

THE “SHARK WEEK” PERSUASION BONUS

Techniques and strategies to move your audience to action

Welcome to your bonus ebook! I call this “Shark Week” because we’re going to talk all about persuasion and the “s-word” (selling).

I promise this session won’t turn you into a shark! Learning to be more persuasive won’t make you less ethical or less respectful of your audience.

Selling isn’t about being scary or predatory. It’s about building a relationship where a person is comfortable moving forward with something you have to offer.

In this session, I’ll use “selling” and “persuasion” pretty much interchangeably. You may not be exchanging goods for money, but there will probably come a time when you want to persuade someone to take an action – whether it’s registering to vote, changing a habit, or supporting a charity.

Before we get into the structure of persuasive content, let’s talk about some common mental blocks writers can have around selling.

HOW WE THINK ABOUT SELLING AND SALESPEOPLE

You won't be able to sell well until you get rid of some head trash

Many ethical people have a lot of “head trash” around selling and marketing.

We think there's something inherently shady or dishonest about the sales process. Which makes it incredibly hard for us to get any good at it.

Most of us come by this belief through multiple interactions with pushy, manipulative, or downright dishonest salespeople.

We've had bad experiences, and we don't ever want to make anyone else feel the way we did.

The good news is,

Great selling is built on honest, ethical relationships.

This session won't turn you into someone who can “sell anything to anyone” – because not everyone is a good fit for what you have to offer!

Instead, we'll focus on finding the perfect offer for your customer or client – and then expressing that offer clearly and attractively.

This session is divided into two parts. In the first, we'll talk about the underlying context for your sales message. I also call this “The Hard Part.”

It requires a lot of thinking about precisely what you have to offer, what makes your solution different, and why people should choose you out of all the options they're considering.

Fortunately, “The Hard Part” doesn't require you to do anything awkward, or hype yourself up to trying to push for a sale.

In fact,

You can't force a sale to happen by pushing.

You can't make people buy something they don't want. **You just aren't that good, and neither am I.**

All you can do is gently pull. You can create an attractive offer, present it appealingly, and give your audience the opportunity to take the next step.

You're not even going to pull very hard. You'll just create something that draws your perfect buyer closer.

WHERE COPYWRITING "GANGSTERS" GET IT WRONG

There's a kind of persuasive copywriter who identifies themselves as a "gangster," "ninja," or some other powerful, violent metaphor.

They've studied every copywriting manual ever written. They channel grizzled pitchmen like Gary Halbert (who spent time in jail for mail fraud) and Dan Kennedy.

They do know a lot about writing to persuade. But most of what they know works best in a very different context than the one most of us operate in today.

This kind of copywriting is often called "direct response," and it comes from the world of direct mail. (Or "junk mail," to nearly everyone who receives it.)

In the direct mail world, you take a highly informed guess about who you send to, then you apply a lot of experience, data, and skill to craft a message that will sell on the strength of the contents of a single envelope.

It's very expensive. It's brutally difficult. And it takes decades to get really good at.

The persuasive world we live in is a little different.

Online, we can create an environment for our sales messages. (That's a big part of what content is all about.)

We're not paying a lot of money for a single shot at a customer. We're creating a nurturing environment where customers educate themselves, and step forward when they're ready to buy.

It's similar to the contrast between selling door to door and running an attractive boutique – with one big difference. The boutique is much more expensive to run than selling door to door is. But building a content-based digital sales environment is a lot cheaper than running direct mail campaigns.

Direct mail expert (and my friend) Brian Kurtz often says that digital marketers should "act like they need to pay for postage."

I agree with him ... to a point. If you're writing to build a business, your writing should be strategic and directional, not just "throwing stuff at the wall."

However, building an online content environment for a business does allow you to play more wild cards – precisely because you aren't paying for postage.

You can put more art and personality into your marketing because you have breathing room. Not for self indulgence, but for craftsmanship and a human touch. And you can experiment to find what kind of messages are most relevant and compelling for your individual audience.

If you eventually decide to branch into advertising (which can be a great way to make content even more effective), you'll want to put that "paying for postage" hat on and think strategically about how your potential customer moves from stranger to customer and on to rabid loyal fan.

But first, you probably want to get good at writing persuasive work in the more nurturing environment of a blog, podcast, video channel, or other content-rich site.

“THE HARD PART”

Setting the context for effective persuasion

We're ready to dive into “The Hard Part.”

Remember, it isn't hard because you need a personality transplant to become “that sales guy.” It's only hard because it requires serious thinking about the nature of your project and your customer.

THE OFFER

My first sneaky (not sneaky) tip is that it's much easier to sell something that people actually want.

Does that sound absurdly obvious? It is, in a way. It's also – by far – the biggest reason people don't buy.

“The gifted offer is more powerful than the gifted pen.” - Rosser Reeves

Startups obsess with what's called “product to market fit.” That's just a jargon-y way to describe the work of figuring out the exact thing that people want to spend money on.

What's one of the best ways to do that?

Ask an engaged audience who trusts you enough to tell the truth.

(Those kinds of audiences are built with well-crafted content that originates in strongly felt values. Funny how that works!)

Relationship-building content lets you attract people who want to solve problems. They want better lives, they want to feel better about themselves, and they want meaning, love, and comfort.

It's the job of your organization to help out. And you'll find the best ways to do that through listening and conversation.

SELL WHAT THEY WANT, NOT WHAT THEY NEED

One common marketing pitfall is to fixate on what your audience needs in order to solve those difficult problems.

Which is very logical! Your audience has a headache, your solution prevents headaches. In theory, that should work brilliantly.

But in practice, often it doesn't. If selling what people need was the most persuasive way to go, life insurance would be easy to sell and big-screen televisions would be difficult. But that's not how it works.

Notice that around the first of every year, most gyms don't run a lot of ads focused on how uncomfortable working out is, how sweaty their equipment gets, or how intimidating it is to go to the gym and encounter a bunch of ultra-fit people who have been exercising all year.

Gyms sell you on the vision you have of yourself as that ultra-fit person. The person who's already done the painful stuff. Who's already worked through the discomfort.

Gyms sell potential members on **becoming a better version of themselves**. And most great selling works on that principle.

That better version is what people want.

In not-so-ethical marketing, the sweat required to get there (the need) is minimized. "Look like a fitness model in 6 minutes a day!"

In more relationship-based marketing, the sweat is presented in a way that the buyer feels confident they're up for this challenge – and excited to begin.

BEWARE THE CURSE OF KNOWLEDGE

One thing that makes it hard to know what people want is a cognitive bias known as the **curse of knowledge**.

Essentially, once you start to learn about a topic, it becomes hard to remember what it was like to be a beginner.

Do anything you can to “travel back in time” and remember what it was like to be frustrated, confused, and uneducated about your topic. What intimidating early hurdles became easy later on? What concepts seemed terribly confusing when you first ran into them?

It's also useful to spend time listening in to the voices of folks who have less experience than you do.

You can:

- Survey existing customers or users of your project
- Send an email or social media post asking your audience what's difficult for them
- Read reviews of related books on Amazon or a relevant product site
- Look for social media postings about the topic (groups are often great for this)
- Sit down and talk with people!

Note that this relates directly to our daily exercise to find “5 snippets of dialogue.” We'll talk more about this in the Easy Part section as well.

VALUES

In the 21st century, people care more than ever about the values of the people they do business with.

The more polarized our societies become, the more important it is to be willing to stand up and declare what's most important to you.

If you think this is just for single-person companies or niche businesses, consider that mega brands including Coke, Unilever, and Nike all run ad campaigns that highlight the values of diversity and inclusion.

Do those companies actually walk the walk? Do they really live by those values? They might not. But current ad campaigns are taking political stands that would have been unthinkable controversial for a big brand just a decade ago.

Not every statement of values needs to be controversial. But when buyers know what you stand for, they feel more comfortable moving forward.

And don't worry if a handful of people find your content more controversial than you intended. We've all seen a few extremists try to take over conversations.

For example, I've seen people refer to positive reinforcement dog trainers (an evidence-based method which uses no punishment) as "Nazis."

Don't let a few wing nuts discourage you. On the web, there are always a few wing nuts.

VOICE

Voice is another friend from our earlier lessons – the uniquely human sound to your writing that differentiates it from generic work.

Just about all of us have to deal with faceless corporate bureaucracies sometimes. And no one is happy about it.

The more human and individual your persuasive writing sounds, the better it will land with the humans who are considering a purchase.

For more thoughts on this, refer back to the lesson on getting rid of corporate speak in your writing, as well as lessons on the words you choose.

THE SKULLS OF YOUR ENEMIES

In keeping with Shark Week theme, I gave this a scary sounding name – but it isn't actually scary.

This technique is just taking language that might have been used to insult your group or your values, and turn it around as a badge of pride.

The two most vivid examples from recent politics are "snowflakes" and "deplorables," referring to the left and right wings of the U.S. political spectrum. Both originated as insults, and both have been reclaimed by those groups as labels they're proud of.

I did this in a Copyblogger post, talking about how often I'd been called "naive" in corporate settings. (I included a link to that post in the Reading List.)

Whether you find your own badge or use one that a group has reclaimed, these can be powerful signals of the values you stand for.

BENEFITS

Every product or service has features – the dimensions, specifications, and details.

Features are good to keep in mind, but you want to make sure they're paired with benefits.

The feature is what the product does. The benefit is why the buyer would want that feature.

My colleague Chris Garrett's favorite example is a flight to Australia. No one especially wants to sit in a cramped seat, being managed like livestock and eating mediocre food for 16 hours. But if you want to go to Melbourne and you live in Vancouver, that's how you get there.

- The seat dimensions, service, and food are the features.
- Being in Melbourne is the benefit.

Before you start writing persuasive copy, get very clear on what the features of your product or service are, and what benefits come from those features.

One useful formula is,

Our product does [feature], so that you can [benefit]

The phrase “so that you can” will lead you right to the benefit of that feature.

*“This language app uses cutting-edge neuroscience,
so that you can learn faster and remember better”*

Incidentally, this isn't just for products you can buy. The benefit of a nonprofit donation is the feeling of empowerment and satisfaction that comes from helping others.

If you're going to ask someone for action, you have to know what they're going to get out of it.

YOUR UNIQUE VALUE

This one can be tricky to get to, and you may find that you figure it out in stages. Take your best guess for today, and keep thinking about it and refining it.

Your unique value (also called your winning difference or unique value proposition) is the answer to the question,

*“Why should your potential customer choose you,
given all of their other options?”*

Try to convey your unique value in every piece of content you create. It's the DNA of your project – “why we do things this way.”

The reading list includes a Copyblogger post I wrote that will help you get to a unique value you can work with for now – and keep in mind as you refine this crucial element.

Incidentally, always remember that one of the options your buyers have is doing nothing. That's often the "hidden competitor" that's more powerful than all the other products and services combined.

FIND THE AHA MOMENT

The Aha Moment comes from SaaS (software as a service) world – it's that moment when people really get why your project is so valuable, and they make the decision to commit to your solution over anyone else's.

Look for the experience that your buyer has with your offer that makes them say,

"I'm so glad I did this. This is amazing."

This moment is often the first meaningful transformation they make on their way toward a final goal. It might be two weeks of walking every day, the first 100 words they learn in a foreign language, or a civil conversation with their teenager.

You'll come to this through careful observation and listening. Interviewing successful customers can sometimes reveal good Aha moments. So can taking a close look at post-sale data and statistics.

Once you know this moment, look for case studies you can write that demonstrate it. (We'll talk more about case studies in the next section.)

You'll also want to do everything you can to make sure that your buyers actually get their Aha moment. Sometimes that means you have additional persuasion work to do after the sale – getting them to do the thing that will make the product fantastic for them.

BUILD PATHS TO PURCHASE

You may remember that in Structure week, we talked about putting content together like stepping stones.

Those stepping stones create what marketers call a path to purchase.

Here's an example of a typical path to purchase:

- Your person starts as a stranger with a problem to solve
- They see your Facebook post or an article on LinkedIn
- They go on to listen to several podcast episodes or read blog posts
- They join your email list to get a valuable incentive that begins to solve their problem
- They click on content from your email that triggers a relevant persuasive sequence
- They make their first purchase
- They make an additional, more expensive purchase
- They recommend your product to all of their friends

Some marketers refer to these paths as “funnels,” but that implies that everyone tumbles down the same well-defined path. That's not particularly true in modern marketing and sales. Your buyer will do a great deal of their own homework before they start interacting with you.

Funnels do still have a great place. The point when someone indicates interest in a specific problem or topic is a great time to introduce them to a persuasive sequence (funnel) that offers them an opportunity to buy a solution.

Copyblogger and Copyhackers both offer lots of great advice on building funnels.

THE ULTIMATE BENEFIT

We talked about being in Melbourne as a benefit of getting on that long, pricy flight to Australia.

But the *ultimate* benefit of that trip is the pride and satisfaction of being a world traveler.

Marketer and psychologist Sharon Livingston talks about the “benefit ladder.” When you’re figuring out your benefits, keep asking, “Why do they want that?”

Eventually, you’ll come to, “To feel good about themselves.” That’s the ultimate benefit.

The goal of really good projects, products, and services is to make our buyers the best versions of themselves.

That’s true whether we’re selling business advice, a great workout regimen, dog training, political action, or asking for a charitable contribution.

That “best version” should shine through your persuasive work. It’s the ultimate benefit of what you sell.

THE EASY PART!

Persuasive copywriting tricks, tactics, and techniques

As promised, now that we’ve done all of that thinking, we can enjoy the easy part!

This section is where I’ll talk about specific persuasive copywriting tactics – what you actually write on your website to make more sales.

These depend heavily on you knowing the answers to those more thoughtful “Hard Part” questions, like what the ultimate benefit of your project is to buyers, and what unique value you offer.

I call these “tricks” to emphasize that they’re tactical and simple, but of course they aren’t tricking anyone. They’re tricks of the trade, rather than something to fool or manipulate your audience.

Also keep in mind that in the real world, you'll let your own instincts set the order of your persuasive elements. Persuasive copywriting is much more like Lego than IKEA. You'll put your elements together in the order that serves your project, rather than strictly following an abstract formula.

It's usually smart to begin any persuasive piece with a compelling, emotional hook, and to make sure you have risk reversing elements at the end. But beyond that, you can stay flexible about the order you use these elements.

You can also use persuasive elements in different places in your copy. Benefits, risk reversal, calls to action, and other techniques can be woven through your writing where they naturally feel like they fit.

TRICK #1: VOICE OF CUSTOMER

This "hack" is an old copywriting trick, and today it works better than ever.

"Voice of customer" is a simple and powerful idea: Use the words that your buyers use.

Where can you find those words? Start with hangouts where your perfect buyer likes to spend time. Today, this is often a social media gathering, like a Facebook or LinkedIn group.

Caution: Don't wade into a group and start asking a lot of marketing-type questions. You'll irritate everyone and you might get thrown out.

Just listen. Observe. Watch what people struggle with, and make notes on how they talk about that.

Try not to jump in with your own advice, at least right away. Sit quietly for awhile and watch what arises when you aren't trying to shape the conversation.

You're looking for specific words and phrases, but you'll also find attitudes, metaphors, powerful images, and vivid ways of describing problems and solutions.

You can also get great customer voices by looking through reviews of related products or books. If your topic is gluten-free baking, look at Amazon reviews for gluten-free cookbooks. You'll find a wealth of words that describe the problems ("gluey," "like lead," "inedible") as well as words that describe what it's like when it's going right ("exactly like regular bread," "chewy," "light.")

Keep these words, phrases, and insights where you can refer to them easily while you're writing your persuasive copy.

They provide excellent starting points for headlines. You'll also use them throughout your copy to make your writing more inviting, relevant, and personal.

TRICK #2: START WITH EMOTION

You may remember that we talked about this in Structure week, and it's even more important for persuasive copy.

Start your persuasive piece by bringing forth a strong emotion in your reader. This is often a difficult emotion focused around a painful problem, but it doesn't always need to be.

For example, my client Susan Garrett includes plenty of pictures of adorable dogs in her marketing for her positive reinforcement training business, Say Yes. That creates an instant happy emotional bond with her customers.

Strong headlines will help you make that immediate connection, and attention-getting headlines have always been a part of good persuasive writing.

One easy way to do that is to make sure there's a benefit of the solution in your headline.

Here are a few good examples I found around the web:

“Become the best-dressed guy in the room” (Trunk Club)

“Eliminate stress with a “Worry-Free” home loan” (The Financial Brand)

“14 different pumpkin plants that will grow in ridiculously small containers” (Ann Handley via Orbit Media)

By the way, you might wonder if headlines should be in title case (most words are capitalized) or sentence case (it's just capitalized like a normal sentence).

The answer is that it depends on the publication. The New York Times uses title case, but the London Times uses sentence case.

If you're writing for your own site, decide which you like better and just keep it consistent. If you're writing for someone else, make note of what they're doing and stick with that.

Getting and holding the reader isn't just for the headline.

It's the job of the headline to get the reader's attention and get the first sentence read. It's the job of the first sentence to get the second sentence read. And it's the job of the second sentence to get the reader to finish the first paragraph.

Whatever else you do with your headline and introduction, make sure they're interesting, emotionally resonant, and get readers engaged with what you want to write about.

DON'T BE AFRAID OF PROBLEMS

Many persuasive writers kick off their writing with a problem, because it works so well. It breaks through distraction and content clutter, creates an immediate emotional state, and gets the reader instantly engaged with the content.

In fact, there's a well-known copywriting structure called **Problem-Agitate-Solve** that starts with a problem affecting the buyer, agitates it to dig into the real cost and pain of ignoring the problem or using ineffective remedies, and then presents the solution to correct it and reach the buyer's goals.

Don't be afraid to dig into problems *if* there's something real that the buyer wants help solving.

If you focus on the problems that your audience actually cares about, that usually relieves any concern about negativity. Help them with the struggles that bother them.

Of course, as an ethical marketer, you won't manufacture new problems by making prospects feel unworthy with your messages. That kind of thing is one reason so many people dislike marketers.

TRICK #3: WEAVE BENEFITS THROUGHOUT

As we discussed in the earlier section, it's very easy to get wrapped up in all of the things a product or service does (the features), and forget to highlight the benefits.

Features do matter, but people make most decisions by weighing whether or not there's enough in it for them to justify the cost of action.

The benefits of your product or service are, of course, what it does for your buyer – the “what's in it for them.” And benefits come in two flavors.

Emotional benefits are the positive emotions that buyers get out of your product. These are the answers to the work you did in the Hard Stuff section – that better version of themselves that customers are looking for.

Pride, connection, companionship, and even “bragging rights” are all emotional benefits. So are safety, security, and freedom from worry or fear. Delight in beauty, sensory pleasure, and a good laugh can fit here as well.

Being able to tell a good story is an emotional benefit that's often overlooked. Charities like SmileTrain and Heifer benefit from the stories they enable their donors to tell. The dress shop Zuri shares stories about the Kenyan women who make their dresses, and the artisans throughout East and West Africa who create the cloth.

Being able to own something that tells an interesting story is a particularly strong benefit in the 21st century, when so much of what we buy has an anonymous, mass-produced quality.

Logical benefits are the reasons we use to justify making purchases to ourselves.

*“Um, sure, I just bought \$200 worth of fabric, but I can make a quilt out of it that would easily cost that much in a fancy boutique.”
- Something Sonia says much too often*

Because people make decisions emotionally first, then justify them with logic (yes, even your friend who thinks she's part Vulcan), persuasive copy usually puts the emotional benefits first, then reassures the buyer with the backup of logical benefits.

Logical benefits often pair well with the agitation we brought up earlier with “Problem-Agitate-Solve.” Logic can make a good door into getting to the deeper issues:

“Science says if you don't resolve this, it will get worse.”

This makes the evidence the bad guy, not you.

I wrote articles about both emotional and logical benefits for Copyblogger – you've got links in the Reading List section.

TRICK #4: BE THE ONE TO BRING UP OBJECTIONS

"Objections" are all the reasons that prospects don't move forward to buy.

It's easy to hope that if you don't bring them up, the prospect might not think of them. But that's a mistake.

Any time you leave a negative thought buried or unexamined, it will work against you. Don't be afraid to be the one who brings up potential negatives – it virtually always strengthens your case.

One of the most common objections in any topic is,

"I can see how it would work for other people, but it won't work for me."

For example, most people believe that going to the gym is a good way to get physically fit – but they have a list of reasons why that's not the right answer for them.

This is an objection you should almost always address. You can simply say,

"Maybe you think this won't work for you."

Then you provide examples of people it did work for, even though they didn't at first seem like likely candidates for the solution.

One powerful way to do that is the **case study**. These are just stories that show real people using the product or service and getting success with it.

Case studies can be as short as a single sentence:

“Mary Sue used my 9-step process to score the job of her dreams without having to fly out for an interview.”

Most case studies work best when they showcase ordinary people. They demonstrate how real people, just like your audience members, can get excellent results without having any special knowledge, talent, or privileges.

Sometimes, you have a rock star who uses your product – a well-known person in your industry, or someone who achieves an extraordinary result.

It's great to include these stories as inspiration to show what's possible at the highest levels. But most of your case studies should demonstrate that ordinary people without special gifts can get good results, too.

Testimonials are another good way to show your prospect that they can get the result they want.

These can be awkward to ask for (although getting good at it is well worth your time). The best time to ask is when you've just secured an excellent result for someone and you know they're happy.

You can also keep an eye on your email interactions with buyers. When they say something nice, ask them if you can use it. You can use this wording:

“I'm so glad I could help! May I use your wording as a testimonial?”

TRICK #5: THE CALL TO ACTION

This is the easiest of the “Easy Stuff.” Just tell your prospect what to do, clearly and simply.

Good calls to action are very direct.

“Click here to download the special report”

They are clear and remove any confusing or complicated language.

“Add to cart”

Sometimes, they provide some additional context, so the buyer knows what to expect.

“Call now — operators are standing by.”

The only remotely difficult thing about them is that some writers feel they might “sound like an infomercial.” (They do, because infomercials are expensive to run, and they nearly always use crisp, effective calls to action.)

As long as you’ve provided value and have acted with integrity throughout your writing, don’t worry if the call to action sounds slightly “salesy.” It doesn’t need to be hypey. It does need to be clear and direct.

TRICK #6: DISCOURAGE PROCRASTINATION

This one definitely makes beginning marketers nervous, but it’s an important skill to master when you’re writing to persuade.

Remember that the default state of most people is to do nothing. To put off joining the gym, training their dog, buying a new sofa, or learning a new language.

We all have plenty to keep us busy. So there’s always some friction when we consider adding something new to the list.

The copywriting technique called *urgency* gives the buyer a reason to move forward today, rather than continuing to put off taking action.

Nonprofits are familiar with the spike of donations they get on December 31, when people are rushing to make charitable donations for that tax year.

And if you've ever been inside a shopping mall on Christmas Eve, you've seen how many people put off making purchases that they've literally known about for a year.

Urgency is any reason you can give why the buyer should move forward today rather than putting it off.

Normally, you do this by making something scarce.

You either have a discount or bonus that will expire (time scarcity) or you have a limited number of items to sell (number scarcity).

If you're selling a service, there's a natural built-in scarcity element. For example, I have a service where I partner with businesses for a whole month. Obviously, there are only so many of those I can sell a year. And that number isn't 12, because I like to travel and spend time doing other things like running workshops.

This is why I often suggest to service providers that they set up and use a wait list as part of their business routine. Rather than scrambling to convert every inquiry as it comes in, get prospects onto a wait list, and open it regularly in a way that works for your business.

Never lie about scarcity (or anything else). For example, don't pretend they must buy in the next 7 days, when you know you're going to keep extending the deadline.

Anything untrue in your marketing will train your audience that you're an unethical person. Lying in your marketing can also send you to jail.

However, it's entirely legitimate to put an offer with an expiration date into an email sequence and let people know it's intended for new subscribers. You can get software that helps with this kind of thing – Deadline Funnel is the one I've used, and found it works well.

When selling courses and communities at Copyblogger, I often simply wrote, "To discourage you from procrastinating, we're putting this offer on a deadline – you need to pick it up by X date in order to get the best price."

TRICK #7: BRING THEM BACK TO SAFETY

One of the reasons so many people hate selling and salespeople is that the process doesn't feel safe.

We feel like we're going to be pressured into doing something we don't want to do. Or that we'll feel dumb for succumbing to a seductive sales message.

Good copywriters know that in fact, feeling unsafe makes it less likely that a prospect will move forward. Fear leads people to move away, or to freeze in their tracks. It doesn't often lead them to move forward with you ... and if it does, the relationship is likely to be toxic.

My preference is to make sure the sales process feels safe through as much of the experience as possible.

We do sometimes create an unsafe feeling early in our messages, when we're bringing up and agitating problems. We're bringing up the elephant in the room – and that's always an uncomfortable conversation.

But once we've raised that awareness, it's important to restore safety so the person feels they can move forward.

There are quite a few ways to do that with your copy.

First, **manage the number of choices** buyers have in front of them. Too many choices put us into decision fatigue, and we often just walk away and think about it later.

(Ever had to decide which fund to put your retirement money into? Ever put that decision off ... possibly for months or even years?)

Whenever you can, limit the number of choices you're presenting to two or three. Making decisions at that scale is typically much easier than choosing from a menu of dozens or even hundreds of options.

That's why so many offers fall into a "silver, gold, or platinum" set of categories.

"Regular or premium" is another classic frame that helps buyers move forward.

Don't wear buyers out with irrelevant offers. Instead, **use smart automation to send them offers they care about**. If they're constantly filtering out offers they don't want, they're less likely to tune in when you have something they *do* want.

For example, if you're writing to promote a local gym, you might have an email newsletter with articles about strength training, cardio classes, cardio machines, and distance running.

Only send offers for sessions with your team of marathon coaches to people who click on articles about distance running.

Similarly, send reminders about the schedule for fun cardio classes to readers who click on those types of articles.

Many email providers allow you to do simple behavior-based segmentation like this. I currently like ConvertKit because it's easy to use and well-priced for small lists, but there are lots of options.

Remember our clarity cleanup from the exfoliation session? **Making your writing clearer** is an excellent way to help your reader feel safe with your project.

Confusion kills trust. Clarity, understanding, and transparency help people feel good about moving forward.

Risk reversal is a classic copywriting technique. This refers to the many ways you can help make a purchase feel less risky to your prospect.

The money-back guarantee is the most common technique, but other options include security badges that show that you will process their transaction securely, and accreditations from organizations like Better Business Bureau.

Beyond those traditional methods, your own reputation is one of the best risk reversal assets you have.

Your reputation is your business's most valuable asset. Stay away from shortcuts (especially the dodgy kind). Make it easy for people to get hold of you, handle refunds promptly if you offer them, and cultivate a healthy network of respected peers.

Finally, your sales message overall should convey:

“We’re a lot alike, and your welfare is my chief concern.”

Go through your persuasive piece and check that you’ve demonstrated throughout that:

- You’re good at solving problems
- The problems you solve are the ones they care most about
- You care about the well-being of your customers and clients

You’ll find that persuasive writing is an art of its own, and well worth the time to learn. I hope you dive into it, and let me know how it works for you!

You can always reach me at sonia@remarcom.com – just put “Question from the writing workshop” in your header so it doesn’t get lost in my own inbox clutter. :)

READING LIST AND RESOURCES

Food for thought and a few tools I've found useful

As I mentioned, Copyblogger and Copyhackers websites are the two I turn to myself for advice on persuasive writing technique. Here are some specific links and recommendations:

SONIA'S COPYBLOGGER ARTICLES

How content marketers can expand their roles to include conversion copywriting:
<https://copyblogger.com/conversion-content-marketer/>

Using content to develop your audience's stages of awareness (this is crucial for your path to purchase): <https://copyblogger.com/stages-of-awareness/>

The Unity principle (this is another term for the values-based identity you share with your audience): <https://www.copyblogger.com/ultra-powerful-persuasion/>

How being called "Naive" strengthened me as a business owner (this is an example of "Skulls of your Enemies") <https://copyblogger.com/naive/>

Emotional benefits <https://copyblogger.com/emotional-benefits/>

Logical benefits <https://copyblogger.com/logical-benefits/>

Find your unique value proposition (or "winning difference") <https://copyblogger.com/usp/>

Prospect fear of feeling foolish is the number one enemy of conversion in your copywriting. Here are some ways to address it: <https://copyblogger.com/copy-conversion/>

MORE ARTICLES

Yes, other people write about copywriting, too!

Copyblogger has lots of advice on writing better headlines. You can grab some of the best here: <https://www.copyblogger.com/magnetic-headlines/>

Here's a post Brian Clark wrote about why sometimes use "Click here" in digital calls to action: <https://www.copyblogger.com/click-here/>

Joanna Wiebe on how to turn your call to action into an enticing button: <https://www.copyblogger.com/call-to-action-buttons/>

And this one wasn't on Copyblogger, although she's a frequent contributor there. Here's an article Henneke Duistermaat wrote on translating features into benefits: <https://www.enchantingmarketing.com/features-and-benefits/>

Finally, Jon Morrow has compiled a list of "headline hacks" that will help your content get the attention it deserves: <https://pages.smartblogger.com/headline-hacks>

A few tools I've found useful

There are lots of apps and tools that can make messages more persuasive. These two are simple to implement and can be quite powerful.

ConvertKit is a user-friendly email service that offers simple but effective segmentation based on behavior such as user clicks. <https://convertkit.com/>

Deadline Funnel lets you put a timer on web pages and in email messages for a time-based scarcity element. Remember to keep things honest and transparent when you're using scarcity, especially with an automated tool. <https://www.deadlinefunnel.com/>

By the way, there's nothing wrong with affiliate links, but I don't happen to use them for anything in this workshop.