

9 Things Sales Copy Can Do For Your IT Business Better Than Even The Best Sales Force

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The time was October 331 BC. The place was the plains of Gaugamela, in Asia Minor. On one side there was the Macedon army of 50,000 men led by Alexander of Macedonia. On the other side there was the Persian army of 200,000 led by King Darius III.

On the previous day, Alexander allowed his scouts to learn that the Macedonians planned to attack the Persian army at night. The next day, some of the scouts were captured and interrogated. Of course, to avoid torture, they spilt the beans to the Persians. Well, the wrong beans so to say.

In response to the news, Darius kept his men awake on alert and in full battle formation all night. But nothing happened. Not a sausage. Just to be on the safe side and maintain the perception of a possible night attack, Alexander sent out some skirmishing forces to keep the Persians somewhat busy and to make them believe that impending night attack.

At the same time, on the other side of the plain, the Macedonian army slept like a baby. Well, without frequently waking up and crying here and there.

The next morning, the Macedonian army stood up in an oblique formation with the cavalry at the ends and the heavy infantry in the centre. Alexander, always clearly visible, rode in the middle.

Darius started the battle by sending in 300 battle chariots with sharp blades attached to their axles. Alexander anticipated that Darius would attack with his secret weapon, the chariots, and brought forward the javelin throwers.

The javelins tore the chariots to pieces pretty quickly.

Then the Persian cavalry attacked the Macedon army's flanks, and intense battle ensued. While fighting, as a tactical surprise, the Macedon army also started shifting to the right.

The Persian army followed to the right, and a hole opened in the middle.

That's when Alexander and his elite Companion Guard of 6,000 men rode forward and cut through the Persian Army like a hot knife in frozen butter. They headed directly for Darius himself.

Alexander knew that the Persian army wasn't really one army but many small units of conscripts with some level of compliance but very low or no level of commitment or loyalty to Darius or to each other.

He knew that the fall of Darius would mean the fall of the Persian army.

Alexander was right. At one point in the battle, Darius' courage drained from him and both he and his generals ran away with their tails between their legs.

After that, it was just a matter of time for the whole army to fall. And fall it did.

By the end of the day, the Persians lost 90,000 and the Macedonians lost 500.

That victory made Alexander the Master of Persia. It also made him Alexander the Great.

He was also the military commander who never was defeated in battle.

I've decided to mention this interesting story between a small army and a large supersized army is because this is exactly how good sales copy can bring victory to its users against competitors that rely on legion-sized sales forces.

So here are nine things good sales copy can do a lot better than a live sales force.

1. Copy Maximises The Impact On Your Market

Imagine that your perfect prospect reads some of your collaterals. What happens after reading it?

Does she sigh? "Hell's bells. That's interesting." Then she puts it aside and continues doing whatever she was doing before your material interrupted her. And within a week, you and your materials are forgotten. They are dead and buried in the general shuffle of daily business chaos and busyness.

Or does she say, "Yes, that's exactly the problem we're facing. I'd better learn more about this." Then she goes to the web, makes some Google searches and looks up your company. And both on your website and all over the web, she finds a preponderance of your valuable content in the forms of articles, white papers, case studies, audio and video... all produced by your company.

Now imagine this situation after meeting a salesperson.

Does the buyer sigh? "Oh, shit what a waste of time this meeting was."

Or does the buyer say to herself? "Holy sausage, man. That was an amazing meeting. Let's get on the web and learn more about this company. I'll do my 59 hours¹ of urgent work whenever I have time for it."

The reality is that good copy can trigger further positive actions from buyers in a way that a sales force can't pull off.

After reading good sales copy, buyers take time to follow up on what they've just read about.

But after meeting salespeople, buyers almost always just get back to the activities that salespeople had interrupted in the first place.

¹ According to the International Association of Professional Organisers, this is how much urgent work the average executive has on her desk, waiting for her attention.

First, no one wants to meet and talk to salespeople. Opposing this reality is just as stupid as opposing gravity. Although people try it and die from it every day. Oh, well.

2. Copy Reduces Your Stress Level And Labour Intensity

The reality is that any IT business stays in business if and only if it can have a healthy flow of profitable clients.

Now, how can you get those new clients?

Well, in two ways...

1. Hire salespeople, assemble a legion-sized sales force, send them out to dial for dollars and pound pavements day in day out dawn to dusk. And deal with the constant and never ending hiring-training-firing of salespeople.
2. Hire one copywriter, create one copy of a printed salesperson, clone that salesperson using your printer and distribute hundreds thousands of these “printed salespeople”.

Managing a sales force is labour intensive, stressful, frustrating and you have to keep playing the referee between rivalling type A, macho alpha guys and gals. Do you really need that? Do you really need raging stomach ulcers and an almost-permanent migraine headache for the rest of your business life?

Also, do you really need the frustration and aggravation of managing a sizeable sales force?

Yes, I know, some call it the excitement of doing business, but from where I stand, it’s more like the anxiety of doing business. And it can kill you in the long run.

Also, do you have the financial means to support a sales force in which 49% never reach quota, 27% doesn’t sell enough to cover the cost of employment, and the annual attrition rate is 43%.

Do you really want to peg your chance of success on these numbers?

I sincerely, desperately hope you have some better options. Even it’s as simple as eating more of your mother’s famous pancakes.

3. Copy Generates More Sales

When you put the right words in the right place and using it in the right media to communicate it to the right market, then you will make more money.

This is what copywriting legend, John E. Kennedy called in his book, *Reason Why Advertising* (Published in 1905), salesmanship in print.

You hire one copywriter who writes one sales letter (a.k.a. salesmanship in print). Then you print out that letter in 10,000 copies and send them out to 10,000 members of your target market (a.k.a. salesmanship multiplied).

Yes, your hands will still shake when you write a cheque for your copywriter’s fees and you

have to pay him a nice royalty on the sale the copy products, but you save a truckload of money and frustration on not having a live sales force.

The right copy at the right place, read by the right person resonates with that person. She can recognise herself, her afflictions and her aspirations in the copy.

The trouble is that the wrong words can turn readers off and cause significant problems to your business.

But you can avoid sending out the wrong words by staying away from writer mills, like Elance or Craigslist.

4. Copy Makes Your Company Noticed

When you have a sales force, you have different salespeople with different characters. It means they attract different buyers with vastly different characters.

And that's when your perfect client profile² goes down the toilet. Salespeople initiate business with anyone who is willing to talk to them. They know only very few buyers are. But they have to earn their commissions, so any prospect with a chequebook and a heartbeat is a good prospect.

Then the project team can struggle to work with jerk clients. But by then, our sales hero is off to greener pastures to make new sales.

Here is the big difference.

Sales copy is crafted carefully, using meticulously selected words. Every sentence is checked for impact and at the end of the letter, the call to action is optimised so, the maximum number of perfect prospects take the desired action. Also, this level of consistency strengthens your brand.

In a way, I can compare this approach to brain surgery. It takes extensive diagnostics, careful planning and precise implementation to pull it off and have the patient live.

Now let's look at the sales force's approach.

The pressure, exerted by sales managers, is so high that there is no time to prepare. There is time only for activity: Dial => Spray => Pray.

Salespeople dial their numbers, spray prospects with some facts and some manipulative phrases to get appointments to further bludgeon prospects into submission. And as soon as they make the sale, they move on to the next number and the next victim.

The problem is that salespeople make all sorts of impacts in the market, and this inconsistency undermines the band. Also, their aggressive stance to making their numbers makes buyers want to stay away from them. End even when they meet, buyers prefer not to be bone honest with

² In case you need help to develop your Perfect Client Profile, see <http://www.varjan.com/information-products/perfect-client-profile-development-toolkit.shtml>

salespeople just in case they use buyers' honesty against the same or other buyers.

5. Copy Can Save You Money

Using Pareto's 80/20 rule, if 20% of your sales force makes 80% of your sales, and 80% makes only 20%. Why don't IT business owners get rid 80% of their sales forces and enjoy 80% of the sales?

Not to mention that the 80% consists of the 20% of their sales forces that eats up 80% of their cost of sales.

The problem is that it's not even 80/20 anymore. It's more like 95/5.

Yes, it's a nice ego thing to brag to friends how many people you manage and work for you, but if the production is so poor, then you'd be better off with one copywriter who doesn't need a car, an expense account, annual vacation, medical plan and other goodies salespeople require.

Can you imagine how much it costs to provide all those goodies to salespeople? They can carve a serious chunk out of your piggy bank.

The funny thing is that many IT companies' lead generation is dysfunctional, but all they do is focusing on the late stages of their sales funnels and hire more salespeople.

That's fine, but it doesn't cure the problems at the early phases.

Or let's look at another problem. Buyers buy the best and most expensive ad locations in publications or websites or even in the Yellow Pages, and then hire the cheapest copywriters to write something to fill in the space. And what they end up writing is literary vomit and verbal excrement.

And now their money is gone on paying for the location, but the ads don't work... for obvious reasons.

6. Copy Creates The Kind Of Sales Messages That Work

Good copywriters are also good marketers. The two disciplines go hand in hand.

While your live sales force can work efficiently (tactically busy), that is, doing things right, they may not be effective (working within the right strategy), that is, doing the right things.

And even if you have an ace sales force, if your sales leads are generated in the wrong way, that is, using maniacal pursuit not magnetic attraction, your salespeople end up with the unwashed masses of your market that can make the crappiest clients your people have ever dealt with.

And since they are ace salespeople, they close many deals. And now your subject matter experts have to duke it out with clients that can be as far from your Perfect Clients as Sydney Australia is from Sydney (Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia) Canada. Well, only about 10,449 miles or 16

817 kilometres. It makes a nice relaxing afternoon swim.

But if you leave out the sales force, and rely on your copy all the way from first contact to signed contract, then you can tightly control every aspect of the sales process. You no longer have to worry that your salespeople bring in the wrong clients, so they can get paid.

Now the quality of your clients is in your copywriter's hands.

Now tell me. What's easier? Working with one copywriter and together figuring out the best approaches to get perfect clients or working with a legion of salespeople and preaching them what exactly you want. And then they ignore your preaching in order to grab quick buck clients regardless of how bad they are.

Of, course, it's your call.

7. Copy Allows Peaceful Information Consumption

Buyers "consume" written information in a relaxed manner because they know they can stop at any time. They know they are in control of the consumption process.

Since they are relaxed, they are more open-minded to the presented ideas. They know they can suspend their suspicion, scepticism and cynicism because no one is there trying to "get them" and sell them something they neither want nor need.

They also know that if they don't like what they need, they can simply chuck the letter into the nearest rubbish bin.

But what does it feel like meeting salespeople?

It's an agitating process to say the least. Buyers know they'd better be on guard, because salespeople try to sell them something but not because buyers need those products/services, but because salespeople have to make their quotas in order to earn their commissions to feed their families and not to get fired for underperformance.

Buyers know they'd better treat salespeople with a 10-foot pole, so salespeople can't push them into dark corners from which there is no escape.

8. Copy Showcases Your Business In The Best Possible Lights

Imagine two jewellery store shop windows.

In store A, there are several pieces of various diamonds. Various in size, in value in everything. On the ceiling there is a fluorescent light shining on the diamonds. Next to each diamond is its price tag.

In store B, there is a marble pedestal with black velvet draped over it. On the top of the pedestal there is one diamond lit by two halogen spotlights. There is a detailed description of the

diamond, but no price tag.

When you look at store B, do you think this diamond is cheaper or more expensive than the ones you've just seen in store A?

Now imagine that a sales force is like store A and sales copy is like store B.

If you have a 10-person sales force, your store front look in 10 different ways and changes every day.

With sales copy, you can send the same pedestal/black velvet setup to every prospect.

Every prospect sees your product in the best light and in the same light. That's consistency. And that strengthens your brand. What that also means is that now you can track how effective your approach is. Every tiny change can make significant differences.

9. Copy Allows Split Testing, Sales Force Doesn't

Imagine you have 1,000 names to send direct mail letters to.

You send out 500 with an opening question: **"Are You Making Mistakes In Internet Security?"**

Then you send out 500 with a slightly different opening question: **"Are You Making These Mistakes In Internet Security?"**

The difference is only one word, but, knowing from experience, the second letter has high response but the first one has almost none.

If you track your letters, you can compare them and tweak them for better performance.

How do you split test the offer your sales force presents?

You can't.

And your sales force goes out and presents your offer with the proverbial **"Are You Making Mistakes In Internet Security?"** opening. And no one knows why no one is interested and no one buys.

And more money and time are wasted on the sales force using the wrong approach.

On Summary

Having read this, some people may I am biased against sales forces.

Well, hell, yes. When the button costs more than the whole coat, then I'm biased against that button.

I'm also biased against steam boats when I go from Canada to Hungary to visit my parents. I've found that if I fly, I can go door to door in 20 hours. In a steam boat, it would take roughly the same time to reach international waters from the shores of Canada.

A good few years ago when I started paying attention to internet marketing gurus, I noticed they made pretty good money without employing salespeople.

How in the name of the holy sausage did they do it?

Well, sales copy. “Salesmanship in print” and “salesmanship multiplied”, as per John E. Kennedy.

So, if your goal is to brag to your friends about how big your company is, then go for a large sales force.

But if your goal is to have a blazingly profitable business, as measured in profit per employee, then you’re better off hiring one copywriter and play the “salesmanship in print” and “salesmanship multiplied” games.

In the meantime, don’t sell harder. Market smarter and your business will be better off for it.

About The Author



Tom “Bald Dog” Varjan is an independent business development strategist and copywriter. He works with privately owned “entrepreneurial” type information technology companies that sell new, complex, expensive and hard-to-explain products and services to sophisticated clients in the B2B arena. IT companies that want to market and sell with dignity.

IT companies hire Tom when they find themselves frustrated with the quality and quantity of new business they can land, but don’t want to resort to the most commonly used and dumbest solution: Hiring more salespeople and having them cold-call.

Prior to becoming an independent marketing consultant and copywriter in 1998, for 16 years, Tom had worked in the high-tech sector as an engineer, programmer, project manager and technology buyer where he gained his intimate understanding of how buyers make buying decisions, what appeals to them and what appals them.

Tom holds a B.Eng. degree in electronics and computer engineering from the University of Greenwich (London, UK), specialising in microprocessor-based systems design and application. He also studied English and adult education at Cambridge University (Cambridge, UK) and obtained his teachers certification in Teaching English As A Second Language.

For more information, you can visit Tom’s website at <http://www.ITBusinessWriter.com>