

Title:

To Hype or Not to Hype?

Word Count:

536

Summary:

Hype can be good or bad, depending on whether it reflects our natural enthusiasm, or whether it's designed to manipulate others. Assess whether your hype is good or bad by questioning your motivation, and by considering the needs of listeners or readers.

Keywords:

copywriting, writing copy, sales copy, communication

Article Body:

One of the discussion lists I follow had quite an exchange of messages about the place of hype in writing.

Hype, of course, generates emotion, and we see it used extensively in sales copy. But it also turns up in some employee communication, and especially in staff newsletters when the wrong people get involved.

But getting back to the discussion; as it evolved it became clear that hype comes in two kinds, a good kind and bad kind. Something like good and bad cholesterol, I suppose.

Good hype might be described as arising out of genuine enthusiasm. It's sincere and an expression of satisfaction, joy, a desire to share something good, or some other positive emotion.

Bad hype, on the other hand, comes from a desire to influence us without taking our needs into account. Take a look at the spam email in your inbox, and it won't take long to find faked enthusiasm. Lots of upper case letters and exclamation points, for example.

In our writing, we should aim to stay within the boundaries of good hype. Yes, we should convey our enthusiasm for things in which we believe and feel that others should know about, too. Our writing shouldn't take us over the line, though. Not only for the sake of our own integrity -- and that's what this boils down to -- but because the people with whom we're communicating will likely

respond negatively.

We can look for that fine line in a couple of ways.

First, we can subject ourselves to some self-examination. Obviously, we could start by asking ourselves about our motivation, "Why am I writing this" or "What do I hope to achieve by writing this way?"

We might also examine the context of the hype. For example, if I've just been on a holiday and had a great time, then I think I'm justified in raving about the elements that made it a great time. In contrast, think about the people who have hit you up with an offer to give you a free vacation if you'll 'just' listen to a presentation about an 'exciting' vacation opportunity.

Perhaps a more effective way to gauge hype involves the effect on the reader. What's in it for the listener or reader. Are you serving their needs, serving your need and their needs together, or serving only your own needs?

It seems obvious now, but I recall what a breakthrough it was when I discovered the secret of an effective newsletter - to serve both reader needs and publisher needs at the same time (it seems obvious, yet not to many others, judging by many of the newsletters I see).

Whether we discuss hype or any other presentation style, taking reader or listener needs into account changes the whole dynamic. Serving reader or listener needs forces us to rethink what we say, and how we say it. And in doing that, we should be able to objectively judge our hype.

In summary, hype can be good or bad, depending on whether it reflects our natural enthusiasm, or whether it's designed to manipulate others. Assess whether your hype is good or bad by questioning your motivation, and by considering the needs of listeners or readers.