

While many boutique IT service firms have worked with freelance content writers, only a very few have worked with freelance copywriters. This is a short primer on the differences between content writers and copywriters, whether or not it makes sense to engage them, what, if any, value they bring to the table, how to collaborate with them and how to pay them.

It's All In The Words, You Know

What Boutique IT Service Firms' Leaders Need To Know About Copywriters And Copywriting

Tom 'Bald Dog' Varjan

It's All In The Words, You Know

What Boutique IT Service Firms' Leaders Need To Know About Copywriters And Copywriting

By Tom 'Bald Dog' Varjan

<i>What in the name of the holy sausage is this copywriting thingy anyhow?</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Copywriting and marketing.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>What are benefits of copywriting for marketing.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>What copywriters do.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Pre-Production (~ 45%)</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Production (~ 10%)</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Post-Production (~ 45%).....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Selecting copywriters</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Copywriter selection flaws.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Practical selection criteria</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Compensating copywriters</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Selling through a field sales force</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Selling through sales copy</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Some prices.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>A little perspective</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Conclusion.....</i>	<i>16</i>

Do you know that smooth peanut butter outsells crunchy peanut butter by nearly 5 to 1? By a staggering coincidence, this is the rough bottom line improvement that you can achieve when you use effective sales copy in your IT service business, instead of an army-sized field sales force.

Due to Covid and the internet, the sales process has turned upside down.

Once upon a time salespeople used to roam the land knock on doors, basically interrupting buyers in their daily routines.

As a result, buyers have become suspicious of salespeople’s motives and have barricaded themselves to make sure salespeople can’t get to them.

Just read Faith Popcorn’s 1992 book, [*The Popcorn Report: Faith Popcorn on the Future of Your Company, Your World, Your Life.*](#)

She wrote that in the ‘90s people wanted to be left alone and not to be bothered! She called the process cocooning.

Well, if people were “cocooning” in the ‘90s, in today’s economy, they’ve built fortresses around themselves with very high walls, very wide moats and very powerful defence force.

Many of your buyers hide behind their computers, read their e-mails and post on their social media platforms, but don’t even answer their phones in case they care getting calls from salespeople.

Most probably, you too can find a few buyers in your database who operate like that.

So, if you want to do business with them, you need a special invitation from them. You have to be invited, in marketer Dan Kennedy’s words, as a welcome guest, not just show up as an unwelcome pest.

Have you noticed that nowadays even executive assistants have a few layers of gatekeepers? And this buy-sell dynamic is not going to change.

So, what IT businesses need is a new sales method in a new economy.

And so enters copywriting, a valid alternative to the traditional legion-sized sales force-based sales approach.

The table below outlines the main differences between selling through sales copy vs selling through sales force.

SELLING THROUGH SALES COPY	SELLING THROUGH SALES FORCE
Expensive to start – Good copywriters require both fees and royalties	Cheap to start – Starving, low-end salespeople are willing to work for straight commission
Cheap to continue – The copywriter stays with you and tweaks your copy on an ongoing basis for better performance	Expensive to continue – Due to the low quality of salespeople, you end up in a never-ending loop of hiring => training => firing => hiring
Cost-effective and easy and to improve	Expensive and cumbersome to improve
Written sales messages are consistent, so they build your real brand	Salespeople, being human beings, are inconsistent. A sales force of 100 people delivers 100 different messages, thus building 100 different phantom brands
Prospects buy on their own volition whenever they’re ready to change	Sales folks constantly pester prospects trying to sell them something
Better quality clients acquired based on your perfect client profile	Salespeople accept any client because they get paid for sales volume not for client quality

SELLING THROUGH SALES COPY	SELLING THROUGH SALES FORCE
Final purchases	Lots of buyer's remorse, disagreements and hidden agendas

But without jumping too far ahead...

What in the name of the holy sausage is this copywriting thingy anyhow?

Put it simply, in the words of Canadian copywriter, [John E. Kennedy](#) (1864-1928), it's salesmanship in print and salesmanship multiplied.

It's salesmanship in print because it presents products and services in writing and it's salesmanship multiplied because the same copy (a.k.a. disembodied salesperson) can be sent out to any number of prospects simultaneously.

Yes, a copywriter is a salesperson behind the keyboard but operates drastically differently from traditional field salespeople and much more effectively.

The salesperson is the lifeblood of your business. And a good direct response copywriter is just a hyper-effective salesperson.

And in the age of buyer suspicion, scepticism and cynicism, the most effective way of showing up on buyers' radar screen is through the power of the written word.

You write a good and relevant message and get it in front of buyers using the best vehicles (direct mail, email, magazine ads, etc.)

One problem is that many people confuse content writing with copywriting but there is a huge difference.

The main difference is that content writing is all about informing and entertaining readers whereas copywriting is about informing and entertaining them, influencing them to see their situations and predicaments from new perspectives and persuading them to take a specific action. And that action is moving them towards a buying decision.

Content writers write to generate Twitter followers, Facebook likes and LinkedIn connects. By contrast, copywriters write to generate sales.

Many – especially new – businesses make the mistake of getting so bogged down on content creation that they don't have resources left for systematic lead generation (a.k.a. copywriting).

Sadly, many people associate sales copy with used car sales type selling.

But it doesn't have to be. Good copy is engaging and readers don't even notice that as they're reading, they're being sold.

But not sold on buying a product or service. Sold on taking a specific action at the end of the copy.

Copywriting and marketing

In [The Practice of Management](#) (1954), Peter Drucker wrote: "Because its purpose is to create a client, the business has two - and only two - functions... Marketing and innovation. Marketing and innovation produce results, all the rest are costs."

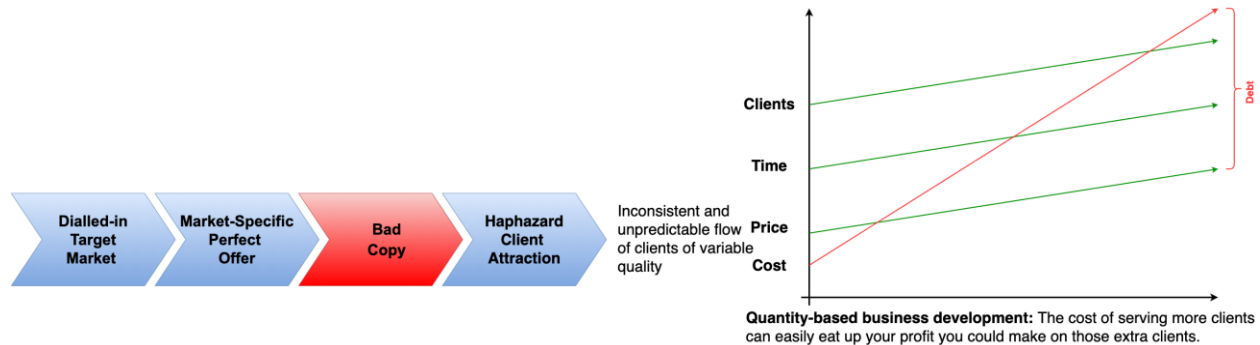
A few years later, in [Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices](#) (1974), he wrote: "There will always, one can assume, be need for some selling. But the aim of marketing is to make selling superfluous."

Copywriting is the language of your marketing. Copywriting drives every good marketing strategy. The

words that you send out to your target market is the foundation of your success. Your words make the first impression of your business and create a perception in your target market's minds.

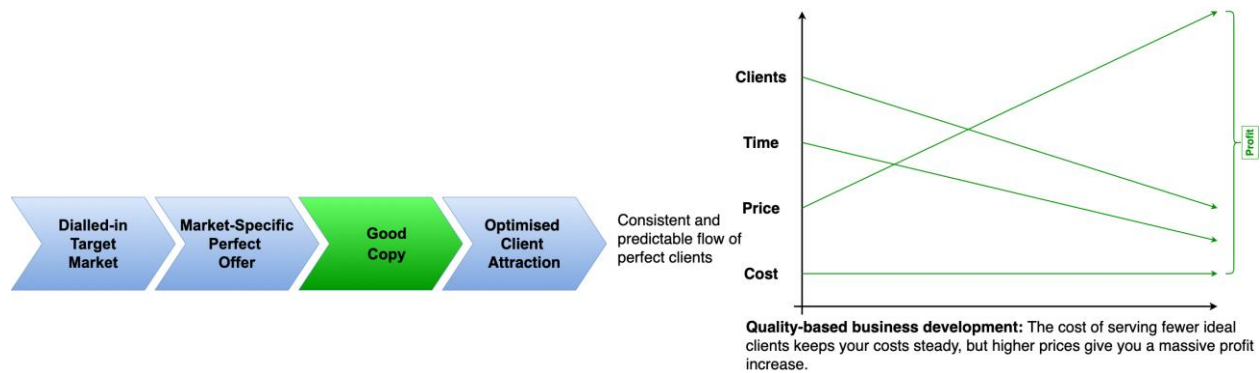
Why is this so important?

Even if you have your specifically defined target market and you have a very good offer specifically created for this market, with poor copy, your client acquisition will be haphazard and the quality of clients will be very different.



Leading to increased client load, increased project delivery times, maybe moderately increased prices and drastically increased costs, resulting in debt.

But if you have good copy, your client acquisition will be consistent and predictable and the quality of clients, all being ideal clients, will be very similar.



Leading to reduced client load, reduced project delivery times, steady costs and significantly increased prices, resulting in profit.

In fact, and wrap your head around this baby, in every fiscal period, you make 250% of your annual profit. But inappropriate clients eat up 150% and by the end of the same fiscal period, you have 100% left.

What are benefits of copywriting for marketing

The Corporate Executive Board (Owned by Gartner) discovered a few years ago that buyers are 57% “deep” in their buying processes when they first talk to sellers. Before that, they evaluate sellers based on their written materials. Today, this percentage can be as high as 90%.

And your written materials either position you as a fungible vendor or a respected industrial authority. And who gets various, including price, objections from buyers? Yes, only vendors.

The problem with the 57% point is that by the time buyers reach it, they become solution-focused and are looking for their self-cooked solutions at the lowest prices.

A possible backup problem...

Early stage (before the 57% mark) buyer: “We have a serious data loss problem that costs us a small fortune. Can you help us to solve it?”

A possible CRM problem...

Early stage (before the 57% mark) buyer: “Our salespeople keep losing valuable sales leads. We’re looking for something that keeps track of our leads and aids our salespeople to effectively follow up with prospects? Can you help us to solve this problem?”

Buyers present experienced symptoms.

By contrast...

Later stage (after the 57% mark) buyer: “We are looking for an XYZ type backup system. Do you deal with XYZ type backup systems and what’s your best price?”

Later stage (after the 57% mark) buyer: “We are looking for a Salesforce expert. What is your best price to set up a Salesforce system for us?”

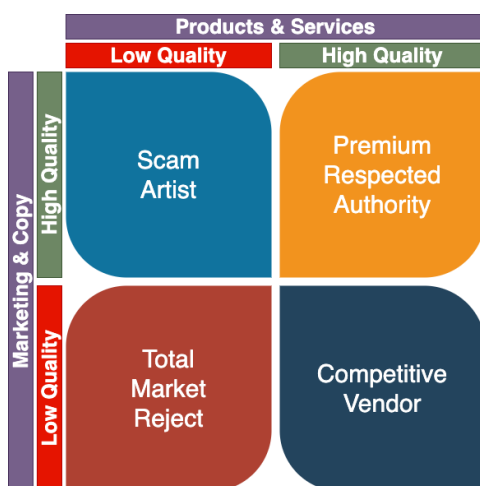
Late stage buyers present their home-cooked solutions and are seeking the cheapest pair of hands to implement those pre-cooked solutions.

With the early stage buyers, you can have diagnostic conversations to establish the root cause of their problems.

Late stage buyers think they know their problems and are in search of implementers for their home-cooked solution at the best price.

But we know from McKinsey & Co. that some 73% of projects that are based on buyers’ self-diagnoses fail to deliver the desired value those clients bought and paid for because those solutions had been based on buyers’ experienced symptoms not root causes.

And good copy-based marketing allows you to connect with your best prospects early on their buying journeys, allowing you – according to Aberdeen Research – to convert up to 64% more prospects to paying clients at as much as 47% higher prices.



And many of those vendors are really much better than some respected industrial authorities. Nevertheless, the initial market positioning has created the wrong perception, and in life, perception is reality.

So with bad copy in place, there's a painfully low ceiling on your growth and profits, but with good copy, the sky's the limit. Of course, good copy is not enough. You need great products and services too.

But the great marketing is more important.

The date was 23 Oct 2001, the 45th anniversary of the 1956 Revolution in Hungary, when Apple entered the already ferociously fierce MP3 market with its own toy, the iPod.

Surviving the MP3 battle seemed about as hopeless for Apple as a broken-hearted teenage girl’s love life.

At that time, the iPod was the lowest quality MP3 player on the market. But there was good marketing behind it so people bought it.

And over the years, the quality has improved a lot.

The other side of the same coin is, and it doesn't matter what The International Cheeseracing Association, the International Voodoo Underwear Slapping Council or even The British Humpty Dumpty Reassembling Society says about it, that no matter how good your products and services are, if you don't have good marketing, including engaging copy behind it, then you remain a best kept secret and slowly fade into obsolescence.

Remember there are lots of best-selling authors, but I've never come across even one best-writing author.

And your good products and services become as useless as a neck massage on the steps of the gallows.

And now, having read so far, you probably want to know...

What copywriters do

Assuming that copywriters "simply" write is just as erroneous as assuming trial lawyers' job is sitting in court and jumping up every now and then and shout, "Objection your honour!"

In fact, a copywriting assignment is about 10% writing.

The typical assignment consists of pre-production, production and post-production.

Pre-Production (~ 45%)

This phase includes diagnosing clients' current situations, research, brainstorming for solution jointly with clients' key people. Then ideas are distilled to one specific strategy that gets implemented.

Production (~ 10%)

Writing: Well, writing the piece.

Re-writing: Tweaking and polishing the copy for easy reading. Making sure the copy covers everything that clients want to communicate. Do you know that Stephen King re-writes every manuscript five-times? Yes, producing bestselling material takes a bit of time.

Post-Production (~ 45%)

In the words of Scottish novelist, Robert Louis Stevenson, the author of Treasure Island, "It takes hard writing to do easy reading."

Yes, technically anyone can write, but maybe no one wants to read it.

The post-production phase makes sure that the targeted people read the copy and take the action that the copy calls for.

Selecting copywriters

Copywriter selection flaws

There are three major flaws around selecting copywriters.

The three main bases of evaluation are portfolio, formal writing education (Degree in English or journalism is preferred) and content writing.

The portfolio problem

The first problem is that you don't know anything about the associated project the portfolio piece

belongs to. You don't know the client, the objective of the project and the other details.

Besides how can you evaluate something that you don't understand?

Yes, you can say whether or not you like it, but copywriting is an objective sport, and what matters is metrics and performance indicators, not personal likes and dislikes. Besides whose fault is that you don't like something that has never been written for you?

Now you may ask what to do if the copywriter turns out to be a charlatan and writes you a big heap of mess? Well, you ask for your money back. And if he doesn't want to return it, you rat him out on social media.

Yes, you can hire a lawyer and take the legal route, but that's too long and too expensive.

But rest assured that good copywriters who have some kind of web presence are far too worried about their long-gained reputation that they don't want to mess it up for a few thousand dollars.

Formal writing education

At the moment, there are no formal college courses in copywriting but this little factoid as irrelevant as the letter "k" in the word "knowledge".

No one has ever become a good copywriter only as a result of having a degree in English or journalism.

The table below shows the differences among various types of writing.

Journalism	Academic Writing	Copywriting
Starting point: Employee mentality	Starting point: Employee mentality	Starting point: Entrepreneur mentality
Objectives: 1) Protect job, 2) Please boss, 3) Increase readership, 4) Inform public	Objectives: 1) Protect job, 2) Please boss, 3) Inform peers	Objective: Generate revenue
Professional pursuit: Some individual glory and passion, some assigned work	Scholarly pursuit: Individual glory and passion	Entrepreneurial pursuit: Solving clients' problems for financial (well paid work), emotional (enjoyable work) and intellectual (challenging work) gain
Past-focused: Completed work	Past-focused: Completed work	Future-focused: Work to be completed
Once the writing is done, the project is complete.	Once the writing is done, the project is complete.	Once the writing is done, perpetual testing and tweaking begin.
Dazzling readers (even by misinforming them)	Preaching to readers	Eliciting specific actions from readers.
Dealing with the audience at arm's length in a formal and impersonal manner	Dealing with the audience at arm's length in a formal and impersonal manner	Dealing with the audience from within the audience in a personal and conversational manner
Indifference for the audience.	Indifference for the audience.	Empathy for the audience.
Passive, sterile, objective and dispassionate tone	Passive, sterile, objective and dispassionate tone	Active, personal, conversational, engaging and intriguing tone
Individualistic and mainly solo	Individualistic and mainly solo	Team-focused, collaborative activity with continual feedback

Journalism	Academic Writing	Copywriting
activity	activity	required
Flexible length constraints: Brevity rewarded	Few length constraints: Verbosity rewarded	Strict length constraints: Brevity rewarded
Use of general language to please the unwashed masses	Use of academic jargon	Use of target market's specific jargon
Overt objective: To inform and shape public opinion	Overt objective: To inform and educate	Overt objective: To inform and sell
Covert or real objective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To keep the job and earn pay increase and promotions Recently: To indoctrinate readers to the journalist's employer's political, social and economic orientation. 	Covert or real objective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To earn tenure, praises from peers and pay increase Recently: To indoctrinate students to the professor's own and his employer's political, social and economic orientation. 	Covert or real objective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To sell To improve brand equity

There are real copywriting masters out there teaching real copywriting but don't issue certificates. That's my background too. Yes, Cambridge gave me the English foundation, but then I've also attended lots of courses and have written a lot to add copywriting to my repertoire.

So, how come there are no copywriting college courses?

Because it's impossible to find instructors for it. A large percentage of new copywriters reach \$100,000 annual income by the end of their first years. And no one is dumb enough to give up such a lucrative career for a professorship.

The way I see it, if those professors out there really knew their stuff, do you think they'd slog it out in academia for a small fraction of what they could earn in the free market?

Content writing

As we discussed it under "What is copywriting", content writing is NOT copywriting.

You take 100 random people working in a given industry and 90 of them can write plausible content about that industry.

Now ask the same 100 people to sell their company's products/services in writing, a.k.a. write copy, and maybe one can do it. But this is a very generous estimate.

Many firms hire content writers because they erroneously think that if they put tonnes of short blog posts on their websites, something will happen. Something will happen, but not something financially beneficial.

And creating content that is missing selling power is about as useful as a cat flap on the elephant house.

Creating content is an investment, so you should expect a return.

Some others hire content writers and ask them to write copy because they don't want to pay copywriting prices.

Yes, a copywriter, being a salesperson, costs a lot more than a content writer, but a copywriter brings you money, whereas the content writer takes your money.

You can also see the differences between content writers and copywriters in the table below.

CONTENT WRITING (WRITING FOR SHOW)	COPYWRITING (WRITING FOR DOUGH)
Objectives: To generate social gains: Twitter followers and retweets, Facebook likes, LinkedIn connects, etc.	Objective: To generate financial gains: Quality sales leads, new ideal clients, product customers, paid subscribers, seminar/webinar/workshop attendees, etc.
Once the writing is done, the project is complete.	Once the writing is done, perpetual improvement testing and tweaking begin.
Approach: Informs and entertains readers	Approach: Informs and entertains readers, influences them to see their situations and predicaments from new perspectives and persuades them to take a specific action.
Communicates to the intellectual left brain	Communicates to both the intellectual left brain and the creative and emotional right brain via the reptilian brain
Deals with readers at arm's length in a cold, impersonal manner	Deals with readers in a personal and warm, conversational manner
Revolves around a specific topic	Revolves around a specific reader and his specific expensive business problem
Passive, sterile, objective and dispassionate tone	Active, personal, conversational, engaging and intriguing tone
Individualistic and mainly solo activity	Team-focused, close collaboration between copywriter and the client's marketing team
Use of general language for the unwashed masses	Use of target market's specific jargon-laced language

Practical selection criteria

Imagine an iceberg. The trivial 10% is visible but the vital 90% is not.

But iceberg doesn't move based on the waves and the wind on the surface, acting on the visible 10%.

It moves based on currents way under the surface, acting on the invisible 90%.

90% of the iceberg's movement is defined by the deep currents. The surface winds and waves barely make any difference.

So, what criteria belong to the trivial visible 10%?

- Degree in English or journalism
- Native speaker of the language
- History and reputation
- Geographical location
- Price

And what criteria belong to the vital invisible 90%?

- *Subject matter expertise in the client's industry* – It's very hard to write about something that we don't understand. Remember, the readers of your copy assume that it's an expert who's

According to a 2007 study of Global Fortune 1000 recruiters by the Wellesley Group and Broderick & Co., the two most valuable and sought-after skills in professionals, on the top of their core expertise, are subject matter expertise and hands-on industrial experience in their clients' industries.

written the collateral piece.

- *Hands-on experience in the client's industry* – Buyers recognise hype and bullshit from miles. While exaggeration can work in B2C consumer copy, when you sell to laypeople, but it's a no-no in B2B, when you sell to industry experts.
- *Project management skills* – Every copywriting assignment is a project and is part of a bigger project. The copywriter must know how his work fits into the whole project.
- *Consultative selling skills* – Selling a promise of performance is drastically different from selling tangible products with observable and demonstrable features.
- *Collaboration & teamwork skills* – To this day, military trains the best team collaborators. Recruit vets if you can.
- *Easy to work with* – No matter how good a copywriter is, if he's an obnoxious jerk, no one wants to work with him. The end result is a function of character and competence. Working with a merely competent copywriter with great character results in better outcomes than working with a world-class copywriter who is a jerk.
- *C-suite level understanding of the client's industry* – It's C-suite top executives who read marketing collaterals. But to have them read your copy, it has to be written in C-suite English, not in server room English. And that requires a good understanding of the client's industry.

Compensating copywriters

In every IT business, there are money-making and money-taking activities.

Yes, you can say your technical people do money-making work, but they are not.

By delivering the projects, your tech people use up the money (the cost of delivering the project) that your business development people, including your copywriter, have generated (project's price) by selling those projects.

As you can see, if your business development people don't understand technology and your tech people don't understand business development, the two groups of people can work against each other and the cost of sales (COS), a.k.a. the cost of delivering the project can exceed the price that your clients have paid.

So, after this little detour, let's look at copywriters' compensation.

When I say that in a well-managed IT service firm, the copywriter is one of the highest paid people, I'm not far from the truth.

This is why.

There are two ways to sell your services. Either through a field sales force or through sales copy.

Selling through a field sales force

So, if you decide to build your business based on field sales force, here are some factors you may want to consider...

- The type of salespeople you'd ideally want to hire are already hard at work at companies where they get six-figure base pay, \$250,000 or higher in total compensation, company car, expense account, dental/medical care, pension plan and an incredible latitude to manage their work. By contrast, lots of entrepreneurs passionately love micromanaging their salespeople, and high-performing professionals hate that.
- If you sell complex and expensive solutions, you sell to a group (five on average) of buyers; one

ultimate decision-maker plus several subject matter experts who advise the decision-maker: Lawyer, finance expert, engineer(s), etc. Since most salespeople have no subject matter backgrounds in those areas, they have to drag their companies' technical, financial and other experts with them to their presentations. Back in the day as an engineer, I had my fair share of being dragged around to evaluate solutions and advise executives. That means a huge loss of productivity for those experts.

- In the high-tech world, replacing a departing salesperson can be a rather costly game. When you add up the costs of hiring new salespeople, training them and add all this to the loss you've suffered when the departing salespeople "stole" some of your best clients, you're pretty much as doomed as a lowly dormouse at a gastronomy conference for cats.
- Field salespeople work on a 1-to-1 basis either face-to-face or on the phone. It means they have a very limited number of opportunities to pursue. It also means that very often they miss juicy opportunities because they focus on the low-hanging (also low-margin) fruit.
- Field sales forces, just like many things in life, operate on Price's law, named after English physicist, historian of science and the father of scientometrics, Derek J. de Solla Price. This law states that the square root of the number of your salespeople produce 50% of the revenue. It means the more salespeople you have the larger idle work force you have and pay. With 10 salespeople, three of them produce 50% of the revenue and seven produce the other 50%.
- Field salespeople are paid commissions based on the gross sales they make, so they have an incentive to make many quick sales. It means, as long as they make enough money on deals that covers their personal financial needs, they often make deals under cost and flood the shop with sales either with wafer-thin or zero margins. It means, with every deal, your firm goes deeper into the hole, although your salespeople still take home a pretty penny.
- Besides the obvious that salespeople sell only 11% of the 40-hour workweek, there is 43% annual attrition, 49% never make quota, 27% never sell enough to cover the cost of their employment.
- Due to the long sales cycles, it takes new salespeople 6-9 months, or even more, to get fully up to speed and contribute fully. Until then, you just pay them. And what happens when they are up to speed on your dime? Well, the annual attrition rate is 43%. Within one year, almost half of your sales force is going to work for your competitors.
- Due to the long ramp-up time, you have to pay salespeople for a long time before you can say whether they are sales studs or sales duds. And after a long waiting period, it turns out that half of them are duds. 27% are beyond duds... dud squared.

The January 2017 issue of the Harvard Business Review² reports that American companies spend over \$900 billion per year on building and perfecting their sales forces, yet the same companies deliver only 50-60% on their sales forecasts.

The same goes for sales enablement tools. An annual \$12 billion is spent and the payback is as dismal as a waffle.

The promises are as warm as a hooker's heart, but the delivery is missing.

Selling through sales copy

The other side of this selling coin is selling through sales copy. In a systematic approach, you replace the

² Frank V. Cespedes and Christopher Wallace: [Executives and Salespeople Are Misaligned — and the Effects Are Costly](#)

inconsistent and unpredictable human element, a.k.a. salespeople with sales copy, your little disembodied salesperson.

Yes, I know.

In consultative sales, beyond a certain point, you do need the human interaction, but let's consider an important point.

If you bring in the human element a bit late, that's fine and serious prospects will indicate that they are ready to interact with a consultant.

But if you bring in the human element too early, most prospects are not yet ready for it and often get scared away.

So, the lesson is that it's all right to slow down the sales process, but it's a huge mistake to try speeding it up.

And now let's see what you're likely to discover when you replace salespeople with sales copy. Unlike salespeople...

- ... sales copy can bring in a very high return (relative to the cost of sales)
- ... sales copy can generate some quick cash. Remember, John Lennon didn't say to Paul McCartney, "Let's assemble a field sales force to sell enough records and concert tickets to buy a swimming pool!" he said, "Let's write a swimming pool!"
- ... sales copy can perform fairly consistently and predictably, so it builds your brand equity and stabilised income streams.
- ... sales copy be used all over again for a long time.
- ... sales copy positions your brand in the marketplace as an industrial authority (vs. a fungible vendor).
- ... performance, sales copy's performance can be systematically improved.
- ... sales copy doesn't fall for the temptation to offer discounts and special commission-boosting but profit-eroding deals for quick sales.
- ... sales copy works 24/7, without vacation and sick leave.
- ... sales copy can "revisit" unresponsive prospects at short intervals without negative consequences.
- ... sales copy sets the buying criteria based on your company's uniqueness.
- ... who cause buyers to have their guards up (suspicion and scepticism), buyers read sales copy with their guards down (open-minded about what they read).

So, where is the problem?

Well, most firm leaders are happy to pay "real" salespeople pretty well, but want to pay copywriters only a small fraction of a salesperson's compensation.

Interestingly, smart entrepreneurs with internet-driven businesses don't even bother to hire salespeople. They are happy to pay high-five and even six-figures for online, copy-driven sales systems because they know they recoup their money pretty quickly.

What also makes internet-based entrepreneurs different is that they are not growing their businesses for headcount, as many IT firm leaders do. They grow their firms for profit.

The reason why many firm leaders want to pay pennies to copywriters is that "real" salespeople do "real" work but copywriters "just" sit at a desk doing nothing. At least this is the common perception.

But the question is this.

Do you pay for a copywriter's exerted effort or the value you expect the project to deliver to your firm? If effort, then something must be wrong.

Maybe coal miners and crab fishermen should be paid more than brain surgeons. After all, they exert higher effort.

But let me tell you a story...

In 1974, Martin Conroy, the then then vice president of BBD&O advertising agency, wrote a sales letter that generated some \$2 billion of Wall Street Journal subscriptions. Yes, with a "B".

The letter consisted of 780 words on two pages, and was sent out in #7 envelopes.

That was a whopping \$2,560,000 per word.

It was regarded the most successful sales letter ever and no one could outperform it for 28 years.

Both the WSJ publisher and Conroy became filthy rich.

But after 28 years, Mal Decker's letter outperformed Conroy's letter by 24%.

It proves the point that when you use sales copy, not sales force, there is always room for improvement. And even significant improvements are pretty inexpensive to implement.

In 2005, I did a media package and some associated collateral pieces for an IT firm in Texas. So far, the package has generated (yes, the firm has tracked it) \$6.2 million. And all that for an initial investment of \$47,300. That's 131-times return.

No sales force can come even close to that and I'm not even an outstanding copywriter. But being an engineer who worked in the industry, I have an intimate understanding of the buying process and buyers' mentality that copywriters without this experience don't have.

This is just the nature of good sales copy backed into a good sales strategy.

All in all, in comparison to a human sales force, sales copy can offer...

- Lower client acquisition costs (McKinsey & Co: Every 1% variable cost reduction adds 7% to your bottom line)
- More predictable sales forecasts
- Reduced cost of sales (McKinsey & Co: Every 1% variable cost reduction adds 7% to your bottom line)
- More consistent and discount-free pricing (McKinsey & Co: Every 1% price reduction shaves 8.1% off of your bottom line)

And now let's look at...

Some prices

This is just a guideline, so you can expect both higher prices from industry specialists and lower prices from generalists.

The following estimated fees are based on generic copywriters on Upwork with intermediate (\$\$) skills in the US without subject matter expertise and industrial experience.

PROJECT TYPE	FEES
3-panel brochure	\$800 - \$1,300
Website copy	\$200 - \$500 per page
PPC ad	\$50 - \$200 per ad

Direct mail postcard	\$500 - \$800
Direct mail letter	\$1,500 - \$5,000
Blog post/content article	\$700 - \$1,500
Sales landing page	\$4,500 - \$10,000

PROJECT TYPE	FEEs
SEO Copywriting	
Blog posts	\$125 to \$2,000 per post
Press releases	\$1,500 to \$2,500 per release
Product page	\$60 to \$800 per page
Articles	\$100 to \$2,400 per article
Guides	\$3,000 to \$4,200 per guide
Sales page	\$300 to \$25,000 per page
PPC copywriting	\$25 to \$350 per ad
Email copywriting	\$35 to \$2,000 per email
Welcome	
Client onboarding	
Offer	
Survey	\$35 to \$2,000 per survey
Newsletter	\$150 to \$750 per newsletter
Informational or Small Business – not a sales-focused - website (8-10 pages)	\$2,000 - \$9,000
Case studies	From \$1,500 per case study
Core issue articles	From \$2,300 per article
Data sheets	From \$1,700 per data sheet
Direct mail lead generation package	From \$4,000
E-books	From \$2,300
Press kits	From \$7,200
Position papers or white papers	From \$6,200
Website home page	From \$3,500
Ongoing copy improvement	3% of gross sales or from \$5,000 per month

And in case the above prices have shocked you, let's look at...

A little perspective

Let's say you sell a specific IT service through your website.

Let's say you're doing \$500,000 a year in revenue with that particular service, and let's say the landing page is converting at 1% of visitors.

And let's say, you engage copywriter who looks at the page and tweaks it here, fiddles with it there, changes the headline, the offer, the guarantee and the call to action.

And now, instead of converting at 1%, this page is converting now at 2%, making you \$1,000,000, while your costs are still the same as before. It means the second \$500,000 is pure profit.

Have you thought about how much time, money and effort it would take for your field sales force to double its closing rate? It could take months or years to find the winning closing formula and then some more years to have all the salespeople use it... if ever.

What has this copywriter done? Here's what he's done.

He's just doubled your firm's revenue, without adding even one extra dollar to your marketing, hiring one single salesperson or buying any new technology.

Is your firm spending more money? No.

Does your firm need more people seeing your website? No.

Are you adding more features the service that costs you more? No.

All you have done is changed a few words of how the offer or the message is being communicated to the marketplace.

Do you see the power of this?

That is the power of copywriting.

And now we can nonchalantly go to the...

Conclusion

So, we've completed our little journey in the land of copywriting. Hopefully by now, you see that selling through sales copy is more effective and more lucrative than selling through sales forces.

After all, salespeople spend only 11% of their total time selling. 49% of salespeople almost never reach their quota and 27% fail to sell enough to cover their cost of employment.

It means, a salesperson works one hour a day. By contrast, sales copy works 24 hours without a break, vacation, sick leave and other problems.

The other issue SG&A (selling, general and administrative expenses) under which salespeople's compensation falls as variable costs. And, as per a [McKinsey & Co. study](#), every 1% reduction in variable costs adds 7% to the bottom line.

So, do you prefer to incur the monetary and psychological cost of a sales force or a solo copywriter?

So if you want to grow your business with a high level of certainty, you must learn how to bring in new ideal clients consistently, predictably and cost-effectively.

What makes sales copy more consistent, predictable and cost-effective than a sales force is the minimised human element. Humans introduce unnecessary subjectivity, hence inconsistency.

100 salespeople present the same offer and deal 101 different ways leading to 101 totally different outcomes.

You don't need human element in the sales process until buyers specifically request meetings.

Offering the human element before buyers are ready for it can only scare them away to the welcoming arms of your competitors.

In closing, when buyers bluntly ask me about my rates, I tell them, “Most probably higher than your attorney and definitely higher than your accountant”.

And that’s the way it should be. Your copywriter brings you money, while your attorney and accountant take your money.

If you can digest and accept those last two sentences, you have a good chance to find and engage a good copywriter who can put a few dollars into your pocket.

And if you still have questions, you can hit me up at Tom@ITBusinessWriter.com and I hope I can give you at least a semi-erudite answer.