



The Ins And Outs Of Hiring And Working With B2B Copywriters

**A Copywriting Buyer's Guide For Privately
Owned Information Technology Companies
and Solo IT Professionals**

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Dear IT Business Owner,

Over the years, copywriting has become one of the ideal home-based businesses. Copywriting training courses are churning out legions of copywriters to write various marketing packages.

But in this shuffle of madness to find and engage the best copywriters for their projects, buyers make some costly mistakes.

When you look around out there, you can easily conclude that there are more than enough copywriters to block the Amazon River and have it flood the whole Amazon Basin. And that's a pretty monumental task if you consider that it's so mind-bogglingly huge that you could plop Australia, with all of her kangaroos, koalas and even Crocodile Dundee and his pension plan right into it, and you would still have enough land left for a decent-sized vegetable patch.

So, from this bombastically splendiferous crowd of copywriters, how in the name of the holy sausage can you find the right one for your next marketing campaign?

Saying that writing talents are plentiful is as much of an understatement as calling Mount Everest a glorified speed bump.

Even copywriting talents are plentiful.

Effective copywriters are less plentiful but there are quite a few lurking in the shadows.

Effective copywriters who understand marketing strategy and are able to write copy in context of your company's overall strategy and vision, are few and far between.

Effective copywriters who have all the above coupled with significant subject matter expertise and industrial experience in your industry are the proverbial rarefied air.

They are infinitesimal needles in gargantuan haystacks. And since they don't work for money¹, although they get paid very handsomely, they carefully select their clients.

So, you have the two ends of the continuum.

In cardiac surgery, at one end of the continuum, you have Fred Cringingnuts 1st year medical student. At the other end, you have Dr. Michael DeBakey, one of the greatest cardiac surgeons who ever lived on this planet.

And they have different prices for surgery. What is your main criterion to choose a cardiac surgeon? Low price or high chance of survival?

Now what is your main criterion to choose a copywriter? Low price or high payoff?

If it's high return on investment, then I think, this guide can help you to find the right copywriter.

¹ They operate at the top, in the "self-actualisation" part of the Maslow pyramid.

Never Tender Out Your Project In A Competitive Bid

The reality is that copywriters that are worth retaining don't respond to competitive bids.

They know the dynamic: Bottom feeder companies are looking for competitive(ly cheap) copywriter and hope for copy miracles. Competitive, a.k.a. average, copywriters respond to tenders.

Do you want an average copywriter and duke it out in the marketplace?

Or do you prefer to hire an excellent copywriter who has a chance to take your products/services to the market over the competition?

Here are a few reasons why good copywriters don't respond to competitive bids. Copywriters know that...

- RFPs represent low-profit and low-quality opportunities from the low-end clients.
- RFP buyers unanimously set the rules - badly stacked against copywriters.
- RFPs water down copywriters' market differentiation.
- RFPs eat up copywriters' future profits on their projects.
- RFP work represent low-quality master (client) servant (copywriter) relationships.

Careful With Samples; Test Instead

The problem with samples is two-fold.

The first problem is that you want to hire a copywriter, because you can't write copy.

Yes, some people have told me over the years that they are excellent copywriters but they hate writing and don't have time anyway.

That's bullshit.

When a business owner yells me he has no time to do something that would give his business the biggest bang for his buck, I know he is either a liar or an idiot. Maybe even both.

But if you can't write copy, how can you evaluate whether a piece of copy is good or bad.

Yes, you can say whether you like it or not, but, you aren't your market, and you can't tell whether that copy would fly or flop on the market when you ask real people to give you real money.

The second problem is that you don't know how the copy that you're criticising has performed in a real campaign.

You may fall in love with that copy, but, from the market's perspective, it may be a huge dud.

Well, let's face it, if you could write copy yourself, why would you hire others to do it for you, considering that a copywriter is the most expensive help you may ever need.

Yes, a copywriter worth hiring is definitely more expensive than your accountant and most probably more expensive than your attorney.

The reality is that neither your accountant nor your attorney can generate revenue for your business.

From the accountant's perspective, it's easy to count the money after someone has generated it.

All in all, as copywriter ace, the late Gary Halbert was fond of saying, **"Most business problems can be solved with a good sales letter."**

The third problem is that when you look at too many samples of different writers, you ask your in-house or hired budget copywriter from Upwork to patch together a mule of a copy using bits and bobs of several samples you've seen.

Case in point: Young kid walks into the guitar shop to buy his first guitar and learn to play. He picks up a guitar and starts mimicking either Deep Purple's *Smoke On The Water* or Led Zeppelin's *Stairway To Heaven*.

So, instead of checking samples, ask for a test copy. This is how it works...

Pick a product/service. Show past promotions to your copywriter candidate. Let him speak to all the people who've created that promo material. Then ask him to produce a headline and a lead paragraph in 24 hours.

No, you can't use what you get as is², but even this short and simple test gives you a good indication how well or poorly your candidate would handle the whole project.

Of course, offer some nominal compensation. If you ask for it free, then no one will take you seriously, and you end up with a rock bottom copywriter.

The problem is that copywriters who are worth hiring because their expertise means some great payoff for you won't do that.

They are busy working with serious businesses and serious projects.

Careful With References and Testimonials

When you want to check references and testimonials, you essentially say...

"I don't believe a word you say until and unless I validate you by some total strangers' opinions. If they like you, although I don't know them, I will like you too. If they don't like you, I'll drop you."

Good B2B copywriters are niche writers, meaning that they write for narrowly defined niches.

² Until and unless you buy it from the copywriter, everything the copywriter has produced is his copyrighted intellectual property.

And since their markets are small, they prefer not to name their clients.

And clients often require total secrecy and 100% confidentiality.

Just think about it. What do you think would happen if you asked your doctor or lawyer to give you references or testimonials? You would be dropped, and the doctor or lawyer would never ever consider you as a possible patient or client.

Check Previous Campaign Results

This is not always doable, but most copywriters insist on it. They request that clients provide ongoing reports on their copies' performance.

It also makes sense, because smart client who pay royalties to their copywriters receive ongoing improvements on their copies.

I've had cases when by inserting "these" or replacing "heart attack" with "myocardial infarction" cause triple digit improvement in response.

Clients who don't want to pay royalties would never achieve such improvements. They would get the first copy and that's it.

Now there are some considerations here. Sometimes clients keep campaign results confidential, so they can't be shared.

In that case, ask the copywriter what indicators he plans to track and how he plans to track them. But if the copywriter slides over this question, then ditch him. It shows that he tries to dodge the responsibility for the quality of his copy. And that's rather fishy.

Fee Plus Royalty Are Parts Of The Game

If your copywriter doesn't ask for royalties, then ditch her.

This is why.

The copywriter knows that if she gives you kick-arse copy, that copy will make you money like clockwork, year in and year out. And the copywriter rightfully feels that as the creator of that "money magnet" copy, she has the right to receive a share of that income on an ongoing basis. And that's more than fair.

The way clients benefit from this arrangement is that they receive ongoing improvement on their copy. After all, every improvement makes money both for the clients and the copywriter.

Regardless of how good the copywriter is, her virgin copy (the first version put on the market) is far less responsive than some seasoned copy that she's tweaked over a few months based on analytics of previous copies and responses.

Let's say, the copywriter writes the copy and he's gone. The client puts the copy on the market

and it brings in sales leads that develop into \$1 million per month in new business. Great! And the client can keep all the money.

But if the copywriter negotiates a, let's say, 10% royalty on gross sales, let's see what happens. After six months of copy tweaking, the copy brings in \$3 million in new business. Out of that money, \$300,000 goes to the copywriter as royalty and the client keeps \$2.7 million.

Do you prefer 100% of \$1 million or 90% of \$3 million?

I know some clients get physically sick even from the thought of sharing their money, but good copywriters carefully screen their clients and avoid entrepreneurial morons.

Besides, smart business owners pay their salespeople both base salary and commission. And copywriting is really salesmanship in print. So, if salespeople deserve it, I reckon, copywriters deserve it too.

By the way, if a copywriter tells you, “My rate is \$XYZ per hour and I don't know how long the project takes”, then you'd better run very very fast and very very far. That's really just euphemism for, “Just give me a signed blank cheque and I'll fill the sum in later”.

If the copywriter doesn't know how long it takes to write certain copy, then he's a rank amateur, and you'd better find someone else.

If he doesn't know how long it takes, it means he's never written that kind of copy. Then why would you hire him?

Yes, he would win by practising on your dime, but you would lose.

Besides, hourly rates reward ineffectiveness in incompetence. The longer he takes to write the copy, the more you pay.

Ideally, Your Copywriter Should Be A Marketing Strategist Who Also Writes

Above and beyond copywriting, your copywriter should be familiar with the whole marketing-sales continuum.

Just look at professional speakers. Apart from celebrities and ex-US presidents, speakers are consultants first, and speak about what they've experienced as consultants.

A copywriter without sales and marketing knowledge is like a pure speaker who can speak eloquently about something he has no idea about.

And your copywriter should be pretty proficient in education-based, results-accountable direct response marketing.

The other form of marketing is image or institutional marketing, practised by multinational giants with billion-dollar marketing budgets.

Unlike direct marketing that focuses on communicating benefits to the market, image marketing focuses on building the company's image., well corporate chest-beating.

But that approach is just too expensive, hence impractical for privately owned IT companies where being profitable is more important than being admired.

So, to make life a bit easier to contrast the differences, here is a short comparison table between image marketing and direct response marketing.

Image Marketing	Direct Response Marketing
Objective: To provide a platform for some corporate chest-beating and self-aggrandisement	Objective: To provide as platform for systematically educating and inspiring prospects to meet you when they're ready to buy.
Suitable for marketing to the unwashed masses "People"	Suitable for marketing to specific market niches "Left-handed women-owned coffin manufacturing plants between 20 and 500 employees in South East Zululand."
Pleasing board of directors (most of whom don't know marketing)	Becoming more trusted
Appeasing shareholders	Becoming more respected
Looking good to Wall Street analysts	Achieving deeper credibility
Looking appropriate to the media	Creating the perception of a sought-after industrial authority
Appearing politically correct to the general public	Building more brand loyalty
Building brand identity	Accomplishing pre-emptive positioning (Not buy from anyone else.)
Winning advertising awards	Eliminating possible pricing comparisons
Generating one-shot sales	Generating more referrals and repeat business
Motivating action some day in the future	Motivating action right now
It's adorable	It's bankable
Result: Executives: "Wow, we're truly	Result: Market: "Wow, this company is truly

Image Marketing	Direct Response Marketing
amazing.”	amazing.”
Summary: With image marketing, you still need an army of salespeople to generate revenue.	Summary: With direct response marketing, making the sale is the natural climax of your marketing.

The biggest benefit of direct response marketing is that self-qualified prospects contact you when they are ready to buy, so you don't have to chase, beg and bug them, which would only irritate the living daylights out of them.

So, when a marketing consultant tells you that marketing's effectiveness can't be measured, and you just have to keep doing it and spending your money, then you'd better grab your purse and run for your life.

The problem with a pure writer is that he doesn't understand the dynamic of the market, and even his best copy can be as out of place in that market as a hooker in a nunnery.

You can have the perfect copy, but if you market to doctors, and the copywriter uses "heart attack", instead of myocardial infarction, in the copy, then the whole campaign is doomed right from the start.

Let Your Copywriter Work With Your Artists And Designers

Imagine if you will...

You need new glasses. You go to the eye doctor and get your left eye tested. Then you go to another eye doctor to get your right eye tested.

Then you go to Costco to get your left lens done. Then you go to Wal-Mart to get your right lens done.

Then you go somewhere else to buy a frame.

Then you go somewhere else again to get the pieces assembled.

And when you put on your brand new glasses, you're not only blind as a bat, but the frame bugs both your nose and ears.

The same disaster can happen when clients don't allow copywriters and other participating subject matter experts to work together.

Since most copy is used alongside various design elements, it's vital that your copywriter works with your design team.

For instance, if you have some web copy to write, let the copywriter collaborate with the web designer, the graphics artist, the programmer, the keyword researcher, the web analyst, subject matter researcher, etc.

After all, all these people are supposed to create one thing: Well-optimised, kick-arse looking web pages that generate new business.

This is the only way clients can get one integrated product, not many bits and bobs that may or may not fit together.

This collaboration also makes sure that copy and design complement each other and don't step on each other's toes for domination to the other elements' detriment

Become A Marketing Person When Working With Your Copywriter

When you visit a lawyer that you consider to hire for your legal issues, you prepare yourself for the meeting and gather all the legal subject matter knowledge you can have, knowing that the lawyer speaks legal language. That's normal.

I've found this puppy on a forum, posted by Nigel J. Shaughnessy. It's from a real legal document.

When a layperson wants to give you an orange, he or she merely says...

"I give you this orange."

But when a lawyer does it, the words he or she uses are...

"Know all persons by these present that I hereby give, grant, release, convey, transfer and quitclaim all my right, title, interest, benefit and use whatsoever in, or and concerning this chattel, otherwise known as an orange, or citrus aurantium, together with all the appurtenances thereto of skin, pulp, pip, rind, seeds and juice to have and to hold the said orange, for his own use and behoof, to himself and his heirs, in fee simple forever, free from all liens, encumbrances, easements, limitations, restraints or conditions whatsoever, any and all prior deeds, transfer, or other documents whatsoever, now or anywhere made to the contrary notwithstanding, with full power to bite, cut, suck or otherwise eat the said orange or to give away the same, with or without its skin, pulp, pip, rind, seeds or juice."

When your lawyer drafts you a letter of some kind, that letter will be full of words, like "hitherto" or "hithertofore". After getting this letter, you have to ask the lawyer to tell you in plain English what's in the letter. Then you'll understand it.

Before talking to a copywriter, get familiar with terms like split testing, headline, CTA (call to action), SEO (search engine optimisation), SEM (search engine marketing), PPC (pay per click), etc.

History has proved that the most subject matter expertise buyers show, the less likely they are to be taken for a ride by scumbag sellers.

If you're lucky and your copywriter understands your industry, she can speak your language.

Otherwise you have to speak hers.

Regard Your Copywriter As A Member Of Your Team

Belonging is a basic human need... even for hard-core introverts. Freelance copywriters have left their corporate jobs not because they want to work alone in isolation, but because they want to design a better life than what their corporate jobs offered. They have formed their businesses to give them the money, the freedom and the lifestyle they desire.

Yet, they want to belong to something bigger than themselves.

Let's take a quick look...

So, what attracts and retains great independent professionals? More or less the same that attracts and retains great employees?

There are some misbeliefs³ by managers, and these misbeliefs keep losing the best people in organisations. Here is an interesting comparison about what managers believe employees are seeking, and what employees are actually seeking.

For instance, managers often believe that *"Full Appreciation for Work Done"* is only at 8th place on employees importance list. Well, it's number 1.

Managers believe *"Feeling "In" on Things"*, that is, *"belonging"* is the No. 10 criterion for employees. No, it's only No. 2.

Factors	Managers	Employees
Full Appreciation for Work Done	8	1
Good Wages	1	5
Good Working Conditions	4	9
Interesting Work	5	6
Job Security	2	4
Promotion/Growth Opportunities	3	7

³ **Sources:** Foreman Facts, Labor Relations Institute of NY (1946); Lawrence Lindahl, Personnel Magazine (1949), Repeated with similar results: Ken Kovach (1980); Valerie Wilson, Achievers International (1988), Bob Nelson, Blanchard Training & Development (1991), Sheryl & Don Grimme, GHR Training Solutions (1997-2001).

Factors	Managers	Employees
Personal Loyalty to Workers	6	8
Feeling "In" on Things (a.k.a. sense of belonging)	10	2
Sympathetic Help on Personal Problems	9	3
Tactful Disciplining	7	10

This is why it's vital that you treat your copywriter as a member of your team. Granted, as an independent professional, she is a temporary member with different working conditions, and it's not you who pays her medical and pension, but while working on projects, make sure she feels as a team member.

Involve her as early as possible even during the product/service development stage. She will be more than happy to offer her two cents even before she gets formally engaged.

Why?

Based on the royalty, the copywriter will make her big money on the back end (royalty) not at the front end (flat fee). So, she has a vested interest to help you to design your product/service as kick-arse as humanly possible. After all, regardless of how good her copy is, if the product/service is crap, then good copy can only communicate that crappiness faster and farther into the marketplace.

But if your copywriter wants to work alone and not to get involved in the whole campaign, then you'd better find another one.

Keep Operational People Away From Your Copywriter

Operational people are all about what can't be done and what can go wrong. By definition, they are fault-finders and problem-seekers. Even when they know that there is only one in a thousand chances that something goes wrong, they scream "danger".

In their eyes, marketing is a huge waste of money, and all that money should be given to them to improve operations and the production process.

What operational people fail to realise that it's marketing that produces the money that keeps operational folks on the payroll with their paycheques in their pockets every two weeks.

Are there any dangers in marketing? Yes, of course. Some campaigns flop and some fly.

There are also car accidents, plane crashes and avalanches. Yet, despite all the death toll these

incidents create, people still drive, fly and ski.

I've been a skydiver since 1977. I've had my fair share of incidents and some near death situations. Some people say that a sound person with a sound mind would never jump out of a sound plane.

Maybe.

But I do it again and again, in spite of knowing that one day, unbeknownst to me, that may be my very last jump, and after that, my last journey is to the graveyard. And I'm all right with that. It's just part of my life.

When you mix operational people with your marketing team, including your copywriter, the operational folks can seriously curb the marketing team's enthusiasm, which will have a negative impact on their campaigns.

Marketers are optimists, and they work their arses off because they expect success. It doesn't always work out, but it's like skydiving. The danger is there, but I do my best to reduce my chances of dying.

As David L. Cooperrider and Diana Whitney write in *A Positive Revolution in Change: Appreciative Inquiry*, you can't study how objects float on water by reversing your findings on how objects sink.

Autopsy is not merely reverse surgery. Bringing a new life into this world (birth) is not merely the opposite of taking out an old one (burial). I'm very experienced at burying corpses, but very inexperienced at delivering babies.

The other point is that if operational people are pessimistic about something, it's related to operations, not marketing. Then they should solve that problem without pestering the marketing folks unnecessarily.

But certain interaction between them is certainly required. The features marketers promote and the features operations folks can produce must be in alignment.

Henry Ford produced the Model T only in black. And his marketing people promoted only black Model Ts.

So, make sure there is alignment between what is produced and what is promoted.

Engage A Copywriter Who Understands Your Industry

A few years ago I wrote copy for a software company specialising in the medical field. Unfortunately, the copywriter before me didn't understand the intricacies of the medical world.

The promotion went out to doctors to promote an ECG machine.

Unfortunately, the copywriter, as a layperson, used the term "ECG curve" in the promotional materials.

That was his terminology. Sadly, with that term, he also buried the company's credibility. Not one red cent of business came in from the promotion.

Then the company hired me for my engineering expertise in the biomedical field, and I corrected "ECG curve" to the proper name that doctors use: "QRS complex".

Since the promotional materials spoke "doctor's English", it was a success.

Based on a 2008 study among industry leaders, by Broderick & Company, the top three criteria buyers are looking for in external professionals are 1) "experience in our industry", 2) "expertise in our subject matter" and 3) "Understanding of our business".

Yes, a copywriter with these attributes is significantly more expensive than a general practitioner copywriter, but the return can justify the investment.

Copy Only Or Strategy Plus Copy

Most copywriters are copywriters only. That's what they do. They write copy, but don't get involved in how that copy is used or how it ties into the company's overall strategy.

When you buy copy from many copywriters, it's like buying meat in a supermarket. You walk in and pick something up that you think will make a good roast and take it home. The rest is up to you.

But with a strategist/copywriter, it all feels like buying meat at your old-fashioned family butcher...

Customer: Well, Mr. Smith, we have a family gathering on Sunday, and I'd like to make a nice roast beef. What do you suggest?

#1: Butcher: We can go for tenderloin and I can marinade it for you here in the shop, and then your husband can pick it up on Saturday. And it's ready for cooking. What do you think?

#2: Butcher: Mrs. Jones, considering what you've told me that most of the guests are of Central European origin, I'd like to encourage you to consider pork. You see, Central European people, and I'm one of them, are more pork people than beef people. If there is a choice, they always choose pork. Pork and potatoes.

Example #1 is about "Here is your meat and give me money."

The latter example, "Here is a dinner your family members will remember for the rest of their lives. Here is a dinner that makes you a culinary genius in the eyes of your family."

Most copywriters write, give you the copy and then you're on your own. But the copy alone won't make you money. That copy has to be properly applied within a winning strategy. Also, besides copy, you need a great offer and a responsive market.

Actually, about 60% of your marketing campaigns' success lies in your list, 30% in your offer

and 10% lies in your copy. Everything else, including graphics, is almost negligible.

There is no point in writing fantastic copy to promote your amazing running shoes to the local association of quadriplegics and paraplegics.

Some buyers say they have their own marketing people, so they are fine with pure writers. The problem is that your people are limited to what they have observed inside your company. Also, they are politically biased. Instead of creating kick-arse campaigns, they protect their jobs, which is normal human reaction.

We all need the independent, constructive insights of an unbiased, professional outsider that include external frame of reference and a new perspective. Without that we end up getting better at what we do, and what we are already doing may well be the very root of our problems.

A Generalist Or A Specialist

The consideration is whether to hire a generalist or a specialist.

That is the choice between...



A Swiss Army Knife

an
d



A “Rambo” Knife

The Swiss Army knife is great because it does lots of things. It doesn’t do anything excellently, but does lots of thing pretty well. It’s a sort of Jack-of-all and master-of-none tool.

In copywriting these are the copywriters who write anything for any industry. They can write, but...

By sharp contrast, the “Rambo” knife doesn’t do many things. All it is a knife, a saw, a compass in the butt of the handle and a basic first aid kit inside the handle. Plus a smaller switchblade inside the side pocket of the sheath.

In copywriting these are the copywriters who write only for specific industries. And the best ones have significant experience in those industries.

In a way, copywriting is like any other profession...

For instance, many doctors do lasik surgery, but Dr. Ming Wang in Tennessee is the only lasik surgeon with a Ph.D. in laser physics. Many doctors know how to use their laser devices to correct people's visions. Dr. Wang has an intimate understanding of lasers and their application in vision correction. His use of lasers is not robotic but both scientific and intuitive.

Many outdoors companies manufacture mountain-climbing pitons, but Yves Chouinard is the world's only mountain climber who is also a blacksmith. He's replaced the old-fashioned cast-iron pitons with aircraft-quality chrome-molybdenum pitons.

There are many blacksmiths and mountain climbers in this world, but he is probably the only one who's both, thus understands both mountains and metals, and how metals behave on the mountains under extreme conditions. And that is his unique value.

Both Dr. Wang and Yves Chouinard are the proverbial Rambo knives in their respective industries. They are world-class at very few things.

In the jungle of business, I believe we're better off with a few special tools that do only a couple of things precisely and effectively than with integrated tools that does a bit of everything.

You can hire copywriters who know a little bit about everything between accounting and zoology. Or you can hire copywriters who know your industry like the backs of their hands.

Of course, specialists cost significantly more. But they also offer higher return on investment.

A Gunslinger Or A Sniper

This is mainly about the mentality of the copywriter.

Some copywriters like hashing something out quickly and hitting the market. If their campaigns fail, they hit again.

If you really want to understand the difference between gunslingers and snipers then watch a spaghetti western movie with Clint Eastwood and the Day Of The Jackal back to back.

Gunslingers shoot from the hip and hope they hit something.

The master sniper, Jackal (played by Edward Fox) spent 71 days to plan former French president, Charles de Gaulle's assassination.

The two approaches are drastically different.

Now you may say, the Jackal failed and died. Yes, and do you know why?

Because the police breached his client's security and he was betrayed. It was entirely his client's fault.

This difference is like in the movie *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* in which Allan Quatermain, the Sean Connery character, asks US secret agent, Tom Sawyer...

A.Q.: Can I teach you how to shoot?

T.S.: I know how to shoot.

A.Q.: Well yeah, in the American way. You keep shooting and hope you hit something.

Alan, just like the Jackal, is a sniper with a “One shot one kill” mantra. Tom is a gunslinger who shoots for the sake of shooting, and as long as he hits something, anything, he’s happy.

There is a huge difference in the weapons of the gunslinger and the sniper.



The gunslinger’s Remington 1100 Classic Field

Vs



The sniper’s Remington M24A2

Gunslingers like using shotguns like Remington 1100 Classic Field, Remington’s world-renowned 20-gauge shotgun.

This gun fires normal cartridges from a smoothbore barrel. In the cartridge there are many shots and after firing, these shots fly in a general direction. The shots cover a wide area, hitting some ducks, trees, window frames, park rangers, stray cats, wandering grandmas and maybe even some elephants on their paths.

The accuracy is not exactly world-class. It’s not Remington’s fault. These are the innate characters of shotguns. And there is not a sausage, or even duck liver pate, Remington can do about it.

By contrast, snipers use sniper rifles like the Remington M24A2, used by the US Special Forces.

The first thing you may notice is that it’s not merely a rifle but a weapon system.

Instead of cartridges, it fires bullets from a bored barrel, which drastically increases accuracy. Actually with this rifle, you can almost shoot off the bollocks of a fly from 1,000 yards without raising a sweat.

With the shotgun, you have to be a pretty good shot to hit an elephant from 100 yards.

The rifle is much more accurate, but it comes at a price.

In spite of the rifle and shotgun examples, I’d like to discourage you from shooting your prospects. Dead clients have a hard time to do business with us. I found this out a good few years ago as a gravedigger. It’s always the relatives who paid the bills. And clients never gave us references and testimonials.

The price tag on the Remington shotgun is around \$700US. And while I don’t know the exact price of the M24A2, I’m sure that for the price of the Leupold scope alone you can buy a few 1100 shotguns. So, there is a significant difference in upfront investment.

But when we translate this difference in accuracy, and effectiveness into long-term return on investment, the investment in the rifle is worthwhile. And it's this long-term success that you have to consider as your company consists of...

Some copywriters, like gunslingers, just want to write the copy and then put it on the market.

Some other copywriters, like snipers, meticulously plan their actions. They interview key people and digest preponderance of company- and market information before they write even one single word.

And when a "gunslinger" client hires a "sniper" copywriter by mistake, or vice versa, then clashes are unavoidable. They have drastically different mindsets that are likely to destroy their collaboration.

Test To The Nth Degree

After a few conversations with copywriters, you can differentiate between "creative" copywriters and "analytical" ones.

Creative ones are eager to write the copy and if it flops, they quickly write the next version. All in all, they are not much for testing.

Analytical copywriters don't even start writing until they get detailed analytics on their clients' existing copy. And when they start writing, they test everything they can. They test headlines, opening paragraphs, images, prices and many other factors.

Do you know that the headline alone can make as high as 22-times difference in response?

Sometimes in the early 1900s, Sherwin Cody was promoting his 100% Self-correcting Course in the English Language. He used the headline of "**Do You Make These Mistakes in English?**" Since then, this has been one of the most successful ads.

Before that version, he had used the headline of "**Do You Make Mistakes in English?**"

Everything except the "These". The ad without the "These" was a total disaster.

And if you end up with an analytical copywriter, make sure you don't rush her. Let her do her best work, so she can amaze you with the response.

Granted, copywriting takes quite a bit of time as is. Couple that with painstaking testing, and you might feel that you die before the campaign hits the market.

No you won't. You will see the campaign properly implemented, and you and your executives may end up dancing naked on the boardroom table with bottles of Jack Daniels in hands, celebrating the campaign's success and blessing the day when you engaged this seemingly anal retentive copywriter.

B2B Or B2C. Does It Really Matter?

There are some differences between B2B (Business To Business) and B2C (Business To Consumer) copywriters, simply because there are some essential differences between the B2B and B2C buying process, hence the copy.

In general, B2C copy is more emotional than B2B copy, because in the B2B world subject matter experts spend their companies' money. In the B2C world laypeople spend their own money.

B2C copy uses lots of emotional hot button pounding. B2B copy uses more reasoning and scientific references.

B2B buyers have refined bullshit detectors.

In the B2B world you're facing sophisticated and professionally skilled buyers who are looking for one thing above everything else: Return On Investment. And they don't care how cheap your stuff is, unless and until you can "show them the money".

B2B buyers are not shopping. They are ready to buy to solve specific problems.

B2B sales are complex and expensive, so transactions can take quite a bit of time to come to fruition. Actually, some 50% of all prospects take longer than 12 months to make a decision.

In B2B sales, decision-making is done in the absence of salespeople. It's not the typical B2C "closing the sale" type activity.

Above \$10,000, the B2B sale can involve as many as 22 advisors, evaluators and decision-makers on the buyer's side alone. These people discuss lots of things among themselves in which they don't want to involve salespeople, which means salespeople can't influence the buying process the same way they can in B2C situations.

B2B buyers have to justify every purchase to their superiors. They can't just go on shopping sprees as B2C shoppers.

The B2B sale is almost always more than a transaction. The sale requires post-sales support and sometimes long-term handholding.

B2B buyers digest all relevant information because they want to make the best choice.

B2B buyers buy both for personal and company benefit. B2B buyers acquire merchandise to benefit their companies. This means the merchandise must make or save money or save time for the company. But B2B buyers also buy for their own benefits. As humans, we all are selfish. Buyers want to improve their personal situations in their companies by making the right buying decisions.

"Using this IT system can save money for the company and make me look like a hero in my bosses' eyes."

B2B buyers are scared too. When B2C shoppers make mistakes, they lose a bit of money. When B2B buyers make mistakes, the company loses some money, but even worse, their colleagues

regard them as idiots. Upon making a mistake, B2B buyers lose face, which is riskier than losing money. And B2B buyers also have their jobs to protect.

If you hire a B2C copywriter for your B2B copy, you can end up with contrived headlines, like...

"How to Control the Mind of Your Prospects And Influence Them to Buy What You're Selling."

or

"These Ain't Your Granddaddy's Closing Techniques, Boy!"

These are 24 of the most ruthless tactics -- kept under wraps for years -- that can turn even your most hard-nosed prospects into cash-generating customers.

These headlines and this opening are fine in the B2C world (although they are far too slimy for my taste), but it can bury your reputation in the B2B arena.

So, just be careful.

Summary

Let's remember that anyone who graduates from medical school is called a doctor regardless of whether he's graduated at the top of the class or at the bottom of the class after multiple re-takes of exams.

Copywriting is the same.

There are pros and there are joes

In the world of spying they are...



Johnny English

and



James Bond

On the surface they look exactly the same. Impeccable exterior, great hairstyle, black tuxedo, snow white shirt, expertly tied bow tie and the same Walther PPK pistol.

And here the similarities end. When you observe them at work, then you start seeing the difference. James Bond tends to sort things out wherever he goes, whereas Johnny English tends to add to the chaos wherever he goes.

And in the world of police investigation, we have...



Inspector Jacques Clouseau

and



Inspector Hercule Poirot

The inept and loudmouth Clouseau and the quiet, unassuming Poirot.

As Oscar Wilde put it many years ago...

"Some cause happiness wherever they go; others, whenever they go."

The same applies to copywriters too.

There are lots of Johnny English calibre copywriters and some James Bond-grade copywriters. They offer different, although seemingly similar, services, at different prices.

And buyers decide whether they need a cheap Clouseau or an effective Poirot.

About The Author

Since 1998, after a 16-year industrial stint as an electronics/computer engineer, project manager and technical buyer, Tom "Bald Dog" Varjan has been working with privately held information technology companies and independent IT professionals to market and sell their complex, high-ticket and hard-to-explain IT solutions to high-end, sophisticated clients, using crisp, clear and compelling sales copy, so his clients don't have to rely on the haphazard and unpredictable nature of using armies of salespeople and don't have to use ugly, filthy, mind-numbing cold-prospecting grunt work to acquire clients. For more information, you can visit Tom's website at <http://www.ITBusinessWriter.com>