5 WAYS TO TIGHTEN YOUR MARKETING COPY

WITHOUT LOSING THE

Magic

Can you relate to the following scenario…?

You've worked hard writing awesome marketing copy for, say, a landing page. Your prose is fantastic. You can't imagine changing a single word. In fact, you're already imagining your boss, team, or client giving you high-fives. Then you see your copy formatted in the template and realise it looks like crap. It's too long, too difficult to scan, and not the least bit eye-friendly. Ouch. You're going to have to make some cuts and edits.

The good news is, tightening your copy almost always makes it better

I know that from experience. I've written sales copy I thought was perfect (no ego here!). But when I had to tighten it, the copy ends up being stronger and more persuasive. I guess my original draft wasn't so perfect after all!

The trick to tightening is to make the copy shorter without losing the "magic"

The goal is to maintain the energy, creativity, conversional flow, key points, and other elements that make it effective, so here are some tips for doing that.

1 What does your prospect need to know?

This is a great question to ask when tightening your marketing copy. By asking, "What does my prospect need to know in order to take the next step?" you can present only that information and jettison everything else! If you're writing a Facebook ad, you don't need to explain *everything* about the product. You just need to highlight one or two motivating features and benefits — enough to get the prospect to click *LEARN MORE*. This technique alone will cut the fat in your copy and leave the good stuff.

2 Tell the quick version of stories

Stories are a powerful tool in every copywriter's toolbox. The problem is, stories take longer to tell than merely stating facts and benefits. If you don't want to remove a story or example from your copy, then tell the "quick version" by cutting out unnecessary details. Focus only on the highlights. Most two-paragraph stories can be told in a sentence or two so write *that* version.

3 Take the five per cent challenge

Challenge yourself to cut five per cent of your word count, without sacrificing any key points nor the style and impact of your copy. Here's a few tips on how to do this:
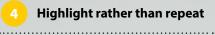
- Turn passive sentences into active ones. That often makes them shorter and punchier.
- Do you really need that adverb? Often, a verb can stand on its own. If it doesn't, find a better verb!
- Use a comparison to help explain a complex feature or idea. That will require fewer words.
- Don't expand on (aka *sell*) every feature; just the most motivating ones. If necessary, put the rest in a simple bullet list.

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- Cut redundant words. Look for phrases like "...lowers insurance costs and fees".
- Explore ways to rephrase sentences to make them sharper and clearer. That usually makes them shorter.

4 Highlight rather than repeat

Repetition builds persuasion. But if you're hammering the same benefit over and over again, that can eat up the word count. Instead, take that benefit and highlight it in a way so it's not missed. You can dedicate a separate paragraph or section to it. Or, to really tighten things up, write the benefit as a short header, callout, or caption. If you're certain the benefit will be noticed, you won't need to repeat it.

5 Put your subheadings to work

Subheads can tell a story. In fact, you can use subheads to communicate a lot of information. So take advantage of that when tightening your copy. Don't just think of subheads as section titles. Put them to work communicating your sales message. Try this: When editing your copy, see how much of your message you can get across with just the subheads. You might be surprised.

Few copywriters like having to cut back on their strategically-crafted word, but as I said earlier, the process often results in better copy. Hopefully, these copy-tightening techniques will help. ◆

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