

Chapter 7 – The power of words...

The worst words in copy writing

- I
- Us
- We
- Our
- My

There's a reason these words are the epitome of bad copy. Every one of these words focuses on you, not the client. Your customer does not want to hear about you, your product, your service, your company or anything else that isn't directly related to them or their problem.

Whenever you write copy, it should be just like this e-course. Written to, and about, the person reading it. Never write third person if you can help it. Always write as if the person were sitting across the table from you.

The only time “we, us, or our” are okay to use is when you are trying to be inclusive and create a feeling of community. Or you are trying to create an “us against them” feeling. This can be a very powerful tool to seduce people into buying your product or service if your potential customer feels persecuted or that life isn't fair.

The secret tools of great copywriters...

That was just an example of one of the psychological tools that great copywriters use when selling with words. Let's look at a few more...

Since 95 percent of people are imitators and only 5 percent are originators, people are more persuaded by the actions of others than by any proof we can offer.

--Cavett Roberts

The word “Because”

The word “because” is one of the most powerful motivators in the English language. In selling a product or service, always tell your readers why they need to do what you're asking them to do.

Something as simple as “You must act now *because* this offer expires on December 31, after which we can no longer accept orders” is sufficient.

Don't believe me? You should because of the following research by respected Harvard social psychologist Ellen Langer.

Langer demonstrated the power of the word 'because' by asking a small favor of people waiting in line to use a library copying machine. 'Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine because I'm in a rush?'

The effectiveness of this request-plus-reason was nearly total: 94 percent of those asked let her skip ahead of them in line. Compare this success rate to the results when she made the request only (without giving a 'reason why'): 'Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine?'

Under those circumstances, only 60 percent of those asked complied. At first glance, it appears that the crucial difference between the two requests was the additional information provided by the words, 'because I'm in a rush.'

But a third type of request tried by Langer showed that this was not the case. It seems that it was not the whole series of words, but the first one, 'because,' that made the difference. Instead of including a real reason for compliance, Langer's third type of request used the word 'because' and then, adding nothing new, merely restated the obvious: 'Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine because I have to make some copies?'



The result was that once again nearly all—93 percent—agreed, even though no real reason, no new information, was added to justify their compliance. The word 'because' triggered an automatic compliance response from Langer's subjects, even when they were given no subsequent reason to comply.

The Zeigarnik Effect:

The state of mental tension and unbalance caused by uncompleted tasks. It is named after the Gestalt theorist.

Why is this a problem? Advertising banners, reciprocal links with other sites, and links to unrelated content on your site can distract the reader and lead to the Zeigarnik Effect. In other words, the human brain is not able to fully concentrate on your copy if it feels distracted by other items on the page that it feels are 'unfinished tasks'. Your visitor is tempted to click on the other links rather than pay full attention to your marketing copy.

This is the “linear path” method of writing web copy. Don't litter your web pages with a slew of topics and subjects that will distract your reader. Stick to a single message.

Mental tension can also appear if the reader comes across a term or concept they don't understand. Rather than driving them off your site to look for answers, make the word or phrase a link to a pop-up that explains it. Then they can resolve the mental tension and remain on your page.

The Cliffhanger Principle

Think of the season finale of a TV series that leaves you hanging or a teaser story from TV news followed by "Film at Eleven." You'll sit through the entire news program to catch a 2 minute story.

This is a variation of the Zeigarnik Effect. The uncompleted action demands our attention.

If you break your copy into multiple pages and need the reader to click through to the next page, or have a teaser opening paragraph and you need them to follow the link to the rest of the story, finish with a teaser or cliffhanger. Here's an example:

"The secret ingredient of branding that can single-handedly turn a small business enterprise into a mega-success is hidden in Tommy Hilfiger's story. Did you catch it? Here it is..." (Followed by a button marked "Next Page")

Now Let's Take a Look at Neurolinguistic Programming

NOTE: The examples you see in this section were taken from the book – [WEB COPY THAT SELLS](#) by Maria Veloso. I highly recommend the book if you want a more thorough treatment on this and more.

Neurolinguistic programming is the science of how the brain codes learning and experience. Using it properly can make all your communications more powerful. The following are all NLP devices.

Embedded Commands

Website copywriting is direct-response writing which means you are trying to elicit a response which is usually an action such as signing up, calling, purchasing, etc.

Using embedded commands entails crafting the action you want your reader to take and wrapping it in the cushion of a casual, innocent-looking sentence. For example:

"I wonder how quickly **you are going to buy this product** when you learn how easy it is to use?"

...**you are going to buy this product** – is the embedded command. It is couched in an innocent sentence but to catch the subconscious' attention, you must use bold, italics, quotation marks or color to delineate your command.

Other examples of embedded commands used in the past include:

Aren't you glad you *use Dial*? Don't you wish everyone did?

Wouldn't you really rather *have a Buick*?

How to write an Embedded Command:

Use three to seven words to create your command in the imperative voice; begin with an action verb that presupposes the subject "you."

Command examples:

- get your hands on this [name product]
- act on my advice
- say yes to this offer
- learn this secret
- pick up the phone.

Next embed the command in a sentence and set the command in bold type. Another example:

"As you **read every word of this lesson**, you will discover advanced psychological tactics that will boggle your mind."

Presuppositions

The brain can only focus on one major thing at a time. When bombarded by multiple thoughts, it is forced to presuppose (assume) and accept suggestions as facts.

"What will you do with the extra \$2,500 you'll earn next month?" is a presupposition. Your brain is asked, "what will you do...?" Your brain is compelled to answer. It's the same principle as waking up in the middle of the night with the answer to a question you were thinking about during the day. Your subconscious will continue to work on the question until it comes up with a satisfactory answer.

The question assumed you will earn \$2,500 next month by simply asking what you will do with it. In NLP, this is called an *adjacency pair*.

To understand a question or sentence, we must subconsciously make assumptions in order to make sense of the question. So your brain has to assume that “the extra \$2,500 you’ll earn next month” is an established fact.

Here’s another presupposition:

“What will you do when the government imposes a five cent surcharge on every email that you send out.” The brain must focus on the question (“What will you do...”), which means it must assume the second half to be true even though it’s actually just a rumor.

Another example:

“Are you one of the 295 million people in America who’s tired of the nine to five corporate grind, who wants to start her own business?” The brain must assume there are 295 million Americans who want to start their own business while it focuses on the question, “Are you one...?”

Presuppositional phrases can be used such as, “As you know,” “I’m sure you know,” “Everyone knows...” or presuppositional words like “clearly,” “obviously,” “evidently,” “undoubtedly,” “easily,” “readily,” “automatically,” “and “naturally.” Any statement after these words will be likely to be accepted as fact by your reader.

An example:

“Obviously, these triggers usher in a revolutionary – and immensely more effective – era of selling that you simply can’t miss out on,” or “Clearly, investing in Adam Ginsberg’s program, Creating a Successful eBay Business, is the fastest way to start earning eBay profits in as little as one day.”

Linguistic Binds

A linguistic bind is a form of syntax that makes your reader say, “Why, of course, what you’re saying is true!”

Here’s an example:

“While you’re sitting there reading this letter, you begin to understand why you can’t afford to waste any more time getting less than everything that life has to offer.”

It consists of two parts.

Part 1 states something obvious (“you’re sitting there reading this letter”), and part two states what you want your reader to think, say, or do. *It is the command.*

More examples:

“Now that you’ve read this special report, I’m sure you realize that you need to beat your competitors to the punch by attending this seminar now.”

“As you are sitting there reading this, I know that you’re thinking about all the ways you can turn your book into a bestseller as a result of attending Mark Victor Hansen’s Book Marketing University.”

“As you think about what you really need in your business, you begin to realize that you have only one choice to make, and that is to invest in this [product or service].”

Other variations of linguistic binds:

The more you A, the more you B.

Examples:

“The more you understand the power of this one psychological trigger, the more you’ll realize that you need to get all 30 of Joe Sugarman’s Psychological Triggers.”

“The more you read, the more you won’t want to be without this incredible product.”

Another variation: *cause-and-effect syntax.*

Example:

“Taking advantage of this free trial of our water purifier in the comfort of your own home will cause you to fully understand why buying bottled water is simply not the way to go.”

Reframing

Reframing is the process of altering one’s perception of a person, place, or thing by changing the context in which it is viewed. In the context of copywriting, reframing is a technique for communicating a flaw, a shortcoming, an imperfection, or a disadvantage in a way that transforms its meaning to one that is pleasant, desirable or advantageous.

The key to successful reframing is to shift the reader’s focus to a desirable, sometimes hidden, aspect of a disadvantage and turn it into a plus. You may be surprised to discover how just about anything can be reframed into something desirable when you look at it in a different light or, more accurately, with a fresh set of eyes.

Example:

What price can you put on learning how to get as many speaking engagements as you can handle? \$25,000? \$15,000? \$10,000? (Believe it or not, that's how much other speaker trainers charge!)

If you paid me my standard consulting fee of \$625/hour for the 7 ½ hours I'm giving you at the Speaker's Workshop on October 18, it would cost you \$4,687.50.

Would you believe it if I told you the workshop won't even cost you \$4,000? No, not even \$3,000. Your investment in your speaking career-*and* your life-is only...

\$1,595.

You'll most likely earn at least **twice** that much on **your very first speaking engagement.**

The Commitment/Consistency Element of Influence

Human beings have a nearly obsessive desire to be - or to appear – consistent to others and to ourselves. Once we've subscribed to something, voted for something, bought something, or taken a stand on something, we are under tremendous pressure to behave consistently with that commitment in order to justify our earlier decision.

You simply have to look at politics to see just how powerful this method is. Bush beat John Kerry by consistently portraying him as a "flip-flopper". Regardless of whether or not it was true, enough Americans were convinced that Kerry might not be consistent. It gave Bush just enough votes to win.

Another example: Bush seniors' admonition to "read my lips: No New Taxes!" However, later in his first term, he was forced to raise taxes. He was eaten alive in the next election because of his "inconsistency."



To use this "element of influence" technique, you must first help your reader to express a firm stand or opinion about something and then present your product in a way that plays to the stand they've taken.

First, construct a question the reader could not possibly say no to such as, "If I could show you a way to double or triple your sales closing rate – and teach you how to sell 50 to 100 percent of all prospects you come in contact with – are you willing to spend an entertaining 63 minutes to learn it?"

By asking this question, you have extracted an unspoken commitment from the reader. Next, tell them to read the rest of the article where you give the details of your offer. After you give the sales pitch, give them something like this:

Earlier on, I asked you the question: “If I could show you a way to double or triple your sales closing rate – and teach you how to sell 50 to 100 percent of all prospects you come in contact with – are you prepared to spend 63 minutes to learn it?”

Since you’re still reading this, I’m going to assume you answered, “Yes.” Well, now that I’ve shown you unequivocally how Brian Tracy’s 24 Techniques for Closing the Sale can deliver on that promise – and have also shown you Brian’s first-rate credentials and the rave reviews he’s received – it’s time for you to act on this.

As you can see, you’ve reminded your readers that they must behave consistently with the commitment they’ve made.

Cognitive Dissonance

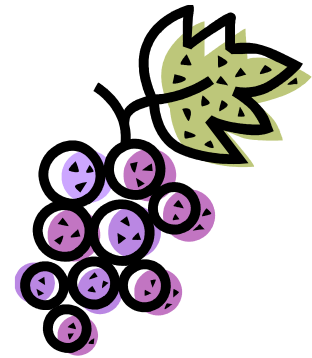
Former Stanford University social psychologist Leon Festinger coined the term Cognitive Dissonance. It is the distressing mental state in which people “find themselves doing things that don’t fit with what they know, or having opinions that conflict with other opinions they hold.”

In Aesop’s fable about the Fox and the Grapes, when the fox could not get the grapes no matter how hard he tried, he concluded that the grapes were sour and if he had them, he wouldn’t eat them anyway.

The fox’s withdrawal from pursuing the grapes clashed with his belief that the grapes were delicious. By changing his attitude about the grapes, he was able to maintain thoughts consistent with his behavior.

In the beginning of your web copy, you have to get your reader to say, “Yes, that’s exactly what I need!” You can do this by crafting a *well-articulated promise* and inserting it very early in the body copy. Next, get readers to take ownership of that promise and cling to it so tenaciously that no one can pry it away from them.

Thus, any doubts that creep in during the sales process will be crushed by the original belief, paving the way for the sale.



Two Examples:

1. By the time you finish reading this article, you will know how to *consistently pick the hottest stocks* that are on the *upswing* right now – so you can make a killing on the stock market every time.
2. What if I told you I could show you how to *increase your ability to ethically influence others*, naturally, *without sounding like you’re making a sales pitch*. How much more money and success could you create with that skill?

Involvement Devices That Multiply Sales

Involvement devices are simply devices that get people involved with your copy. They move people to read every word of your copy. They break people out of their preoccupation with other things. Like a radio tuner, involvement devices get people tuned in to only one signal – in this case, your web copy or sales message.

An original headline: “Learn how to be prosperous, successful and happy in just 10 minutes a day,” was an attempt to get at what the author thought were the hot buttons of his target audience but the headline sounded vague and definitely not riveting. It didn't call out to the real desires of his target audience.

An involvement device was added that asked readers to identify their wants, needs, and dreams. They typed into a box their real desires and were asked how they felt seeing their real desires in front of them. What could be more riveting to your target audience than their specific dreams, the dreams they might not dare tell another living soul?



A retailer of loudspeakers featured a Home Theater Wizard on its website. The Wizard is an involvement device. The web visitor checks off boxes on a brief questionnaire about budget, room characteristics, listening preferences, and equipment setup. Based on the answers, the Wizard recommends a preconfigured system customized to the customer's wants and needs.

Configurators are another, higher priced version of the Wizard. People choose the options they want and the configurator puts it together for them and shows them exactly what it will look like. A great example is used by [HeatNGlo](#) on their website.

The device gets the visitor involved and invested in this site and its products.

Amazon uses a similar device for diamond rings. You answer four questions (visitors click on radio buttons) to select the preferred shape, carats, metal, and the setting. They can then preview the ring and then select the diamond quality and ring size.

The wizard then recommends a ring from inventory and gives the price and ordering instructions. Guys love it. This is much more effective than just showing pictures and info on hundreds of rings and forcing the viewer to try to decide which one.

Here's another great involvement device from a site that sells a real estate investment course:

“What's your real estate IQ?”

Take this **simple, eye-opening quiz** – then learn **specific, cutting edge** secrets for making **instant cash in real estate**. *Answer True or False.*

1. In order for you to accumulate a fortune in real estate, you need excellent credit or a lot of money.

TRUE↑ FALSE↑

[Click here for the correct answer](#)

2. Clearly, real estate investing has created more millionaires than any other industry known to man, but it's a slow process, taking years to acquire massive wealth.

TRUE↑ FALSE↑

[Click here for the correct answer](#)

3. 99.32% of today's elite real estate millionaires made their fortunes by buying/renting single family homes.

TRUE↑ FALSE↑

[Click here for the correct answer](#)

Each of the answer links opens in a popup window so the viewer is not taken away from the main selling path. This method gets them involved and makes them curious enough to click on a text link to learn something they don't know and whets their appetite for the product being sold. "No it's not out of reach and yes it can be done by you."

Another Involvement Device makes the visitor close the sale themselves by getting a written commitment from them to use the product or service that includes their honest admission of their true emotional reason they wish to lose weight, tying it to the product. This box was used for the weight loss product:

I, _____, have decided I want to lose _____ pounds,
because _____ and I'm committed to
following the *Megabolic Weight Loss Program* until I reach my desired
weight.

These tools should not all be combined to flood a page with sales power. Use one, maybe two in combination to drive your sales. Also, some of these may not be applicable to your product or service. And lastly, first and foremost, you need to write powerful and compelling sales copy.

Next chapter...

In our next chapter, I'm going to teach you a trick that will have you thinking like a professional copywriter in about 4 hours. Don't believe me? Just wait and see...

See Quiz on next page

Chapter 7 Quiz

Try to answer these questions without looking back at the previous pages.

- 1) What are the worst words in copywriting?
- 2) Why is the word “because” so powerful?
- 3) What is the Zeigarnik Effect? Why is this a problem for websites?
- 4) How and why do you use the “cliffhanger principle” on a website?
- 5) Give two examples of an “embedded command” that would be applicable to your website.
- 6) Write a “linguistic bind” that you could use on your website.
- 7) What is the purpose of “reframing”?
- 8) Why was Aesop’s fable about the Fox and the Grapes an example of “cognitive dissonance”?
- 9) Give three examples of an “involvement device”? Which of the three could be used for your website? How?