



# ILLUMINATE YOUR MESSAGING

*Direct Response Copywriting to Enlighten Your  
Audiences and Close More Deals*

*Direct Response  
Copywriting Allows You to  
Enter The Conversation  
Already Going On In Your  
Audience's Brain.*

by David J Dunworth

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## INTRODUCTION

Direct response copywriting is typically geared toward crafting sales messaging of one kind or another. As that once made a significant living from the craft, it wasn't always understood why it can cost so much for someone to put pen to paper (figuratively) to attempt to sell something. But it is much more than spewing out content.

The word "Copy" is a bit vague, as there are numerous forms of copy – speeches, press releases, video scripts, emails, letters, ad copy, radio scripts, etc. Sure many of these are either directly or indirectly sales-related. Whether written or verbal, anything that shares some information, regardless of its intent, is copy.



Direct response is a particular mode of creating copy. To craft this form of information share, it's vital to understand the language and the emotional and psychographic nature of the audience one wishes to attract. Direct response is knowledge of human behavior and the proper trigger words to enact an immediate reaction.

As that has relied on crafting the right message for myself and clients and nonprofits and NGOs I support, direct response is paramount to getting the message across to the right audiences. There are fundamental must-do rules that must remain at the forefront of every copywriter's mind. Hopefully, these are what you are about to utilize in your daily marketing and info-share responsibilities.

There are a lot of "masters" of direct response copywriting, and I consider my mentors among them. Some of them are alive, like Dan Kennedy, Mark Ford, Drayton Bird, Dave Dee, Russell Martino, and a bunch of others, and those that have graduated, so to speak, like Claude Hopkins, Clayton Makepeace, Joe Coleman, Gary Halbert, and David Ogilvy. These are just the top picks among a large cadre of greats, past and present. They each offered their perspective on what is right or not-so-right about capturing an idea and using it to attract readers, customers, patients, clients, and even donors. I continue to be "mentored" by these great writers.

So many rules, so little time.

## I Began at the Beginning

As I typically do when learning how to master something, I began by researching all of the information I could locate online about the masters and their craft; direct response copywriting. They have each contributed to the best practices, the "Rules" of compelling copywriting by their very being.

The internet is a marvelous tool for learning and locating stuff, and researching any topic is enlightening. What began as the creation of a checklist has turned out to morph into a cheat sheet that has taken on a life of its own. At each iteration, new thoughts or "rules" have been added, with the latest version being reviewed by you at this very moment.

### WHY FOLLOW RULES?

Humans, by nature, believe subconsciously that we are creators and originators. While that might be true to an extent, unless monkeys were raised one on a desert island, we have all been influenced one way or another by our surroundings. Shall we? *There is nothing new under the sun.* Since the dawn of creation, everything has evolved, morphed, grew from, or been influenced by something that previously was the "first and foremost."

Rules might sound a bit pragmatic and stiff. However,

what has been proven to work is known as "Best Practices" or "Rules" to manifest success in any activity. Writing is no different. There are quite a few other writing styles, from casual and conversational, to legal and binding, novels, advertisements, screenplays, and oh so much more.

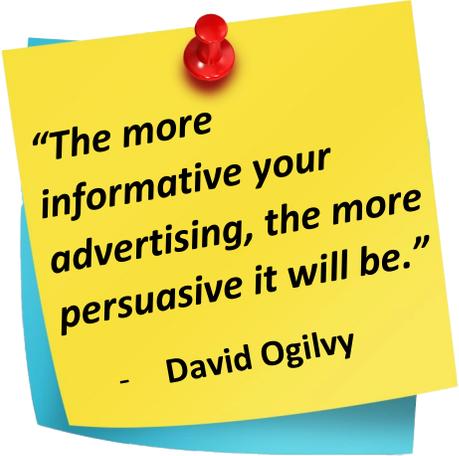
What we're concerned with has a particular style and expectation. Direct Response Copywriting has one specific expected outcome. That is, to sell. An idea, concept, product, service, or merely a persuasion or change of opinion are all of the same ilk: selling.

And there are specific means by which to sell anything. We do it every day when we try to offer an opinion, convince, persuade, inform, educate, entertain, and gain credibility. It's all selling in one form or another.



## THREE FUNDAMENTAL RULES OF SELLING

1. People do not like to be SOLD. People allow themselves to be persuaded.
2. People buy things for emotional, not rational reasons. After all, logic overrules emotion 100% of the time, so rationalizing is not first in their minds.
3. Once sold, people need to justify their emotional decisions with logic. Instead of I want, they define it with I need.



**"The more  
informative your  
advertising, the more  
persuasive it will be."**

- David Ogilvy

Craft your messaging with four levels of strength and stability. Appealing to your prospect's emotions is not the only fundamental. Excellent copy (especially long-form sales letters) contains four essential and critical factors that must be included to provide strength and stability to withstand scrutiny and second-guessing:



**ALWAYS,  
ALWAYS, ALWAYS  
INCLUDE A  
CALL TO ACTION!**

- ✓ Your product, service, idea, solution, etc., must have a positive track record.
  - ✓ You and whatever you are selling must possess credibility. Some call it social proof, others street cred, still others positive reviews, testimonies, and the like.
  - ✓ It must contain a BIG IDEA. Why is it, or you are unique, one-of-a-kind, inimitable, stand-alone in the marketplace why you are a market of one. Not one of many.
- ✓ You MUST provide Future Benefits in addition to all of your promises, assurances, market praise, and features. What will they gain by changing horses and switching to your offers?

## YOUR ONLY GOAL

There are all sorts of reasons for establishing clear, written goals to get where you wish to be in the real world. When utilizing direct response copywriting, your only goal is to create a pre-defined ACTION from your audience. That's why EVERY message, regardless of email, letter, display ad, social media post, video, or podcast, should have a Call to Action or CTA.

If your goal is to get your name out to the public merely, you need to focus on BRAND MARKETING, not direct response marketing. Large corporations utilize a considerable amount of Brand Marketing to keep their brand image and name in their customers' "top of mind." It's sort of like feeding the fish.



The more you feed them, the fatter they get. However, you're not feeding fish; you are trying to catch fish. There is a place for brand marketing, but attracting, resonating, and converting new prospects require ACTION. Get them to notice you, draw them in, and ultimately pull them into the boat.

Remember, though, that large corporations have what I like to call Monopoly Money. They can chum the water all they wish. They

treat matters like they have unlimited funding. They treat these behemoth budgets like fake money because they throw it against a wall like spaghetti until something sticks. You don't have that kind of financial freedom. Every dollar that comes out of your pocket is no longer in your pocket. And empty pockets aren't fun. So stick to catching fish first, and feeding them comes secondary.

## YOUR BIG IDEA MUST...

Hook the prospect's interest...Confirm prejudices...Resonate with emotions...Stimulate desires...Articulate a significant, socially unspoken belief...Deliver the Big Promise...Be simple enough so that your prospect can re-communicate it to someone else from memory.

**Help from David Ogilvy** – For recognizing a Big Idea. Ask yourself these questions:

Is the information valuable beyond compare?

Did it make me gasp when I first saw it?

Do I wish I had thought of it myself?

Does it fit the strategy to perfection?

Can it last for 30 years?

Is it unique?

## BEFORE YOU START WRITING

Before actually putting words into phrases and sentences, you have to get into the frame of mind that works to your advantage and benefits the recipient.

- **Identify** the core feelings you'll stimulate in your prospect- They/it could be unbridled desire, fear of missing out, a new lease on life, hope, rescue, curiosity, or appeasement
- **Determine the Big Promise** – What is the solution to the issue you are addressing? If you do this... you'll get that
- **Know the Offer** – What is the ACTION you want them to take to receive what will benefit them and why? Know all of the features, benefits, strengths, minuses, competition, value proposition, and why the prospect will be missing out if they do not take immediate action
- **Know the format** - The length, the voice, the testimonials you'll use, and your fundamental point of view



## FINDING YOUR VOICE

***“Imagine the person you’re writing to.  
Picture him or her as a friend.***

***Believe that the product you’re selling and  
improve your friend’s life.***

***Figure out what it would take to convince  
you to buy the product.”***

- Paul Hollingshead

Engage your prospect in a conversation. Think about your target audience (your Persona or Avatar should be so well-defined everyone on your team should know them as a person) and simply talk to them as a good friend. Use what you know about them to imagine the questions they would ask...and answer them in your copy. It doesn't have to be stiff, technical, wordy, or blunt. Make it a conversation, with your recipient receiving answers to their burning questions already in their minds. This can only be done with effective and thorough research.

*“The ability to organize words that motivate people is a super-power.”*

- Dan Kennedy



## Intimacy...

...is a closeness between the writer and the reader. For the prospect, it's a feeling that she/he knows the author of the message...that the writer cares about her/him and is someone the reader can trust.

## Ways to Create Intimacy...

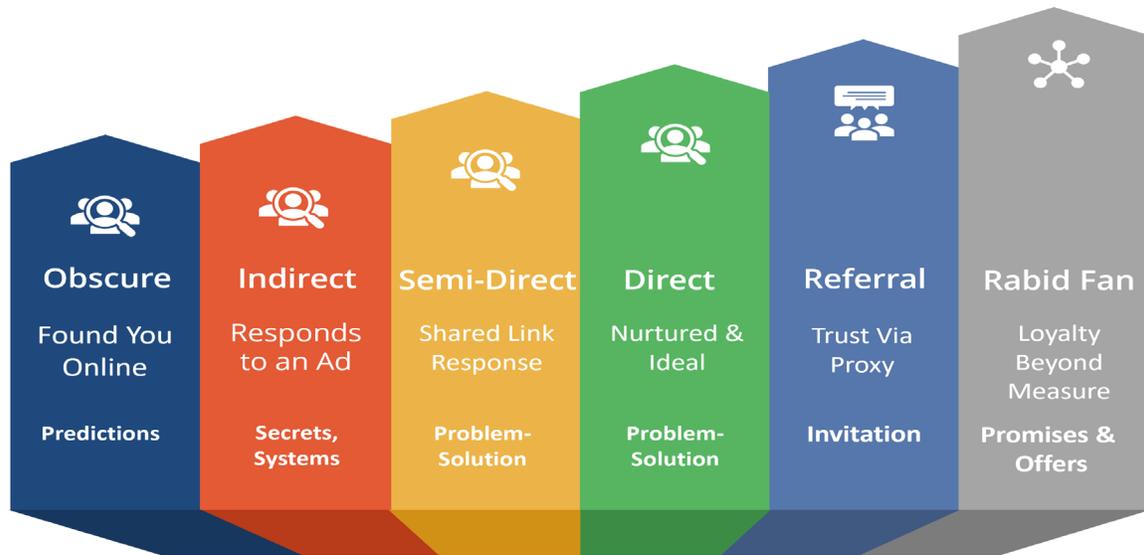
...Adopt an intimate voice...Include a photo...put yourself in the prospect's shoes...Include revelations...Show your "Achilles Heel" ...Include your reader in "Your Special Group" ...Differentiate yourself from the enemy.

## HAVING FUN WITH LEADS

Everyone in the field of entrepreneurship, to the mega-corporation marketing and sales departments, has one thing in common. To succeed in growing their revenues, they must generate leads.

There are several types of leads, and they run the gamut from highly casual to completely direct. Each sector holds its fascination and interest level. Your approach and interaction must be moderated based on where you think they fall on the scale or lead scoring system you employ. Here's an image that I conjured up to help visualize the various leads you'll experience.

## From Whence They Came



Know that nothing is cut and dry; everything is subject to the individual. Your approach to each type of lead or prospect grade must accomplish the emphasis of conversion at one level or another based on the notes provided in the lower comments on each level.

Now, I think you might be anxious to learn more about actually crafting the messaging.

## THE 4 P's of COPYWRITING

*The American Writers & Artists Institute® strongly recommends these anchors always be included in any form of direct response copywriting. As the largest international organization of writers and artists, it goes without saying (although I will) that the 4 P's are incremental toward the success of any project.*

**The Promise** – Make your prospect a promise. Identify a fear or desire... that keeps them awake at night or what daydreams come while driving, sitting quietly, or washing the dishes. Then tell them what you are going to do for them. What benefits do you have to eliminate his fear or fulfill his desire?

**The Picture** – To cement the desire for your promise, you want him to PICTURE herself benefiting from your product or service.

**The Proof** – You have to prove what you say is true to your prospect. AND you have to prove it to HER satisfaction.

**The Push** – A clear, specific call-to-action!

Remember to consider a steady sprinkling of credibility. Use reliable and believable sources for your information. In the case of this report, much of this information was gleaned from the AWAI Copywriter's Cheat-Sheet poster that hangs on the wall in front of my desk. The quotes, some sections of this copy have been modified a bit but still contain the original elements gleaned from the copyrighted material. Keep in

mind that it is not plagiarism if you cite the source. As a member of AWAI, I am confident sharing this information is well within the bounds of copyright protection.

## ELEMENTS OF MESSAGE FLOW

Although the elements are in elemental order, they aren't necessarily crafted in this order. For a quick response to the unasked but thought about the question of which step comes first – it depends. We'll get to that stuff in a few, but rather, the elements in order.

### ❖ HEADLINES OR SUBJECT LINES

It doesn't matter what form of copy you create; everything begins with an opening statement THAT MUST catch and hold the attention of your ideal avatar. Whether it's a blog article, postcard, brochure, sales letter, video script; they all need a hook

### ❖ PRE OR SUB-HEADLINES

This technique is not always a solid idea, so that new copywriters might require experimentation. Some examples might be **ATTENTION SENIORS...** Have you... **IF YOU HAVE NOT DONE THIS...** Make sure to...

### ❖ The Body of the Message

Depending on what you determine to be the best headline/pre or post headline, the body of the message has numerous responsibilities, AND in a particular structure. The body of your message should make or prove the claims you made in the opening. You might need to restate the promise, which is a tie-back to the original reason they were attracted to the piece in the first place.

The body is where you can strategically sell the benefits (that's what they need or desire) and reinforce with all of the features at each step. Features support the logic of the purchase. People rationalize the emotions that drove them to the point of purchase.

This is where you reinforce your Unique Sales Proposition, your USP. What makes you the ONLY choice? Remind them why your solution is better than anything else on the market. If you can assure them that you are the ONLY solution worth considering, people are willing to pay much more.

### ❖ Sub-Headings

These are valuable elements in the body of your message. Some readers scan things to see if they will be helpful or pertinent to their situation. Sub-headings, written strategically, can tell the story without all of the fill-in verbiages.

Some people only read the hook, then search through to find accompanying info links.

Much like you notice in this copy, sub-headings keep the flow and structure of the information in bite-sized pieces of information to link one thought to another, hopefully keeping the attention engaged by the target audience.



## ❖ The Golden Thread

This element is critical. Emotions are what drive our decision-making, so continue to weave the emotional appeal throughout your copy piece. Emotional connection and resonance woven through the message will keep their attention.

One of the best ways to weave that golden thread is through the use of testimonials, both video and written. A smattering of these elements throughout the piece will reinforce the benefits messages and slowly embed the purchase decision in the prospect's mind.

## ❖ The Call(s) – to – Action

Ask for the sale. Restate the first stated benefit, then ask for the sale again. Restate the second benefit, and ask for the sale again. Repeat until you have reiterated all of the benefits of your pitch.

## ❖ The Postscript(s)

Believe it or don't, some people open a long-form sales letter and skip straight to the postscript section of the letter. You'll need these essential elements for a few reasons.

Postscripts allow for the restatement of all the benefits, along with yet another request for the sale. You can introduce another promise as good or better than the original. You can incentivize the prospect by presenting a Bonus Offer, Surprise benefit, or provide a guarantee.

Some copywriters use this to present a further sense of urgency, which was already stressed in the body of the message. So you don't have to limit yourself to one or two PSs, just don't go overboard, or it will come off hokey and sale'zy.

*“Never forget that people buy things or services...they buy solutions to their problems.”*

- Max Lincoln  
Shuster

## Remember what many call the 4 U's<sup>©</sup>

**URGENCY** – Give your prospect a real reason to want this product or service today, now, right away.

**USEFULNESS** – The headline should communicate something of value to the prospect. It might be a solution, cure, the fix.

**UNIQUENESS** – The headline should suggest that what you are offering is in some way different than every other solution currently available from any competitor.

**ULTRA-SPECIFICITY** – Avoid being vague at all costs.

Your headline or subject line needs one of several means by which to hook your recipient. It should make a bold promise. If you go in that direction, make your promise **BOLD** – wishy-washy just won't cut it. Man Bites Dog... My 600-pound Life... Make \$4754.39 Today...

The headline/subject line can be crafted to help visualize the solution, problem, promise in the mind's eye of the prospect. Imagine...Picture this... Can you see...

Frequently copywriters utilize the Ask a Question technique to establish their hook. Have you... What would it take to... How would you... Why are..

The simple statement of facts can be powerful, especially when it happens to be centered on a trending topic. Men Over 50 Lose This Every Day... What Women Really Want is... Local Mom Wins \$2.5 Million Lottery...

## DON'T HIT THE SEND BUTTON OR LICK THE ENVELOPE JUST YET

My grandfather was perhaps my best mentor, and he was always sharing bits of wisdom in his quirky way. His presence is known in all of my books, as there are generally great reasons to share a tidbit or two from his "Bag O' Wisdom." Because I spent a lot of time with my grandparents, there was always something to say to me. "**Read What You Write,**" he would say as I penned some poetry or scribbled notes to myself.

That means that even though it came out of your head and made its way to the paper through the pencil doesn't mean it is correct. Editing. Editing. Editing. Some call it the bane of the writer. But if you want to maintain credibility and clarity and produce results, editing is a vital part of the process.

## CONCLUSION

The exciting part about direct response copywriting is that there is no conclusion. Marketing is constantly evolving, and so also does direct response copywriting. Remember, it's all about taking action, both you taking strict action to improve your skills and inducing action-taking into every marketing communication. I wish you nothing but the very best in your copywriting endeavors.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



David James Dunworth is a certified direct response copywriter who works exclusively with Foundations, Nonprofits, NGOs, and Ministries. Dunworth serves as the Chair of the SynerVision Leadership Foundation Board of Directors and is a dedicated servant leader to four other select organizations in a pro bono capacity. David received his training in the private club sector of the hospitality industry working internationally in Europe, the United States, Greenland, South Korea, Japan, India, and South America.

An international best-selling author of six books, co-author of two other tomes, ghost-writer for a pair of celebrities, and hundreds of ghost-written articles, blogs, brochures, sales letters, and direct mail postcards. Certified as Magnetic Marketing Advisor and Certified Direct Response Copywriter, with mentors such as Dan Kennedy, Clayton Makepeace, Russell Martino, and others, Dunworth now only supports global initiatives that assist humanity.