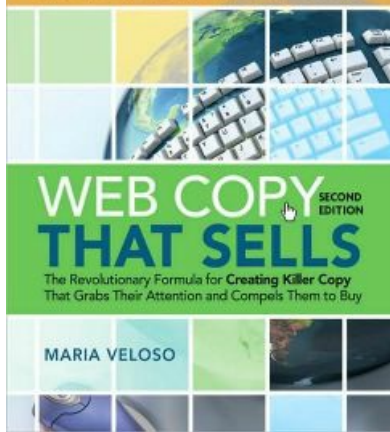


"Veloso has cracked the code for writing irresistible copy that gets people to buy whatever you're selling on the Web." —Jay Conrad Levinson, author of *GUERRILLA MARKETING*



Book Web Copy That Sells

The Revolutionary Formula for Creating Killer Copy That Grabs Their Attention and Compels Them to Buy

Maria Veloso
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Recommendation

Writing for the Web is different than writing for print, but what exactly is the difference? Veteran copywriter Maria Veloso has pondered this question and provides some solid, standard answers in her useful, straightforward manual, which helps copywriters produce great sales copy for the Internet. While maximizing the sales opportunities copywriters find on the Web, Veloso also explains how to adapt traditional emotive ad copywriting to meet the Web's restrictions, from the physical limitations of a Web page to the distractibility of the average online consumer. She explains how to use opt-in offers and how to write B2B and B2C copy. *BooksInShort* recommends her practical, entertaining book to Web copywriters, particularly novices, who want to boost sales and better understand the strengths and weaknesses of their medium.

Take-Aways

- Effective Internet sales copy doesn't look like or read like print advertisements.
- It should be informative, enticing, short and easy to understand since people are more likely to scan it than to read it.
- Web sales copy needs a good headline. Coin 30 to 50 choices; pick the best.
- Good Web sales text should provide knowledge and tell a story. Start with a compelling lead paragraph and state a unique selling proposition.
- If you want to send your advertising e-mails to your Web site's visitors, you have to capture their addresses first. Give people good reasons to leave their e-mail addresses.
- To prevent readers from viewing your e-mails as spam, communicate a clear message. Readers categorize 80% of the 39 trillion e-mails sent annually as spam.
- To write Web sales copy, determine your buyer's problem, why it persists, how solving it benefits the buyer, how your product helps and what the buyer should do next.
- Sell with psychological triggers, like fear, anticipation, tension and emotional satisfaction.
- Use "involvement devices," like samples and surveys, to keep people on your Web site.
- Close the sale using buttons and links on your site that lead to your order page.

Summary

Writing Irresistible Copy

Quick! What's the most important element of any Web site? Graphics? Videos? Colors? Flash animation? Nope. It's the written word. Two major studies report that most Web visitors pay attention to the words first. This is especially important to understand if you want to sell online. More than 175 million Web pages compete for people's attention, so good Web copywriting skills are a business survival tool. Internet sales copy has the same goal as print advertising copy: to compete for the reader's time and attention. To write evocative Web sales copy, start by following three rules:

1. **Don't make your ad look or read like an ad** – About 3,250 ads bombard people every day. The last thing visitors to your Web site want to see is another ad. Since most people go online to get information, your headline should tell them how to get more of it. Make your sales pitch part of a larger informational

strategy. Respected adman David Ogilvy found that ads don't have to look like ads; they can look, for example, like newspaper editorial pages. Six times more people read articles than ads. Useful information magnifies this appeal.

2. **Make the copy enticing** – Gain readers' attention and hold it to compel them to visit your site and hang around for a while.
3. **Get your Web visitors' e-mail addresses** – Make it inviting and easy for prospects to enter their e-mail addresses on your site and to buy from you. Invite them to sign up for your newsletter, ask a question about your offering or place an order. Try to generate enough interest to sell them something. Conversion rates, which measure how many lookers become buyers, range from 0.5% to 1.5%, depending on the industry. Top Web sites sell to only 5% of their visitors.

“Very few people truly understand the complexities of communicating on the Internet.”

Web usability experts find that most people do not actually read on the Web; 79% of Web users scan pages quickly, but only 16% actually read the copy. Thus the key to writing effective Web copy is to keep it short and easy to understand. To build your copywriting skills, find a site you admire that generates significant sales. Transcribe its copy in longhand a few times to distill its main messages and to get into the mindset of the people who wrote the copy.

Answering Five Critical Questions

To write selling Web copy, you must know your audience, goal and product. Ask five questions:

1. **What is the problem?** — What issue does the target audience want resolved? To get an answer, you may have to tell your audience members that they have a problem and then demonstrate that you care about them enough to solve the dilemma for them.
2. **Why does this problem persist?** – Write a few factual sentences that address the history, implications and previous attempts to resolve the predicament.
3. **How will the customer's life improve once the problem is solved?** – Present a new vision of a better life.
4. **How can you help solve the problem?** – Answer this by explaining the unique selling proposition (USP) that distinguished you from your competition.
5. **What should the prospective customer do next?** – Once you identify and solve the problem, issue a call to action. Tell the audience members what you want them to do.

“Words are the true currency of the Web.”

Web copy based on these issues should generate emotion. For example, ask if customers are broke, depressed, lonely or fed up with their jobs. Then, show the emotional benefits of solving these problems with your product or service. For example, explain what a debt-free life would be like or how much fun a romantic vacation would be. Use emotional drivers like fear, anger, greed, guilt or exclusivity. Create “emotional scenarios” that build a heartfelt connection between your product and its potential customers. Help prospects envision themselves buying your product and enjoying its benefits. You are creating a virtual experience.

“The single most important ingredient in a commercial Web site is Web copy.”

Other powerful techniques for spurring buyers to act include promising free bonus gifts, putting a deadline on your deals, offering money-back guarantees and, then, as in any face-to-face sale, making the close. In Web copy, the close leads to an order button embedded at the end of the message. To close, ask numerous times for the sale. Start inserting “trial closes” – opportunities for the consumer to buy – by inserting hyperlinked words that will lead the buyer to the order page if they click on them. Use these links as early as the second screen of your site. Intersperse testimonials and credibility-building facts, but don't reveal the price too soon because it will override the benefits described in your copy. In the final close, explain every detail, even obvious ones.

Generating Results

Good Web copy is interesting, enticing and actionable. It clearly illustrates the benefits and attributes of your offering and shows prospects how your product could improve their lives. It explains the USP, which helps the potential customer understand the product's features. Attracting attention to your Web copy requires a powerful headline that explains a clear benefit, like earning pleasure or avoiding pain. Experts recommend putting headlines in quotation marks or using imperative statements that encourage your audience to act. To create a great headline, write 30 to 50 of them and select the best one. Then, wait a day to see if you can improve it. A lot rides on this decision since most people visit just the home page of a Web site. When they arrive, often they'll read only the headline before deciding whether to stay or go.

“Success in any endeavor, particularly in selling, is part ambition, part observation and part determination.”

Start your Web copy with a powerful first paragraph. List the product's rewards to entice the reader to keep reading. State a clear, hard-to-resist offer. For example, who could turn down “knives that will last a lifetime and never need replacement?” Make an offer that motivates people by appealing to an innate desire, like the wish for acceptance, status, safety or family.

“People buy on emotion and justify their purchases with logic.”

Testimonials are also powerful. Insurance legend W. Clement Stone used them to build his company, Combined Insurance Company of America, into a billion-dollar empire. Stone told his 1,000 agents not to make sales pitches. Instead, they presented clients with a binder holding 200 pages of testimonials from satisfied customers. After reading 25 pages or so, most prospects bought insurance. In complex sales of intangible products or services, buyers want “social proof,” or confirmation from others that they are taking a correct course of action. People rely on each other's wisdom. When you combine that wisdom with an emotional story such as a testimonial, the impact is powerful. Presenting a testimonial as a case study gives it added credence since it appears objective and factual.

“Although buyers want physical satisfaction, which they hope to obtain from the benefits of your product or service, what they really desire is emotional satisfaction.”

How long should your Web page copy be? That depends on how long it takes to make a convincing presentation that covers the subject while stimulating readers' interest. Ogilvy advocated longer Web and print copy (around 1,400 words) “for a great many products.”

The Power of E-Mail

E-mail, the cornerstone of e-commerce, can energize sales and bring people to your Web site. A site alone cannot sustain customer relationships, but e-mail lets you leverage relationships, build traffic, enhance your credibility and increase conversion rates. E-mail maintains postsales connections, strengthens interactive marketing and contributes to the customer's lifetime value (LTV). This metric tracks a client's value with a formula using how long the person does business with you, what he or she spends, and how many of the people the customer refers also become clients. Customers with a high LTV build profitability, since recruiting a new customer costs five to ten times more than building on your relationship with an existing customer.

“The value of emotion in Web copy cannot be overemphasized.”

Every e-mail must contain a meaningful message so people don't consider it to be spam – the fate of about 80% of the 39 trillion e-mails sent annually. To transcend that label, write your message to reflect the recipient's frame of mind. Make it conversational and informal. To test its effectiveness, send it to yourself and see if you find it worthwhile and interesting.

The Psychological Edge

A few psychological devices, such as putting customers in a positive light with reframing or getting people to act by calling upon the human desire to behave consistently, can build your sales response rates. For example:

- **Give a reason** – Use the word “because” to explain why someone should do as you wish. Experiments show that most people comply with a request when you give them a reason.
- **Create deliberate tension so people feel accountable for taking action** – Scientists report that people remember things they still have to do more than they recall tasks they have already done because uncompleted chores create pressure. Doing the job – buying and using your product – reduces the tension.
- **Build anticipation** – Use this motivational tool to encourage people to keep reading or to sign up for a trial offer. Use teasers like “Have you heard about the new cure for arthritis?” that make people want to keep reading until they get the information.
- **Embed a command** – Move readers along by giving an implied order. The slogan “Wouldn't you really rather have a Buick?” includes the command “have a Buick.”
- **Ask a question** – The brain works overtime to answer questions, such as “What would you do to earn an extra \$10,000?” or “Why did you take the money?” Even though the premise of the query may not be true, the brain interprets the implied meaning and lowers its intellectual resistance, so the person actually mentally answers the question.
- **Make your sale emotionally satisfying** – When customers are emotionally content after a purchase, they will overlook a product's shortcomings. Ads for De Beers' diamonds use emotion to sell diamonds as symbols of enduring love, rather than focusing on the value of the stones themselves.
- **Don't erect distracting barricades** – People are easily distracted, so design your site to make readers focus on your sales message without being drawn to extraneous buttons and links. To explain new concepts or technical terms, use pop-up windows.

Getting People Involved

When prospective customers display an interest in your merchandise, accelerate their conversion into buyers by using the “Trifecta Neuro-Affective Principle,” a process that creates an emotional bond with potential customers. Offer several – three is best – representations of your product designed to answer the five main consumer questions (What is the problem? Why does it persist? How will solving it improve the buyer's life? How can you help? What should the customer do next?) Include three arguments your target audience will find compelling, based on:

- **“Identification”** – What messages resonate with the audience?
- **“Redefinition”** – How can you delineate the problem quantitatively or emotionally to show how your product will improve the customer's situation?
- **“Resistance”** – What arguments will persuade consumers to say yes?

“One of the major mistakes Web site owners make is that they fail to close the sale.”

Combine these elements to help prospects see how your product will improve their lives. The Trifecta forms an emotional bond with consumers to help them see your message as a reflection of their personal situations. Write copy, long or short, that builds this identification, provides logical information, presents a believable case study and supports your sales proposition. In general, bits of short copy, called “cyber bites,” can work if they are factual and convincing.

“No one Web site strategy, e-mail tactic or marketing message works all the time.”

Strengthen your Web copy with “involvement devices,” like opt-in offers for a free sample of your product, customized questionnaires or consumer surveys. Amazon uses an interactive survey on its jewelry site to define visitors' wishes. For example, if you want an engagement ring, you can fill in your preferences in terms of the setting and the diamond's size and quality. Autoresponder e-mails are another way to follow-up with those who express an interest in your product. These messages rely on the rule of seven: Consumers must see or hear your message seven times before they consider buying your product. In terms of social media sites, if you want to encourage people to become involved with your entries, offer transparency and authenticity. Your copy must be attributed and you must know what your audience wants.

About the Author

Veteran copywriter **Maria Veloso** is director of the Web Copywriting University and the former Director of Creative Web Writing for Aesop Marketing Corporation.
