



## 22 Proven Copy Techniques that Make Customers Respond

1. **Talk about your Prospect.** Your prospect is always asking WIIFM? (What's in it for me?). So don't waste your time talking about you or your company. Always spin the language into key benefits for your prospect. If you find yourself using first person pronouns (I, me, mine, us, our, we, etc.) then you know you are off base. Focus on the second person (you and your).
2. **Make a Guarantee.** Remove objections to responding and include a guarantee. Minimize risk for the prospect at every juncture. A guarantee may be abused by a tiny handful of customers, but the good will and trust that you create will far outweigh any downside.
3. **Don't be Funny.** Humor may work in TV advertisements, but not in direct marketing. Don't be cute or witty. Direct marketing depends on credibility and trust. Humor offers you no significant benefit but plenty of risk.
4. **Make it Personal.** Personalization works. Personalize the coupon or response device. Personalize the content. Present offers customized to needs, wants, desires and historical purchase behavior of your prospect. The more your copy and offer are customized uniquely to your prospect, the closer you are to true one-to-one marketing. Personalization drives response. How often do you respond to a Dear Occupant letter?
5. **Members Only.** Make your customers feel like they are part of an exclusive group. Use the language of 'membership' rather than 'subscription' and renewals will increase. People love to join. People don't love to subscribe or purchase.
6. **Department Store Pricing Works.** Prices specified to the penny, especially just under the dollar (i.e. \$19.95 vs. \$20.00), will pull better. Why do you think this practice has been in place for decades? Because it works.
7. **Just Say No.** Credibility is key in direct marketing. A Yes/No option must include a legitimate No in order for it to be believable. And it will help increase orders. Sweepstakes mailings asking for magazine subscriptions have the Yes/No option down to a science, maximizing response and revenue with this technique.
8. **Myth: Keep it to one page.** Contrary to popular opinion, long copy is actually better than short copy, as long as it works. If you have a story to tell, do tell it. But make sure you are consistently delivering benefits, enticing your prospect and offering a solid reason to respond. There's no such thing as copy that is too long; it's only too boring.
9. **Give Special Treatment.** Treat your existing customers with special care. Craft mailings just for them that include special prices, terms and premiums. Reward your customers for rewarding you.
10. **Write the Way You Speak.** Direct marketing copy is not the same as a formal business letter. It's perfectly OK to use contractions, to start sentences with the word 'and', or even use one-word sentences. Write the way you speak. Use simple language, words



that are easy to understand and read. Seventy percent of your words should be 5 or fewer letters long. And try to limit your paragraphs to a max of 6 or 7 lines.

11. **Capture Your Prospects Imagination.** Do use wonder-words (in addition to the most wonderful of all: FREE) new, how to, suddenly, now, announcing, introducing, it's here, just arrived, improvement, sensational, remarkable, amazing, revolutionary, startling, miracle, magic, offer, quick, easy, wanted, challenged, compare, bargain, hurry, last chance, save, money, help, results, discover, proven, guarantee, safety, gift, premium, below-cost, discount, satisfaction, 100% guarantee, news, important development, the truth about, new and improved, you, you, you, you, you, you, you.
12. **Endorsements Work.** Leveraging marquis, third party brands/logos that are part of your offer will lend significant credibility to your message. Celebrity endorsements work too (i.e. Ed McMahon for Publisher's Clearing House and recently Wayne Brady for Avaya).
13. **People Pay Attention to your Postage Method.** Consider using a live stamp to overcome those people that do not read standard/bulk rate mailings. And if you are mailing with first class postage, proudly boast on your envelope that are indeed mailing "First Class". Your customer will notice and think they are being treated with greater care.
14. **Customers Respond to Benefits, not Features.** Your audience doesn't care about the technical specs of your product/service, they only care about the results they get. Customers don't want to buy a hammer; they want to build a house. Focus on what the reader gets, not what the product does.
15. **Tell the reader what to do.** Direct their action and eye flow. Call now. Must redeem coupon for discount. Use high impact graphics to control their eye flow... remember readers will skim and you need to get their attention and tell them what to do in a single scan.
16. **Ask for the Order.** Remember to ask for the order. Tell the reader exactly what their next step is. And give them a deadline. Don't assume they will know it's time to call (or mail) the order in.
17. **Never Stop Presenting Benefits.** In direct marketing your initial objective is to generate response. And benefits are the key to making your customer take action. They can get the detailed features after they make their initial response. Hammer away at the benefits and advantages of the product at every opportunity.
18. **Make a Promise.** Do make as big a promise as you can live up to. Don't sell yourself short.
19. **Demand Action.** Don't run institutional ads - Do ask for an immediate response. No ad should be run without a phone number, an 800#, or a free offer. Limited number, ask for action now, today, this instant. Don't fly a blimp and hope people call you.
20. **K.I.S.S.** Don't sell more than one product at a time (unless you have a catalog).



21. **Everyone Reads the P.S.** Don't ever write a letter without a PS. It is the second most often read piece of copy (after the headline). Use it to re -state your primary benefit, create urgency and ask for action. Readers often look here first, so make it intriguing.
22. **Make It Easy for Prospects to Respond.** Include 800 numbers and business reply forms. More than 70,000,000 Americans purchase item over the phone. 6 out of 7 customers prefer doing business with firms who have an 800 number.

