

# "HOW TO WORK WITH A COPYWRITER"

BY

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## **HOW TO WORK WITH A COPYWRITER**

Your product or service is near completion. You've thought before about the adcopy, but it's now time to hire a copywriter.

You understand that you need a specialist who will make the best impression for your product to your potential customers and get you the most sales.

This is a critical step and your quest can go smoothly or be a total nightmare. I hope that this report will help to answer some of your questions and make working with your copywriter a dream come true.

One of the most difficult aspects of giving your copywriting assignment over to someone else is your fear of their lack of commitment to you product or service.

You've perhaps conceptualize the product, worked with the developers and finally given it 'birth'. **The hardest step is now to give your 'baby' over to another for special care.**

**Traditionally, copywriters never got the kind of respect that other professionals receive.** For example, there aren't many people who argue with their mechanics or doctors but everyone seems to have a better idea than their copywriters.

Everyone seems to think that writing is easy until they have to do it for themselves! The key here then is to give your copywriter the room and freedom to work.

You may know your product best, but your copywriter knows how to sell that product better than you do. This is the reason you sought him out in the first place.

**You should hire a copywriter who has experience in your product category and stand back and give the copywriter room to do his work.** You should have an opportunity to review the work and make suggestions, but take the copywriter's suggestions seriously—as you would take that of any other professional.

Samples of the copywriter's work should be available for your review but each assignment is different so you can only get a 'feel' for the writing style here.

Go with your gut feeling. If the copywriter is familiar with the industry, jargon and language of your product category then your customers will be better able to identify with his writing.

He will appear to be a part of the group. This is why you should look for the 'specialist' in your product market. At the same time copywriting is copywriting, is copywriting.

So any copywriter who is worth his salt should be able to write for any market. There are cases however where technical knowledge in a highly specialize field will give one copywriter the edge over another.

After you are satisfied with the sample work then you should be sure that you understand his fee rate. This should be stated right upfront, not hidden in some fine print. *If you cannot afford the rate it's best to find another copywriter.*

Most professionals will give you less than their best if you try to negotiate downwards from their price. In other words, you normally get what you pay for.

You should also find out if the copywriter has any other type of writing experience. Has he published a book? Done articles in professional magazines or newspapers?

Copywriting, like any other type of writing involves the ability to communicate clearly using words. If your copywriter has other writing experiences then this will be a plus for you.

**There are a few people who will call on a copywriter and try to 'milk' him for all he is worth.** These business owners are not normally interested in his services or intend to hire him but would like to get free consultation.

Most copywriters are aware of these freebie seekers; so if you are not serious about hiring a copywriter you should respect his time. This is the ethical thing to do.

I've often had potential clients who will send information for me to look over, materials to read and ask my opinion on different aspects of their business only to hire another writer or none at all.

Well, this was before I recognized the trend and started filtering out these free loaders by asking for the down payment before I can give any "free consultation".

Here are some other tips on working with a copywriter:

**1. You should provide complete information about your product or service.** I would normally ask my clients to fill out a questionnaire before I can start working on the copy.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to get **the client focused** on what they are really selling and also to provide ample information for me to work from.

There is no substitute to product knowledge when you are selling anything. A copywriter can never know too much information on the product he is trying to sell. Usually the more you tell; the more you sell.

**2. Be sure that you understand what you are paying for. Get it in writing if necessary.** It is important for you to know both the cost and what exactly you are paying for *before* the project starts, not at the end when it is too late.

Some copywriters work by the hour but I normally work for a flat fee or rate. I would therefore tell my clients that this letter will cost you \$XX dollars and requires a 50% down payment and the other 50% at presentation of the first draft.

If I work by the hour there may be surprises at the end, but not when I quote the fee forthright. So I prefer the flat fee.

**3. Give the copywriter his space to work.** If you are promised the salescopy in three weeks, don't call or write in two weeks to find out how he is getting along.

Writing is already a mentally taxing exercise, so the added pressure of your frequent inquiries will not help at all. In fact, the way in which I write is that I take 80% of the time to think and plan and only 20% of that time to do the actual writing.

So if you called me half way through the time period that I promised you the copy the answer will be that I haven't written anything as yet.

Remember that you are involved in a partnership with your copywriter so you will want to keep this relationship as smooth as possible.

He is trying to make your business money, not to take your money—hopefully. I speak for myself here but I think that most ethical copywriters will say the same: *“I get greater satisfaction from knowing that my salescopy made my client a lot of money, rather than knowing that I made a lot of money from my client.”*

Because copywriting is a creative process there is a lot of personal pride that goes into every piece a writer puts out.

**4. Pay in the agreed time frame. Pay promptly.** I can still remember that old saying that ‘an army marches on its stomach’. What about other one that says that ‘reward sweetens labor’?

The whole point here is that if you refuse to pay your copywriter he or she isn't likely to give you his best work—just human nature. When you pay on time, you are saying that you appreciate you partner in business—which he is.

If you are not immediately satisfied with the work then you should indicate the changes that need to be made, but don't hold his payment ransom by refusing the balance.

Of course every case must be judged on its own merit, but if you did your research well it is hardly likely that a job could turn out so bad that you

think that it doesn't deserve a fair reward. This brings us to the next point.

**5. Be rational on how you critique the work you receive.** If you send statements such as 'I don't like the copy', 'It's too boring' or 'I expected better', these statements are **too general** to mean anything to the copywriter.

You should be more specific and say something like, "I think you should emphasize how unique our product is in the market place", or "I think that you should strengthen the guarantee more". These statements are all more specific and measurable.

You should also make it a point to indicate what you love about the copy before you state what you don't like about it. You are working with a human being—not a machine—who have just given a piece of his soul on paper.

To be just outright critical will surely hurt—the same way in which a writer's heart bleed after his manuscript comes back from his editors! Remember that it is always easier to criticize what already exists than it is to create something from scratch.

**6. Read the copy as a customer not as a business owner.** After you've spent so much time on the creative side of the fence it's hard to see your product from the **customer's side**.

What may appear as second-nature to you may be rocket science to the customer. Only the customer can decide how effective the copy really is—with their credit cards. *When the salescopy is placed into operation your sales will be the only acid test for the power of the copy.*

Whether you like the style, language or any other aspect of the copy doesn't matter one bit to the customer.

Customers are only concerned about the benefits they can get from your product, not your image. This is a very hard pill to swallow for many business owners who take too much control away from their copywriters.

It goes back again to an innate lack of respect for the copywriting professional.

**7. Be generous with your praise and update on sales.** The majority of clients will receive the copy, make their payment and unless they need to hire the copywriter again, never make another contact. You should send a 'thank you' note and especially when the copy sells well, you should inform your copywriter about your success.

This will help him to improve his skill and also may save you some money on your next project. Again, remember that reward sweetens labor and a word of thanks can be very powerful indeed.

Who should know about the power of words than a copywriter?

**8. Copywriting is only one number in your sales equation.** There are other factors other than the effectiveness of your copy that will determine how successful your sales are. *Bad copy can sell a great product but great copy cannot sell a bad product.*

**So don't be too quick to blame your copywriter.** I know of some copywriters who would not take on your project if they think that your product will not sell.

This lack of sale may be a result of a saturated market, heavy competition, bad timing, a low perceived value of your product and a bunch of other possibilities.

If you carefully performed your market research *before* you created your product or service then this shouldn't be a problem. But just be aware of it.

Here is a final note that involves how you rate a copywriter. Let's say that a copywriter wrote 100 letters that sold 10,000 products for a total of \$500,000. How would he compare to a copywriter that wrote one letter that sold an aircraft worth \$1,000,000?

**Do you rate a copywriter according to the total value of the products he sold or the number of letters he has written?**

That must be left up to you as a client to decide. But suffice it to say that some of the most famous mail order salescopy were done by copywriting students who wrote very few letters in total.

Such a case is *The Lazy Man's Way to Riches* by Joe Karbo, which sold over 3 million books at \$10 each. According to copywriter Joe Sugarman, Joe Karbo wrote this ad right off the top of his head with little editing done after the ad was released.

Also, Karbo wrote few other ads apart from this one. I guess he didn't have to. He could live comfortably from this one short salescopy!

As you shop around to hire a copywriter you must look for **talent as well as experience**. But even if a writer doesn't have years of copywriting experience you may still be looking at a potential Joe Karbo!

I wish you only success in your business!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ray Edwards". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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