One easy tip for producing non-crap digital copy

By Tiffany Markman

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A lot of the digital copy out there is badly written. Okay - a lot of it is crap. So it should come as no surprise to anyone that well-planned, well-structured, reader-friendly and carefully proofed text pretty much guarantees higher conversion. Plus, it nicely distinguishes one online voice from another.

What does this mean for us, the writers, comms people or content creators?

It means we can't forget that we are salespeople and try to be performers. We can't abandon sales to seek applause. We can't angle for laughs, choose form over function or miss the point. Even slightly. Even for a moment.

We have to remember that digital copy that is written (and designed) simply and directly, without a lot of fluff, does the best job of selling. I'd even go as far as to say that, today, elaborate and sexy doesn't sell. It just confuses.

And that's why I (and those I teach copywriting to) choose to follow:

Ed Mayer's 40-40-20 Rule

In a very small nutshell, 40% of the success of your copy will be determined by how well you've defined its audience. Another 40% will depend on how the audience responds to its perceptions of your product, service or offer. And the final 20% will depend on the creative package (artwork and copywriting).

That's right: The audience - and how well you understand it - is responsible for 80% of your success of your copy.

So here are some things to think about when trying to define your audience:

1. How much do my readers already know about my message?
2. What are their key information needs?
3. What do I/client want the outcome to be (i.e. the call to action)?
4. How do I use language and phrasing they'll easily understand?

5. What can I cut out to make the text fit, or add to make it clearer?

Remember: The average reader wants to know "What's in it for me?" not "What's the brand about?" You've got an idea, concept or message to communicate, but your audience will only buy into it if it does something for them - and if you make

that explicit. Write with their agenda in mind.

"When you spend 90% of your time researching the customer, the remaining 10% (the writing) almost falls in your lap," says Google. They'd know. Right?

ABOUT TIFFANY MARKMAN

I spend 10 hours a day writing - and teaching others to write. I was South Africa's Freelance Copywriter of the Year in 2020 and one of the world's 'Top 50 Female Content Marketers' in 2021.

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