

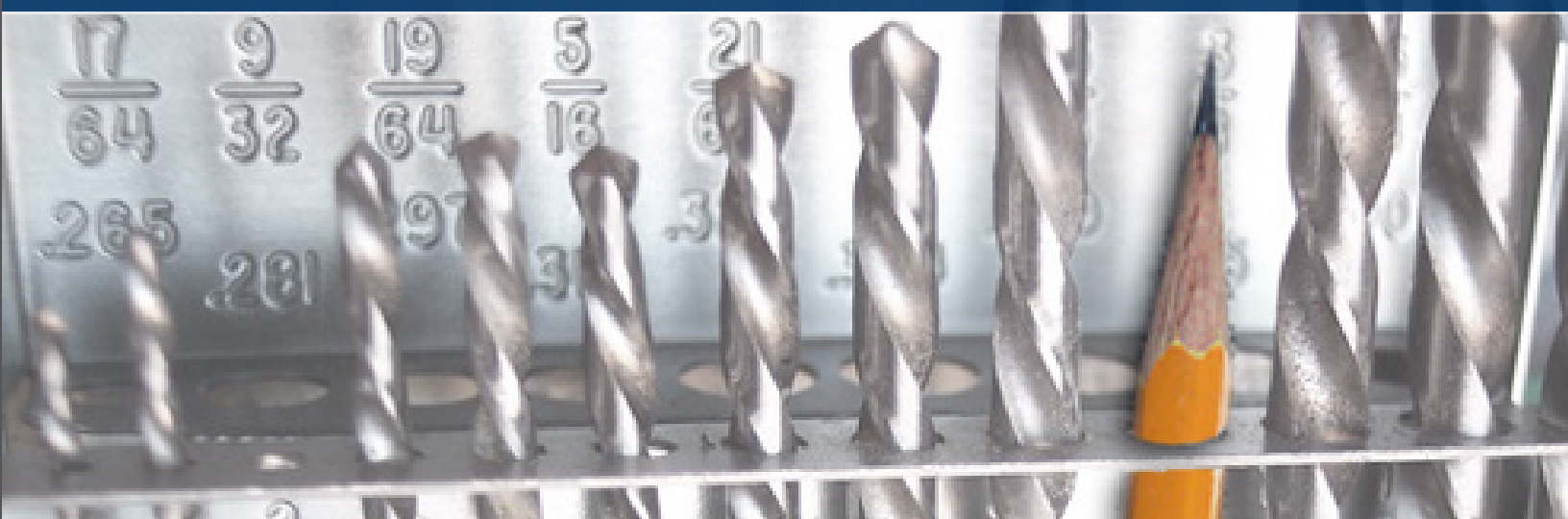
# THE COPYWRITER'S **Success Kit**

**The Basics On:**

Attracting Great Clients

Pricing Your Services

Writing Effective Copy



**Steve Slaunwhite**

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a service of Slaunwhite Communications  
27 Cox Cr., Suite B  
Brampton ON L6X 3G8  
905-846-2620  
[steve@forcopywritersonly.com](mailto:steve@forcopywritersonly.com)  
[www.ForCopywritersOnly.com](http://www.ForCopywritersOnly.com)

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# The Copywriter's Success Kit

Fellow Scribe,

Thank you for requesting this success kit!

When I started as a freelance copywriter more than 15 years ago, there wasn't anything like this available. (At least not for free.) I was on my own to figure out how to write effective copy, get the best clients, and price my services effectively.

As you can imagine, I made a lot of mistakes!

But eventually I mastered how to build a lucrative copywriting practice and, today, I work with great clients on a fascinating range of projects. (I even wrote a few books about it.)

My hope is that — whether you're just starting out or are an established pro — this success kit will give you a jump start toward your copywriting business goals.

So, if you find the information helpful, please do me a favor and let me know.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Slaunwhite', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Steve Slaunwhite  
Editor, ForCopywritersOnly.com  
[steve@forcopywritersonly.com](mailto:steve@forcopywritersonly.com)

# The 7 Ingredients of Highly Successful Copy

Have you ever written an advertisement, brochure, web page, letter, or other persuasive piece and then thought, “There’s something missing”? (Or, worse, has a client ever said that?)

Writing effective copy is a lot like making pancakes. You have to make sure you have all the right ingredients!

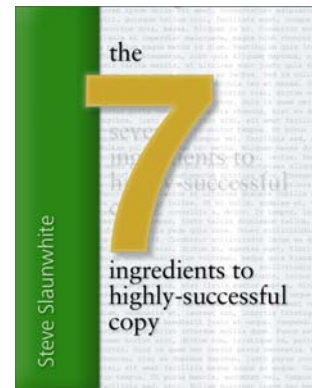
If you miss the baking power or oil, for example, your pancakes will be flat and tasteless.

Copywriting is similar. If you forget to:

- *Gain Attention*
- *Focus on the Customer*
- *Bring the Benefits to Life*
- *Differentiate from the Competition*
- *Build Belief*
- *Put the Price in Perspective, or*
- *Inspire Action*

then your copy just won’t work.

That’s why it’s important to mix all the right ingredients in just the right proportions to create a winning sales, marketing, or PR communication. The following special report will show you how.



# #1 | Gain Attention

By the time you get out of bed, scan the newspaper while sipping a morning coffee, drive to work listening to the radio, turn on the computer and check your e-mail, you're exposed to dozens — perhaps hundreds — of marketing messages. All before 9:00 A.M.!

There's no avoiding them. Advertising, sales, marketing and other persuasive messages are everywhere . . . on radio and television . . . in magazines and newspapers . . . all over the internet . . . in e-mail inboxes . . . on posters and billboards . . . in the mailbox.

The competition for the hearts and minds (and wallets) of customers is stiff. So if you want your copy to break through the clutter and get noticed, you have to make sure it gains attention.

Think about it. If the advertisement or sales letter you're writing doesn't get noticed, customers won't read it. And if customers don't read it, they won't be persuaded by your message. (No matter how carefully you crafted it.)

## **TIP:**

Make sure the headline matches the message. If your headline reads "Your Hair Is On Fire!" it will certainly gain attention. But if the ad is actually about photocopiers and has nothing to do with a head in flames, then potential customers will just get annoyed. They'll feel duped, and may actually decide *not* to buy the product.

So how do you make sure your copy gains attention? Let's take a look at the most common ways to accomplish this.

## **A Great Headline**

An effective headline is the copywriter's number one "secret weapon." It is by far the simplest and most effective way to gain attention in just about any form of advertising, sales, marketing or public relations communication.

A headline is, of course, that big block of bold text at the top of an advertisement. But you'll also see headlines at work in sales letters, flyers, catalogs, websites, trade show exhibits, e-mail promotions and even in blogs.

How do headlines work? Imagine flipping through your favorite magazine. Your decision whether or not to read a particular article depends, at least in part, on the article's title (which is a lot like a headline). If you want to plant a vegetable garden, for example, then an article with the headline, "Grow Veggies That Make Your Grocer Green With Envy", will likely get your attention.

Advertisements use the same technique. The headlines are like article titles, striving to capture your interest. Have trouble with acne? Then the headline, "Reduce Acne Blemishes — Overnight", will seem like it's jumping off the page. Want to be a published author? Then your eyes will lock on the ad that reads "Get A Book Contract in 90 Days." Planning on buying some new clothes? You might even clip the ad that reads "One Day Only: Save 25% on Cashmere Sweaters".

As you can see, headlines are an important tool in the copywriting trade. They're fun to write, too.

## Catching The Eye

You don't always need a headline to gain attention. Sometimes, a clever, fascinating or even shocking visual can work just as well.

### **TIP:**

You don't have to be an artist. When you come up with a visual idea for a promotion, make a rough drawing. It doesn't have to be a work of art. Stickmen are fine! In most cases, the designer or art director will be able to interpret even the most amateurish of scribbles.

Let's say you're driving to work and notice a billboard with a huge picture of a duck staring right at you. His feathers are ruffled. He looks panicked. He seems to be struggling to say something — to you! It's such a beguiling image that you take notice. And as a result, the billboard ad takes hold. Before you know it,

you're reading the line of copy adjacent to the picture, encouraging you to donate to a much needed bird sanctuary.

The picture did all the work. No headline required.

But pictures and other images are not the only way to create an attention-grabbing visual. Imagine receiving a direct mail piece that looks like a child's puzzle box. Or coming across a magazine advertisement that unfolds into a poster. Or picking up a brochure and discovering that it opens into an elaborate, unexpected shape.

Sometimes a very simple idea can be extremely effective. For example, a collection agency once sent a sales letter to potential clients. It had no headline, just a small stone glued to the upper right-hand corner. The letter began as follows:

In ancient Greece, business owners would attempt to collect on overdue accounts by throwing stones at the customers. This forced a customer to choose between a daily bruising and paying up. Today, things are more civilized. But debt collection is no less frustrating...

There are many creative ways to gain attention with the visual presentation of your promotional piece. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination. And, of course, your — or your client's — budget.

## The Power of Two

Often, you need a headline to work with a specific visual to gain attention. In print advertisements, headlines and visuals often work in tandem. Take away one or the other and the impact, and in some cases even the meaning, diminishes.

Consider this headline:

Look What Happens When Salespeople Follow The Power Prospecting Method

Alone, this headline doesn't make much sense. Look at what?

However, when you put this line of copy next to its intended visual — a

salesperson’s weekly calendar filled with appointments for presentations with hot prospects — then the meaning is clear. Any sales professional or sales manager who comes across this ad will want to learn more and, therefore, read the body copy.

## #2 | Focus on The Customer

Perhaps the biggest mistake that people make when writing copy is focusing primarily on the product. “But wait a minute,” you might be asking. “Isn’t that what I’m supposed to do? After all, I’m writing a flyer to sell fitness club memberships. Isn’t the fitness club the topic of the flyer?”

### TIP:

Your target audience must take center stage in your copy. If they don’t, you risk creating nothing more than a “brag and boast” piece. And you know what happens to those. (Waste bin basketball, anyone?)

Yes it is to some degree. You definitely should highlight all the great equipment, amenities and services that the club has to offer. However, if your copy is focused *purely* on the product (the fitness club) and little else, then you will not have answered the number one question customers ask when reading a promotional piece: “What’s in it for me?”

Customers don’t just want to know about the product and all of its wonderful features. They want to learn how your product will help them to achieve their goals, solve a problem, meet their needs, ease their workload, increase their income, alleviate their fears, or make their dreams come true.

Consider this copywriting example:

Speed-Med Courier offers one-hour delivery of confidential

patient documents.

Now take a look at this one:

As a Oncologist, you understand the importance of getting test results returned to your office quickly. That's why you'll be glad to learn that Speed-Med Courier offers one-hour delivery service — exclusively for confidential patient documents.

Which do you think has the greater chance of being read and acted upon? The answer is obvious. The first example is *product* focused and seems dull and ordinary. It's a yawner. The second example is *customer* focused and therefore much more engaging and relevant to the reader. Quite a difference in impact, isn't there?

As you can see, you'll need to walk a mile in the moccasins of your customers — at least figuratively — before you can write effective copy that persuades them.

How do you do that? The key is research.

### **TIP:**

Salespeople can be a valuable source of information on your target audience. After all, they deal with customers every day! So when you're asked to write copy for a product or service, ask to speak to someone involved in selling it. You'll gain insights that are difficult to find anywhere else.

If you are writing to plumbing contractors, learn more about these people! Attend a plumbing contractor trade show, read a few issues of the trade publications they subscribe to, and speak to some plumbers in person or over the phone. Then, when you're writing a promotion for a new kind of flexible hot water piping, you'll be able to speak their language.

If you're writing to working moms, read some of the excellent websites dedicated to these hard-working people, or hang around a daycare center and watch as they

drop off their kids in the morning. You'll soon see just how busy these moms really are. This will give you the perspective you need to explain how "The New Stay-Hot Commuter Coffee Mug" will make their lives easier.

Of course, it's not always possible to do extensive research on your target audience, especially when deadlines are tight. Do the best you can. Take full advantage of any market research reports available and, of course, the Internet. The more you understand your customers, the more effective your copy will be.

## #3 | Bring the Benefits to Life

If you're shopping for bed sheets, 300 threads per inch may not mean a whole lot to you — until you discover how much that density adds to the comfort, warmth and longevity of the linen.

### **TIP:**

When writing about benefits, it's very easy to get carried away. Before you know it you're making claims that border on exaggeration. That's dangerous territory. Go ahead and be enthusiastic, but also candid and realistic when describing product benefits. Honesty is always more persuasive than hype.

Similarly, when you subscribe to a Saturday morning newspaper, you're not just buying the five pounds of paper inked with news stories. You're buying the enjoyment of reading that information, perhaps while sipping a morning coffee on the back deck. You may also be buying the convenience of having that paper delivered to your home, so you don't have to get dressed and march over to the corner store to get it.

When you decide to purchase a product, it's often the perceived benefits that motivated you much more than the product's features.

Features and benefits. What's the difference? Features describe the product — how it's made, how it works, what it does, how well it does it. Benefits describe the effect those features will have on you, the customer.

The benefits of a product might be that it saves you time, makes you money, solves a problem, advances your career, improves your relationships, entertains you, makes you healthier, and so forth.

If a product is one that is sold mainly to businesses, accounting software for example, the benefits might be improved cash flow, greater productivity, less risk of tax penalties, higher employee morale, a competitive advantage, lower operating costs and more.

Writing about features is fairly easy. All you need is the detailed product information. Your real challenge as a copywriter is to bring the benefits derived from the features to life.

When planning a copywriting project, it's a good idea to create a list of features and benefits.

Take a look at this example.

<b>Features and Benefits of an Electric Can Opener</b>	
<b>Feature</b>	<b>Benefit</b>
One button operation	No more wrist strain from using a manual can opener
Opens a can in 3 seconds	Saves time when you're trying to cook a fast meal

Child safety lock	Prevents younger kids from using it and potentially getting injured.
Stainless steel components	Easy to clean. Help prevent bacterial contamination
Three year warranty	Worry-free operation. If it breaks, it will be repaired for you at no cost.

When you prepare a list of features and benefits, put it next to your computer screen or notepad. This will make the writing process a lot easier and the resultant copy a lot more effective.

## #4 | Differentiate From The Competition

Imagine two identical-looking oranges for sale. Your job is to write copy that convinces people to buy the one on the left.

### **TIP:**

According to advertising research, on average, most business products have five direct competitors, and most consumer products have seventeen direct competitors. So, chances are, your target customers will have plenty of alternatives to your product to choose from.

How would you do this? You would have to find some way to differentiate the left

orange from its competitor on the right. Otherwise, there is no reason for the customer to choose one over the other. He might as well flip a coin!

Well, you could write about how the left orange is juicier and therefore better tasting . . . or is seedless and easier to eat . . . or is locally grown . . . or is a Sunkist® and therefore a trusted brand . . . or can be delivered free to your home . . . or that old standby, costs less.

The point is, until you explain why your orange is different — and better — than the competition, you'll have difficulty persuading a customer to buy it.

Of course most products, even close competitors, do not look as similar as two pieces of fruit. A Dell® laptop doesn't look exactly the same as a Toshiba® notebook. But as a copywriter, you still have to provide a good reason, ideally many good reasons, why a customer should choose the Dell over the Toshiba (or vice versa).

## Standing Out in a Crowd of Look-alikes

There are many ways to differentiate the product or service you're writing about from all the other options available.

Here are a few examples:

**Differentiation technique:** A unique approach to serving customers.

**Copy example:** “Do you feel pressured meeting with prospective wedding planners? Our stress-free services let you plan the wedding of your dreams right from your computer.”

**Differentiation technique:** A better guarantee.

**Copy example:** “Try it 60-days risk free. If you're not satisfied, your money will be cheerfully refunded.”

**Differentiation technique:** A longer, more inclusive warranty.

**Copy example:** “10-year comprehensive parts and labor warranty. The longest in its class.”

**Differentiation technique:** A known and trusted brand.

**Copy example:** “Replacement windows backed by the most trusted name in the business.”

**Differentiation technique:** A long track record of success.

**Copy example:** “Montreal’s favorite smoked meat sandwiches for 39 years.”

**Differentiation technique:** More endorsements by customers.

**Copy example:** “Read what customers are saying about the new Turbo Plus Rug Cleaning System.”

**Differentiation technique:** Better payment terms.

**Copy example:** “Don’t pay a cent for 12 months!”

**Differentiation technique:** Longer lasting.

**Copy example:** “The ACME 12B Forklift Truck has a 5-year operating life even under the most extreme warehouse conditions.”

**Differentiation technique:** More glamorous.

**Copy example:** “Get Hollywood’s dirty little secret. Volcanic Facial Mud that makes you look up to 5 years younger overnight.”

**Differentiation technique:** Costs less.

**Copy example:** “You’ll pay less at Outrageous Ed’s! If you find a better deal on featured electronics anywhere else, we’ll beat that price by 10%.”

**Differentiation technique:** Better for the environment.

**Copy example:** “Only ACME lawn treatment gets rid of weeds without poisoning your backyard.”

**Differentiation technique:** Easier to learn and use.

**Copy example:** “The average training time on our contact capture system is less than five minutes per user!”

**Differentiation technique:** Extras are included.

**Copy example:** “While others may charge extra for training, we include a half-day seminar free with every program license sold....”

A great way to brainstorm how to differentiate your product or service is to ask this question: “Why would a customer buy this product and not some other product with similar features?”

## When Products Are The Same

Of course, it’s easier when a product has distinct advantages over the competition. But what if you’re writing a brochure for a local print shop and, well, color printing is color printing? The solution is to focus your copy on the services provided along with the product. That could be free delivery, 24-hour service, a 30-day free trial, and so forth.

Hertz had this problem in the 1970s. The cars they rented and the prices they charge, were similar to other major car rental companies. The only obvious difference was that they were number two in the industry. So they took that difference and positioned it as a benefit. Their famous ad campaign featured the line, “We’re number two. We try harder.” No other car rental company could claim the same thing. Now that’s differentiation!

## #5 | Build Belief

The brochure says: “The ACME 32A brews espressos and cappuccinos on your kitchen countertop that taste so good, the local French café will be jealous.”

Oh really? Says who?

Unfortunately, customers are skeptical of the marketing materials they read these days. And who can blame them? They are constantly being bombarded with spam, hype, inflated claims and broken promises.

As you write your copy, you’ll need to explore ways to overcome this hurdle. Otherwise, few will believe all the benefits that you so carefully flushed out and

presented.

There are basically three ways to do this: prove your claims, offer a guarantee, or make a personal pledge. Let's look at each technique in detail.

## Prove Your Claims

Solid proof is the surest way to get customers to believe what you're saying in your copy.

For example, imagine you're writing a website for a kitchen remodeling firm. Just saying that the company is qualified and does great work is probably not going to convince a homeowner to part with \$15,000. Especially when there are so many stories circulating about people getting burned by disreputable contractors. You're going to have to prove your case.

### TIP:

Avoid rounding up when making a claim with a percentage or statistic. Saying that customer satisfaction is 95% sounds like the writer made it up. Instead, be specific. If customer satisfaction is actually 92.3%, say so in the copy. Customers are more likely to believe it's true.

How do you do that? For the kitchen remodeling company, you could point out that their installers are certified by the American Society of Kitchen & Bath Remodelers. You could show before and after pictures of successful renovations along with testimonials from satisfied customers. If available, you could also feature any news articles and other press on the company. Perhaps they had a renovation profiled in a home improvement magazine.

As a rule, try to back up every claim you make with a proof of some kind. Here are a few examples.

**Claim:** "The best software for personal time management"

**Proof:** "Says PC Plus Magazine."

**Claim:** “Fast, overnight delivery of your envelopes and packages throughout the United States.”

**Proof:** “99.2% of our deliveries arrive by 10:30 A.M. the next business day.”

**Claim:** “The safest mini-van in its class.”

**Proof:** “According to collision tests conducted by the American Automotive Safety Association.”

**Claim:** “The toothpaste dentists recommend most.”

**Proof:** “We surveyed hundreds of dental professionals from across the country...”

**Claim:** “The freshest vegetables in town.”

**Proof:** “Our produce is delivered fresh every morning.”

## Offer a Guarantee

Another way to build belief is to put your money where your mouth is. In other words, offer a guarantee.

For example, a training firm could say in their proposal to a prospective client, “Your sales team will increase the number of appointments they generate from cold calling by 25% within three months, or your investment in this training program will be refunded.”

The problem with this technique is that just about every product or service comes with a guarantee of some kind these days. (In fact, a product is conspicuous if it doesn't have one.) So this technique has lost much of its bite. Still, it does help to build belief because at least some customers will think, “If they offer a guarantee, then their product must be good.”

## Make a Personal Pledge

Sometimes a public promise by the company owner or other senior executive can

go a long way in building belief. Who can forget those famous Hair Club for Men® infomercials when Sy Sperling showed us his full head of hair and said, “I’m not only the Hair Club president, I’m also a client.”

### **TIP:**

A personal pledge doesn’t necessarily have to come from someone in the company. A well-known celebrity endorsement can work very well, too.

One company, offering printing services that could be ordered on the Internet, was new and unknown. They had great service, but that claim was difficult to prove. So the company president posted a letter on the front page of the website offering his personal guarantee that customers would be treated well and satisfied with the quality. The technique worked.

## **#6 | Put Price in Perspective**

You’re in a store specializing in travel clothing. You notice a beautiful cotton shirt on display. It looks great. You touch the material; it feels great. Then you look at the price tag. \$90. Ouch! More than twice what you’re used to paying for a shirt.

Will you buy it?

That depends on how well the store put the price in perspective for you. If the signage, display materials, and information tag clipped to the garment persuades you that the shirt will not wrinkle, even when stuffed in a suitcase; is extremely comfortable, even on the longest trips; and can be rinsed and hang-dried overnight in a hotel room, then \$90 might seem like a bargain.

Putting the price in perspective is a key ingredient of successful copywriting, especially when you’re dealing with a product that costs more than most other options available.

Let's take a look at the various ways to accomplish this in your copy.

## Show a Little TCO

The price isn't the only cost of owning some products. Often there are other costs as well, such as maintenance, support, repairs and, eventually, replacement. Think of a laser printer. The initial price may be \$350, but the cost of replacement cartridges over time could easily exceed that amount.

In the business world, this issue is commonly referred to as Total Cost of Ownership (TCO). It's an effective way to show how a big ticket item may actually be quite affordable.

If a company is purchasing a new forklift truck for the warehouse, they know that the \$35,000 price tag is just the beginning. It takes fuel to run this piece of equipment. The rubber wheels may wear out and need replacing every few months. There may also be training costs associated with learning how to operate the truck. So if another forklift manufacturer can demonstrate that their \$40,000 vehicle has longer lasting wheels, better fuel economy, and is easy to learn and operate, then they might get the sale — even though the price tag is \$5,000 higher.

### **“What if I'm writing copy for a cheap product?”**

If you're promoting a product that is cheaper than most of its competitors, you still need to put the price in perspective, but in a different way. You have to demonstrate that the lower price does not mean low quality.

## Highlight the Payoffs

The benefits derived from using a product can often far outweigh the price.

For example, a sales manager may balk at the \$12,000 price tag for a two-day sales training seminar. “That works out to \$6,000 per day! An outrageous fee,” she might say. However, when she realizes that the payoff is a significant boost in sales, and possibly a nice bonus for her for achieving quota, then the price

suddenly seems like a drop in the bucket.

The payoffs of purchasing a product don't necessarily have to be tangible. They can be emotional as well.

A brochure for a weight loss clinic explains that the basic price of the program is \$900. A hefty price tag for most people. (No pun intended.) However, the copy goes on to explain that more than 94% of clients lose at least 15 pounds in the first six weeks. "Imagine how great you'll feel," the copy might read, "as you shop for new thinner clothes for the healthier great-looking you."

## **Break It Down**

Houses often cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. However, most people aren't alarmed by the price because they break it down. They focus on the \$750 per month mortgage payment rather than the \$300,000 list price.

If your product has a high price tag, consider breaking it down into more digestible chunks for the customer. It's a great antidote to sticker shock.

A direct mail piece for a business magazine offered a special annual subscription price of \$370 per year. Even for business people, that's a significant chunk of change. The copywriter was smart, however. He put the price in perspective, explaining that, "This executive subscriber program works out to just \$1.43 per day. Hey, that's less than the price of a café latte!"

The magazine is more expensive than its rivals. But by comparing it to the cost of a daily cup of java, any price comparison seems trivial.

## #7 | Inspire Action

You've written a terrific advertisement, web page or brochure. Now what is it you want the reader to do? Visit a web page and fill out a form to get more information? Call a toll-free number and place an order at a special one-day-only price? Visit the local hardware store and purchase the product before supplies run out?

### TIP:

In advertising and marketing, this is often referred to as the "Call to Action". It's the section of the promotion that encourages the reader, listener or viewer to take some specific step towards buying the product.

Copywriting, in virtually all its forms, is about getting the customer to take action. Whether it's an obvious "Call Now!", or conveyed more subtly in the subtext, you must communicate what it is you want the reader to do. If you don't, your promotion will be like a cruise ship without a rudder. It may look good, but it's going nowhere.

It's amazing how many advertising and marketing pieces contain no clear instructions on how to buy the product or learn more about it. If you write such compelling copy that the customer becomes interested, why leave any doubt as to what he or she needs to do next?

Here are a few examples of "Calls to Action" used in advertising, marketing and public relations:

Click here for a free White Paper on...

Call today for a no-obligation free consultation...

Visit our website for a free online demo...

Order now and get free delivery...

Order today and save 15%...

Download this free report: 9 Ways to Recognize a Disreputable Renovation Contractor...

To learn more about how our State Tax Savings Program works, click here to request a case study featuring a company in your industry...

Reply today and we'll extend the 30-day free trial to 60 days. That's two full months of benefits at no cost...

Subscribe today and save \$27 off the cover price...

Ask your local pet products retailer for a free sample of Cat Yummies...

You might think that the piece you're writing makes it obvious what the reader needs to do next. If you're creating a glossy brochure for a new car, it may seem like a no-brainer that the reader should go the dealership and ask for a test drive. But according to research in the automotive advertising industry, this isn't necessarily so. Studies show that a brochure including the line "Visit your local dealership for a test drive" or something similar motivates more readers to do so.

Inspiring action is the most important goal of any sales, marketing or public relations communication. In your copy, there should be no doubt what it is you want customers to do.

# 9 Things I Know For Sure About Attracting Great Clients

By Steve Slaunwhite

**NOTE:** The following is based on a presentation I gave to the Toronto chapter of the Professional Writers Association. In the audience that evening was my colleague, Paul Lima, who graciously took copious notes and prepared this transcription. Thanks Paul. I owe you one!

*[Steve Slaunwhite is introduced. Presentation begins...]*

Copywriting is a very, very hot market for freelance writers. And I'm not just saying that because I'm a copywriter myself, and teach and coach other copywriters.

There was an interesting study that came out a couple of months ago from Robert Half International — they're one of the biggest staffing companies in the world. In their report, they listed the top five professions *in demand* for 2007. Here's what they are:

- Internal auditors
- Senior administrative & facilities managers
- Web developers and computer engineers
- Corporate lawyers
- And finally, copywriters!

Now, copywriters were not #5 on the list. That's just the order I gave you.

Robert Half International placed copywriters #2 on the list. So we're more in demand than computer geeks and lawyers!

There's no doubt about it. There is a growing demand for freelance copywriters. You can do very well. In fact, many of the full-time professional copywriters I know earn between \$100,000 and \$150,000 per year.

Not bad.

**Now, just because there's a big demand for copywriters doesn't mean you can just hang a shingle and clients will stampede to your doorstep.** It just doesn't work that way. To attract clients and get the work, you must know how to market yourself effectively.

So how do you do that?

I'm in a very fortunate situation in that I've been a freelance copywriter for about 15 years. So, when it comes to getting clients, I've learned a lot about what works and what doesn't work. In addition, because of my newsletter and monthly teleclasses, I have gotten to know hundreds of successful copywriters and learned *their* secrets to getting great clients as well.

Here's what I have discovered.

**There are nine things I know for sure about getting great clients for your copywriting services.**

And what I'd like to do with the time we have available is to go through each of these one by one. So here we go...

### **1. Be professional**

Here's an example of what I mean by this:

Imagine you're driving somewhere and you stop at a stop light. Taped to the light post next to the intersection is a poster. The poster is handwritten in block letters. The paper is cheap and tattered by the weather. There's even a typo! And the poster reads:

***John Smith. Financial Advisor.***

Now, would that poster motivate you to trust Mr. Smith with your retirement savings?

Please say no.

*[A chuckle from the audience.]*

Mr. Smith might be a fantastic financial advisor. But his marketing materials are telling a different story.

I see this with freelance copywriters all the time. Cheap cookie-cutter web sites. Business cards that look like they were printed from one of those vending machines in the mall.

By being professional, I mean in every way that you communicate to potential clients — on your web site, in your letters, on the phone.

Just last week I happened to call a copywriter. Here's how she answered the phone:

“I just came out of the shower and I’m dripping wet. Can I call you back?”

It would have been better if she had let the call go to voice mail!

**Professionals — marketing managers, PR executives, creative directors, those who hire copywriters — want to work with other professionals.** So look the part! That doesn’t mean you have to sink a fortune into your web site, stationary and other marketing materials. But do make sure they look clean and professional.

## **2. Target your market**

Years ago, I interviewed Ivan Levison, one of the most successful freelance copywriters in the business. He told me about the early days of his career when he would write just about anything. He did pretty well, but wasn't as successful as he would have liked. Then he decided to focus on writing for software companies — and his career took off. Today he is, arguably, the top direct response copywriter in the software industry.

So if you want to be successful as a freelance copywriter, think small.

**Pick one or two target markets and focus all your efforts on marketing to the companies in those markets.** You'll learn who the players are much faster. And you'll become known to potential clients in those markets a lot sooner.

Let me give you a few of examples of copywriters who are highly successful in their target markets:

- Gordon Graham – the white paper market
- Kelly Robbins – the healthcare market
- Casey Demchak – The medical device industry market

So don't be all over the map. Focus on target markets.

By the way, I have a new special report coming out soon called ***Top Niche Markets For Writers***. It contains a list of more than 47 great paying niche markets for copywriters, PR writers, corporate writers and other "commercial" writers. When that becomes available, I'll be announcing it in the *For Copywriters Only* newsletter. So please watch for that.

### **3. Have an effective website**

According to a recent report in MarketingSherpa — that's a popular online marketing magazine — approximately two-thirds of business people will check out your web site to qualify you *before* they call or email you to discuss a project or ask for a quotation.

So, if your web site is not very effective, you may be losing opportunities and don't even know it!

I see evidence of this in my own business all the time. I don't know how many times prospects call me and say something like, "I was checking out your web site and it looks like you know what you're doing..."

**So your website has to be VERY effective.** It has to do a great job of converting a potential client's *interest* into a call or email.

Now, creating a web site that markets your services effectively is too big a topic for the time we have available. So let me just tell you the biggest mistake that I see writers making on their websites. They talk way too much about themselves and not enough about the *client*.

The most effective writer web sites focus on problems that a potential client might be having — such as low clickthrough rates on email promotions, or getting their customer newsletter done on time, or creating effective web site content — and then describe how the writer's services can solve those problems.

#### 4. Use letters

Of all the techniques you can use to reach out to potential new clients, the simple letter is still remarkably effective. That doesn't mean you don't use email, phone, networking, and other contact methods to follow up and keep in touch. But a letter to introduce your services can work very well.

There are two surefire ways you can increase the success of your introductory letter to potential clients:

- **Offer something for free.** An article, tip sheet, special report, fee schedule, portfolio samples. A copywriter I'm working with, Michael Roach of LeadCopy.com, offers a free report called "Engineers Hate Marketers". Obviously, he specializes in writing copy for companies that market to engineers.
- **Lumpy letters. Put something inside.** When you receive a lumpy letter, you just have to open it. It's irresistible. A copywriter featured in my latest book, *The Everything Guide To Writing Copy*, Pam Magnuson, specializes in writing copy for the alternative health industry. Her introductory letter to potential clients includes a packet of green tea. That letter has been so successful for her that she's becoming known in that industry as the Green Tea Copywriter!

#### 5. Get a little bit famous

**Everything works better when you're *known* in a target market as a first-rate copywriter.** You get more referrals, more response to your other marketing

efforts, such as letters, and more people willing to hire you just because you're known and therefore are perceived as someone who is good at what they do.

But how do you get known?

Well, the distinguishing characteristics of people who are well-known in their fields are that they are seen, heard, read and quoted. Or, to put it in a more practical way, they write articles and columns... get interviewed in the press... participate in blogs and forums... and speak at events like these.

**The most successful copywriters I know do a lot of writing and speaking.**

Dianna Huff, a very successful copywriter, has a blog... she has an ezine... she writes articles for MarketingSherpa — an online marketing magazine... she speaks at her local chapter of the Direct Marketing Association. And, not surprisingly, she attracts more copywriting projects at top rates than she can handle.

## **6. Network**

In the old days, before the Internet, the way you networked was to attend a live event like this. Since the Internet, however, it's now possible to network with potential clients while sitting at home in your PJ's!

There are all these online water coolers out there — forums, blogs, discussion boards — that you can become active in.

A copywriter I was working with recently specializes in writing white papers — not Gordon Graham, someone else. He started becoming active in WhitePaperSource.com — an online forum. Within one week, he met a potential client who eventually hired him for a major copywriting project.

Even blogs are a good way to network.

## **7. Build a referral network**

Marketing consultants, freelance designers and design firms, even other copywriters, are professionals in your target market who could potentially refer

you to one of their clients. **Your referral network can be an excellent source of new business.** In fact, more than 80% of my new business comes from referrals.

Tom Stoyan, known as Canada's Sales Coach, has a great strategy for building a referral network. He says, "The best way to get referrals is to give referrals." He goes on to say, "Get in touch with people who you can help today, and who may be able to help you in the future."

## **8. Follow up**

A prospect is five times more likely to hire you if you follow up than if you don't. I see this a lot working with other copywriters. I'll hear something like: "I sent out a mailing of 200 letters and got a few responses, but no work."

I'll say, "How long ago was that?"

"Three months ago."

"Did you follow up?"

And many times, they'll say, sheepishly, "No."

**You MUST follow up with prospects and other potential clients you meet.**

Have a keep-in-touch plan because a potential client who cannot hire you today may be able to hire you six months from now — if you stay on their radar screen.

And number nine of the nine things I know for sure about attracting great clients...

## **9. Don't give up**

The number one reason why people fail in this business is that they give up way too early.

I received an email recently. It went something like this: "I put up my web site and sent out a press release. I also sent a letter to some of the ad agencies in town. That was three months ago. So far, nothing. I'm about to give up."

I hope she doesn't give up, because she will have given up way too soon.

You have to do a lot of things to get those first few clients... mail out hundreds of letters... network every week... write articles.... make phone calls... follow up...

But never give up.

If you do enough of the right things, you will start to see some success.

Thank you.

*[Audience applauds.]*

# 5 Things I Know For Sure About Writing A Successful Pitch Letter

**By Steve Slaunwhite**

Need more clients? Then put your paper army of salespeople to work for you! I'm talking, of course, about pitch letters.

A pitch letter is a letter or email – usually one to two pages in length – that introduces you to prospective clients.

Over the years, I've tested dozens of pitch letters for my own copywriting business, enduring the painstaking process of discovering what works and what doesn't.

Yep, I've had my share of big winners. (Yeah!) And spectacular flops. (Ouch!) But, today, I consistently generate a response rate of about 2%-5%, depending on the list. So if I send out 500 letters, I receive 10 to 50 replies. And about 20% of these folks eventually try my services.

What are my pitch letter secrets? They're fairly straightforward. Follow these tips and you'll be well on your way to writing a winner:

## **1. Highlight the problem.**

Believe it or not, clients don't hire you for great writing. They hire you to solve problems - looming deadlines, sagging response rates, work overload, etc. So begin your letter by addressing a specific concern a client might have that YOU can solve.

For example, I specialize in writing sales letters. So I often highlight the difficulty in getting a decent response rate from direct mail and email promotions.

An investor relations writer I once read about began his pitch letters by asking: "Is

your Annual Report an annual headache?"

On her website, copywriter Janice King leads with, "*Finding a writer who understands the technology in high-tech isn't easy...*"

## **2. Position YOU as the solution.**

If you remind a client that he or she has a problem, then you better suggest a solution but quick. And that solution is, of course, you.

What is it about your copywriting that can relieve a client's pain like no other writer's can? Do you have extensive experience in his or her industry? Are you particularly adept at reaching the target audience? Do you specialize in a specific project type (direct mail? online selling? newsletters?)

One copywriter I came across recently specializes in reaching the luxury market. So if Rolex needs a sales letter that gets results ("the problem"), she is positioned as the expert who can make that happen ("the solution".)

## **3. Reek credibility.**

After you have positioned yourself as the solution, you need to prove your case. Or else the client will have no reason to believe you.

List some of the companies you have written for... highlight your successes... point to the availability of samples... cite response statistics... quote client testimonials... reference trade publications where you have been featured or quoted... say how long you've been in business...

You get the idea.

And don't forget your presentation. Make sure you use quality letterhead and consider having your logo or wordmark professionally designed (along with your website.)

You're asking clients to be their go-to copywriting expert. So look the part.

#### **4. Don't write a resume!**

The most common mistake I see in copywriter pitch letters is that they look too much like job applications. You're NOT looking for work. You're looking for clients.

In my experience, clients want to deal with professionals, not job hunters. They want to hire writers who demonstrate skill, experience, and the ability to work independently. They're not interested in training you or holding your hand - an impression they might very well get if your pitch letter looks like a resume.

So leave out the hobbies, list of schools you've attended, special formatting, and other elements you normally find in a curriculum vitae. Make your letter look like it's from a busy professional, not the hungry job seeker.

#### **5. Offer FREE giveaway.**

A sure way to increase the response to your pitch letters is to give something away. This could be as simple as a customized CD featuring portfolio samples and current fee schedule. You could also offer a reprint of an article, special report, tip sheet, or booklet.

For years, I offered a free booklet, published electronically as a PDF, called: "101 Writing Tips for Successful Email Marketing." It not only boosted the response to my pitch letters, but also positioned me as an expert in email marketing! As a result, I attracted hundreds of thousands of dollars in lucrative email writing assignments within just a few years.

Well, there you have it. The five things I know for sure about crafting a client-getting pitch letter.

And here's a bonus tip: Don't give up too soon. If your first letter doesn't do as well as you had hoped, try, try again. Keep revising and testing your letter until it consistently generates the response you need - which, for most copywriters, is about 1%.

# The Biggest Pricing Mistake You Can Make

**By Steve Slaunwhite**

There is a devastating pricing mistake that almost every freelance copywriter or business writer has made. (Me included.)

Here's what typically happens.

Let's say a potential new client calls you. She is the marketing director of a large company and has a writing project she wants you to quote on. It's right up your alley. You're excited! You want the work. And, if you do a good job for her, she could potentially send a lot more work your way in the future.

But first you have to quote the job. Hmm. How much do you charge?

You don't want to take any chances. So you quote a low fee, a real bargain, just to ensure you get the work.

Big mistake.

Why? There are two reasons.

First, when you quote too low, you look like an amateur. It's a red flag. The client thinks, "This writer is a beginner." She wants to hire a professional who can work independently and write great copy, not someone just starting out who may need a lot of direction and hand-holding.

In a quick survey I did of writing opportunities posted at elance.com (an online job board where freelancers can bid on projects) virtually none of the low-ball quotes ever won. Not surprising.

But what if you do get the job?

That's the second reason why quoting too low is a big mistake. You get locked in

at that bargain basement rate. You see, when a new client receives a first-time quote from you, it's like a calibration setting. The price level becomes fixed in her mind – and it is very, VERY difficult to raise your fees to that same client later on.

Think about it. If you charged a measly \$250 the first time you wrote a two-page sales letter for a client, what are the chances that you can get \$500 for a similar letter later on? Zero. The client would balk at your 100% increase in fees. Even if you explained that you gave her a great deal on that first letter, she would still feel ripped off.

Trust me. You don't want to be locked in at a low rate with a client. I can tell you from experience, there is nothing more miserable than toiling away on projects that are paying you far less than you could have been earning.

I can understand how tempting it can be to quote a low fee. There are a lot of issues that come into play. You want the job. You may feel uncomfortable or even too shy to quote a higher rate. You may not even know what the market rate is for a particular writing project. (And if this is the case, do some research and find out!)

But, despite the temptation, know that a client is MUCH more impressed by a writer who confidently quotes an accurate, professional fee than one who comes in at a low price (as if begging for the work.)

So quote the right fee (hint: it's probably much higher than you're quoting right now) and clients will take you more seriously. You'll have a much better chance of getting the work. And you'll earn more money, too.

# When The Client Says, "Your Price Is Too High!"

**By Steve Slaunwhite**

A potential client asks you to quote on writing some web pages. You gather all the project details, determine how much to charge, and confidently email him your price proposal.

Okay so far.

Then, the next day, he calls and says, "Sorry, but your price is just too high."

What do you do?

You could, of course, simply walk away from the opportunity. And you would be justified to do so, especially if you feel you have quoted a fair price.

**However, there is another option.**

Negotiate.

Does that word scare you? It shouldn't. Negotiation is simply a process of discussing options with your client, and coming up with pricing and terms that will work for both of you.

**Here's how I do it:**

When a client says that my price is more than he expected to pay, I respond with something like: "Okay. I respect that you have a budget. Can we discuss some options that may allow us to still work together?"

The client will almost always say, "Sure." Then I'm off to the races.

My next question usually is, "How much were you hoping to pay for the

copywriting?"

This puts the ball firmly in the client's court. If my quote is \$2,500 and he says his budget is \$2,000, then we're not that far apart.

Now here's the secret. I never lower my price just to get the job. (Negotiation is, after all, inherently give and take.) Instead, I make an offer based on a change in the project scope or terms.

Here's some examples of what I mean:

- **Offer to get the job done earlier than the deadline.** Many clients are willing to pay my price in exchange for receiving the copy earlier than scheduled. It takes a lot of pressure off them.
- **Offer a discount for paying my price upfront.** This strategy works well for me. I offer the client a 10% discount if they pay me in advance. The client gets the savings. And I get my money before I write a word of copy! (Special thanks to consulting legend Alan Wiess for this great idea.)
- **Offer a lower fee in exchange for a longer deadline.** I only offer this arrangement to clients when my schedule is tight. It's worth it to me to earn a little less on a project if I have more time to complete it.
- **Ask about upcoming projects, then offer a volume discount.** If I'm asked to write a sales letter, and the client has two more letters planned for the future, I'll offer him a special price for all three.
- **Offer to throw in a little extra work for free.** For example, if I'm writing a case study, I might offer to write a short email or ezine ad that promotes it for no additional charge. This only takes me an extra hour or so, but is very valuable to the client.

Isn't it easier just to lower your price and take the job? Of course it is. But you'll be teaching your client that they can always get your services at a cut-rate. And getting paid less than you deserve is a miserable way to work.

Don't be afraid to negotiate. Trust me. You'll get more work, better fees and, more importantly, greater respect from clients.

# 7 Ways To Wipe Our Price Resistance

**By Steve Slaunwhite**

When you quote a writing job, ideally you want the client to get back to you with a Purchase Order in one hand and a thumbs up sign in the other.

But that doesn't always happen.

Sometimes, when the client calls you back, or when you follow-up, she says, "Sorry, your price is too high."

This puts you in a tough situation. You may have to negotiate, explain and haggle to get the job at a decent rate.

Now, there's nothing wrong with negotiating. But it's reactive. A better approach is to be proactive, and minimize or eliminate price resistance BEFORE you quote the job.

How do you do that? Here are a few tips:

## **1. Act confidently.**

Imagine if a dentist says to you, "Hmm, oh, let's see, my fee to pull your tooth is, ah, well, \$400?" If you sound hesitate or unsure of yourself, especially when discussing your rates, clients will assume you are inexperienced. They'll either not give you the job or, if they do, expect a lower rate.

## **2. Look professional.**

Everything from your website to your business cards to the way you answer the phone should scream "I'm a professional". If, through your marketing materials and personal presentation, you look like a professional, clients are more likely to pay you like a professional.

### **3. Establish value when you quote.**

A quote is a powerful selling opportunity. Don't blow it! Use your quote to establish the value of your services.

When I prepare a quotation, I begin by highlighting what the client is trying to accomplish, and then explain how my writing services will help to achieve that goal.

Next, I list, in bullet points, all the things I'm going to do on the project: study the background materials; clarify the features and benefits; develop headline concepts; organize the key messages; write the copy; handle requests for revisions promptly, etc.

Finally, I quote the fee.

This may sound like a lot. In fact, my quotations are usually a page long before the price is even mentioned. But, because I'm showing clients all that they are getting for their money, this quoting format works like a charm.

### **4. Highlight your experience, knowledge and track record.**

Client testimonials, project experience, how-to articles, speaking credits, awards, they all help to elevate your status as a professional -- which minimizes price resistance. In fact, I often insert a credential right into my quotations. For example: "John, I'm confident I can help make your direct mail campaign a success. In fact, a package I wrote for Scott's Directories recently won an ACE award."

### **5. Focus on higher-paying projects.**

You can expect less price resistance when quoting projects that generate leads or sales. After all, your copywriting is helping the client make money! That's why direct mail, ads, email promotions and similar projects often pay well.

Case studies, white papers, speeches, and annual reports also pay well because most clients feel these require a higher level of expertise than, say, a product brochure.

## **6. Specialize in one or more industries.**

Clients are more willing to pay a top professional fee to a writer who has experience in their industry.

Let's say there are two writers pricing the same job for a resort hotel. The first is good, but she has limited experience in that industry. Her quote comes in at \$500 . The second writer bills himself as a "Travel and Tourism Specialist" and quotes \$750.00 . To the client, paying the second writer an extra \$250 is worth it because she thinks his writing will produce better results.

## **7. Know the going rates.**

If you quote \$2,000 for a press release, and the going rate is \$500-\$1,000, then you're likely to meet with a heck of a lot of resistance – no matter how good you are.

There is no almanac of copywriting fees in this business. But there are ways build your knowledge of typical fees for typical projects. The more you know about what clients are accustomed to paying for writing services, the more confidently you can quote jobs without the risk of pricing yourself out of the market.

# The Most Dangerous Myth About Prospecting

**By Steve Slaunwhite**

Recently, I've been coming across a lot of misinformation about prospecting. "You have to make a lot of cold calls," one guru insists. "You must send out hundreds of pitch letters," another advises. What these experts are telling you, essentially, is that prospecting is a numbers game.

But is playing that game really the best way to attract ideal clients?

Consider the following scenario:

Let's say a plumber knocks on your door one evening asking if you need any plumbing work done. It's obvious that he's canvassing the neighborhood trying to drum up some business. You politely say, "Sorry, I don't need a plumber." So he hands you his flyer and goes on his way. A flyer that will probably end up in the trash.

Now, let's change that scenario around a bit:

Imagine that same plumber knocks on your door. But this time he DOESN'T ask if you need any plumbing work done. Instead, he offers you a free booklet: "How to Lower Your Hot Water Heating Bill." You say, "Yes". (Why wouldn't you?)

Then, a couple of weeks later, you receive a Thank You card from that plumber. He still doesn't pitch his services. Instead, he offers to answer any questions you might have about the booklet and hot water heating. That's nice of him!

Then, a couple of weeks after that, you receive a friendly letter from the plumber, with a 20% discount coupon for "Emergency After Hours Service" (should you ever need it). Also included is a fridge magnet with his 24-hour emergency phone number. That magnet goes right on your fridge, along with the Thank You card!

See what's happening? That plumber is positioning himself with you as a helpful,

knowledgeable expert. And by doing so he's becoming the obvious choice should you ever need plumbing services.

Sure, he's spending more time with each prospect. And probably reaching less prospects than he would if he were mailing or calling a gazillion names. So what? Prospecting isn't about numbers, ratios, clicks, responses, conversions, or whatever.

That's right. Prospecting is NOT a numbers game. It's a relationship game. It's about building relationships with people today who may be able to do business with you in the future.

Think about it. Who do YOU call when you need a professional service? Someone who has hit on you with a cold call or a mailing? Or someone you know, either directly or by reputation? I bet ya' it's the latter.

Now that doesn't mean you don't use the phone, email, and letters in your prospecting efforts. You do. But you do so with an intention and strategy of positioning yourself as a helpful knowledgeable expert with valuable information to share – and NOT as a desperate freelancer looking for work.

So prospect to less people. Take your time to build the relationships. And you'll attract more ideal clients as a result. (And more referrals, too.)

# Does Your Marketing Cover The Bases?

**By Steve Slaunwhite**

Marketing your services is a lot like coaching little league baseball when your team is in the outfield. You have to make sure that all the bases are covered. Because if you don't, some other hotshot writer is going to get the job.

Here's what I mean:

Let's say you promote your writing services by networking at business events. (The local branch of a major marketing association, for example.) This is a good strategy. And a terrific way to meet potential clients who would otherwise be difficult to reach.

But if networking is your **ONLY** marketing strategy — and you're doing little else to attract clients — then you are losing opportunities.

Why?

Because your success is limited to only those people who attend the events. What about the thousands of other potential clients who don't attend? How are they going to learn about your services?

Chances are, they never will. And when one of these potential clients has the perfect project for you, you'll never know it. Because they will have called someone else.

That's why you need to cover the bases with your personal marketing. You need to ensure that as many people as possible know about the great writing services you offer.

What are these “bases” I keep referring to? There are four:

**1st Base: Visibility.**

You need to be seen, heard and read. You need to become “known”.

There are dozens of ways to accomplish this. You can write articles for marketing publications, post comments on popular blogs (I recently got a new client this way), participate in online discussion forums, speak at meetings and conferences, the list goes on and on.

What’s your visibility strategy?

### **2nd base: Outreach.**

Many potential clients will never call you first, no matter how visible you are. But that doesn’t mean they won’t hire your services. You just need to make the first move.

How? There are lots of ways. You can send a letter, make a cold call, network at events. One copywriter I know sends potential clients — mostly ad agency executives — an invitation to lunch. He manages to schedule at least two or three lunches with new prospects every month!

What’s your outreach strategy?

### **3rd base: Radar screen.**

A potential client may be genuinely impressed with your services. She might even say, “I’m going to hire you for our next project”, and really mean it. But guess what? People get busy. Priorities change. Months go by. And a promising new writing source (you) is easily forgotten.

So you have to find a way to stay on the radar screen. You can make follow-up calls, or publish an ezine (a technique that works wonders for many copywriters I know), or send updates to your portfolio. There are many other techniques you can use, too.

What’s your radar screen strategy?

### **4th base: Client satisfaction**

Clients are your number one source for new business. They can not only offer you a steady stream of writing assignments but can also refer you to their colleagues at other companies.

So you need to keep clients satisfied. How? Remember, clients don't just want great copy. They also want a great experience. They want to enjoy working with you.

What's your client satisfaction strategy?

There you have it. The four bases. Miss just one and potential clients will slip through your fingers.

Cover the bases. And you'll get more business.

# Resources

## **Secrets of Strategic Copywriting**

(Course)

Master copywriting skills and build your portfolio — in just 7 weeks.

[www.forcopywritersonly.com/courses.html](http://www.forcopywritersonly.com/courses.html)

## **Attracting Great Clients:**

### **How To Market Your Writing Services**

(Course)

Proven techniques for attracting ideal clients and great projects to your door.

[www.AttractingGreatClients.com](http://www.AttractingGreatClients.com)

## **Writing For Ad Agencies & Design Firms**

(Audio class & workbook)

Learn how to break into the largest freelance writing market in the world.

[www.forcopywritersonly.com/audio1details.html](http://www.forcopywritersonly.com/audio1details.html)

## **Cracking The Case Study Market**

(Handbook)

Discover how to earn up to \$1,250 per day writing product success stories

[www.forcopywritersonly.com/handbooks.html](http://www.forcopywritersonly.com/handbooks.html)

## **Pricing Your Writing Services**

(Special Report)

The definitive guide to figuring out what to charge for your writing services.

[www.PricingYourWritingServices.com](http://www.PricingYourWritingServices.com)

## About the Author



Steve Slaunwhite has been a highly successful freelance copywriter for more than a decade.

He also helps other copywriters attract more clients, get better projects, and earn higher fees through his popular web site:

[www.ForCopywritersOnly.com](http://www.ForCopywritersOnly.com)

and through his books, handbooks, teleclasses, seminars, and coaching services.

Steve is the author of *Start & Run A Copywriting Business – 2005 Edition* (Self-counsel Press), *Secrets of Writing for the Business-to-Business Marketing* (AWAI), *Pricing Your Writing Services – The Definitive Guide*, and *The Everything Guide to Writing Copy* (Adams Media). He has also contributed to several books written by other experts.

Steve's work and expertise has been featured in more than one hundred publications, including Inside Direct Mail, DM News, The Wall Street Journal, The Vancouver Sun, Sales & Marketing Journal, The Golden Thread, and John Forde's Copywriter's Roundtable, and The Writer. He has lectured occasionally for the Media Copywriting Program at Humber College.

Steve leads educational sessions at several writers' conferences and seminars, including two of the most prestigious: Professional Writers Association of Canada (PWAC) and American Society of Journalists & Authors (ASJA).

When not writing, coaching and generally obsessing about helping freelance writers become more successful, Steve is a proud member of suburbia and lives with his wife and daughter just outside Toronto, Canada.