Affiliate Classroom

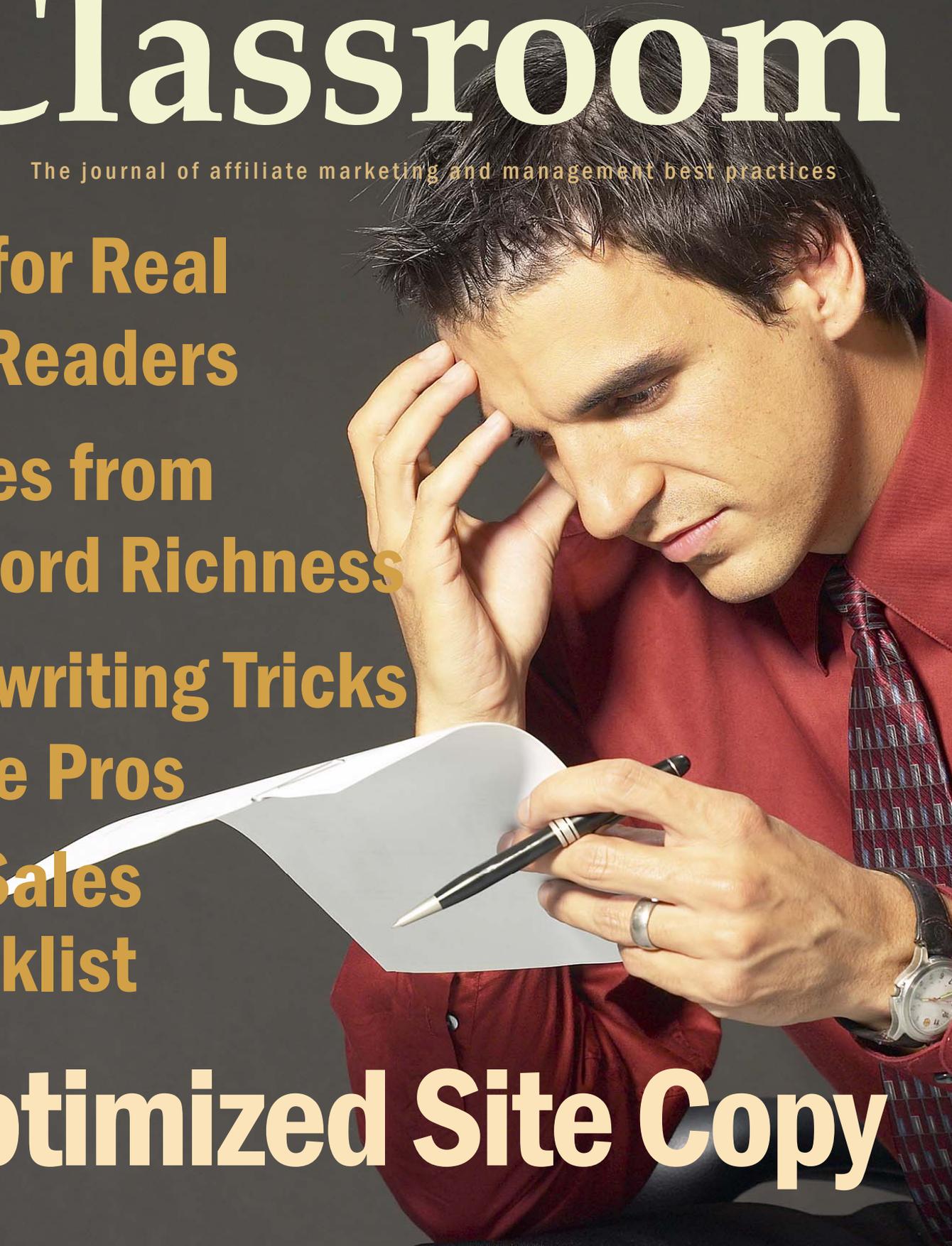The journal of affiliate marketing and management best practices

SEO for Real Live Readers

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Mike Enos

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SEO With Real People In Mind

by Katalin Torok, http://mktg.idared.net

A quick web search for the phrase "optimized copy" confirms that in today's online marketing world, optimizing web site content means writing for ranking. Yet, achieving high rankings for sought-after search phrases is only one side of the coin.

A highly optimized website can still be a failure if the content is only optimized for search engines, but not for its real audience: the users.

As an affiliate, engaging those users who find your site and converting them is your real goal, the one that makes you money in the end. A highly optimized website can still be a failure if the content is only optimized for search engines, but not for its real audience: the users.

There are tens of thousands of pages on the Internet about how to please search engines with your content. But often there is little thought given to how SEO affects usability and the user experience.

In this article, we cover a few tips and ideas on how to find a balance between optimizing your copy for the search engines and your users. Ultimately, it is the users who drive your revenue, after all, and not the robots.

Get to Know Your Users

Chances are you did some kind of market research before starting to build your website. But do you really know your actual user base? In order to create a site that engages your users naturally, you need to "talk" to them in their own language and style, one that they understand and one that they can connect with.

Highly optimized web copy will most likely talk to search engine robots in the way robots prefer, but that may not suit your users. For example, you can optimize a site for the key phrases around credit, but it makes a huge difference whether your audience is corporate users looking for corporate credit, or shoppers looking for credit card offers.

Research Is Key

Doing primary research — that is, asking your own questions from your own audience — will offer insights into who is actually using your site, as opposed to who you think is using it. Once you learn more about the audience, you can start optimizing the content to match the

user profiles you discover. Using a tone that engages your audience will help conversions, as it will better attract and keep the users' interest, as well as engage them emotionally (remember the AIDAs from the last issue of this magazine?).

Questionnaires Help

You can start out by creating a simple questionnaire with 5-10 questions that can be filled out quickly and painlessly. Put it in a prominent spot on your site (e.g. above the fold, in the sidebar) and ask your readers to fill it out (call to action!). Explain with a sentence that the questionnaire was designed in order to better serve visitors. You can offer a small incentive (e.g. a free downloadable gift) for filling out the survey to lift response rates.

If you take the time to integrate separate pieces of copy into a seamless unit, the result is coherent and quality content.

Opt-In Pages, Too

An even better option is to put the survey on your regular opt-in forms, such as your newsletter subscription form. Once the user trusts your site enough to leave their email address with you, they probably will not mind spending two more minutes filling out your questionnaire. (But keep it optional or it may backfire and alienate some potential subscribers!)

If you have already built a substantial registered user base, they are your perfect research base. You can run periodic surveys and compare results to tweak your web site.

Integrate Copy Into Content

Once you know who your audience is, you can start talking to them in a style that appeals to them. The first step is to make sure that your content isn't fragmented.

As an affiliate site, you probably have many different types of copy: product descriptions, reviews, syndicated content from other blogs or social media, free articles you use, and your own articles, to name just a few. As all these chunks of copy come from different sources, they likely differ in tone, vocabulary, and style.

If you throw them on a page untouched, the result is a page with fragmented content. On the other hand, if you take the time to integrate all these separate pieces of copy into a seamless unit, the result is coherent and quality content.

Keeping any copyright or other restrictions in mind, apply the same standards to all the copy that you present on your site. If you are not allowed to change the copy, you can still put it in a context to integrate it. Present it as a quote by putting quote marks around the text and naming its source and then include your own comments as a context.

Rewrite copy with your audience in mind (see our notes on market research above). Sprinkle in keywords that you are optimizing for, and your web site name or brand name only where it naturally fits the copy. Turning copy into your own unique content results in a better user

experience. It also helps decrease the chance that robots treat your page as duplicate content.

Branding Counts

Affiliate marketing is a very competitive market. There is a good chance that your affiliate site is not the only one covering your specific niche. You differentiate yourself from the competition by your design, your logo, in a word: your branding. Have you considered the role of your content in establishing your brand?

The first step in creating a unique site is to have some unique content (articles, reviews), and a unique selection of products. Once you have those basics down, you can go a step further in making your site an authority by adding some personality. Use humor, and a personal style of writing to spice up dry marketing copy and product descriptions.

> ### Have you considered the role of your content in establishing your brand?

Humor, by definition, evokes pleasure, amusement, in one word: emotions. In last month's article we covered how important emotions are in engaging your audience, an important step in the conversion process.

A cheerful tagline, or a funny one-liner can grab someone's attention and bring your page closer to the reader. During their quest for that great buy, your shopper probably already read the same or very similar marketing copy a dozen times during their research, so they will appreciate some fun for a change.

Creating a mascot is a great branding tool, but it requires a little more creativity. If you can come up with an animal or person or thing that your audience can connect with, you can instantly give your site a personality. "Ms Fashion Queen gives this bag two thumbs up" sounds much more authentic and easier to relate to than "Product rating: 5 stars".

If you are ambitious, you can give your mascot a full-blown personality, and use it as the knowledgeable and friendly host of your site. It can give out tips and give its opinion on products or news items. Create a periodically updated online journal for it. Instant sticky content!

Balancing SEO With User Needs

Finally, a few tips for user-friendly search engine optimization.

Creative Keyword Optimization

One way to inject keywords in your copy without compromising user experience is to implement tagging. Tags give you an opportunity to feature your most important keywords prominently on a page, within context. (We covered tagging in-depth in the July 2006 issue (get previous issues of Affiliate Classroom magazine.) Keep your tags relevant to your content, and use keywords that your customers will be familiar with, not just those you are optimizing for.

Break Up Your Content

Tweaking your writing and third-party copy should go hand-in-hand with user- friendly presentation of your text. Numerous studies demonstrate that users read differently on the web, skimming a page, rather than reading straight through. Highlighted areas are seen and read first, and eyes often jump over large areas within the copy. You can aid the user through your copy by cleverly breaking it up into smaller chunks, and highlighting the most important pieces of content.

Breaking your article or product description into short paragraphs is easier on your readers eyes, than a page of text without any breaks. Make sure to put the breaks where they would occur naturally in your content. Use unordered (bullets) or ordered (numbered) lists to separate list items visually from linear copy.

The Power of Semantic Code

In addition to breaking up your copy into paragraphs, use semantic code to give more weight to certain elements of your copy. Semantic code refers to using HTML tags that describe the context and importance of an element of text. For example using <h1>Budget Hotels in Paris</h1> instead of Budget hotels in Paris tells the robot that "budget hotels in Paris" is an important phrase in your text that describes your content.

This brings multiple benefits with regards to optimization. It tells the search engine robots which words to treat as important on your page. And, your user will more easily navigate within your text.

Use multiple levels of headlines to help the user understand the structure of your copy, and to highlight the most important ideas. Use H1 and H2 tags for headlines, and lower levels of headline tags for sub-headlines. Use your important keywords in these headlines, as robots will treat these with greater importance than regular copy.

The Age of Information Overload

We all know the feeling of being overwhelmed with the millions of pages of content, newsletters, RSS feeds, blogs, and other sources of information that we come across. By breaking up your content into manageable bits, you can lessen the chance of your users feeling overwhelmed by your site.

Finally, keep in mind that your affiliate site's main goal is to pre-sell the product and make the user click through to the merchant site. Provide just enough information to achieve that goal. Too much content can be as harmful to conversions as too little, as overwhelmed users will be more likely to abandon the purchase process.

These tips give you a jumpstart to create stellar content that is optimized for search, yet still works for users. It is possible to create highly optimized, yet usable sites. **The key is not to lose sight of either of your "audiences" along the way**.

About the Author

Katalin Torok is an independent marketing consultant with a focus on Web 2.0. Her website and blog contains many helpful tips at: http://mktg.idared.net .

Keyword Rich Copy, Key To Riches

by Jeffrey Perren, Associate Editor
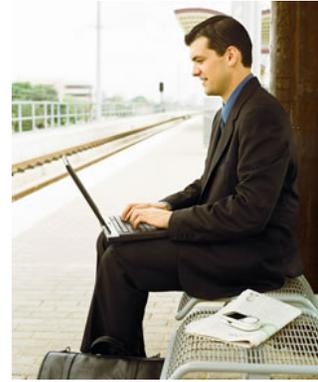
Ok, I confess. No content alone will make you rich unless you are J.K. Rowling or Dan Brown. (Come to think of it even they need good marketing, too.) But both anecdotes and studies agree: if you want traffic, you need good content. To turn traffic into sales, you need good content. To get repeat visitors, you need fresh, good content and lots of it.

> **The first sentence or two should contain keywords that reflect the message you want to plant uppermost in your visitor's mind. That makes writing keyword-rich copy an exercise in psychology.**

What Is Good?

But from the perspective of that all-important first step — getting the traffic — what constitutes "good?"

Most spiders will read only about the first 200 words of a page before moving on. During that scan the robot picks up the basic information that the search engine algorithms later turn into a ranking decision. That means, you need to pack your punch into those all important first few paragraphs.

The first sentence or two should contain keywords that reflect the message you want to plant uppermost in your visitor's mind. That makes writing keyword-rich copy an exercise in psychology. (But you knew already that is 50% or more of marketing.) Fortunately, no advanced degree is necessary to gain the needed insight, just common sense and some experience, along with a few helpful tools.

Picking Keywords

Over 90% of searches are done with one or two keywords typed into the box. Single keyword searches make up most of that 90%, but mix it up. Use some single keyword terms in a sentence and sprinkle some double keyword phrases here and there.

But which word or two is best? Think about what you would use to search for, say, an acoustic guitar. Then ask a few friends; that will give you a perspective that might not have occurred to you. (You might be odd!) Then, use a tool like Yahoo! Search Marketing's keyword selector tool and get a wider viewpoint.

In short order, you'll have a list surrounding your topic that will make for potentially great spider food. But you need to turn that potential into reality. When you do your analysis, keep in mind

the actual relationship between what you offer and that keyword. Just picking "guitar" or "acoustic guitar" might be too generic, it depends on exactly what you pre-sell.

Are you an affiliate for an instrument merchant, or are making income directing traffic to an instructor, or offering MP3 downloads? The nature of your business will heavily influence how you refine that list of prospective keywords.

Change Them Often

Whatever your business, it isn't static and it exists in a dynamic environment. Products, the state of information about them, and every other variable online are constantly changing. Competitors rise and fall in the marketplace. Sears, at one time, was the largest retailer on the planet. Wal-Mart supplanted them long ago. Microsoft was unbeatable 10 years ago, now they're struggling to compete.

That means you need to keep the keyword-rich copy you write relevant to what is happening now, not six months ago. Here again something like Wordtracker or the Yahoo! Selector will help to keep you up-to-date.

Google is designed specifically to define relevance as what people want to read. That means that the words that would occur to a writer discussing a topic and those a potential reader uses to find them are likely to match pretty well spontaneously.

Writing Copy

Aim Sideways...

Keywords are absolutely essential to moving your copy beyond interesting into profitable. But, that doesn't mean that you should necessarily focus on keywords directly when first creating your text. Philosophers sometimes suggest that aiming straight at happiness may cause us to fall short of it. But re-directing attention to other things leads there.

That indirect approach is equally appropriate in writing website content.

At least during the first draft (and you should always do at least two), just focus on your topic. Convey the information that needs to be there and don't think about whether the words you choose are good spider food. Then, after you have it in good shape, do your keyword research to prepare for a final draft.

...And Hit the Target "Blind"

Nine times out of ten you'll find that the copy is already near-perfect for your purpose anyway. After all, Google is designed specifically to define relevance as what people want to read. They're not big fans of SEO designed to capture people by keyword tweaking and are always harping on writing naturally.

That means that the words that would occur to a writer discussing a topic and those a potential reader uses to find them are likely to match pretty well spontaneously. Often, no special effort is needed.

Play the Odds

Suppose you've written an article stating how fine a thing is the Gibson acoustic guitar. You're likely to use those last three words somewhere in the first paragraph without any special thought towards SEO.

> **Make sure your copy still makes sense from a human point of view. You have to attract visitors, but you don't want to drive them away with senseless sentences once they get there.**

Now suppose someone wants to buy one. What are they likely to type in? Odds are high it will be something containing "Gibson acoustic guitar." Their research goals, directed by their purchase desire, will drive their keyword use.

(That doesn't guarantee you high ranking, or getting found, of course. Keyword-optimized copy is important in SEO, but it's not the end of the story.)

Confirm and Re-write

That "natural linkage" will get you part of the way toward your goal. But to really nail it down, you want to check and confirm the utility of your content. Do some searches yourself to see what comes up. Use Wordtracker, Yahoo!, or your favorite tool to verify the content in your copy. Find out how often someone really would use the words you included.

With that in hand you can go back through your copy — whether it's an article, sales letter, home page intro material, or whatever — and see if the words you use really do match. It's much easier to modify existing text to swap out a word here or there once you already have something.

Substituting a spider-tasty synonym for the word you used that means the same thing (but wouldn't work quite as well) is easy now. Go through the first 200 words to ensure that the keywords that are in heavy use related to that topic really are in your copy. If not, swap one out of your text that means the same thing and pop in the new one.

Check It For Sense

When you're done with that stage, read it over to make sure it still makes sense from a human point of view. You have to attract visitors, but you don't want to drive them away with senseless sentences once they get there.

Do the same exercise with the rest of the copy. While it's true that search engines focus heavily on the first sentences, paragraph, and/or 200 words or so, that's not all they check. Spider designers are devilishly clever. They sometimes check the last paragraph as well.

From both the search engine and the real reader's points of view, the copy has to read well throughout. You don't want to lose either at the end. After all, that's often where you'll tip the undecided into a sale.

Consumer tastes change, both in products and the way they want to find out about them. A fresh phrase today is a tired cliché a year later.

Test, Test, Test

Don't regard your copy as ever "finished." It may read well today, and that will last you for a while. But six months or a year later, things will have changed. Different products require a different focus, even when the copy is general enough to cover them all. Consumer tastes change, both in products and the way they want to find out about them. A fresh phrase today is a tired cliché a year later.

The only way to know for sure whether your copy is still effective from a keyword perspective is to observe the results. Monitor the traffic, put up different pages on the same topic with slightly different wording and note the difference. It's a never-ending effort to keep those visitors coming, and coming back.

But the reward is never-ending sales.

About the Author

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Affiliate Pre-Sales Checklist

by Evelyn Grazini

http://www.reawakener.com/free_gifts.htm

The affiliate marketing world is not much different than other sales-related worlds. The bottom line still depends on how many sales are closed. What is different, however, is that in order to become a "Super Affiliate" you must first become a writer. Unlike some sales positions, affiliates don't have big marketing departments to write advertising copy.

Therefore, affiliates have a big task in front of them because they are not actually trying to close the sale. Good affiliate sales pages give the reader just enough information to make them thirsty for more! When the reader clicks on the affiliate link to the Merchants site, the merchant does the closing.

It reminds me of car salesmen. When there is a newbie salesperson on the lot trying to sell cars, they spend time discussing features with the potential buyer. They take prospects on test-drives, hype up the different models, etc.

The affiliate marketing world is not much different than other sales-related worlds. The bottom line still depends on how many sales are closed.

But when it comes down to negotiating the sale, the manager sends in the "closer." This person is experienced at convincing the visitor that they have made the best decision. They insist the customer should get his or her checkbook out right away before the product is no longer available.

We'll look at how to get customers into our "lot," using Pay Per Click (PPC) techniques. Then discuss the importance of writing good, keyword loaded articles and product reviews that entice the visitor to click our link. Lastly, we'll look at various ways to make web pages similar to the merchants. You don't want your customer to feel like they've been sent across the street when they're ready to buy.

Four Overlooked PPC Ad Writing Tactics

I recently did a case study for the Affiliate Classroom where I compared two different AdWords ads to see which would get the highest Click Through Rate (CTR). Not surprisingly, the ad where I bid on the actual product name was the winner! Let's look at four things that can be done to increase the CTR when using PPC advertising:

#1—Always strive to get as close to the actual product name as the merchant will let you. Most merchants will not let you bid on their company branded name. However, they are

much more likely to let you bid on the name of the product.

#2—Use whatever keyword tool you have at your disposal to make sure people are actually searching for the keyword. For example: Your merchant's name could be Widget Maker, with a *bestwidget* product. When you do keyword research, you may find that there are very few people searching for that particular keyword. Not many people have heard of the *bestwidget*.

In this case, it will not do a bit of good to set up a campaign for the *bestwidget*. PPC is only profitable if people are actually searching for the item you have for sale.

How your set up your Ad Groups makes all the difference in the world.

#3—Get the highest CTR by setting up a variety of Ad Groups. In AdWords, you set up "Campaigns" and then "Ad Groups." It doesn't make much difference what you name your campaigns. That section is primarily to help you stay organized. But how your set up your Ad Groups makes all the difference in the world!

Each Ad Group should target a very specific keyword and related keyword phrases. Make sure the ads in each group point to a page on your site that is optimized for that keyword.

For example: I have a **Gardening site** with a lot of information on square foot gardening, container gardening, and landscaping. For this site, my AdWords "Campaign" name is "Gardening."

Then I have three separate ad groups that focus on the individual areas. The *Container Gardening* group has just the keywords related to, you guessed it, container gardening. I point the ads in this group to a specific page on my site that deals with container gardening.

I also make sure my web-page is highly optimized for one or two specific keywords that I'm bidding on in the ad group. This method gets a much higher CTR now than when I was just starting out and lumped everything into one group. It's much more time-consuming to set up the separate groups. But it saves me money because of the higher CTR.

#4—Test variations of keywords and keyword phrases until you get the highest CTR possible. It's no secret to those familiar with the AdWords system: the advertiser with the highest CTR pays the least per click. The structure of the ad should be as follows:

⇒ **Put the keyword in the headline of the ad, if possible.**
⇒ **On the first description line give the searcher a benefit. This will let them know that what they're looking for can be found at your site. (Example: "Learn how to garden in small spaces")**
⇒ **Capitalize the first letter of each main word (as in the example above).**
⇒ **On the last line, tell them what they'll get when they arrive at the site. This is where you give them a *feature* of the site. Possible features include free eBooks, specific information, trial offers, etc.**

Now that you've got your ads set up properly, consider what the visitor will see when he or she clicks on your ad and gets to your site? What they should see is very precise, pre-sales information that will make them want to click again – to the merchant's site.

Two Keyword Writing Opportunities

There are two recommended options for the pre-sale opportunity.

A Keyword-Optimized Article. Be sure your article is optimized for the keyword you are bidding on. If necessary, break down your Ad Groups even further. You can re-write your article several different ways to focus on your targeted keywords. However, be sure to change the article enough so that readers are getting value from each article. Visitors will leave too soon if they keep reading the same article, with the only change being the keywords.

A Product Review – Some people find that product reviews are easier to write than articles. It takes very little effort to use the product keyword a number of times in a review. A template can be used to ensure all reviews follow the same format.

The main features of a good product review include:

Introduction – Start with a few sentences that outline the problem, and then suggest a possible solution. This is the first place the visitor should see the keyword they searched for. It will confirm in their minds that they have arrived at the correct site.

Overview – The keyword can easily be added again in the overview (possibly a couple of times). This is where the highlights of the product are reviewed. Explain in depth the product's benefits and effectiveness. It's also a good idea to add something about the value of the product here. (Example: "Twice as effective as other products on the market," etc.).

If you know any negatives about the product, list them here. People are more likely to think you have used the product (and hopefully you have), if you list a few concerns. Just make sure they do not destroy the visitors' inclination to buy.

For example: when reviewing a gardening container product I might say, "This container was a little small for my tomato plants, but worked perfectly for herbs and low growing flowers."

> ## When the visitor clicks through to the merchant's site, make sure they don't feel like they've entered into another world.

Summary – The summary puts the introduction and overview into a simple sentence. Incorporate the keyword once again here. This is where you strongly recommend that the visitor purchase the product. List any guarantees the merchant has, as well as credibility indicators (see below).

At last, the visitor clicks through to the merchant's site! And why wouldn't they? They searched for something of interest; found it via an ad; and now have a complete review and recommendation from a third party.

Clone the Merchant Web Site

When the visitor clicks through to the merchant's site, make sure they don't feel like they've entered into another world. If at all possible, make your site look similar to the merchant's. This is a subject large enough for a completely separate article. However, there are a few small things you can do to ensure your visitor feels comfortable once they are ready to purchase:

⇒ **Use the same language and tone as the merchant in all pre-sales materials**
⇒ **Use similar colors and format as the merchant**
⇒ **If the merchant has credibility indicators (example: Better Business Bureau Trust-E, Hacker Safe, etc.) note these on your site, possibly below your summary.**

You now have enough information to optimize everything you do. Every time Google changes something, it has to do with the fact that they want the people who use their search engine to find what they're looking for.

It's the advertisers who don't provide the proper content on their site that are always hit the hardest when Google makes changes. However, those who do it right from the start really don't have to care what Google does. Customers will always find what they're looking for when they click on the ad. That's all Google wants – and that's all the customer wants. Help them and they'll help your profits.

About the Author

Evelyn Grazini is an Affiliate Classroom student and the author of "Directed Dreaming, Success From The Subconscious." Her specialty is Self-Help information, including Dreaming, Hypnosis, and Stress Relief. Her writings effectively condense volumes of professional research into one succinct resource. Get some of Evelyn's free reports at: http://www.reawakener.com/free_gifts.htm

Use the Copywriting Methods of the Pros

by Mark Thompson
http://www.income-academy.com

When it comes to writing content for our sites many of us sit down and write the first things that come into our heads. We like to think that this gives our content a natural and homey feel that will appeal to our readers. However, by doing this we are depriving ourselves of sales.

> **By employing some of the methods used by copywriters, many of whom earn thousands of dollars per page, we can improve our click through rate and thus improve our sales.**

There have been thousands of books published and reams of research papers written on the subject of copywriting. By applying some of the principles used by professional copywriters we can increase our sales.

Word Association

Copywriting has long been proved to work; **words trigger associations** in our subconscious. Words can make us lose our inhibitions and some **words make us buy** things. And yet many people never consider for a moment using any copywriting techniques when they create a site.

By employing some of the methods used by copywriters, many of whom earn thousands of dollars per page, we can improve our click through rate and thus improve our sales. A lot of things written by one copywriting expert can be contrary to what has been written by another. Some recommend "long copy" while other will say short copy is the way to go. Fortunately, it is quite easy to work out what actually works.

Long or Short?

One of the easiest ways of **researching which methods are successful** right now is to look at what is currently working for sites listed in places like Clickbank. Analyzing the top five to 10 performing sites at Clickbank will show us that without a doubt that "long sales copy" — those incredibly long sales pages — are definitely in favor at the moment and performing well.

Using this method you will also see that there are keywords that are often used in headlines and throughout the sales pages. These words are there for a reason: they elicit a response. How may times in normal daily conversation do you hear somebody say the word skyrocket? Looking through many sales letters you will frequently see the term "skyrocket" used in conjunction with income. This isn't coincidence.

The 30 Words

Another set of about 30 words is called **"hot button" words.** When used in a headline, these words automatically grab the attention of the reader. They hold a specific subconscious meaning to most people. Some of these words are; guaranteed, incredible, breakthrough, revealed, uncovered, hidden, short, proven, inside, private.

> **You will find that once you start analyzing sales letters (and not just reading them), they all have various things in common with each other.**

If you look at successful sales letters you will find that these words are regularly used. These particular words hold special meaning to American readers. If you are targeting customers from another country make sure you look at what words the copywriters are using in those countries.

By taking what we can learn from successful sales letters, we can transform our websites and use their techniques to help us earn additional income. You will find that once you start analyzing sales letters (and not just reading them), they all have various things in common with each other. Let's now look at some of these and see how we can incorporate some of the techniques on our own sites.

Analyzing Sales Letters

If you look carefully, the first thing you'll notice about great sales letters is they have great headlines. They make full use of the hot button words and compel you to read further. The headline is there to capture your attention and to ensure that you read the entire sales letter. You can use of this on your site and also in any of the articles you may publish. A great header or title will ensure that your readers will read further than the first line.

Now that you have grabbed the reader's attention you need to take into account that many people when they read web content are "skimmers." These types of reader do not read all the content; they will skim down the page just looking for highlighted points.

We can ensure that these readers are catered to by creating a bulleted list or numbered points that stand out on the page. These points should address the main features we are trying to get across to the reader.

- **If this was a USP you would have noticed it.**
- **And you would also notice this, since it's a bullet.**
- **If you read this before the paragraph above you are a skimmer!**

To P.S. or Not To P.S.?

Before we go further, have you noticed how many sales letters have two or three postscripts at the end of the sales letter? These are not there because the author was forgetful. They are there for the skimmers.

You will notice that there are often two or more (which should be written P.S. and P.P.S.). They repeat in some form the main points, usually about the unique selling point, the bonuses and the guarantee. The postscript is a good technique to use on your site, since it's a good way to again persuade the reader to click a link before they leave the site.

Establishing Trust Through Credibility

One of the keys to copywriting is to identify a problem and present the solution to that problem.

Before you get into why people should click on your links or purchase products from your site you need to establish credibility with them. That is quite straightforward: tell the readers about how you used the product or how it has changed your life. Let them know that you are the same as them, that you had the same problems or needs and that you found a solution to the problems and you are here to help them.

One of the keys to copywriting is to identify a problem and present the solution to that problem. By building this into the same part of the site where you establish your credibility you can kill two birds with one stone.

Using USPs

Professional sales letters will always highlight a USP, a **unique selling point**. It is very helpful to your sales if you can do something similar. Find a unique reason why people should buy from you or your site. Great sales letters will also offer bonuses and cast iron guarantees. If the products you are selling or the affiliate products you're promoting have these, then it is a great idea to mention them on your site.

Ask For The Sale

One thing that many people forget when creating their sites is probably the most important. Ask for the sale. Asking for the sale it is a **call to action.** Under no circumstances should you forget to include this. A simple "click on the link below" is usually enough to get the reader to click on the link and for you to be one step closer to making a sale.

Make It Personal

One of the ways to write good copy is to always ensure that you are talking to one person. Always refer to "you" and focus on that one person. This will help ensure that your content feels personal to the person reading your site. Once you have written your content, leave it for a day and then come back and analyze it. During this analysis you are looking for a number of things.

Are you talking to "you" all through the page? Make sure your headline and first paragraph cover the most important benefits. Does your last paragraph **cover the important benefits again**? Does your last paragraph **have a positive call to action** that will make them

click your links. **Have you added two or more postscripts that** once again have reiterated the main points you want your readers to know?

List Benefits

Ensure that your middle paragraphs of the page list the benefits in order of importance Also, make sure that you have bulleted points. Ask yourself while reading through if you really want to buy this product right now. If you don't want to buy it, then go back and rewrite it.

Try to build a sense of loss the person will feel if he or she doesn't purchase immediately. Make them feel like they are missing out. Try to write with passion about the product and let everybody see how much it means to you.

Substitute Sales Pages

If you are an affiliate, and you find that your affiliate partner does not have a good sales page, it is worthwhile creating your own using the principles we have discussed above.

Many affiliate partners are quite happy for you to do this, although others may take a dim view of it. It is up to you to decide whether to ask your affiliate partners permission before you do it. If they agree and your site starts to perform well they may well ask you to upgrade their sales page for them.

Make It Shine!

By using a few of the obvious techniques used by copywriters you can improve the performance of your own sites. As we have seen it just takes a little analysis and a bit of time and effort. The results will be well worth the effort.

About the Author
 Mark Thompson spent many years working in IT consultancy in London. Following a re-evaluation of his goals and lifestyle in 2004 he sold everything he couldn't fit into the family car and moved to rural Spain where he now pursues a variety of online ventures.
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