

Sales Writing That Counts!

Power Selling Checklist

Ask yourself these questions to create winning sales copy every time.

Have you used a tone appropriate for your client—respectful, positive, professional with a personal touch?	Have you used imagery where appropriate, chosen concrete words, or provided specific information as proof of the quality of your product or idea?
Have you explained the benefits of each feature of your product or service?	Have you organized your ideas so that readers can easily follow your logic?
Have you anticipated your client's concerns (costs)?	Have you created a " reader centered " content by downplaying <i>I, me, mine</i> and emphasizing <i>you, your, yours</i> ?
Have you addressed these concerns (weight)?	Have you polished your document so that the writing sounds and looks correct?
Have you found ways to encourage your client to accept your offer within your timeframe (tracking)?	Have you guided your reader to conclude that the benefit you offer is worth more than the cost?

Words To Avoid

Allege	Error	Insist	Quality
Can't	Fail	Misinform	Should
Complain	Fault	Mistake	Shouldn't
Couldn't	Honestly	Must	Value
Demand	Inadequate	Oversight	Wouldn't
Don't	Inferior	Price	Wrong

Words That Motivate

Believe	Enjoy	Excite	Succeed
Agree	Good	Proven	Unlimited
Bargain	Good	Respect	Valuable
Benefit	Grateful	Satisfy	Welcome
Comfort	Guarantee	Solution	Yes
Dream	Happy	Strive	You

Sample Product/Service Benefits Table

Use a table to develop your benefits statements.

Product/Service: ACME-Web's web site development services

Reader Concern	Feature	Benefit Statement
Interruption of service	Smooth transition	Site down for fewer than 24 hours when switched over to new design
Cost overages on design changes	Satisfaction program	Changes can be made at no cost until satisfied (per contract terms)

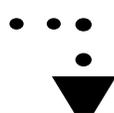
Based on the Benefits Table above, ACME-Web's sales letter might open with:

ACME-Web promises a painless transition to your new Web Site. Your new design will be ready for release within 20 days. In fact, we replace your home page within two days of the contract initiation date—giving you an instantaneous image improvement for visitors. Plus, your site will be down for fewer than 24 hours when the switch occurs.

Our customer satisfaction program guarantees you'll be satisfied with our work. If not, we'll continue to make changes (per contract terms) at no additional cost until you have a Web site you decide is right. We believe the new site will literally pay for itself within months.

A feature is listed, then benefit statements are used to help the reader understand the feature's value.

Cost/concern anticipated and a benefit added to outweigh the concern.

**Know the difference:**

- In **business writing** your goal is to *communicate information* to the reader.
- In **sales writing** your goal is to *guide the reader toward taking a desired action* (e.g., making a purchase, signing a contract, shifting his or her position on a subject).

Sales writing can be divided into two categories:

1. Selling a **product** or **service**.
2. Selling an **idea** or the **writer's position**.

Either way, sales writing is always about the reader!

Are you writing to...

- convince the reader to buy your product?
- garner support and get people on board?
- prove to the reader that he or she invested well?
- persuade the reader to accept the contract?
- request the reader resolve a problem?

1 Always create benefit-oriented sales messages.

Convince prospects you have the solution to their problem. Before you begin writing, have a plan. Consider:

- **Goal:** What do you want your reader to do? By when? What will it take? Make every word count toward your expected outcome.
- **Audience:** Who's your target market? What do they need to know to be convinced to buy? Create a form/solution or benefit-oriented copy and headlines that address your market's questions or concerns.
- **Tone:** Your copy should read like you're talking to the reader in person. Also, since your Web site has to work in your absence, make sure content is honest, inviting, and interesting.

2 Always incorporate these powerful sales concepts into your writing:

- **Benefits:** List the advantages your reader will gain. Benefits bring recognizable value to a product's features or illustrate WHY the features were selected.
- **Costs:** What the reader must give up, both monetarily and through other concessions. Anticipate both the price and other concessions readers worry about (e.g., downtime, dissatisfaction, additional expenses to the business, etc.).
- **Weight:** Benefits that outweigh the cost. Simply outlining features won't do. Show how features lead to benefits that give more value (weight) than overall costs.
- **Tracking:** Information that guides the reader to make his or her own conclusion to act within your time parameters.

3 Always make a connection:

Imagery stirs emotions. Add specific nouns, vivid verbs, sensory words and images to sales copy. You'll create "movies" in your reader's mind that bring your service or product to life. When appropriate, describe:

- How something feels.
- A scent or sound reminiscent of something else.
- A taste or flavor that could whet the reader's appetite.
- A dramatic scene to help the reader visualize pain, relief, happiness, security.

The Five "NEVERS"

It's NEVER just about the price! Never base your sales on price alone. Dig into the benefits only you can offer.

It's NEVER about features. It's always about benefits! Features are specific attributes of an item or concept (e.g., lowest price, fast service). Benefits are advantages features provide.

It's NEVER just about the benefits themselves. It's always about how the customer receives the benefits! The more you think about how a target audience will respond to your product/service, the better prepared you'll be to offer benefits customers will value.

It's NEVER just about what you want! Ask: What's in it for my customer? What should my reader care? The more sure your text is positioned from the reader's point of view.

It's NEVER about closing! Avoid ordering customers to act. The basic rules of sales writing boil down to:

- Sell them quality, what's in it for them.
- Help them understand why it's fair and mutually beneficial.
- Guide them to come to their own conclusions.