

Marketing Series for Women Entrepreneurs

Part 5: Magic Messaging: Words That Connect With Your Customers

Writing copy for ads and websites is easy. Writing **effective** copy for ads and websites...now **that** is much trickier. The goal of all marketing copy is to attract attention, educate and prompt action on the part of the reader. Which is a lot easier said than done. You must first uncover what customers need to know in order to act, then be very clear on what you want them to do. Then you can explore what tone and style will attract attention.

Start With the Destination in Mind

There's an old saying that if you don't know where you're going that's exactly where you'll end up. Nowhere. It's also a basic principle of marketing that if you don't know specifically what your marketing is meant to accomplish, it hasn't a hope of being successful. With copy writing, that means you have to know what you want readers to do about it once they've read your stuff.

Marketing needs to have a reason or it's just so much blather. What do you want potential customers to do when they see or hear your ad, or read the sign in your window and the info on your website? It might seem obvious, "I want them to buy!" but there are many different reasons to engage customers.

Do you want them to go to the website to purchase? Call the 1-800 number? Attend a community event at the store? Give you feedback on their experience? Become a testimonial? Sign up for your newsletter? Refer a friend? Quality marketing campaigns don't just ask customers to buy, they also develop a relationship that educates, establishes rapport, and earns respect.

As part of developing relationships with her customers, Rhiannon Cosgrave, owner of [Natural Synergy Day Spa](#) in Parksville, uses a monthly newsletter. The newsletter format allows Rhiannon to educate customers about the services she offers while also informing and offering tips on general health and wellbeing.

"I do a lot of advertising in many different forms for the business, but ultimately it's about keeping people engaged so they think of your business first," says Cosgrave. And her customers are thinking of her. Cosgrave was awarded Entrepreneur of the Year by the Parksville & District Chamber of Commerce this year.

Yes, It IS All About Them

I often say marketing isn't about telling people what you want them to know. It's about knowing what they need to hear. That means you need to [know your customer](#). Put yourself in their shoes. Start with understanding what their main pain points are. What are the challenges you can resolve for them? The only way to know this for sure is to ask them.

Start With the Highlights

Much can be said about any product or service, but often the details are more important to you than the customer. When you want action, it makes most sense to focus on what matters most to your customers. Frankly, it also saves a lot of time and space. When you're dealing with small ad spaces, it's vital to get right to the point.

Start with a bullet point list. Often this starts out with the features of the product, the technical details. These may be important, but usually they are not nearly so important as the benefits – how does the customer benefit by choosing your product or service.

In the case of a highly technical product or service specifics of how something works play a larger role, but for most buyers, this is still secondary information. The first step is to address immediate needs. Provide the in-depth as an easily accessible follow up.

Prioritize Information

Once you have the bullet points, prioritize the information based on what your customers have indicated is most important to them. Ideally, ask people who have already purchased why they did and what helped them make the buying decision. This kind of [market research](#) will ensure that you are not making unfounded assumptions about what motivates your buyer.

Know the Venue

Appropriate tone and style depends on where the content will appear. Ads are typically short and sweet, and often catchy or humorous – you have little space and it's costly, so use it wisely for greatest impact. Websites content needs to be easy to scan through, for easy reading and quick sound bytes. White papers are an example of in-depth content that may be downloaded from a website and thoroughly read and absorbed.

Choose a style and tone appropriate to both your [brand](#) and where content will be read. It's fun to be creative and play with this a little, particularly as something surprising can help attract attention and be memorable.

Being in the fashion industry, Colleen Becker, owner of [Frakas. Shops for Women Inc.](#) in Kelowna, knows that nothing attracts her customers like the promise of access to the latest fashions. Her marketing includes an ongoing series of promotions through radio, newspaper and social media that link feature items in her store to the hippest celebrities in Hollywood.

"Our ads are enticing and paint a picture of an item we carry in the store and its connection to a celebrity. We try to create an ongoing story that engages the customers and keeps them listening and looking for our ads," says Becker.

Becker, also points out how important it is to follow through on the promises you make in your ads. When her customers come in looking for the earrings that Gwyneth Paltrow was spotted in, they'll find a cardboard cut out of Gwyneth's face with the jewelry dangling from her ears. There's no missing those earrings!

Tighten Things Up

Readers Digest Condensed was onto something. Get to the point! Don't use five words where one will do. Get to the heart of the message. One of reasons visuals are so effective is that imagery is so powerful. When you write, paint a picture with your words.

One of the easiest ways to get hung up and stressed out about writing is by fantasizing that you'll get it perfect the first time. You won't. Relax, and have another go. It may take some practice, but you'll get there – that's what the Draft stamp was invented for.

Writing good copy means the difference between moving prospects to customers or having their eyes glaze over...if they even noticed you at all. If ever in doubt about your ability to capture attention, be sure to bring in an outsider who can provide the objectivity and writing finesse to make your marketing sizzle!

Written in collaboration with Liz Gaige.

Liz Gaige, owner of [Market Navigators Consulting](#), specializes in bringing creativity and a double shot of inspiration to business and marketing strategies for businesses of all sizes. By her own admission, she does her best work when she's just a little bit cheeky!

Around the corner or around the province, [Women's Enterprise Centre](#) is helping women start, grow, and succeed in business by offering business advisory services, business skills training, business loans, resources, publications and referrals.

All examples cited are BC business owners who have been profiled at Women's Enterprise Centre publications, events or workshops.