

Creating Powerful Headlines for Your Promotional Materials

If you are like many healing professionals, you probably write your marketing materials without really knowing what you are doing. While this may appear to save you money in the short term, in the long run, it could actually be costing you money.

How can this be so? It is because copywriting, the science and art of writing for the purpose of selling, is not something most healing professionals know how to do, and yet, it plays a huge role in how people make their decisions when buying products and services.

This article discusses one aspect of effective copywriting: your opening headline--the first words you use on any of your promotional materials.

Effective headlines grab people's attention in the increasingly crowded market. Strong headlines set your readers up to want more. They draw your prospects in and convince them to stay around and read the rest of your copy.

Statistics vary, although some have found that about 80% of prospects will read your headlines, but only about 20% of them will read the rest of your copy. In fact, many people will make their decision whether or not to follow through on your offer based on the headline alone. Headlines are seen as being the key to well written copy so much so that experienced copywriters often spend as much time crafting a headline as they do writing the body of the copy.

Writing an effective headline is not any easy task if you don't understand the principles involved. Following the points below will provide you with a beginning understanding of how to write a strong headline.

Know your Audience

Headlines that are directed towards a specific audience bring the best results. When you understand the market you are writing for, you can pinpoint the problems, concerns and desires they have. You are likely wasting your time and money if you gear your headline towards a general audience, as you can't possibly address the needs and desires of everyone in a single headline.

Focus on a Core Problem or Benefit

Your potential clients are usually seeking relief for some kind of discomfort or pain. Your headlines should show that you understand this pain. For example, if you target people with chronic back pain, you might focus on the fact that these people feel frustrated and fed-up with their inability to find relief, are unable to sleep at night, are not functioning well at work, or are short tempered with family members.

Alternately, you could focus your headline on the solution your audience is seeking. In the example of people with back pain, your headline would mention how good they could feel after treatments with you and how this will benefit them in their lives.

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Concentrate on One Idea

Once you have the core idea that you want to convey in your headline, stick with it and don't muddle it by trying to combine other ideas. If you try to address too much, your headline will be diluted and consequently ineffective. This can be challenging, as you really have to commit to one area of focus and not get sidetracked by other points regardless of how important they seem.

Make it Simple and to the Point

Your headline should get to the point immediately. Don't make your prospective clients struggle to understand its meaning. Avoid jargon words that are used in your profession. Stick to plain, simple language that a twelve year old can easily understand.

Make it Compelling

Your headline should compel people to want to read more of your copy. Make it exciting. Evoke curiosity, or intrigue. When your ideal clients read your headline, they should sit up and pay attention. Persuade them right off the bat that there is a high chance that they might want to know more about your product or service.

Make it Believable

While you want your headline to be compelling, it's important that it's also believable. Don't make claims that sound too good to be true or people won't take you seriously. Having said this, in my experience, most healing professionals undersell their services and are consequently more prone to not making their headline compelling enough, as opposed to pushing it beyond the limits of believability.

Speak to Your Prospective Clients' Emotions

People make their buying decisions based on their emotions and then use their logic to rationalize their decisions. Identifying the core emotions people are feeling shows that you understand them and helps increase trust that you know what you are talking about, thus illustrating that you have something to offer them.

Track Your Results

Experienced marketers test different headlines and then track the results of each one. You will never know for sure what impact a headline will have until you test it. Once you find one that is working, you can always improve it until you get even better results. There are many ways to test your headlines depending on where you are using them. You can easily set up what is called a "split test" on your website where you track the conversion rates of different headlines.

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If you don't know how to set up a split test and don't want to spend the time learning how to do this, at the very minimum, always ask your prospective clients where they heard about you and why they called. Then make sure you track this information.

Writing strong headlines takes knowledge, practice and skill. If you feel stuck or want to get the best results possible, hire an experienced copywriter to help write your headlines.

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Juliet Austin, MA, a former Counselor, is a Marketing Coach, Consultant and Copywriter who assists counselors, therapists, coaches, alternative health professionals and other healing professionals in marketing their private practices. She helps her clients overcome resistances to marketing, implement no or low-cost marketing strategies, create compelling promotional materials, and write attention-grabbing website copy designed to get results

Juliet is the author of the FREE, 22 page, report, "67 Surefire Ways to Attract Clients." Get your FREE copy at <http://www.julietAustin.com>

You can also visit Juliet's marketing blogs at:
<http://www.marketingprivatepractice.com> and
<http://www.websitedesignandpromotion.com>