a commercial: voice, music, and sound effects*.*

* The most important element in radio advertising is the human voice, which is heard in songs, spoken dialogue, and announcements. Most commercials use an announcer either as the central voice or at the closing to wrap up the product identification. The voices specified by the writer helps listeners ‘see’ the personalities in the brand message.
* In radio, speaking style should match the speech of the target audience. Each group has its own way of speaking and its own phrasing. We talk in short sentences, sentence fragments, and use run-ons and contractions that would drive an English teacher crazy. Effective copywriting picks up the nuances of people’s speech so it will sound natural.
* Music is as important as the voice in radio writing. Music can trigger an emotional response. Using music and sonic logos consistently can strengthen brand recognition. The primary use of music is a **jingle**, which is a commercial in song. Radio copywriters understand the interplay of catchy phrases and “hummable” music that creates little songs that stick in our minds.
* Organizations can have a piece of music composed for a commercial or borrow it from previously recorded songs. Numerous music libraries sell *stock music* that is not copyrighted. In addition to customer-made jingles, many *jingle houses* create “syndicated” jingles made up of a piece of music sold to several different local advertisers in different markets around the country.
* Sound effects are the icing on the radio message. The sound of seagulls, automobile horns honking, and the cheers of fans at a stadium all create images in our minds to cue the setting and drive the action. Sound effects help make a commercial attention-getting and memorable. Sound effects can be original, but more often they are taken from *sound-effect libraries* on CDs or online.

The Practice of Radio Writing

Below is a list of guidelines for writing effective radio commercials that address the distinctive characteristics of radio advertising:

* ***Keep it personal***. Radio advertising has an advantage over print – the human voice. The copy for radio ads should use conversational language – as if someone is talking with the consumer rather than selling to the consumer.
* ***Speak to listeners’ interests***. Radio offers specialized programming to target markets. Listeners tune in to hear music, but talk radio is popular too. Copywriters design commercials to speak to that audience interest and use the appropriate music and tone of voice.
* ***Wake up the inattentive****.* Most people who are listening to the radio are doing something else at the same time. Radio spots are designed to break through and capture attention in the first three seconds with sound effects, music, questions, commands, or something unexpected.
* ***Make it memorable***. To help the listener remember what you are selling, commercial copy should mention the name of the product emphatically and repeat it. An average of three mentions in a 30-second commercial and five mentions in a 60-second commercial are recommended, as long as the repetition is not done in a forced and/or annoying manner.
* ***Include call to action***. The last thing listeners hear is what they tend to remember, so copywriters make sure the product is it. In radio, this is especially important since there is no way to show a picture of the product or its label.
* ***Create image transfer***. Radio advertisements are sometimes designed to link to a television commercial. Called **image transfer**, the visuals from the television version are recreated in a listener’s mind by the use of key phrases and ideas from the television commercial.
* Writers working on a radio commercial use a standard **radio script** format to write the copy to certain time blocks—all the words, dialogue, lyrics, sound effects, instructions, and descriptions. The instructions and descriptions are to help the producer tape the commercial so that it sounds exactly as the copywriter imagined. The script format usually has the source of the audio written down the left side and the content on the right. The instructions and descriptions, anything that isn’t spoken, are typed in capital letters.

**Television/Video Messages and How to Write Them**

* Television writers understand that it is the moving image—the action—which makes television so much more engaging than print. The challenge for the writer is to fuse the images with the words to present not only a creative concept, but also a story. One of the strengths of television is its ability to reinforce verbal messages with visuals or reinforce visuals with verbal messages.
* *Principle: The ability to touch our emotions and to show us things – to demonstrate how they look and work – makes video highly persuasive.*
* Viewers watching a program they enjoy often are absorbed to a degree only slightly less than experienced by people watching a movie in a darkened theater. Storytelling is one way copywriters can present action in a television message more powerfully than in other media.
* Effective television messages are written to maximize the dramatic aspects of moving images and storytelling, as the *A Matter of Practice* feature in this chapter explains about the emotional pivot in a story.
* Dramatic stories with high emotion, as well as demonstrations, are just a few of the techniques used in television writing. Others are:
* ***Action.*** Good television messages use the effect of action and motion to attract attention and sustain interest.
* ***Demonstration.*** Seeing is believing. Believability and credibility, the essence of persuasion, are high because we believe what we see with our own eyes.
* ***Storytelling.*** Television is our society’s master storyteller because of its ability to present plot and the action that leads to a conclusion in which the product plays a major role.
* ***Emotion.*** The ability to touch the feelings of the viewer makes television commercials entertaining, diverting, amusing, and absorbing.

Tools of Writing for Television/Video

* Television writers have two primary toolkits: audio and visual. Both words and pictures are designed to create exactly the right impact. Because of the number of visual and audio elements as well as the many ways they can be combined, a television commercial is among the most complex of all brand communication forms. It is also ideal for storytelling.
* When we watch a commercial, we are more aware of what we are seeing than anything else. Copywriters keep in mind that visuals and motion, the silent speech of film, should convey as much of the message as possible. **Animation** involves photographing successive drawings of images that give the illusion of motion.
* Likewise, emotion, which is the effect created by storytelling, is expressed convincingly in facial expressions, gestures, and other body language. Because television is theatrical, many of the copywriter’s tools, such as characters, costumes, sets and location, props, lighting, optical and computerized special effects, and on-screen graphics, are similar to those you would use in a play, television show, or movie.
* As in radio, the three audio elements are music, voices, and sound effects, but they are used differently in television commercials because they are connected to a visual image.
* A common manipulation of the camera-announcer relationship is the **voice-over**, in which an announcer who is not visible describes some kind of action on the screen. Sometimes a voice is heard **off camera**, which means you can’t see the speaker and the voice is coming from the side, behind, or above.
* Dialogue, both in radio and television, is an interesting challenge for writers who try to keep the words natural and the interaction interesting. Music is also important. It creates moods, heightens emotions, and has the potential to create a memorable aural signature for a brand.
* Other creative tools that support the story line are the setting, casting, costumes, props, and lighting, all of which the writer must describe in the script. The setting, or **set**,is where the action takes place. It can be something in the studio, from a simple tabletop to a constructed set that represents a storefront or the inside of a home, or it can be a computer creation layered behind the action. Video shot outside the studio are said to be filmed **on location**, which means the entire crew and cast are transported somewhere away from the studio.
* For many brand messages, the most important element is the people, who are called **talent**. Finding the right person for each role is called **casting**. People can be cast as announcers, spokespersons, character types, or celebrities.
* Costumes and makeup can be an important part of the story, depending upon the characterizations in the commercial. The writer must specify all the details of the script. The director usually manipulates the lighting, but the writer may specify special lighting effects for the script. Writers might have to specify the commercial’s **pace**—how fast or slow the action progresses.

Planning the Television Message

* Writers must plan how long the commercial will be, what shots will appear in each scene, what the key visual will be, and where and how to shoot the commercial. In addition, the copywriter has to consider the length, number of scenes, and key frames. Other key decisions the copywriter must consider in planning a commercial are the length, number of scenes, and key frames.
* The common lengths of TV commercials are 10, 15, 20, 30, and 60 seconds. The 10-, 15-, and 20-second lengths are used as reminders and product or station identification. The 60-second spot, which is common in radio, has almost disappeared in television because of the increasing cost of airtime. The most common length for a TV commercial is 30 seconds.
* A commercial is planned in **scenes**—segments of action that occur in a single location. A scene may include several shots from different angles. A 30-second commercial usually is planned with four to six scenes, but a fast-paced commercial may have many more. Because television is a visual medium, the message is often developed from a **key visual** that contains the heart of the concept. The **key frame** is that visual that sticks in the mind and becomes the image that viewers remember when they think about the commercial.
* Writers need to answer many questions such as: How much product information should be in the commercial or announcement? Should the action be fast or slow? How intrusive should the ad be to catch people’s attention?
* The key to the structure of a television script is the relationship between the audio and the video. A **storyboard**, which is the visual plan or layout of the commercial, is drawn by hand or on the computer to show the number of scenes, the composition of the shots, and the progression of the action. A **photo board** uses photographic stills instead of art to illustrate the progression of images. It is created from the still photos or frames from the filming and is used to present to clients.

**How to Write for the Internet: Online Media**

* The internet is more interactive than any other mass medium. Not only does the viewer initiate the contact, but they can respond as well. This makes the internet more like two-way (or multiple-way) communication, which is a major point of difference from the other advertising forms. As a result, the internet writer is challenged to attract people to the brand and to manage a dialogue-based communication experience.
* ***Principle:*** *To write great copy for the Web, copywriters must think of it as an interactive medium and open up opportunities for dialogue with the consumer.*
* Internet writers write everything from catchy phrases for banners to copy that works like traditional advertisements, brochures, or catalogs. Email and video ads, as well as mobile ads on smart phones, all require variations of traditional copywriting techniques. Most of these formats end with a link to the sponsor’s website where the user can participate in a more interactive brand experience.

Websites

* The challenge for internet writers is to understand the user’s situation and design messages that fit their needs and interests. The Web is an informational medium and users come to it, in some cases, for reference information – formats that look a lot like catalogs or even encyclopedias. Keywords are used to help *visitors* or *surfers* search for the site online, as well as within the site for the information they need. Be mindful of the **user experience (UX)** because a good experience translates to higher conversion rates.
* Some tips for writing for websites are:
  + Call out important words.
  + Use subheads to break up major copy blocks.
  + Keep it simple.
  + Convert paragraphs to bullet points.
  + Limit your text links.
  + Lead with the main message and then drill down.
  + Keep it short.
  + Scrolling is okay.

Blogs

* **Blogs** are an interactive form of communication on websites that offer commentary and can serve many purposes, including promoting products and ideas. They can be informational and help convey a brand personality through personal stories, give news and industry updates, to name a few uses.
* Public relations practitioners find blogs attractive as a strategy for building relationships because they have the potential to build credibility, foster goodwill, and form a positive reputation. Writers need to think carefully about what they post in terms of content and style, since once the blog is on the internet, it’s there to stay.

Internet Display Ads

* Similar in some ways to traditional advertising, internet ads are designed to create awareness and interest in a product and build a brand image. Display ads range in format, and in terms of creating interest, good copywriting is important.
* The most common form of online advertising is a small **banner ad** containing a little bit of text, images that grab attention, and perhaps motion and sound. To avoid being ignored, banners in this small format have to be creative to stand out amidst the clutter on a typical web page. Effective banners arouse the interest of the viewer, who is often browsing through other information on the computer screen. It is critical to make the site easy to navigate.
* **Native advertising** blends promotional messages with other content. Usually online, this type of advertising is a hybrid, combining a promotional message and other information to an extent that makes it hard to categorize into a traditional IMC category.
* Although considered a hot, new term for a specific type of online advertising, the concept really isn’t that new. In other forms, it’s known as advertorials and infomercials, which intertwine content with sponsorships.

Social Media

* In this complicated, fast-changing environment, there are not a lot of rules for social media writers. In the textbook, a Director of Integrated Marketing Communications at a Texas hospital offers several tips for brand communicators in interactive media.

**challenges writers face**

* The copywriter’s job is to find a memorable way to express the creative concept.   
  A writer’s talent will do no good if the audience cannot understand the “magic words.” This is particularly complicated in global brand communication.

**Writing for a Global Brand**

* Language affects the presentation of the message, which is a problem for global campaigns. English is more economical than many other languages. Standardizing the copy content by translating the appeal into the language of the foreign market is fraught with possible communication blunders. It is rare to find a copywriter who is fluent in both the domestic and foreign language and familiar with the culture of the foreign market.
* Headlines in any language often rely on humor, a play on words, or slang. Because these verbal techniques don’t cross borders well, writers remove them from international campaigns unless the meaning or intent can be recreated in other languages. For this reason, international campaigns are not literally translated. Instead, a copywriter usually rewrites them in the second language.
* The major distinction in cross-cultural communication is between **high-context** and **low-context cultures**. In high-context cultures, a message can be best understood when interpreted within contextual cues. In a low-context culture, a message can be understood as it stands.
* Experience suggests that the most reasonable solution to the language problem is to use bilingual copywriters who understand the full meaning of the English text and can capture the essence of the message in the second language. A **back translation** of the ad copy from the foreign language into the domestic one is always a good idea, but it seldom conveys a complete cultural interpretation.
* The most recent announcement on the global stage is the opening up of the internet to non-Roman letters, such as those used in Chinese, Korean, and Arabic. It’s a challenge to develop translations for these languages so that a posting can be read in its original language, as well as in Roman-letter alphabets. However, improved technology is making this possible.

◆***END-OF-CHAPTER SUPPORT***

**Review Questions**

**10-3. What qualities make a good tagline or slogan?**

Slogans are a long-term brand or corporate identity effort. They must be catchy and memorable. It is a distinctive catchphrase that serves as a motto for a campaign, brand,   
or company and is used across a variety of marketing communication platforms and over an extended period of time. The best slogans have a close link to the brand name. A good slogan is enduring – they are rarely changed. They also have to be original.

The word tagline is often used to refer to a slogan, but technically it means a line at the end of an ad that wraps up the creative concept. It’s more of a campaign theme than a brand slogan, so it is less enduring than a slogan. They are short phrases that wrap up the creative idea or creative concept. They usually appear at the end of the body copy and often refer back to the headline or opening phrase in an ad.

**10-4. Discuss the differences in writing for advertising, public relations, and direct response.**

In almost all situations, advertising has to win its audience, which is no small task, given that it usually competes in a cluttered environment and the audience is generally inattentive and uninterested. For that reason, the copy should be as simple as possible. Every word counts because both space and time are expensive. Ineffective or overused words and phrases waste precious space. Ad copy is usually written in a conversational style using the language of real people. Copywriters try to write the way the target audience thinks and talks, often with personal language and direct address.

However, a variety of writing styles are used in public relations because that area uses so many different types of communication tools. Publicity, for example, is designed for news media and uses the basic stylistics of journalism, while corporate publications may sometimes be more unconventional. Press releases and video news releases are more like television news but corporate videos may function more like films with action and dramatic stories.

Direct-response messages are often longer and contain more explanation and detail than other forms of marketing communication. That is because if the message does not provide enough information and motivate the receiver to respond in some way, the message is wasted. Because direct-response messages can be individually targeted, the more personalized the message, the better. Most importantly, the message needs to counter consumers’ reluctance to buy. Most will include copy intended to put the buyer’s mind to rest.

**10-5. Describe the various copy elements of a print ad.**

The two categories of copy that print uses are display copy and body copy (or text). Display copy includes all elements that readers see in their initial scanning. These elements - headlines, subheads, call-outs, and taglines - are usually set in larger type sizes than body copy and are designed to get attention and to stop the viewer’s scanning. Body copy includes the elements that are designed to be read and absorbed, such as the text of the ad message and captions. Other common tools in the print writer’s toolkit are headlines, overlines and underlines, subheads, call-outs, captions, taglines, and calls to action.

**10-6. List with examples the techniques used by writers to create effective slogans.**

***A startling or unexpected phrase.*** Adding a twist to a common phrase to make it unexpected—for example, “If it’s out there, it’s in here.”

***Rhyme, rhythm, alliteration.*** Using repeated sounds, as in the Wall Street Journal’s slogan, “The daily diary of the American Dream.”

***Parallel construction.*** Using repetition in the structure of a sentence or phrase, such as “When it rains, it pours.”

***Cue the product.*** For example, “Good to the last drop,” and “Breakfast of champions.”

***Music.*** For example, “In the valley of the Jolly, ho-ho-ho, Green Giant.”

***Combination.*** For instance, “It’s your land, lend a hand.”

***Keeping them short.*** The general trend is two or three words.

**10-7. List the types of promotional writing, and explain their commonalities and differences.**

***Advertising.*** In most situations, the goal of advertising is to win over an audience. For this reason, the copy should be as simple as possible. Every word counts, because space and time are both expensive. Ineffective or overused words and phrases waste precious space. Effective copy is succinct, single-minded, and tightly focused. Ads are usually written in a conversational style, using ordinary language—copywriters try to write the way that people from the target audience think and talk, often using personal language and direct address.

***Public relations.*** There are a variety of writing styles used in public relations because the field employs many different types of communication tools. Publicity is designed for news media and use the basic stylistics of journalism. Corporate publications, such as newsletters and magazines, may be journalistic, and magazines may be more unconventional, with features on employees and moving personal stories. Public relations also produces corporate videos and press releases, and brochures that vary from informational to technical, depending on the intended audience. So, public relations writers must be well versed in the stylistics of advertising writing.

***Direct response.*** There are a number of media formats used in direct-response writing—direct-mail letters, brochures, social media, and customer service or technical support. As such, the writing style can be more or less formal, depending on the target audience. The objective of many direct-response efforts is to talk to individual customers or prospects using personalized messages and direct address to build positive relationships with them. A conversational style is more appropriate for interactive forms that engage consumers individually.

**10-8. One principle of print writing is that the headline catches the reader’s eye but the body copy wins the reader’s heart and mind. Find an ad that demonstrates that principle and explain how it works.**

Print ads selected by students will vary. When selecting their example, students should be guided by the premise that well written headlines interrupt the readers’ scanning and grabs their attention, and well written body copy persuades the reader through its sales message, argument, and explanation.

**10-9. Explain the process of copywriting an ad in terms of the team members involved.**

An *ad copywriter* shapes the text in advertisements. Copy is the text used in an ad or the words people say in a commercial. Copywriters begin with a strategy and creative brief. Then, working collaboratively with an *art director*, and perhaps even a creative director, the creative team searches for Big Ideas in the form of magical words and powerful visuals that translate the strategy into an attention-grabbing and memorable message. A truly great Big Idea will come to life through the seamless interaction between the words and pictures.

**10-10. What are the main characteristics of a successful copywriter?**

A successful copywriter is one who has mastery over the language and is capable of marketing anything. Versatility is a common trait among copywriters. They can write about a diverse range of products, from toilet paper to Mack trucks, and effortlessly adapt their writing styles to match the product and language of the target audience.

Many copywriters have degrees in the language they write in or in literature. They love playing with words and often add a clever twist or a pun to the text; they aim to create powerful descriptions while focusing on rhyme and rhythm.

In addition to having a knack for crafting the perfect phrase, great copywriters listen to how people talk and identify the tone of voice that best fits the target audience and brand. In other words, great copywriters should be extremely observant. Copywriters must also have thick skin, as there will always be someone else reading their work, critiquing it, and requesting changes and revisions.

**10-11. What are the major forms of writing for public relations professionals?**

Writing is a fundamental skill for public relations professionals. Like copywriters, public relations writers need to be able to express themselves in various forms and styles across different media platforms. Their work includes writing news releases, pitch letters, features, and op-ed pieces. They also need to be able to communicate interactively on social media.

The work of public relations professionals may also include publicity that is designed for news media and therefore requires the basic stylistics of journalism. Also, they may write copy for corporate publications, which is more journalistic, or magazines, which may be more unconventional. Public relations professionals also produce corporate videos, news releases, and advertisements that may be created as part of a public relations campaign, such as advocacy point-of-view ads or public service advertising.

News releases are another primary way to communicate public relations. News releases and video news releases are more like television news, as compared to corporate videos that may function more like films with action and dramatic stories. The primary criterion for a news release is newsworthiness, since editors judge news value based on such considerations as timeliness, proximity, or impact. For news stories, the traditional journalism “five W” form is followed. Public relations professionals may also be called upon to write feature stories, which focus more on human interest.

Key to writing effectively in these many forms is using simple language the reader understands. It sounds easy, but in practice, it is very challenging.

**Discussion Questions**

**10-12.** Creative directors say the copy and art must work together to create a concept. Consider all of the ads in this chapter and the preceding chapters and identify one that you believe best demonstrates that principle. Explain what the words contribute and how they work with the visual.

*Students will select different advertisements to discuss, but within the variety of samples they should cover several similar points.*

*Art and copy must have a single focus. Readers should receive the same message from both of the advertisement’s elements. Impressions gleaned from the art must be reinforced in the copy and vice versa.*

*Although art and copy have to work together, each performs a different function in an ad. Art tends to be the element that stops readers and pulls them into the ad, and, with hope, invites them to read the copy. Visuals tend to communicate faster and be remembered longer than copy. Art cannot, however, deliver details and explanations.*

*Copy lends its particular strengths in communicating complicated messages, informing about high-involvement items, explaining how to use products, clarifying abstract qualities, and locking in key phrases.*

*Different products will require different combinations of art and copy, and the most effective ads will strike the appropriate balance between visual and text.*

**10-13.** What do we mean by *tone of voice*, and why is it important in advertising, public relations, and direct response? Find a magazine ad that you think has an appropriate tone of voice for its targeted audience (the readers of that particular magazine) and one that doesn’t. Discuss your analyses of these two ads.

*Copywriters listen to the way people talk and identify the tone of voice that best fits the target audience and the brand. To develop the right tone of voice, often copywriters write to the target audience. If the copywriter knows someone who fits the audience profile, he or she may write to that person as if they were in a conversation. This information should guide students as they are making selections from various magazines.*

**10-14.** Your instructor divides the class into three groups. Two groups are requested to prepare a radio ad for a local orphanage to attract charity donations. The third group, to which you belong, will act as the jury to decide which ad is more effective and successful in meeting the ad objective.

As a means of evaluating each ad, explain and interpret the creative process, the writing style, the production characteristics, the appeal used, and the interplay between emotions and logic for each.

*Although responses to this question will vary, all students should cover the following:*

***Radio program.*** *Writers must keep in mind that there are three audio tools to be used—voice, music, and sound effects.*

***The creative process.*** *This includes strategizing and scripting the best ways to deliver the message.*

***The writing style.*** *It should be direct response.*

*Written content is interpreted and evaluated based on one of the following criteria:*

***Keep it personal.*** *The copy for radio ads should use conversational language.*

***Speak to listeners’ interests.*** *Writers should design commercials that cater to the audience’s interests, using appropriate music and tone of voice.*

***Wake up the inattentive.*** *Most people listen to the radio while doing something else simultaneously, so radio messages should be designed to capture their attention in the first three seconds, using sound effects, music, questions, commands, or something unexpected.*

***Make it memorable.*** *To help the listener remember what is being sold, ads should mention the product name emphatically and repeatedly. Copywriters use taglines and other key phrases to lock the product in the consumer’s memory.*

***Include call to action.*** *Listeners tend to remember the last thing they hear, so writers should make sure that it is the product name. The final words should communicate the Big Idea through a call to action and remind listeners of the brand name.*

***Create image transfer.*** *Radio messages are sometimes designed to link to a television commercial for the same product.*

***Production characteristics.*** *The ad must be believable, attract attention, and ensure that the message can be ingested by the audience with minimal effort. Also, the voice must be evaluated for its nonverbal communication, as it can convey more than just what the words mean.*

**10**-**15.** Critique the following (choose one):

* 1. Jingles are a popular creative form in radio advertising. Even so, there may be as many jingles that you don’t want to hear again as there are ones that you do. Identify one jingle that you really dislike and another that you like. Analyze why these jingles either work or don’t work effectively for you and present your critique to your class.

*Student responses to this question will vary. However, radio copywriters understand that effective jingles are those in which an interplay between catchy phrases and “hummable” music work together to create little songs that stick in our minds. The best jingles are those that consumers can sing along with, thereby helping them to remember and get involved with the message.*

* 1. Surf the web and find one banner ad that you think works to drive click-throughs and one that doesn’t. Print them out and prepare an analysis that compares the two banner ads and explain why you think one is effective and the other is not. Present your critique to the class.

*Student responses to this question will vary. However, internet copywriters understand that banners in this small format have to be creative to stand out amidst the clutter on a typical Web page and, similar to outdoor advertising, they have to grab the surfer’s attention with few words. Effective banners arouse the interest of the viewer, who is often browsing through other information on the computer screen. The key to stopping surfers is vivid graphics, motion, and clever phrases.*

**take-home Projects**

**10-16.** ***Portfolio Project:***In the discussion questions at the end of Chapter 6, you were asked to consider the research needed for a new upscale restaurant chain that focuses on fowl—duck, squab, pheasant, and other elegant meals in the poultry category. Now your creative team is being asked to develop the creative package for the restaurant chain. As a specialty category, this would be somewhat like a seafood restaurant. You have been asked to develop the creative package to use in launching these new restaurants in their new markets. Develop the following:

* The restaurant’s name
* A slogan for the restaurant chain
* A list of five enticing menu items
* A paragraph of copy that can be used in print to describe the restaurant
* The copy for a 30-second commercial to be used in radio
* A news release announcing the opening of the restaurant

*Student responses to this assignment will vary. When completing it, however, their work should reflect the following:*

* *The most important word selection in marketing communication is the brand or corporate name.*
* *Slogans are a long-term brand or corporate identity effort. They must be catchy, memorable, and original. The best slogans have a close link to the brand name.   
  A good slogan is enduring – they are rarely changed.*
* *When writing for print media, both display copy and body copy is used. The print copywriter’s toolkit includes headlines, subheads, call-outs, captions, overlines, underlines, and taglines.*
* *Tips given in the textbook for writing effective radio ads include keep it personal, speak to listeners’ interests, wake up the inattentive, make it memorable, include call to action, and create image transfer.*

**10-17*. Mini-Case Analysis:*** Summarize the creative strategy behind the Old Spice Campaign. Explain how the Big Idea works and how it is expressed in the copy. What makes the writing so engaging? Come up with an idea for another Old Spice ‘one-shot’ ad and draft the copy.

*The Old Spice campaign illustrates how advertising has evolved in complexity over the past four decades. When the current campaign is contrasted to its original from 1953, changes can be easily observed. The revived campaign did an excellent job of sparking word-of-mouth communication among its target audience by using a former NFL athlete to deliver the brand’s message. The hilarious and over-the-top tone of the ad brought life to the brand, moved it into a contemporary realm, and reinforced a ‘manly man’ brand image.*

*Along with television commercials, Procter & Gamble used YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and the brand’s website to get people talking about the brand. In addition, word-of-mouth buzz was generated by letting the audience ask questions of their brand spokesperson, who was dubbed as “the man your man could smell like.” The result was a campaign that effectively fended off rival brands and increased sales by more than 50%.*

**TRACE NORTH AMERICA CASE**

***Writing for a Multicultural Audience***

Read the TRACE case in the Appendix before coming to class.

**10-18.** The case briefly discusses the tonality (voice) of the communications. Write a one-page directive to the creative team explaining what the tonality should be and giving rationale for your recommendation. Keep in mind the target audience and your client, TRACE.

**◆*ADDITIONAL MATERIAL***

**Assignments**

**Individual Assignments**

1. Locate two magazines containing body copy that is too wordy. Redesign the ads, cutting body copy to brief “bullet” points and revamping other elements (headline, subhead, visual, etc.) to better reflect the appeal of the ad. In a brief presentation to the class, explain how the ad has been improved by cutting body copy.
2. Locate an example of public relations writing for a brand or a company. It can be publicity designed for the news media, corporate communications, an advocacy point-of-view ad, or public service advertising. It can also be either in print or video. In what ways does the example that you have chosen differ from other types of brand communication? What unique concerns did the writer have to consider when preparing it?

**Think-Pair-Share**

1. An electric log splitter has been introduced on the market. Its target market is do-it-yourselfers and homeowners who occasionally split firewood for home use. The benefit of this product is that it is light, quiet, and doesn’t bother users with the noise, fumes, and fuel consumption of gas-powered models. Also, a two-handed handle design ensures safe operation. As a team, develop each of the following: a brand name, a slogan, display copy, and body copy for a print ad.
2. Review the unique creative considerations a writer must consider when developing internet ads. Also consider what is different about an online audience that will directly affect how copy is perceived. Discuss this in pairs and then find on the internet websites that provide a good user experience and have followed the tips for website writers provided in the textbook.

**Outside Examples**

1. What accounts for the phenomenal success of the “Smokey the Bear” advertising campaign? In your estimation, what turned this simple Big Idea into an American icon? Go online to www.adcouncil.org and type ‘wildfire prevention’ into the search box to learn all you can about the campaign and its creative themes. Also review some of the ‘Smokey the Bear’ ads on www.youtube.com, especially the older ones. Prepare a 10-slide PowerPoint presentation for the class that discusses the creative strengths of this campaign.
2. Many people are proficient copywriters, but how does one become an *excellent* copywriter? The Web is full of articles and resources on this subject. Using your favorite search engine, run a keyword search and learn everything you can about the art of great copywriting. How does it contrast with the material you have read in this chapter? Prepare a 10-slide PowerPoint presentation for the class. In it, share your major findings and advice for becoming an excellent copywriter. You can even include examples of copy written for specific campaigns, as long as you credit the original sources.