

**Mark Shaw**

# Copywriting

*Successful writing for design,  
advertising, and marketing*

**Second Edition**

# Writing for advertising and direct marketing

*When writing for advertising or direct marketing you must assume that your target audience are tough. They automatically select the sort of media and information they choose to let into their lives, they don't like being intruded upon, and they're not predisposed to believe your messages—at least not to start with, anyway. Your audience want only what they think they are looking for, they don't have much time to spare, and they are cynical. But give them what they want and they'll love you for it. So, as the writer, all you have to do is figure out exactly what it is they're looking for.*

## There's nowhere to hide when you write advertising copy

Such fun—baring your soul and pouring out fresh new conceptual ideas into a hard-nosed world of executives and bean counters. You'd have to be either stupid or mad to want to do this, or perhaps it's the only thing that's ever made sense to you. There is nothing to stop you joining those single-minded, creative wordsmiths who live and breathe advertising copywriting.

Most ad writers work in a specialist agency alongside art directors and designers, and often with account managers looking after the client relationship. Increasing numbers of copywriters are based in-house within a business, sometimes teamed with a designer or, more usually, a creative artworker helping to produce finished results, with advertising included in their mix of other briefs. This may offer less variety, but often allows you to have a lot more control over the copy. The other ad writers are freelance, working alone or in collectives. Some find themselves freelancing after redundancy, others to get their fledgling career moving, and some simply because they are in great demand for their consistently excellent work.

In every case the writer will be commissioned with a brief that will have originated with the client company. It may have passed through a few hands, and it is your responsibility as a writer to take the best possible copy brief, gather as much relevant raw material (background information and sources to follow up) as possible, and to make sure that you are completely clear about the objectives and expectations of the person briefing you. Any errors at this stage can escalate into big problems down the line.

## How advertising developed

Advertising is constantly changing. The way in which messages are crafted and communicated is becoming increasingly sophisticated and your writing has to keep up and stay ahead. George Orwell described advertising as “the rattling of a stick inside a swill bucket” and he was right, at the time. Early advertising was little more than an attractive sound and a directional sign, pointing people towards what they already knew they needed or wanted. It began as simple flag-waving. By the 1950s and 1960s advertising was trying a lot harder, telling us that the qualities of the new Cadillac included a more powerful engine and better top speed, or that a soap powder “washes whiter.” The audience were now being told what to think and, in general, they went along with it.

As western economies grew, increasing competition in the marketplace and the growing awareness and sophistication of the consumer forced innovation in the way consumer products were presented, positioned, and sold. If the new Cadillac has a superb, faster engine, what this really means is not that the owners of the new car could arrive at places sooner, it means that they can look (and sound) cooler, have more fun, and feel more special while driving to their destination. So let's tell them. They'll imagine that the car will genuinely improve their lives, not just get them around. They may even pay a premium for this. Advertising messages had now started to focus on the customer's lifestyle and self-esteem, fueling increasing demand by promising the fulfillment of dreams. Recent Porsche advertising exemplifies the state of the art in the automotive industry. The line “A devil on both shoulders” beautifully complements the stunning image of the new Cayman, and tips the wink to the target audience by giving the car an aura of dangerous glamour.

The birth of **conceptual advertising** was open season for creative writers. It was exciting and fun, and the 1970s were full of strange ideas such as pregnant men advertising birth control, space aliens telling us about instant mashed potato, and a man in a suit telling us he liked a razor so much he bought the

*“Among the best copywriters there's a flair for expression, of putting known and believable things into new relationships. We try to be more straightforward without being flat-footed. We try to be warm without being mawkish.”*

Leo Burnett



With blissfully dark intentions, the new Cayman just begs to be driven. Beneath sculpted curves, sits a 2.7-liter, 245-hp mid-mount engine yearning to run. Its rigid body ready to respond instantly to your will. Never has bad felt so good. Porsche. There is no substitute.

**A devil on both shoulders.**

The new Cayman. Starting at \$49,400.



*A devil on both shoulders.*

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With blissfully dark intentions, the new Cayman just begs to be driven. Beneath sculpted curves sits a 2.7-liter, 245-hp mid-mount engine yearning to run. Its rigid body ready to respond instantly to your will. Never has bad felt so good. Porsche. There is no substitute.

Naughty but nice. Car advertising can't encourage fast driving, but combine a beautiful image of the new Porsche with a subtly provocative headline and you can sit back and let the testosterone do the rest.

entire company. Messages, and the ideas behind them, were starting to evolve, and the consumer was ready to handle them. These are the roots of today's advertising and direct-marketing copywriting.

The main lesson we can learn from looking back at the development of advertising is that it was always adapting, staying fresh, being surprising, and breaking new ground, and this is what we must continue to do today. It's about being one step ahead of your reader. With all forms of advertising and **direct marketing** there are two challenges: reaching your audience and interacting with them.

## What's the difference between advertising and direct marketing?

The two are closely related but clearly distinct. Advertising is one-way communication; direct marketing (or direct response) aims to be two-way. Technically speaking, advertising is paid-for communication where the client (the company paying for the ad) controls the message, and is identified as doing so (ensuring that there is no confusion between the paid-for messages and the editorial). It's all about grabbing attention and influencing people's habits. By contrast, direct marketing sends its messages directly to the consumer or business, without using any other media, and its marketing objective is to generate an immediate response.

Advertising aims to raise awareness of the client's message to a specific audience, and it operates in every medium and in many different forms. Very high-profile advertising is created by large corporations selling products or services, who are looking to increase demand. Variations of this include charities and government departments promoting humanitarian or policy messages. Recruitment advertising is also a major industry, as is business-to-business or trade advertising. There are many new forms of advertising, especially with the rise of Internet usage and the development of guerrilla advertising (where the surrounding environment is used—sometimes illegally—to display conceptual messages). In today's competitive commercial world, advertising is one of most dominant forms of communication.

Marketers like direct marketing because its effectiveness can usually be measured accurately, unlike that of most other promotional activities. The level and extent of the response to a mailer is tracked and measured, and the information it provides can be used to shape the next brief you work on for the client. **Direct mail**, where addresses are purchased and mailers are sent out in bulk, is the most common type of direct marketing. Next on the list are **telemarketing** and e-mail marketing, as well as inserts in the press or packaging and Internet **banner ads**. A criticism leveled at direct marketing is that it produces tons of "junk mail" and "spam," and this can work against a brand.

Advertising that includes a response form or request to call a number or visit a website also falls within the category of direct marketing. This type of writing needs to use powerful concepts to communicate compelling messages effectively, in order to generate the maximum response from as many people as possible.

*"The first thing that marks a good writer is that he avoids the cliché. He avoids the cliché in his speech, not just in his writing."*

George Gribbin

## Getting the pitch right

Whether we admit it or not, there are always some ads that we like, or even love. We all like to shop for the things that we consider important in our lives. It may be to do with a favorite hobby or it may be the monthly supermarket run, but each of us enjoys shopping once in a while. If we enjoy shopping, we don't mind being given ideas, updates, and information that will help us to

shop. This is the attitude to adopt as you tackle each new advertising brief. If you can pitch it correctly, which is a very delicate process, your audience may just lap it up.

You will be briefed by the client or an account manager from a creative agency, and while the main brief will apply to both you and a designer, you will need to take a separate copy brief or at least interview the briefer about the core messages, supporting information, target audience, and USPs on which you will be focusing.

When writing advertisements ask yourself who you are actually writing for. The answer is simple. The only people you're writing advertising for are the members of your target audience. The better you know and understand them, the better your chance of getting a good response from them. You're not waving a flag or rattling a swill bucket with a stick any more, you're moving into their private space, having a quiet word, and giving them new ideas that they simply cannot resist.

## Getting to the heart of the problem

In almost every advertising copy brief you will find a core problem that is being solved for your reader by your client, by providing a product or service that addresses a clear need. This should lie at the heart of your thinking when breaking down and analyzing the content in the brief, and when deciding which message or messages to focus on in the advertisement. After all your preparation, these three essential elements will be the focus of your copy:

1. Who is your target audience and what are they like?
2. What is the core message to be communicated to them?
3. Why is this interesting, and what about it is different or unique?

It is not enough to be a creative thinker with a good vocabulary or a clever grasp of English. You're writing about commercial activity and you must understand the business context fully. Too many writers rely on a good turn of phrase, such as "we all know how hard it can be to . . .," "if you're like most people, you're looking for . . .," or "these days, it takes all you've got just to . . ." Focus on hard information and save the padding for a brief that gives you nothing at all to go on.

The Greenpeace ad featured here shows a clear thought process that can be traced back to the brief. The writer understood something fundamental about the audience: they want someone to risk life and limb to stop whaling, but they don't want to risk their own. It seems pretty obvious, really, when you think about it. Turn this into a succinct headline: "Some people risk their lives in the Antarctic to save the whales. Those people are called not me."—suddenly everyone in the target audience can relate immediately to the concept. Apart from the stunning photography and excellent typography, the power lies in the tagline "You don't have to join us, to join us." This is a strong call to action. The whole concept comes from studying the nature of the target audience, as outlined in the brief.

To understand your client's business as a writer you have to view it through the customer's eyes and ask probing questions. Get to know the business by being a customer if you can, or by touring their factory floor. If possible, interview the key directors or managers, and ask plenty of those "stupid" questions to challenge the hype and see what is really going on. You'll be surprised how many original creative ideas can grow from these conversations. You won't know what you're digging up until you find it, so don't worry too much; just cover all of the ground and process it when you get back to base.

*"I find if I drink two or three brandies, or a good bottle of claret, I'm far better able to write. I also find that if I listen to music, this loosens me up. I also find that if I read the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations for 15 minutes, this may start trains of thought."*

David Ogilvy

## It's time to commit

You can't process your material forever. Sooner or later it's commitment time. Set yourself up somewhere and get on with it.

Begin by letting your imagination explore the links and connections between the benefits of your product or service and the lifestyle of the target audience. Day-dreaming—the structured sort—helps, as this sort of lateral thinking will help you to make connections that business thinkers will never see. Your goal is to inspire yourself first, and then inspire your audience.

For example, if you are writing advertisements for Harley-Davidson, build a picture of the audience. The brand is clearly aspirational, giving people the sense that they are rebels, individuals, not part of the rat race. Who aspires to this? Free spirits, free thinkers, strong characters, independent minds. And what are these people like? They do their own thing, they make up their own minds, and they don't take any crap. How are we going to advertise motorcycles to them? Very directly, with no sales speak. We need them to recognize themselves in the ad, and then see that a Harley fits into their lifestyle. It has to be their thought process, not ours, that gets them there.

The early stages of developing your creative ideas will feel a bit strange. With your notes from the brief in front of you, you'll consider the selling points and benefits, and how you can link these to your audience. Some sensible connections will come to mind first, followed by seemingly random ideas and loose concepts. Keep jotting these down and revisit them. At this stage it makes little difference if they are good, bad, or indifferent.

Working on your imaginary brief for Harley, you should be sketching out some character profiles that fit your audience. Get the clichés out of the way—the Hell's Angels, the big scary nasty bikers—and steer toward the

**Can you tell who this is targeted at, what the core message is, and why it is interesting? This treatment could hardly have more impact, giving you a number of highly compelling reasons to join the organization.**



bulk of your audience. We're not dealing with kids here, these are people who have lived their lives, know who they are and what they're looking for. Come up with a few phrases for each of the character profiles you're doodling (using cartoons or words). What sort of things would they say?

At this early stage you're not assessing the quality of your ideas, you're simply getting them (formed and unformed) out of your head and on to the page. Keep pushing yourself and remain confident that you will eventually shape one or more of these roughs into an effective creative solution.

With your Harley ad you've decided, based on your audience profile, that you're not going to try to sell them a bike. You're going to portray their lifestyle, and what better way to do this than putting some of them in the ads, accompanied by typical things they might say. Make sure you get this right, or you'll lose all of your readers and might damage the brand.

Take a break after your one-person brainstorming session. Make a cup of tea or walk around the block, and let go of the brief. When you come back to your desk, review your ideas dispassionately, referring back to your overall objectives. Although some of your ideas will be too poor to be developed, others, though incomplete, will have something good about them. Sometimes the solution lies in the merging of several rough ideas into one new one.

Your portrait-sketches of Harley bikers should be feeling quite real now. It's time to take these and create advertising with them.

Prepare two or three routes that you feel confidently address all of the main elements in the brief: the core message being presented with a clear benefit and a strong point of difference (highlighting the product's or service's USP) in the audience's own language. Consider how your copy lines can be brought to life with imagery and graphics, and be prepared to adjust the copy to facilitate the design treatment. One element must dominate the page, and if this is going to be a visual image your copy may have to be more passive.

If you're showing Harley riders, use the best photographer you can find, and don't use models—only the real deal will work with this approach. Take your best three or four portraits and give each of them the best line you can write. You can let them breathe. Just have a full-bleed shot showing aspects of their lives, let the line speak for itself, and brand it with your logo. No other motorcycle company can claim this territory, so make the most of it.

*“In most agencies—in all agencies—there's a shortage of copywriters. Good ones. And the good ones are so overworked they almost stagger from one assignment and one meeting to another.”*

**David Ogilvy**

## The main types of advertising

### High-profile brand awareness

These ads work over the longer term by building visibility without necessarily looking for an immediate response. They must be simple and memorable, and must have enough impact to remain in people's minds for as long as possible. For example, the Alzheimer's advertisements on pages 86–8 don't ask us for our money, they simply build an understanding and awareness of the plight of the sufferers and their families. In time, we will be more inclined to donate to the charity.

### Hard-working direct response

These have to persuade the reader to call, write, or go into the nearest store straight away. They work over the short term, and need a sense of urgency, or drama, to wake up the audience and get them to act immediately. They often include a tempting offer. This type of advertising is usually for price-led retail promotions. Instead of appealing to the intellect, they go for the gut, with short deadlines and “amazing” offers. Lines such as “hurry, sale ends Tuesday” or “while stocks last” bring immediacy to the message.



Having settled on the best route or routes to work up into finished design treatments you can now edit your copy into its final shape. You may have a precise word count, or a space on the page to fill, or you may have been given a fairly free rein.

The real Harley ads have beautiful photography, great character portraits, and cracking lines. One has a close-up of a biker's grizzled beard next to the line "May wind be the only product in your hair." Another shows a female crouching to apply makeup, checking her reflection in the chrome of her bike. The line reads "Do this, do that, blah blah blah." No need to water it down or spoil the effect with body copy, you can leave the rest to the reader's imagination.

## Take your creative ideas to the extreme

Creativity is not simply about going off on a flight of fancy and painting grand concepts for your audience to decode and interpret. You need a strong nerve and a confident approach to use abstract ideas to make your point, and your concept must be rooted in the core message in your brief. For each format there is a different set of guidelines:

### **Product-specific**

*Focus on a single, overriding benefit, keep the whole thing very simple, and let the few elements you use breathe.*

For example, Nokia's press advertising for the 6300 model showed an immaculate image of the phone with the lines: "Simply beautiful" and "Beautifully simple," which conveyed everything about the new model.

### **Service-specific**

*Outline the problem it solves. Be clear about who provides the service, how it is accessed, and why it is the best value for money.*

Clever Wally's direct marketing (pages 84–5) is headed "We make it, you bake it" and "Free delivery," followed by a phone number. Once this has been made clear, the mailer/menu expounds on the fun of cooking a fresh pizza at home.

### **Business-to-business**

*Trade customers are primarily interested in making profit. Reassure them about quality, service, and delivery, but focus on professionalism and trust.*

The Royal Bank of Scotland once advertised to their business customers using the line "Less talk" to support images of suited men in a meeting spouting the words "bull, bull, bull, bull, bull, bull ..." and "bluster, bluster, bluster, bluster ...," suggesting the bank was sharp, focused, and on the ball.

### **Recruitment**

*Outline the company, the opportunity, the candidate, the package, and the process. It makes a lot of sense to put the bulk of this on a website and lead the readers to the additional content through a press advertisement, which can then focus on attracting their attention.*

In the UK's *Creative Review* magazine, a design agency ran an advertisement alongside glossy, half-page advertisements (with 500-word descriptions) that read simply "We would like to meet a passionate designer to work on a wide range of web- and print-based projects," with just an e-mail and web address for following up. The website explained how to apply, and provided all of the necessary background material. This is efficient, cost-effective, and clear, and projects great brand values, suggesting the agency is organized and acute.



Look at you with your cute little nose...  
And cute little fingers...  
And cute little everything really.

Well, except that  
**strong sucking  
action of yours on**

**MY SORE NIPPLES**

It's not how it's **MEANT** to be.  
The mothers in the breast-feeding pamphlets are always smiling serenely -  
**NOT GRIPPING IN PAIN.**

That's all, I'll think about the bonding.  
Still there's always the other side...  
Oh, no, that one **HURTS** too.

For the first time in my life I wish I had three nipples.



**Boots**  
**expert**

If you've got cracked nipples, Boots understands how it feels. That's why they've put over 150 years of expertise into creating a range of solutions for life's everyday problems. To find out more visit [boots.com/expert](http://boots.com/expert)

**The new Boots Expert range. For every problem there's now an expert solution.**

Available in larger Boots stores

This fun and amusing treatment takes an innovative approach to presenting copy, but it also gets across a serious, benefit-led message. It should appeal to the core audience while building general brand awareness.

**To profile your audience you will need to:**

**1. Build up as accurate a picture as you can, using the following criteria as a rough guide:**

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Income levels: \_\_\_\_\_

Likes/dislikes: \_\_\_\_\_

Current opinions of the client's product or service: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Aspirations: \_\_\_\_\_

Lifestyles: \_\_\_\_\_

Attitudes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**2. Use this information to understand the characteristics of the audience by:**

Imagining the world through their eyes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Understanding how they might weigh things up: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Estimating how they might react to different messages: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **Profiling your audience**

Your twin goals are to attract your audience and interact positively with them. You must find out who they are, where they are, and what they are really like, using your own instincts as much as the background information you're supplied with, in the same way that Greenpeace and Harley-Davidson might do in order to create their advertising.

To help develop your ability to get a clear insight into the different characteristics of each audience you'll write for, take a bit of time to think about the people in your life, how they each speak to you, and how you speak to them. What is it that characterizes those people that you most like talking to, and those that turn you off? Could you replicate this on paper? What do their voices look like when written down?

## **Get you know your audience before you begin**

Language is perhaps the most powerful tool in human history, yet it's something that we all take for granted. It's only when we look into the way language operates, and the way it can be used to plant ideas into people's minds, that we start to see the complex structures involved in communicating. Effective use of language builds connections—bridges—between your client and your audience, and those bridges enable relationships to form and develop.

We're all unique individuals but we're social animals, and our society is formed of lots of defined groups, and language is used differently between

these different groups. We copy, observe, and imitate our close peers, and share stylistic techniques, vocabulary, and tones. We may all speak English but we are all using phrases and words differently.

I use the phrase “amateur psychology” to describe the processes that copywriters use to profile their target audience. There’s no need to go into complex market research analysis or sociodemographic categories in any detail. This is all about drawing on your knowledge of people in your life, or even people in movies, on TV, or online. You want to distill the essential characteristics of the specific types of people so you can find a common ground in terms of their attitudes and beliefs.

The basic questions you can ask yourself are: How old are they? Where do they live? What are their habits? What’s their family situation? Think about their interests: What do they read? What type of movies do they watch? What brands do they like? How do they socialize? Where do they work? Where do they go on vacation? Make a note of these “made-up” profiles, and try to be as accurate as you can. This will help give you ideas about tone of voice and messaging later.

The point of this is to try and establish the kind of influences they will take on board. Be realistic not idealistic. Consider the challenges that people who are typical of those in your target audience will be dealing with. What type of income do they have, and how able are they to buy into the messages you’re putting out to them? You’re looking for ideas about what it takes to “tip the balance” for the target audience from considering the message to acting on the message. The more relevant your writing is to them, the greater the levels of engagement that you can develop with them.

We have to win permission from our target audience to allow our ideas into their minds, and if we want those ideas to stay there and create the desired responses we must make sure they are both engaging and compelling. Are there phrases and words that particularly resonate with your audience? Make up a few phrases or pretend you’re writing snippets of a movie script and bring their voices to life, for fun, to warm up.

Establish their tone of voice by writing down some examples, sticking to the content that you’ve been briefed on but using the voice you’re distilling through your amateur research. Think about the rhythm and intonation of their speech: do they speak in short, fast sentences or long, drawn-out phrasing? What about their choice of words, do they use short, stubby Anglo-Saxon words or intellectual Latin-based words? Consider their style of expression: are they loud and brash, oozing confidence and attitude, or are they methodical and considered, particular about the way they construct their point of view? By addressing their preferences, needs, wants, and desires accurately you can show them that you understand the way they think, which goes a long way to winning their trust.

## It pays to engage

In discussing how to develop an awareness of target audiences, these days, it is not enough to rely on using traditional advertising and direct-marketing methods, it’s also important, as a creative, to understand the phenomenal developments in how audiences interact with each other via **social media**. On platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, people are engaging with one another, rather than simply reading content and navigating through pages on a website. Users within these networks can interact with a group of friends, share content with each other, and communicate in a variety of ways.

To write effective social media copy for your client requires you to become a credible part of the conversations people are having with each other within

your client's social networks. You should adapt your copy to reflect the specific social network environment that your client belongs to, being acutely aware of the style and tone of voice of the people who are influencing what happens within that environment, and reflecting this without moving away from your client's brand values.

However, it's important to remember that blogs such as Twitter aren't going to be the right media for interacting with certain audiences, since many people simply don't use them.

Most companies integrate social media advertising into their marketing strategy. Copywriters can use the marketing tools now widely available online, which enables them to target an audience by age, location, hobbies, occupation, etc. In addition, it is now even easier to research how your audience is interacting with your copy.

## Developing your "bedrock" body copy

For your copywriting bedrock, build up a confident tone of voice that you can draw on in many different situations to convey a message warmly and succinctly. This needs to be inviting, fresh, and very concise and is perfect for all sorts of body copy. Write out your body copy fully and then edit it down as tightly as possible. Use your instincts to develop a feel for the sort of language and approach with which everyone is most comfortable, and use this as the overall tone of voice for your copy in support of the more creative copy for the conceptual elements.

The *Huffington Post* cleverly brings together classic news reporting, blogs, and user-generated content on a range of subjects such as politics, world current affairs, comedy, and technology. It is hugely interactive and uses short, snappy, and active language to make its readers want to interact and add comment.

The screenshot shows the Huffington Post homepage. The main article is titled "AFTER THE SPILL" in large green letters, with a sub-headline "Two Years After BP Disaster, Cause Of Children's Health Problems Still At Issue". Below the headline is a photo of an oil rig at sea. The article's lead sentence reads: "We Couldn't Breathe. Our Eyes And Throats Would Burn." The page also features a sidebar with "FEATURED BLOG POSTS" including one by Mohamed A. El-Erian and another by George Zimmerman. At the bottom, there are sections for "SOCIAL NEWS" and "MOST POPULAR ON BLOGSPOT".

The screenshot shows a news article titled "Gulf Oil Spill Anniversary: BP Disaster's Impact On Children Still Debated". The article is dated 04/20/2012 10:10 am. It features a photo of Nicole Maurer of Buras, La., displaying her kitchen cupboard filled with medicines. The article text discusses the impact of the spill on children in South Plaquemines Parish, La., where Julie Creppel raises six children. It mentions that the spill was the worst oil disaster in U.S. history and that the impacts were very clear and very present. The article also mentions that one son, 2-year-old Wyatt, struggles with constipation and severe skin rashes, and that daughters Kylee and Atrea suffer massive headaches almost daily.

## Creative angles for you to consider

There are several tried and tested approaches:



### Before and after

Show how greatly life is improved with the product or service you're promoting by comparing life before (miserable) with life after (joyous).

This is the territory of weight-loss clubs and gyms, and also of loan and finance companies. It is all about offering to solve big problems in people's lives, and applies only where the problem is perceived to be serious enough to spoil the reader's quality of life.



### FUDing

**FUD** stands for Fear, Uncertainty, and Doubt, an approach used by professional services such as solicitors or insurance brokers. Ask the audience if they are confident, feel safe, know all the risks, and they're likely to begin to feel unconfident and insecure, and will want you to help protect them.

This is not about creating anxiety, it's about highlighting risks that people can protect themselves from. This approach is often combined with humor, showing people who haven't protected themselves experiencing an exaggerated version of the risk.



### Wit (not humor)

Humor is very subjective, but wit is universal. A good play on a word or phrase or a twist in meaning can be very effective, but make sure it works for your audience as well as for you.

When the Economist billboard reads "Would you like to sit next to you at dinner?" in huge white letters on a bright red background, you either laugh (to yourself) or you don't. Those who don't get it are not in the target audience, so it's risk-free.

## Knock the competitor

This is not something to be done overtly, although references can be made to well-known products and any shortcomings they may have. Comparison advertising is often as simple as showing similar people in identical situations, one having a better time than the other because of the brand being promoted. Innocent Drinks (see pages 110–12) don't knock competition, but their packs say "We promise that we'll never use concentrates, preservatives, stabilizers, or any weird stuff in our drinks. And if we do you can tell our mums." This implies that the competition uses some or all of these substances.

## Provocation

You don't always have to be liked to sell a lot. You may even consider trying to tell your audience not to buy the product, because it's too expensive or out of their league. See what happens.

Stella Artois advertising, with its "Reassuringly Expensive" tagline, creates the impression that the beer is so ludicrously expensive that it achieves almost godlike status.

Some radio advertising also provokes the audience by using annoying tunes and lyrics to convey messages and phone numbers that the audience will remember.

## Intrigue

A far more positive approach than FUDing, intrigue is a powerful technique for drawing in the audience. Show them something interesting and tell them there's a secret to be told.

Penguin Books use very striking photography in their press advertising, depicting highly dramatic and tense human scenarios, with the line "be here" applied subtly in lower case and their logo in the bottom right corner. It's both intriguing and compelling, especially if you enjoy gripping novels.

## Gimmicks

Promotional giveaways and eye-catching tricks such as clever folds in direct mail or an unusually located advertisement in a magazine can work if they are linked closely to the audience.

Running ads along consecutive pages can enable you to develop a sequence of messages that build to a punchline, and including a promotional item with a direct mailer can create lots of opportunities for hard-hitting or witty headlines.

## How creative do we have to be?

Let's forget about being creative and get on with the job of writing advertisements. The creativity is inherent in the process, but if you try too hard to make your ad better than anyone else's you'll only skim the surface. Put all of your energy into understanding what presses your reader's buttons, and then think about how to press them, which is the fun bit.

You can brainstorm concepts on your own, but it's more enjoyable and more dynamic to share the process with another creative thinker (usually a writer or graphic designer), especially with the guidance of an experienced creative director. As a beginner you'll experience each brainstorming session as a one-off, bursting with new ideas, but there are patterns to this type of work and an experienced creative director will be able to distinguish between writing that is truly fresh and that which has been done before.

## Direct marketing is about generating an immediate response

A great deal of the effort that goes into direct mailers, and other forms of direct marketing, is put into strategic planning and media or **list buying**. Everyone on the team involved in the direct-marketing process is trying to profile the same audience. The strategists should lead the way, explaining to the client exactly who they are targeting and why. The media planners and buyers will then select the mailing lists from the many available from specialist **list brokers**, in order to reach as many members of the target audience as possible within the available budget.

This is all very helpful to you, because it provides lots of information about your audience, as well as how the piece of communication will reach them. If the mailer is inserted into a mainstream music magazine, study the readership profile and work out what it is they like about their magazine, then you can complement or mirror this. If it's going through the mailbox alone it needs as much help as it can get.

You don't have many options with direct-marketing copy, because it has to be so immediate, so it makes sense to follow a pattern in most cases, as outlined below. By following this structure you can put all of your efforts into creating a truly new and appealing approach, and when you have a strong concept in mind simply organize the raw material into the structure provided.

### Copy structure for a direct mailer

Each element has to burn brightly for a short time.

**2.**

A qualifying headline that dominates the inside of the mailer, continuing the theme, with the sole purpose of getting the reader to read the body copy.

**1.**

A hard-hitting, compelling headline, with the sole purpose of persuading the reader to open up the mailer to find out more.

**3.**

Highly structured body copy presenting the core argument, facts, and figures as concisely and compellingly as possible.

**4.**

A very strong call to action, with clear instructions and a range of options, backed by a compelling reason to act immediately.



## Copy structure for a direct-mail cover letter

This is your chance to make friends with your reader.



### **1. An engaging headline at the top of the letter, clarifying the subject matter and promising a discovery for the reader.**

2. A compelling opening paragraph that summarizes the core argument and entices the reader to continue until the end of the letter.
3. Two or three short paragraphs presenting the details of the argument, highlighting all of the benefits outlined in your brief.
4. A call to action in the final paragraph, inviting the reader to study the accompanying mailer or catalog, visit a website, or respond directly.



**We make it, you bake it**

Free delivery 020 8994 8080 85 Chiswick High Road, London W4 2EF

SUMMER MENU

SUMMER 2007

# CLEVER WALLY'S RAW NEWS

## Pizza joint triggers “sensory excursions”

### WEST LONDONERS OVERWHELMED BY RAW POWER

“I tore open the bag and found myself floating over rolling Cotswold hills. Below me, ripe, golden wheat swayed in the soft breeze,” recounted a Hammersmith woman.

A Barnes resident reported “catching the scent of fresh thyme and being transported to my mother’s garden in Sussex.” She witnessed her retired parents “enjoying a G&T and discussing plans to re-mortgage and blow my inheritance on high-end cruises.”

A Chiswick man told us of “standing in the hall handing over a tenner to a delivery man one minute, and the next, perching high in the branches of a Warwickshire tree as

happy free range pigs snuffled below.”

The cause of the phenomenon has been traced to Clever Wally’s Raw Pizza. Wally, raw pizza impresario and freshness fanatic has a ready explanation:

“People are bombarded with the so-called “fresh” everyday, but the store-made dough that we hand shape to order, the free range ham, sausage and chicken, the freshly chopped herbs, are of such high quality, so perfectly fresh and untainted, it can be mind-blowing. What’s commonly passed off as “fresh” is no preparation for an encounter with The Raw.”



#### Wally gives

A percentage of Clever Wally’s profits will be donated annually to *Mi-dé-vin sans Frontières*. Please give us a call on 020 8994 8080 if you’d like to learn more.

#### Amazing offers

Wally’s Deals on Wheels deliver more love for less dough. “That’s more than eating the mustard; it’s about getting raw for less! Hang on, does that make sense?” said Wally. Judge for yourself on the back page!

#### Pig “ready for the end”

“I’ve lived well and ranged free” oinked Porky, 2. “My lawyer has my will and clear instructions to send my best barn to Clever Wally. Man, they can sure sling one fresh pie.”

#### Wally “all ears”

Clever Wally has been listening to his clever customers and he’s changed his menu as a result. Build-your-own pizzas, a new garlic bread, booz... it’s all coming together. New menu inside!

Selling uncooked pizzas is not the most obvious new business idea. However, with stimulating branding and a strong direct-mail campaign it seems like one of the best and most mouthwatering ideas in town, and the pizzas are flying off the shelves.

Free delivery 020 8994 8080 85 Chiswick High Road, London W4 2EF

### SALADS

Made in their own right, our salads are prepared to-order using mixed baby leaves and freshly cut vegetables, served with our homemade extra virgin olive oil and red wine vinegar.

- Feta, Tomatoes & Red Onions** £6.80  
Greek feta cheese, semi-dried cherry tomatoes, black olives, sliced courgettes, sliced red onions, flat-leaf parsley & mixed baby leaves
- Italian Ham & Artichoke Hearts** £8.50  
Parma ham, marinated artichoke hearts, shaved Reggiano parmesan, cherry tomatoes & mixed baby leaves
- Wally's Mixed Leaf Salad** £2.90  
Mixed baby leaves, baby spinach & rocket

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### DRINKS

Beers available in early July when our Beesce clears, please keep asking for it!

- Pop** £1.20  
Coke or Diet Coke in the classic 100ml glass bottle
- Red Wine** £9.70  
Biancotto d'Alto Adige, Barossa, Syrah, Merlot, Sangre de Torro and Pinot with a varied range of styles
- White Wine** £9.70  
Dumfries, Torro, Barossa, Chardonnay, Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc, Pinot Gris, Pinot Noir, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Meunier, Pinot d'Alsace, Pinot d'Alsace, Pinot d'Alsace
- Beer** £1.90  
Newspaper, a great Czech pilsner in a 500ml glass bottle

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### TO START

- Antipasti Plate** £8.90  
Parma ham, buffalo mozzarella, burrata, sliced tomatoes, semi-dried tomatoes & rocket
- Garlic Bread** £2.50/£3.00  
Wally's Unleavened Garlic Bread arrives on the stone in a new guise. With or without cheese.
- Marinated Olives** £2.50
- Fresh Hummous** £2.50  
Served with extra virgin olive oil & dried oregano
- Buffalo Mozzarella & Semi-dried Tomatoes** £3.50

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### PUDDINGS

- Gü Hot Chocolate Soufflé (2 ramekins)** £4.90
- Frü Lemon Cheesecake (3 slices)** £4.90
- Ben & Jerry's (3 cones)** £4.90  
Chocolate Fudge Brownie, Pink Froyo, Cookie Dough, Cherry Garcia Frozen Yogurt

**CLEVER WALLY'S MANIFESTO**  
a.k.a. *The Raw Deal*

Better ingredients make for better pizzas, so we source ours very carefully.

Our certified free range chicken comes from Gloucestershire.

Our dough is made slowly, every day, in-store, with extra virgin olive oil and Shipton Mill organic flour.

The Wiltshire ham we use comes from free range pigs, fed on a healthy, natural diet. Fresh herbs are a world away from dried ones and we use masses of them.

We only use real Italian Mozzarella: a pizza isn't a pizza without it.

We spent years perfecting our tomato sauce, and now it's, well, perfect.

Once you've taken delivery of Raw, you won't let another pizza through your door.

*Clever Wally's Manifesto*  
a.k.a. *The Raw Deal*

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Once you've taken delivery of Raw, you won't let another pizza through your door.

4 | WALLY'S BIG PAGE OF FUN

## Cleverwallyscope

Ignore the glitzy ads you read in the tabloids, Leo Rover's astrologer, Clever Wally, uses 1000+ years of ancient Mesopotamian techniques to cast the bright light of knowing over the murky future.

**General** A chance meeting with your Belgian deppageur will lead to a mutual opportunity. This will happen on a Thursday, in the rain.

**♌** **Leo** A small sign in a bar can tell you what you are up to at a moment's notice. Don't be blind.

**♍** **Leo's** man in a helmet will appear at your door. You will hand him a ten-pound note and he will exchange it for a raw pizza.

**♎** **Virgo** You have to look around the corner. If you want to avoid it and keep having fun, take an unusual route to work.

**♏** **Libra** A man whose first and surname are interchangeable will work here on your weekends. Nip! John! Leo! Michael! Don't drink!

**♐** **Sagittarius** A stranger blowing on an ear will show you your vision at a crucial moment next Saturday.

**♑** **Capricorn** If you step on a crack in the pavement this month, you really will be stepped by a lion.

**♒** **Aquarius** An encounter with a life-headed transport worker sometime mid-week will leave you wondering: "What is it all for?"

**♓** **Pisces** Pay close attention to the configuration of preparation or attitudes on your next pizza: you will find an important message from a surprising source.

**♈** **Aries** A sudden change in barometric pressure on the second Tuesday of the month will bring about a sharp reversal in your fortunes.

**♉** **Taurus** You'll hold the cards at all costs: a group of eight badgers is plotting a strike against you.

**Pimp your pizza**

Design your favourite pizza from our list of menu ingredients and email your request to Wally at feedback@cleverwally.com. The best recipes will feature on our next menu.

### Clever Wally's Deals on Wheels

- Any 16" raw pizza
- Italian Ham or Feta salad
- Garlic bread
- Any day, any time **£19**

- Any 16" raw pizza
- Garlic bread
- Any ice cream
- Any day, any time **£15**

- Buy one pizza
- Get another 1/2 price
- Max. 100, any time **WOW!**

Offer valid until August 16th, 2007. Some exceptions, the cheapest pizza of the two gets the 50% off in the third offer above!

**Leo:** A man in a helmet will appear at your door. You will hand him a ten-pound note and he will exchange it for a raw pizza.

little boy.

around his own legs, wrap

but the car's in the garage, and he knows it,

so he goes and sits in the car,

without the keys,

by his chair and kind of nervous around with the lantern and radiator,

no heat, an electric stove upside and he opens and shuts that,

my mother she calls him,

"look where you cannot drive."

I was sitting on the couch today looking at him when he walked again

and she told him no, again.

by my way and leaned close to my mother,

"you know what? i didn't want to drive anyway."

he was so cute. like a little boy.

my big, strong, control-freak father suddenly looked just like a little boy.

she acquired a lot of grace.

my personal label is

that's part of why this has happened to him.



for the people you love best, call 800-827-8227. **ALLSTATE** INSURANCE

Circle 10 on Reader Service

he came over and leaned close to me and said,  
"you know what? i didn't want to drive anyway."

he was so cute. like a little boy.

my big, strong, control-freak father suddenly looked just like a little boy.

## **Interview:** Diane Ruggie, DDB

*Diane is a group creative director at DDB in Chicago.*

*She has been at DDB for 23 years, working on international brands such as McDonald's. Find out how she approaches her writing and learn from the techniques of a proven master.*

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As a child, I realized I loved words. In second or third grade I was inspired by the idea that the 26 letters of the alphabet can be arranged to make people do an endless number of amazing things like laugh, cry, swear, pray, propose marriage. It's infinite. Yes, I always knew that I was interested in the power of words, and always wanted to work with them in some way.

I studied journalism as my main degree, because I thought I wanted to become a reporter. But I discovered that I didn't like prying into other people's private affairs when they had sad stories to tell or were experiencing trouble in their lives. I had a good nose for news and I somewhat enjoyed writing the stories, but I wasn't comfortable with some aspects of the research and interviewing process. Another thing I had to cope with was writing articles that were unbiased and without emotion, despite prying into people's lives to get them.

My professors helped me shift to magazine writing and then other creative writing challenges. I liked how advertising let me use my instincts to understand how a consumer related to a product. Journalistic writing started to feel scientific in nature, following a dry order. It simply didn't have enough empathy in it for me.

So I went into the advertising program, and I bloomed. It was a general curriculum that gave me the whole picture—creative, production, planning, and account management. More than that, it helped me and the other students put together a portfolio, and source a list of agencies to approach for work as a copywriter. I had a few interviews, and got lucky. I netted my first job at a small agency in Chicago.

But I always wanted to work for DDB. I was pretty single-minded about that. So when I finished my first commercial, I took it over to DDB and said "will you hire me now?" Somehow, that did the trick. Now, I try to stay that passionate about coming in every

day, because you are all only as good as your last assignment.

Even though I'm a manager of people these days, I still like to write on occasion. I work on branding campaigns and tactical work for large companies including Safeway and LensCrafters. But how does that happen? The planners and account people bring the briefs to the creatives. We take it all in, use the products, and listen to the target audience talk about the product. We will eat the food, walk around the grocery store, shopping mall, or museum and absorb the experience as much as possible so we can let it all cook in our brains. You never know where inspiration will come from.

We challenge the client if we experience something that seems amiss. Then we process the raw material, work up the messages, and come up with ideas until we feel like we've turned over every stone. We often put each idea on individual sheets of paper—words or pictures—and stick them to the wall.

After that, it's best to walk away and let things hibernate. It's like a "cocoon" phase and it lasts for a day or so. This is simply about leaving the thick of it and returning later with fresh eyes. And often when you're not even thinking about the assignment, the answer comes to you.

Normally, when we return to the work after the "cocoon" phase, everything gets assessed with a new sense of clarity. Some of it climbs to a higher plane and some of it drops away. The good stuff starts to have more zing, the excitement builds, and the words and visuals come more easily.

Once the basics of the concepts have been cracked the discipline expands and we can then add more detail and missing media options, such as direct-mail solutions, events, or online treatments. It is rare, but ideas that we threw away at an earlier stage sometimes can be folded into a different concept as things evolve.



## **Interview:** Will Awdry, Ogilvy

*Will is a creative partner at Ogilvy, has been writing great advertising for decades, and leads the D&AD Writing for Advertising course. Here we learn how he got started in copywriting, and see how he approaches the challenges of advertising writing. Like many senior copywriters, he mainly oversees creative teams and only manages to write copy himself when he gets the chance in between his busy schedules.*

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In my current role I spend my time keeping everyone inside the factory gates making sure the people outside the factory gates get the picture. My main job now is writing e-mails, and the art of copywriting has never been so important as in writing e-mails.

I had always felt comfortable with writing, but my first jobs were in account management. During this time I worked in partnership with a designer to create a “book,” a portfolio of creative advertising—concepts in this case. We worked on briefs that we were given on D&AD workshops, where we also had exposure to presenting our work to advertising professionals, helping us learn how to show our work in its best light and how to handle criticism.

If you want a job in advertising, remember that they tend to look for teams: two problem-solvers working together who respond with an “idea” for a theme or creative concept. Two heads are better than one, because you can bounce ideas around. One comes up with ideas, the other edits them, and the roles swap from one to the other.

*“Begin strongly. Have a theme. Use simple language. Leave a picture in the listener’s mind. End dramatically.”*

**Winston Churchill**

You have to be able to capture the flavor of what you are trying to achieve. What we really do is turn company stories into a narrative that might be of interest to an audience. The challenge is how to sequence the information so it is of interest. The media, all forms of it, are a series of influences that characterize behavior. Our copy is simply a series of very, very short stories that are looking to rent space in people’s brains. It’s “mental rental.” We’re trying to create thoughts that last longer than others.

Copywriting is commercial communication and it won’t work unless you engage people. You

have to invite yourself memorably into someone’s mind. Your approach is to do this in its most compressed form and then leave it for them to act upon. Didactic carpet-bombing doesn’t work any more.

In the 1970s, advertising would say “buy this, we’re telling you why” and explain that this soap powder gives you the whitest wash. Today, some campaigns give the reader just a fraction of the information, but the best approach is to leave just enough information for the target audience to work out the core message and get the satisfaction of doing this. It is a relationship. Saying “do not smoke, it will kill you” won’t work. Saying “Cancer Cures Smoking” is far more effective, and is a perfect example of a slightly cryptic advertising headline. That’s what makes it click.

Antonio Damasio writes about the treatment during the Second World War of people who had serious brain damage, and the discovery that even in cases where the majority of the brain was missing—leaving only the emotional receptors at the front—perfectly rational decisions were capable of being made. It is our emotions that steer our decisions. The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising produces a compendium of examples of the most effective advertisements in terms of sales. They publish 10 or 12 case studies each year, focusing on the return on investment. Between 1994 and 2004 they published 230 papers, and of these nearly three-quarters of the approaches used largely emotional ideas. When you are writing your copy you must speak emotionally to your audience; you are not some hack journalist rehashing a spec. Engage their interest by being relevant.

Think of your engaging, emotional point as a dart. Your headline, the compressed summary of the thought (for example “The ultimate driving machine”), is the sharp point. Your body copy, the sustained explanations that support the headline, is the feathers of the dart. If your

*“You cannot be a copywriter unless you are a strategist. You attack the problem.”*



wrinkled?  
 wonderful?

Will society ever accept 'old' can be beautiful? Join the beauty debate.

campaignforrealbeauty.co.uk | Dove

body copy is too brief the dart loses its way; if it's too heavy it won't fly. Achieving the perfect balance is essential.

Humans are now very adept at understanding copy and the most rigorous editors of all are the audience. The advertising community has broadly lost the trust of the audience. It used to be British justice, but now it is French justice. Now you have to prove that your client is not guilty.

### **Dove and the campaign for real beauty**

*“I apologize for such a long letter, if I had more time it would be shorter.”* **Blaise Pascal**

The controlling thought for Dove is “real beauty.” The brand originated during the Second World War, when surgeons discovered that most bad gunshot wounds healed better when moisturized. Ten years ago Unilever expanded the brand, which is characterized by having 25 percent moisturizer, across all bodycare products. The seismic change began with the “campaign for

real beauty”. This broke down stereotypes, catapulted the brand into mainstream consciousness, and boosted sales.

The trick, however, is not just to gain sales, it is to maintain them, and there is very little loyalty in most marketplaces. Products are given names such as “pro-age,” celebrating age, with the line “because beautiful skin has no age limit.”

A lightness of touch and a certain freshness takes the messages beyond the hackneyed, and allows you to look at imagery differently. You cannot be a copywriter unless you are a strategist. You attack the problem.

I read the brief, turn it over so that I can't look at it, and then summarize it in one sentence, no matter how clunky or unworkable that sentence is. Then I write it large on a big sheet of paper and stick this on the wall (this is how I get past the blank page). Then I think to myself, “it's easy to do something better than that.”

I might then write a short exposition, two or three lines to develop that thought, and sometimes a pithy line may emerge from this



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that will become a key point. I then go for a walk, and consider how to approach this to bring it to life.

I make sure I get to the end of my first draft before I redraft it. From here it collapses in on itself all the time, and everything “packs down” as I edit and revise the first draft. If I don’t do this it looks overwritten and can easily take on the appearance of slick “advertising-ese.” Copy needs to be quirky and surprising, and your choice of words should come from outside the mainstream.

*“There are just three rules for copywriting, but no one knows what they are.”* **Somerset Maugham**

A great example of good use of copy is in the UK bookstore chain Waterstones. Tim Waterstone had the idea of letting the staff include their “own choice” recommendations of books, where they write their own reviews by hand on preprinted cards that form a special display in the center of the store. It is very personalized and many retailers are now copying this idea.

Once people understand what you’ve written down, then you can play. Use imperatives, or questions, or whatever takes your fancy. The average vocabulary of a typical adult in England is 43,000, in Italy it is 27,000 and in France 25,000. This gives us lots of opportunities to play games with words.

Try these exercises if you can’t get going. Think of a slightly ludicrous audience, for example, Action Man or G.I. Joe. Write 50 words to him that explain the message you’re trying to communicate. If he could write 50 words back to you, what would he say? Do this with understanding and a degree of sensitivity. This will get the arguments flowing. Think about your favorite movie, then write the entire plot in sentences of no more than three words. This will

help you get to the nub of what’s being said. Your arguments should be ordered, clearly identifiable, and sequential. This lets the audience know that you know what is going on in their lives.

A campaign is a minimum of three expressions of an idea, running consistently throughout. You must have a call to action. If you are not eliciting some form of response it’s not working. This takes sensitivity. A bad stand-up comic or circus act will do the act and then stand back and wait for the applause. You have to make the response seem as unlike hard work as possible. If the reader is saying “you’re asking us to do the hard work” he or she won’t respond.

There are two media types: lean forward and lean back. The first refers to readers who are seeking out information about your client—often online. They want to know, so tell them. The lean-back type is more passive, watching TV, sitting on the train, or listening to the radio in the car. You have to create interest. The bulk of copywriting is targeted at lean forward.

Great copy uses visual words. In mainstream above-the-line copy you are fly-fishing for the audience’s heads, and need to be very brief. For example, David Abbott’s ad for the *Economist*—“I don’t read the *Economist*,’ Management Trainee Aged 42”—gets the whole message across in a few simple words. After 25 years the campaign is still running and still wins awards.

## The basics of mailer copy

### The less personal, the less interesting

**No:** “This weedkiller will stop weeds from damaging your driveway”

**Yes:** “Doesn’t it drive you mad when weeds destroy your driveway? Well, you don’t have to put up with this any more ... ”

### Make the message strong, clear, and simple

**No:** “Do you ever get the feeling that you are paying too much for your gas and electricity bills?”

**Yes:** “Looking for savings?”

### Use intrigue or a promise to attract interest

**No:** “Reduce the appearance of wrinkles”

**Yes:** “Discover the secret of younger-looking skin”

### Consider using strong sales-offer messages

**No:** “Sunday Sale—big discounts”

**Yes:** “Amazing! Two for One on all items this Sunday! Wow!”

### Present the benefits clearly, with subheads

**No:** “These children need your help”

**Yes:** “You can save the sight of these children”

### Include a very straightforward call to action

**No:** “So why don’t you find out more?”

**Yes:** “Simply call 0800 123 456 now so you don’t miss out”

### Give a reason to respond now, not later

**No:** “You simply won’t find better”

**Yes:** “Don’t forget, this incredible offer ends this Sunday”

### Use high-energy copy to create a buzz

**No:** “Britain’s ancient woodland has been in decline for many decades, for many reasons. Many new woodlands are planted with fast-growing softwoods that stifle the local habitat. Your donation will enable us to plant ... ”

**Yes:** “It’s true that Britain’s ancient woodland is dying out, but it’s not too late. Together we can restock many ancient woodlands with indigenous species and provide a legacy for our grandchildren that we can be truly proud of ... ”

## Be clear about the mailing process—it affects your copy

The way to success with direct marketing is to send carefully crafted messages to a perfectly targeted mailing list. Perfectly targeted and completely current mailing lists are very expensive, but the alternative is to mail enormous quantities and play the numbers game. It's your role to focus on the messages and ensure they are both relevant and interesting.

If a client is looking to increase sales through a direct-marketing campaign, the strategy could be to purchase a premium-quality list of high-net-worth individuals who each have the capacity to make substantial purchases. There may be 300 of these people in the designated catchment area, and the list—guaranteed to be current and accurate—may be extremely expensive. This approach is favored by premium businesses with high-value offers because they are interested in communicating only with the wealthiest individuals. The cost per mailer in these situations can be enormous, but the potential returns mirror the initial investment. Writing for these is a very high-pressure job, made easier by the precise audience profile, which gives you plenty to work with in terms of establishing a relationship with the reader. This low-volume, high-quality list gives you a clearly defined target audience to whom you can speak in their own voice, and use examples directly relevant to their lives.

An alternative could be to purchase a list of 30,000 middle-income households. You might get this list for the same price as the list of 300 high-income prospects, but it will be a different type of audience, and the response rates will be much lower because the list may be slightly out of date or have other inaccuracies. As the writer, you can't make too many assumptions about this broader and more generalized audience, so focus on the product or service instead, and settle for a more "catch-all" benefit statement. This high-volume, low-quality list gives you a broad and diverse audience, to which you'll have to sell harder in order to deliver the right level of response.

Depending on the quality and accuracy of the mailing list, direct marketing works on typical responses of 0.04 percent of the total mailed. Utilities companies commonly use high-volume mailers to offer cheaper deals on gas and electricity, for example. With the high wastage approach (buying cheap lists covering entire catchment areas), the preferred route is to send creatively written and designed postcards as the print and postage costs are far lower.

## Direct marketing is a vital tool for relationship marketing

**Relationship marketing** focuses on retaining existing customers and building stronger relationships with them, and direct marketing—particularly with targeted mailers—is an excellent tool for developing existing customer relationships and increasing customer loyalty.

By definition, your audience for a **loyalty campaign** will be current customers who have given permission for you to contact them. You know what they are like, and you know that they have previously bought into your brand and may want to know more. You simply want them to retain their loyalty to your brand by continuing to purchase. This makes the writing process more straightforward as there is less uncertainty and risk involved. As they are current customers, you could afford to take a more familiar voice than with your main marketing material, and rather than sell to them you can present your information to them clearly and calmly so that they continue to buy from you.

Depending on your client's customer information, you can operate highly targeted direct-mail campaigns. A retail client could mail a specific group of premium customers and invite them in-store for a special evening where they could meet a celebrity, get some tips from experts, see a preview of a new

line, or enjoy special discounts. You would write this using a different voice—being more personal and inviting—than if you were mailing the entire customer base with a more basic promotional offer.

Variable data printing allows text in a print run to be changed to suit different readers. This can be as simple as running three or four variations of a text to suit different age or geographical profiles, or it can allow the name and personal details of readers to be printed within the document, as if it had been created solely for the recipient. As the copywriter, make sure that the message is as relevant and credible as possible—it's not enough to use this technique as a gimmick. Your main challenge is to make sure that text reads smoothly with the permutations that may occur in a "mail merge."

## Direct marketing is about filtering

The majority of direct mail never gets read: sending a mailer to someone who has not requested it is about as random as communications can get. The point is that some of the people you mail will read it and respond positively, and as the writer this is all that matters to you.

Your target audience is different at each stage in the writing process. At first, you are communicating to a general audience, many of whom are simply not interested. Some of these people will show an interest by reading your advertisement, and these readers form a different audience profile: they are the part of the audience that may well be prepared to put in a bit of effort to find out more, so write with them specifically in mind. You may need to keep your body copy short and sweet in order to appeal to as many readers as possible. Or you may decide to give them something more substantial in the form of a more detailed proposition. Well-crafted, long copy that presents a case, backs it up, and delivers a carefully constructed argument can win a lot of readers and convert many of these prospects into committed customers.

Once you have completed your copy, leave it overnight, go home, and return to it with a fresh pair of eyes. As the writer you view it from a specific perspective; as the reader this will be very different. How does it work for you as a potential member of the target audience? What would you change? Does it work hard enough? This "next day" test is a vital part of the creative process.

Your clients will always want to make amendments; it's human nature. You have to consider whether proposed amendments improve or detract from the final effect, and argue your point strongly, from the point of view of the brief.

## No matter how good it is, edit it down

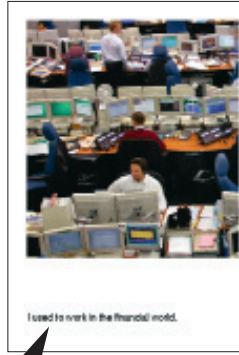
The tighter your copy the better, so cut out unnecessary words. Previous generations hailed the merits of long copy in advertising and direct marketing, but more recent consensus seems to be to keep it as short and punchy as possible. Both are right, it's simply a question of fitness for purpose. You have a split second to catch the attention of a newspaper reader flicking through its pages, and your creative concept has to hit home quickly. However, once you have the reader's attention, you can work with it and can present your story.

For example, Clever Wally's (pages 84–5) uses the headline "Pizza joint triggers 'sensory excursions'" and subhead "West Londoners overwhelmed by raw power" to tease readers into the body copy: "I tore open the bag and found myself floating over rolling Cotswold hills. Below me, ripe, golden wheat swayed in the soft breeze," recounted a Hammersmith woman." Your copy should project personality, and you must be prepared to add human touches wherever relevant, while sticking closely to your original copy brief.

*"One of the first lessons our copywriters get is this lesson—you must make the product interesting, not just make the ad different. And that's what too many of the copywriters in the US today don't yet understand."*

Rosser Reeves

This direct-mail piece is simple yet bold, incorporating a clear message with imagery that gives personality to the obsolete computer. The theme is expanded within the booklet, building to a strong call to action.



I used to work in the financial world.

But was replaced by the younger generation, not that they look any younger.

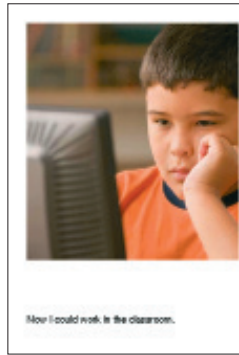
I retired when I was five.

I used to work in the financial world.



While considering my options, I met with investors and they told me that just because I was five didn't mean that I was obsolete.

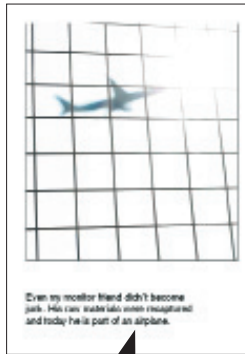
They said I could get a new start—my hard drive would be triple wiped. I'd have an absolutely clean slate.



Now I could work in the classroom.

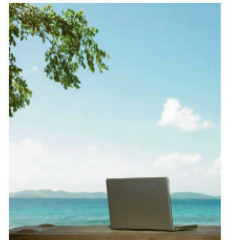
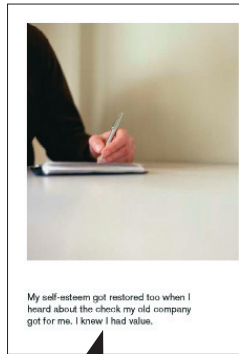
Or be transferred to the Q16 track.

They said I could get a new start—my hard drive would be triple wiped. I'd have an absolutely clean slate.



Even my monitor friend didn't become junk. His raw materials were recaptured and today he is part of an airplane.

They keep track of everything, even detailed reports from clients and some include individual certificates to guarantee against all risk.



My self-esteem got restored too when I heard about the check my old company got for me. I knew I had value.

Don't you just love a happy ending? Yours is standing by.

Even my monitor friend didn't become junk. His raw materials were recaptured and today he is part of an airplane.

My self-esteem got restored too when I heard about the check my old company got for me. I knew I had value.



### **Exercise: write an advertising campaign**

Select a brand that you like or that is well known and collect some of their advertising and marketing material. (Use material from the copywriting exercises in chapters 1 and 2, if possible.)

Decide who the target audience is, what the core message is, and what the USP (Unique Selling Point) should be. Write a summary brief.

Brainstorm some visual and verbal concepts, then sift these down into two or three strong routes.

Select the best route, and work up at least three creative treatments, each following the same style and tone, but each with an individual message. Maintain a clear division between all three.

Draft some body copy and scamp some design treatments, using colored pens or a design program on your Mac or PC. Sit back and assess your work.

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### **Round-up**

Direct marketing describes all communications that seek a direct response from the reader.

There are two challenges: reaching your audience and interacting with them.

The way to success with direct marketing is to send carefully crafted messages to a perfectly targeted mailing list.

Direct marketing is an excellent tool for expanding existing customer relationships.

The breakdown of traditional media has created a wealth of new ways of reaching the target audience.

To understand your client's business you have to view it through the customer's eyes.

Creativity is not about simply going off on a flight of fancy and painting grand concepts.

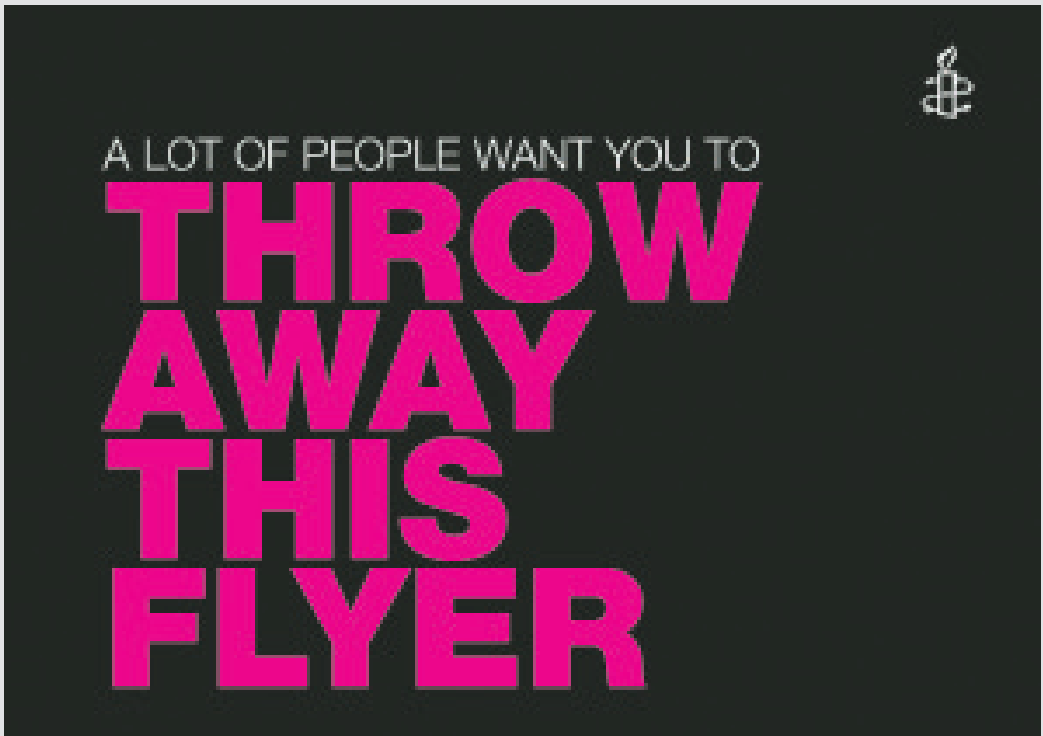
The early stages of developing your creative ideas will feel a bit strange.

Prepare two or three routes that you feel confidently address all of the main elements in the brief.

Consider whether any proposed amendments improve or detract from the finished effect.

**Case Study:** Amnesty International

*Nick Holmes is the creative director and copywriter at graphic design agency Different Kettle in Bristol, UK. The agency is run by creatives and is focused on delivering great creative solutions by getting the brief right from the very start. They have won many awards for their work, and have generated excellent responses through their direct-marketing activity. So how did Nick create this hard-hitting insert for Amnesty?*





**DICTATORS  
TRAFFICKERS  
RAPISTS  
EXECUTIONERS  
TORTURERS  
TERRORISTS**

## DEFY THEM

There's a man in Algeria who tortures people. It's his job and he's good at it. He uses a variety of tools including broken glass and a blow torch.

There's a militia commander in Sudan who wages war on civilians. He commands his men to rape women. As many as possible. It's his way of suppressing the population.

An Iranian official is paid to kill people, including children. He's been known to hang them in public streets.

A western president authorises an illegal detention centre. Here no rule of law applies. Detainees are subjected to sleep deprivation, hooding, forced nudity and simulated drowning.

A man in eastern Europe runs a profitable business selling women as sex slaves. The UK is one of his biggest markets.

**All these people are real. They are all going about their business as you read this leaflet. They all want to carry on undisturbed.**

So they all share one hope: that you will not join Amnesty International.

## JOIN AMNESTY

Amnesty International is the world's most influential human rights organisation. Simply by joining you are making a stand against human rights abuses.

**And they don't like it.**

Bertha Ojeda de Naldi, a woman whose husband was 'disappeared' by the Honduran military, put it like this: 'Murderers and violators are cowards' she said 'so cowardly that they do it hooded in darkness. They hid under stage when organisations like Amnesty International take action.'

A former torturer in El Salvador was even more succinct. 'If there is lots of pressure, like from Amnesty International, we might pass the mistake onto the judge. But if there's no pressure they're dead.'

We can only apply pressure, because of the members we represent. The more members – the more pressure. It's as simple as that.

**That's why we need you to defy the abusers and join Amnesty.**

You can become a member by making a regular donation of £5 a month. All you have to do is complete the attached form and put it in a post box.

**A lot of people are hoping you won't do it. But many, many more are praying you will.**

There's a man in Algeria who tortures people. It's his job and he's good at it. He uses a variety of tools including broken glass and a blow torch.

An Iranian official is paid to kill people, including children. He's been known to hang them in public streets.

All these people are real. They are all going about their business as you read this leaflet. They all want to carry on undisturbed.

So they all share one hope: that you will not join Amnesty International.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IS A REGISTERED CHARITY IN ENGLAND AND WALES

## I'M JOINING AMNESTY

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY IN BLOCK CAPITALS. [www.amnesty.org.uk/join](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/join)

PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY:  I am a member of another Amnesty International group  I am a member of another human rights organisation  I am a member of another political organisation

PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY:  I am a member of another Amnesty International group  I am a member of another human rights organisation  I am a member of another political organisation

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PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY:  I am a member of another Amnesty International group  I am a member of another human rights organisation  I am a member of another political organisation

Full Name

Address

City

Country

Postcode

Phone

Mobile

E-mail

Work

Home

Other

Signature

Date

Age

Gender

Occupation

Other

Other

Other

Other

Other

Other

Other

Other

Other

Other

This form takes only a few minutes to complete. You can complete it online at [www.amnesty.org.uk/join](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/join) or by filling in this form and sending it to Amnesty International, FREEPOST N634 444, Glasgow, G4 0BS.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IS A REGISTERED CHARITY IN ENGLAND AND WALES. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IS A REGISTERED CHARITY IN SCOTLAND. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IS A REGISTERED CHARITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND.

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## **The Objective:**

### *create a generic fund-raising press insert*

We do a lot with Amnesty, and have a long history with them. They decided that they would run a creative pitch for their acquisition inserts, which were to appear mainly in the mainstream quality press. The brief was as simple as “we need a new insert that is not issue-specific and will not date.” This was a very open brief—we could write as much or as little copy as we felt we needed to.

The customer profile defined the audience as people who are well read and interested in current affairs. We were up against our previous work, and we decided to do something that was generic and wasn't time-sensitive. We presented four concepts and the client developed two of them. One was a “hefty” read, consisting of an eight-page booklet debating the use of torture and whether it can ever be justified. The other concepts we used were about changing the news by joining Amnesty and making a difference.

People always feel the need to describe the Amnesty tone of voice. The broad essence is about humanity, and about a movement of ordinary people standing up against injustice around the world. We could qualify the tone of voice as: “simplify, humanize, and make it easy to participate.” We don't put tone of voice on our briefs, because if the brief is clear the tone of voice will inevitably follow. The tone of voice has to be true to the specific concept or idea.

Corporate guidelines can be inward-looking. As far as I am concerned, I talk differently to different people—to my children, to my colleagues, and to my friends—but I am still a consistent person. The best approach is to aim to avoid corporate speak at all times.

Direct marketing is cruel because there is an immediate measure of success. We shelve this fear and instead of worrying about what the response will be we go back to the original creative idea and see how true we are being to it, looking for ways to enhance it and eliminating anything that detracts from it. We just think about this, not how many people are reading it, or the rules of direct marketing. Like any rules, it's good to know them, but do be prepared to break them. Some rules say that with mail packs you should “always make accompanying letters long,” but sometimes we don't have a letter at all.

I think everything should be edited as tightly as possible in every case. It might still be a four-page letter, but it could have started as an eight-page letter. I'm a great one for rewriting and cutting.

## **The Approach:**

### *developing copy and design in unison*

The gold dust is in the raw material. It's critical to have good material to work with, because although you're being creative you are not making anything up. You can't polish a turd. The background research and reading around the subject creates lots of great material. Sometimes if you read a fact there's the creative concept staring you in the face. It'll need crafting and shaping, but you know you've got the essence.

We have an instinctive feel about what will work, but we sometimes disagree amongst ourselves. You can't always predict how well a piece of marketing will perform, but if we're not excited by it ourselves then we usually start again.

We always work as a team, with an art director and writer working in close partnership, and share creative ideas. We develop the core design and copy concept, presenting this to the client before writing body copy. The copy at this stage consists of a main headline and our top-line thinking. In this case, our mock-up was almost exactly the same as the final version, and once they went with it the copywriting was simply about adding flesh to the bones.

It wasn't all plain sailing: the art director had to be talked around to our point of view on designing around the copy's strength before we could present it to the client, as he felt there was not enough creativity in the design. Amnesty's new guidelines included the use of fluorescent colors, which is where the pink lettering came from.

The concept's strength was its simplicity. We know that no one wants to read inserts, so we played on this with the “throw this away” line. But then we very quickly had to tell the reader what this is all about—as soon as they open it up.

## **The Result:**

### *generating good responses*

The insert has done really well. The client seldom expects the inserts to pay for themselves, but on the first outing this insert appears to be bringing in more than the cost of the whole campaign (donors pay by direct debit and it takes a while to properly assess the full response).

It is interesting to consider the criteria for what is “working” and “not working.” We did an arms-control pack raising awareness of arms sales. It won lots and lots of awards, but it wasn't one of the client's hardest-working appeals. It is more difficult to raise money in some subjects than others, and it's not always due to the creative treatments.

# Case Study: MemoMind Pharma

Steve Wexler runs one of the most successful direct-marketing copywriting firms in the US. He has been writing copy for 20 years, initially for catalogs, and now specializes in writing for direct marketing. He employs 11 copywriters in his creative studio, which also includes two sizable design teams, and believes in the power of closely linking words and imagery. He tells us how his studio improved upon the results of a successful direct mailer.

It is a sophisticated doctor's formula shown to reverse up to 10 years of memory decline in as little as 30 days!

In less than one month, my memory went from terrible to incredible.

N-PEP-12 in MemoProve has been shown to strengthen and to "re-connect" neural connections in the brain.

## **The Objective:**

### *generate improved response from a successful mailer*

MemoMind Pharma have successfully promoted their neuropeptides memory pill by mailing a 12-page supplement with articles on memory enhancement to their customer base. The control mailer that had been proven to deliver the best responses was an 8½ x 11 in (21.6 x 27.9 cm) “magalog” (a cross between a magazine and a product catalog).

We test lots of formats using alternative headlines and measuring responses. The challenge is always to improve the control; this is hardest of all when it was your own work! We always start by taking a thorough creative brief. After this, I outline the project, write some initial headers and subheaders, and art direct the layout and structure. The writers and designers then fill in the pieces.

The cover, which is prime real estate, was loaded with promises (which every magazine from *Cosmopolitan* to the *Enquirer* uses heavily) about the benefits of memory enhancement, so we looked at the format, and decided to test different sizes, which let us set copy in larger point sizes.

## **The Approach:**

### *the benefits of different formats*

When you're creating direct marketing, leave your ego at the door—our work is not going to be hanging in the Louvre. Remember that the design has to sell the message. Every element of direct-marketing design should push readers to the end sell, so the designer should read the copy fully and understand exactly what it is that they are selling. Some get this and some don't. (If you're a designer and you get this, you get a much larger salary!)

It is important to develop the copy and design solutions together. If direct marketing were a sales representative, graphic design would be his or her suit and style, and copy would be his or her sales messages. It is often underappreciated that design has to create something that sends a message across visually. Graphic design and conceptual images can overshadow a message: it can be more interesting to look at them and ignore the copy.

It is all about presenting a compelling concept. It's important to work with images that will inspire your end prospect. I will sometimes visit a picture library and search for a compelling picture that relates to the message in a brief, and write copy around it. It is very difficult to do this the other way around. You have to tailor the message to the audience, and make it clear what's in it for them.

The memory enhancement supplement is designed to look and feel like a quality magazine. It has newsstand quality and a high perceived value (it included the price tag of US\$3.95/CAN\$4.50 in the top right-hand corner). It includes a range of different editorial angles, each one leaning toward the proven benefits of the memory pill, for example looking in detail at its ingredients or showcasing a series of testimonials about its effectiveness.

The copy focused on believability, legitimacy, and sales points. Believability came as much from design treatment as copy, which included powerful testimonials from credible people explaining how it worked for them, such as “Wow! What a difference MemoProve has made. I am more alert than I've ever been. It's almost hard for me to realize how ‘mentally slow’ I had been for so long.” The credentials of clinical physicians and findings of medical studies give the messages legitimacy: “Clinical trials on MemoProve stunned researchers when results surfaced in not the usual three to six month time frame, but in 30 days!” Sales points give readers some of the best promises they'll get. As well as offering free samples, the copy promises “to reverse 10 years of age-related memory loss.”

We set the mailer in different sizes, the largest being a tabloid. Each had the same copy and design; in the larger formats everything was proportionally bigger. For the tabloid we had to create an extra four pages as it had to be a minimum of 16 pages.

## **The Result:**

### *the larger copy sizes generate the best response*

The tabloid format, with its increased font size and larger images, delivered even better results than the control mailer, making the most expensive format the one that delivered the best return on investment.

We mail-tested with lower numbers than the usual mass mailing; the tabloid won significantly. When it was rolled out to the full list there was a huge increase in response, so it became the control mailer. There aren't usually many quality brochures in the mail because they are expensive, so this is a real point of difference. When mail came, the quality-printed tabloid became the wrap people used to carry the rest of their mail in.

The bigger type made the copy easier to read for our audience, who are in the older age range, and removed anything that might stop them in their tracks when reading the messages. Whatever you do, don't let anything stop your readers in their tracks—let the flow of the messages continue and you'll get the best responses.