

10 PERSUASIVE COPYWRITING TECHNIQUES

The Only Techniques You'll Ever Need for Grabbing Attention and Turning it into Interest, Desire, Trust, and Action

Seth Czerepak

VQ SUCCESS

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Introduction: The Golden Thread

Everything in Copywriting Depends on This

It would be nice if our prospects woke up in the morning saying:

"It's a great day to spend money! I'm going to pay top dollar for Seth Czerepak's Marketing Course today! I know Seth's competitor has a course that's only a fraction of the price. But Seth's course is worth the extra money, and much more! Now, where's my credit card?"

Obviously, this isn't how people go from being strangers to becoming loyal customers.

Our prospects start out as complete strangers who have never heard of our specific product or service. Our job is to turn them into loyal customers, or at least into email or social media subscribers so we can convert them over time.

Most marketing campaigns try to lead people straight to one of these two outcomes, losing truckloads of valuable leads in the process. This happens because their marketing strategy isn't aligned with the stages of awareness that a modern prospect goes through as they discover a problem, research solutions, compare brands, and make a buying decision.
We call this series of stages the buyer's journey. When we build a marketing strategy based on these stages, I call it "Angle Selling." To do this successfully, we need to understand the psychology behind these stages. The stages are based on a prospect's knowledge, assumptions, and expectations about four key things:

- The PROBLEM your product or service solves.
- The ALTERNATIVE solution(s) to the problem.
- The TYPE of product or service you offer.
- Your specific BRAND of the product or service.

Let's take two examples, one B2C example and one B2B example.

Psychology of The B2C Buyer's Journey

For our B2C example, let's assume you sell a natural supplement that helps active men between 40 and 55 to overcome reactionary arthritis. The stages of your buyer's journey will be based on your prospect's awareness (or lack of) about the following four things:

- THE PROBLEM: reactionary arthritis.
- THE ALTERNATIVES: prescription or OTC drugs.
- PRODUCT TYPE: natural supplements.
- YOUR BRAND: your signature supplement(s).

For example, your prospect might have minor pain in their joints but shrug it off as something that will eventually go away. These prospects will ignore any content attempting to educate them about why prescription or OTC drugs won't fix their reactionary arthritis.

They aren't looking for solutions or even researching the problem because they're unaware of how personal, critical, and urgent the problem is. This defines Stage #1 of the Buyer's Journey, or the "Indifferent" stage.

You'll also have prospects who know that they have the first signs of reactionary arthritis and who know how personal, critical, and urgent it is. These prospects are highly likely to be searching for solutions to the problem. So, they'll be receptive to educational content about how prescription or OTC drugs will fail to fix their reactionary arthritis. This defines Stage #2 of the Buyer's Journey, or the "Curious" stage.

You'll also have prospects who are aware of the risks of using prescription or OTC drugs to treat reactionary arthritis and are shopping for the best natural supplement.
These prospects won't be interested in educational content about how serious reactionary arthritis is or why prescription or OTC drugs are an inadequate solution. They've already passed through those stages of awareness.

They will, however, be highly receptive to messages about why your brand is the most relevant, superior, and unique natural supplement for men their age who want to rid themselves of reactionary arthritis. This represents Stage #3 of the Buyer's Journey, or the "Comparing" stage.

Most marketing messages (online and offline) only target prospects in this stage. This is because most marketers either don't know about Angle Selling or are too busy to build a multi-stage strategy around it. This is why online marketing seems so competitive for most marketers. Once you break out of this crowd, you'll be amazed at the difference it makes in your response rates and your ROI.

It's impossible to overstate the difference this will make in your results. By defining your Buyer Persona and applying the five stages of The Buyer's Journey, you'll connect with your prospects long before your competitors even have a chance.

By the time your prospects reach Stage #4 they'll be much more likely to choose you over a competitor and to be happy about paying a higher price for what they see as a superior product or service.

Stage #4 of the Buyer's Journey is the "Negotiation" stage. These prospects have decided that your product or service is the best solution for their available problem. They just haven't bought yet.

Psychology of The B2B Buyer's Journey

For our B2B example, let's assume you're marketing staff recruiting services to software development startups. The stages of your buyer's journey will be based on your prospect's knowledge, assumptions, and expectations about one or more of the following four things:

- THE PROBLEM: high employee turnover.
- THE ALTERNATIVE(S): in-house recruiting team.
- PRODUCT TYPE: recruiting services.
- YOUR BRAND: hiring you as a recruiter.

As with our B2C example, some prospects will have high employee turnover, but be unaware of how relevant, critical and urgent the problem is. These are Stage #1 (Indifferent) prospects. Other prospects will be aware of the problem, but exploring multiple solutions, which may or may not include recruiting services. These are Stage #2 (Curious) prospects.

We will also have prospects who are aware of the problem and who have decided that hiring a recruiting service is their best solution. Other prospects will be shopping for your TYPE of product/service or even comparing you to a list of direct competitors. These are Stage #3 (Comparing) prospects.

Finally, we will have prospects who have decided that your recruiting services are the best available solution, but who haven't yet paid money to hire you. These are Stage #4 (Negotiating) prospects.

The final stage, of course, is Stage #5, and this is when your prospect has become a client. This is where the Buyer's Journey transitions to the Customer Journey, which we'll discuss later.

Summary of the Buyer's Journey

The following summary of The Buyer's Journey is based on the B2B example we just discussed:

- Stage #1 (Indifferent): Prospects either won't be aware of how costly their high employee turnover rate is, or they'll shrug it off as just something startups go through. Your job is to get content in front of them that educates them about how devastating this problem will be if they don't address it soon.

- Stage #2 (Curious): Prospects will be aware of how costly their employee turnover rate is. However, they might be trying to build an in-house recruiting team to solve the problem or researching some other alternative. Your job is to get content in front of them that educates them about the hidden risks of trying to handle this in-house.
- Stage #3 (Comparing): Prospects will be actively searching for a professional recruiter to hire. Your job will be to get content in front of them that positions you as the most relevant, superior, and unique recruiter they can hire.
- Stage #4 (Negotiating): Prospects have decided to hire you as a recruiter, but they haven't actually written you a check, signed the contract, or paid the first invoice. The earlier you connect with your prospect in the buyer's journey, the more likely they'll be to take this final step.
- Stage #5 (Committed): Prospects have now become your customers. This is where the Buyer's Journey transitions to the Customer Journey, which we'll discuss later in this book.

Once you know how to communicate with your prospects during EACH of these stages, AND lead them from one to the other, you'll have x-ray vision of how to create high-converting content marketing messages. These messages can be in the form of blogs, explainer videos, classified ads, podcasts, and much more.

Now that you're familiar with the concept of Angle Selling, let's unpack the Five Stages of The Buyer's Journey one at a time.

Awareness Stage #1: Indifferent

An Indifferent prospect is anyone who matches your buyer persona and who has the problem that your product or service solves. However, they aren't actively searching for a solution, because they're either:

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- Unaware that they actually have the problem.
- Unaware of how relevant, critical, and urgent the problem is.

This lack of awareness makes them indifferent to any messages about the problem or how to solve it.

They won't be searching for information about the problem, and they certainly won't care about how you compare with your competition. Your job as a content marketer is to show them how relevant, critical, and urgent their problem is. Before we unpack this idea, here are some examples of Stage #1 Prospects:

A 52-year-old man who is 100lbs overweight. He has several noticeable symptoms of early heart disease. One being swollen ankles. However, he thinks these symptoms are just minor annoyances and typical of a man his age.

A newly married couple who is having a big fight once every three or four weeks. However, they assume that this is just something new couples go through and that it will work itself out in time.

A business owner whose tax records and payroll are a mess but who is too busy to worry about it, and doesn't consider it to be an urgent problem anyway.

Notice that in all these examples, the prospect is either unaware that they actually have a problem or they're unaware of how relevant, critical, and urgent the problem is. By "relevant," I mean that they are unaware (or in denial) about how personal the problem is to them. Psychologists call this "optimism bias," a cognitive bias that causes someone to believe they're less likely to experience a negative event compared to other people.

For example, most smokers don't believe they'll get lung cancer by smoking. They may be keenly aware of how critical lung cancer is, but they don't consider it relevant to them. If they do get it, they're likely to react with the "I never thought this would happen to me" attitude or even with denial.

Most marketers don't even bother with Stage #1 Prospects, which is a mistake. They're missing the opportunity to capture the prospect's attention at the earliest stage of the buyer's journey. The earlier you get on your prospect's radar, the more of a head start you'll have on your competitors once the prospect does decide to spend money on a solution.

You do this by reaching out to them with messages that raise their awareness of three things:

- How Relevant Their Problem Is.
- How Critical Their Problem Is.
- How Urgent Their Problem Is.

If they're aware of how critical the problem is, optimism bias could still have them thinking that the problem will "work itself out in time."

If they're aware of how relevant the problem is to them, but don't consider it critical, they won't be motivated to look for a solution. If they're aware of how relevant and critical the problem is, but don't consider it urgent, they'll put off dealing with it. This is why your Stage #1 marketing messages must hit all three of these hot buttons.

The details of how to do this are beyond the scope of this introduction, but we'll cover them in detail later in this book. I also discuss this extensively in The Antifragile Sales System.

I know this seems like a lot to absorb, but Angle Selling is not a topic you learn and master overnight. Like anything worth doing, it takes hard work, patience, and practice. The good news is

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that if you master these techniques, you will have a huge advantage over all your competitors who haven't bothered.

How do you reach a Stage #1 Prospect if they aren't actively looking for a solution? You have to know where they're already finding trustworthy content on other topics related to their problem. I explain this in more detail in the final section of this introduction.

To summarize this section, Stage #1 (Indifferent) Prospects have the problem that your product or service solves. They experience the symptoms (early or progressing) of this problem in their everyday life. However, they're either unaware that they have the underlying problem, or they're unaware of how relevant, critical, and urgent it is.
Your job is to know how they experience these symptoms and to raise their awareness of how relevant, critical, and urgent the problem is. Once you've achieved this, they become a Stage #2 Prospect and require a new messaging strategy.

Awareness Stage #2: Curious

A Curious prospect is anyone who matches your buyer persona, knows that they have the problem your product or service solves, and knows how relevant, critical, and urgent it is. They'll be looking for information on either:

- How to solve their problem themselves.
- How to get help solving the problem.

It's a common mistake to assume these prospects are ready to hear about your product or service.

They may not even be looking for your TYPE of product or service. If you try to sell them on either of the above points, you'll look like another marketer pushing solutions instead of a trustworthy expert. Stage #2 Prospects will be actively searching for information and insights on how to solve their problem. Here are few examples of Stage #2 Prospects and the keywords they might be typing into search engines:

- A 52-year-old man who is 100lbs overweight and has heart problems might type in "heart-healthy foods," "exercises for heart health," "weight loss for men over 50," or "meditations for a healthy heart."
- A couple having marital problems might type in "better communication in marriage," or "save my marriage," or "wife won't have sex with me."
- A business owner whose tax records and payroll are a mess might type in "best way to manage payroll," "small business accounting tips" or "how to manage payroll for my small business."

- A salesperson who's only making $40,000.00 a year and living paycheck to paycheck might type in "closing techniques," or "how to close more sales," or "how to overcome objections."

Notice that these prospects aren't (yet) focused on a specific TYPE of product or service. If you put a "buy now for a limited time offer" or a "here's why we're better than our competitors" message in front of them, they'll dismiss it as irrelevant to their search, or just another junk advertisement. Thankfully, this is the exact mistake most of your competitors will make.
Many of your competitors will also neglect these prospects for the sake of chasing the low-hanging fruit of Stage #3 Prospects. This leaves a golden opportunity for you to swoop in and start building a relationship with them before most of your competitors even have a chance.

You do this by reaching out to them with messages that will:

- Change Their Perspective of The Problem.
- Debunk The Competing Solutions.
- Sell Them On Your Type of Product or Service.

The order is very important here, for a few reasons. Stage #2 Prospects will have a list of misconceptions and biases (negative and positive) about their problem, the available solutions, and even the type of product or service you sell.

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#1 Change Their Perspective of the Problem

Most of these misconceptions and biases will be based on their misunderstanding of the problem's cause. By educating them about the real cause of the problem, you change their perception of the problem, and position yourself as an authority on the topic. This makes it much easier to successfully debunk the competing solutions.

Once the competing solutions are debunked, you have an open door to sell your prospect on the superiority of your TYPE of product or service. If you try to do this in any other order, you'll be swimming against a riptide of misconceptions and biases about the problem, its competing solutions, and even about you as the content publisher. This is why most marketing campaigns fail to persuade Stage #2 Prospects or even keep their interest.

#2 Debunk The Competing Solutions

To clarify this point, let me define the term "competing solutions," and explain what I mean by a product or service "type." Starting with competing solutions, most problems have a list of available solutions on the market. Some even have do-it-yourself solutions.

A Competing Solution is any solution that your prospects are willing to try themselves or to pay money for. Some of these solutions will be ineffective, or even dangerous. Others may be pure marketing gimmicks, and others will be legitimate. Regardless of how you see it, if your prospect considers a solution worth looking into, it qualifies as a competing solution. It's a common mistake to simply ignore it because you don't consider it illegitimate or not a threat. Your prospect decides who the competition is, not you.

#3 Sell Them on Your Type of Product or Service

Your product or service type is the general category to which your product or service belongs. For example, if you're a marriage counselor, marriage counseling is your service type, your Stage #2 Prospect might be someone who is trying to heal their marriage after an affair.

As much as they need your services, they might not be sold on the idea of marriage counseling. They might even have negative misconceptions or biases toward the idea of counseling in general. If you jump right into a message about how you're the best marriage counselor in town (or even the world) before they're sold on the concept of marriage counseling, you'll lose a lot of traction with a Stage #2 Prospect. They might also be exploring books, seminars, couples retreats, sex therapy, or support groups. They will likely have a list of misconceptions and biases (positive and negative) about these solutions as well. You'll need to clear up these misconceptions, educate your product about the disadvantages of these alternatives, and create a path to position your TYPE of product or service as the best solution. This means boldly and honestly debunking any competing solutions as ineffective, or dangerous, or illegitimate. If a competing solution is legitimate, safe, and reasonably effective, your job is to validate its positive points, but position your product or service type as the superior solution. As with the Stage #1 techniques, we'll cover the details of how to do this later in this book. I also explore this topic extensively in The Antifragile Sales System.

To summarize this section, Stage #2 (Curious) Prospects have the problem that your product or service solves, and they know they have it. They experience the symptoms (early or progressing) of

this problem in their everyday life and they're aware of how relevant, critical, and urgent it is. That's why they're searching for solutions.

Your job is to change their perception of the problem by revealing its true cause, debunk the competing solutions, and position your product or service TYPE as the best. Once you've achieved this, they become a Stage #3 Prospect and require a new messaging strategy.

Awareness Stage #3: Comparing

A Comparing prospect is sold on your type of product or service, and is now comparing specific brands or service providers. Your job is to sell them on three things:

- The Relevance of Your Brand.
- The Superiority of Your Brand.
- The Uniqueness of Your Brand.

Stage #3 Prospects are good and bad for the exact same reason: they're already sold on the type of product or service you sell.

This is good because they're closer to the end of the buyer's journey, and can be turned more quickly into customers. This is bad because it makes them more prone to price shopping and other annoyances that we'll discuss later in this book. It's also bad because most marketing campaigns focus primarily on these prospects, making it much more competitive to reach and convert them.

The good news is, the more oblivious your competitors are to the Buyer's Journey concept, the more likely they'll be to focus all their marketing efforts on Stage #3 Prospects. You can exploit this weakness by reaching prospects while they're still in Stage #1 or Stage #2 and building a reputation as an expert before they even start comparing you with competitors.

Here are some examples of Stage #3 Prospects:

- A couple who has marital problems and has decided that working with a marriage counselor could save their marriage. They are likely to be typing terms like "best marriage counselor in [CITY NAME]," or "[CITY NAME] marriage counselor," "marriage counselor [CITY NAME] reviews," or "marriage counselor near me" into search engines.
- A 52-year-old man who is 100lbs overweight and having heart problems has decided to work with an endocrinologist. He is likely to be typing terms like "best endocrinologist in [CITY NAME]," or "[CITY NAME] endocrinologist," or "endocrinologist [CITY NAME] reviews," or "endocrinologist near me" into search engines.
- A business owner whose tax records and payroll are a mess has decided that she needs a CPA. She is likely to be typing terms like "small business CPA," or "small business

accounting services," or "small business accountant for hire," or "small business accountant client reviews" into search engines.

- A salesperson who's only making $40,000.00 a year and living paycheck to paycheck has decided that he needs a good home study course on building rapport and closing skills. He is likely to be typing terms like "best sales training course," or "best sales training course online," or "sales training course closing skills" or "sales training course customer reviews" into search engines.

Notice how all these prospects are sold on a specific type of product or service, and looking for the best brand or service provider. However, it's a mistake to assume that Stage #3 Prospects are ready to buy or even to talk to a salesperson. Whether they're consciously aware of it or not, every Stage #3 Prospect is evaluating you, and your competitors to see how you compare on three things: Relevance, Uniqueness, and Superiority.

Before we unpack these three points, let's deal with the single most common problem people face when trying to convert Stage #3 Prospects: price shopping.

If you're getting a lot of price shoppers, it's easy to assume that they represent the majority of the market and that you have to cater to them if you want to stay in business. This is one of the most crippling paradigms you can have as a marketer or salesperson.

It's especially common for people who are just starting out and who feel like they need to "build up their customer base" before they can raise their prices.

This rarely works out the way they hope, and with good reason. Lower prices mean less money to invest back into improving your product or service. It also means less money for hiring quality employees and contractors.

More importantly, it means less money for quality marketing, which creates a decline in leads and in lead quality. This combination of factors traps your brand in the entrepreneurial purgatory of feast or famine income cycles. It makes you highly vulnerable to economic downturns and forces you to deal with lower-quality vendors.

This is why my general attitude toward price shoppers is that you should do your best to keep them from even contacting your business. If you diligently apply the traffic strategy I outline in The Antifragile Sales System, you'll be consistently reaching Stage #1 and Stage #2 Prospects before they become Stage #3 Prospects. By the time they do, you will have positioned your brand as an authority on the prospect's problem, the competing solutions, and how these solutions compare to the type of solution you offer.

If you apply the Stage #3 techniques laid out in this section, your prospect will see you as the most relevant, unique, and superior option, and be happy to pay a little more for quality. If not, it's likely

that you're dealing with someone who is more concerned with getting the lowest price than they are with getting the best quality. You might also be dealing with someone who expects to get both, which is often a sign that they're more trouble than they're worth.

One of the most exciting benefits of content marketing is its ability to consistently attract higher-quality prospects. Higher quality prospects know the difference between your solution and the competing solutions. They also know that the differences between you and your competitor go beyond price and that it's worth it to pay more for a superior product or service.

Now that I'm done with my rant on price shoppers, let's unpack the three selling points for Stage #3 Prospects.

#1 The RELEVANCE of Your Brand

Relevance addresses the first question Stage #3 Prospects use to evaluate your product or service: "Is this the best solution for someone like me?" The words "someone like me," are the key to understanding and answering this question. The prospect is essentially asking how well-suited your product or service is for a person like them.

When we get into brand and buyer personas later in this book, you'll learn to define a B2C audience according to their generation, social status, gender group, education level, and lifestyle. These B2C buyer persona traits help you target and attract customers who have these traits in common.

If your incoming prospects see that your product or service has worked for people with whom they share similar buyer persona traits, they'll see your solution as a more relevant fit for people like them. The same principle applies to B2B prospects, but the question will look more like this: "Is this the best solution for a company like ours?" The words "a company like ours" are the key to understanding this question. Again, the prospect is
asking how well suited your product or service is for a business like theirs. Later in this book, you'll learn to define a B2B audience according to their industry, business model, company size, financials, decision-maker, buying process and even the buyer persona traits of the decision-maker.

These B2B buyer persona traits help you target and attract businesses and decision-makers who share these traits in common. Just as with your B2C prospects, if your incoming prospects see that your product or service has worked for businesses who share similar buyer persona traits, they'll see your solution as a more relevant fit for their business.

Stage #3 Prospects also want to know how relevant your solution is to their experience of the problem. Here are a few examples of what I mean:

- A couple who has marital problems prefers to work with a marriage counselor who has experience (or specialized training) in working with couples their age, or with similar marriage problems (a recent affair).
- A 52-year-old man who is 100lbs overweight and having heart problems prefers to work with an endocrinologist who has experience (or specialized training) working with men his age who have heart problems.
- A business owner whose tax records and payroll prefers to work with a CPA who has experience (or specialized training) working with businesses in her industry.
- A salesperson who's only making $40,000.00 a year and living paycheck to paycheck prefers to buy a home study course taught (or created) by someone in the same industry as him.

Bottom line, modern consumers are so accustomed to personalized and customized products and services, they've come to expect them. When given a choice between a specialized or a one-size-fits-all solution, the specialized option will always appear more valuable.

#2 The SUPERIORITY of Your Brand

Superiority addresses the second question Stage #3 Prospects use to evaluate your product or service:

"How do I know this will work?"

This prospect is essentially asking how effective your product or service will be for solving their problem. More importantly, they want to know whether your solution will work better than your competitors'.

When I was managing sales teams back in the corporate world, I tested dozens of sales pitch variations to find out how prospects answer this question. I have also experimented with thousands of messaging strategies across dozens of industries while working as a freelance copywriter. Without a doubt, a prospect's answer to this question boils down to four factors (listed from most important to least).

- Results: successes your customers have had using your product or service.
- Reviews: what other customers have said about your product or service.
- Endorsements: what industry experts have said about your product or service.
- Experience: years in business and/or number of customers served.

If your Stage #3 marketing content nails all four of these points, you've said enough to settle this question. Prospects who remain uneasy about whether your solution will work are most likely concerned about something else altogether. We'll talk about how to deal with this when we get to the section on Stage #4 Prospects.

If your brand is new and you have little or no results, experience, reviews, or endorsements to brag about yet, focus your Stage #3 messages on the other two selling points, relevance, and uniqueness. We'll talk about how to solve this problem when we get to the transition from Buyer's Journey to Customer Journey later in this book.

#3 The UNIQUENESS of Your Brand

Uniqueness addresses the third question Stage #3 Prospects use to evaluate your product or service:

"Can I get the same thing somewhere else?"

This is based on one of the most misunderstood concepts in marketing, your unique selling proposition.
Unique Selling Proposition: (USP) the one thing that makes your brand, product, or service uniquely superior to your competitors.
What makes your brand, product, or service uniquely superior to your competitor? Before you answer, here's a list of the worst (and sadly, the most common) responses to this question:

- "We really care about our customers."
- "We pride ourselves on quality and service."
- "We guarantee your satisfaction."
- "We stand by our product."

These are not Unique Selling Propositions. They're vague marketing cliches that any of your competitors can use to promote themselves. Sure, maybe you can back up your claim better. So what? Your prospect doesn't know that. They can't. They haven't even used your product or service yet, and their perception is what matters. Your USP should never require a prospect to know something that only you and your customers can know.

Your Unique Selling Proposition needs to show your prospect that they can't get the same thing from your competitor. They need to know that if they don't do business with you, they will miss out on the one thing that they can only get from using your solution. Your USP clarifies what this one unique thing is, why how it will benefit your prospect when they become a customer.
Here are three rules for creating your Unique Selling Proposition:

- Specific: Your USP shouldn't include abstract words or phrases which are open to interpretation. For example, words like "service," "quality," "satisfaction," and "excellence," are all abstractions that can be easily used by your competitor. They are also vague, and vague doesn't equal value. Your USP should use concrete words and statements to make claims that

can be objectively verified by your existing customers (in their reviews) or by your prospect once they become a customer.

- Beneficial: Your USP must promise a specific (not abstract) benefit to your prospect. Claims about rewards you've won, how long you've been in business, who you've worked with, who has endorsed you, or how many charities you support are good, and you should use them. But they don't mean a damn thing unless you promise a specific "before and after" benefit to your prospect.
- Unique: Your USP should have at least one claim to something your competitors cannot offer to your prospects without legal consequences. This includes patented formulas, copyrighted materials, or other legally protected features of your product or your service offering. This is where most companies fall flat on their face because they think being "better" is enough. Being unique isn't about being better. It's about being better in a way that no one else can duplicate.

Here's a simple example of a USP that does all three of the above:

"Our patented Nanotech formula gives you three times faster absorption, relieving foot pain in 30 to 90 seconds."

Notice that this USP makes SPECIFIC claims by saying "three times faster absorption," and "30 to 90 seconds." It also promises a BENEFIT (relieving foot pain) and ties it to a specific delivery time (30 to 90 seconds). The claim "patented Nanotech formula" also assures the prospect that they're getting a UNIQUE product that our competitors can't legally duplicate.

Of course, you need to make sure you can back up your claims, which is why you should avoid abstractions. In my experience, abstract words and statements are just a way of making promises that you can't be objectively held accountable to. Specific claims, however, are less open for interpretation. They must be backed up with evidence (customer reviews, certifications, clinical studies, etc.). If your USP makes a specific and unique promise to your prospect, and if you can back it up, you'll
have a formidable advantage over all your competitors who have a non-existent, or poorly conceived, USP. We unpack this topic in more detail later in this book. To summarize this section,

Stage #3 (Comparing) Prospects have the problem that your product or
service solves, and they know they have it. They experience the symptoms (early or progressing) of

this problem in their everyday life and they're aware of how relevant, critical, and urgent it is. They're also sold on your product or service type, and are now looking for the best provider.

Your job is to sell them on the Relevance, Superiority, and Uniqueness of your solution. Once you've achieved this, they become a Stage #4 Prospect, and require a new messaging strategy.

Awareness Stage #4: Negotiating

This stage of The Buyer's Journey is based on one of my universal rules of sales and marketing:

"The sale isn't made until the bill is paid."

Negotiating Prospects have compared you with competitors and are sold on your product or service. They just haven't taken the final step by placing an order or signing a contract.
Here are some examples of Stage #4 Prospects:

- A couple who has severe marital problems has decided that working with a marriage counselor could save their marriage. They've decided to contact a specific counselor and talk about getting started.
- A 52-year-old man who is 100lbs overweight and having heart problems has decided to work with an endocrinologist. He's found an endocrinologist he likes and is ready to set an appointment.
- A business owner whose tax records and payroll are a mess has decided to hire a virtual CPA firm. She has found a firm that she likes and has asked them to fax her a service contract.
- A salesperson who's only making $40,000.00 a year and living paycheck to paycheck has found a home study course on overcoming objections. He plans to buy it when his next commission check comes in.

Notice that all of these prospects have settled on a specific product or service provider. They just haven't made a formal commitment yet. Anyone with sales experience knows that the longer a prospect remains in this stage, the less likely they are to make this commitment. A Stage #4 Prospects can also change their mind at the last minute and go to your competitor.
Your job is to close the deal as soon as possible, using messages that:

- Address Common Objections.
- Tell Them What Will Happen Next.
- Give Them a Reason to Act Now.

If you do these right, your Stage #4 messages won't even look like marketing. Let's unpack these three points one at a time and see why.

#1 Address Common Objections

A Stage #4 Prospect can only have one (or both) of the following types of objections:

- Objections unrelated to your product or service.
- Objections related to your product or service.

All other objections are a sign that your prospect doesn't belong in Stage #4 yet. For example, if your prospect is simply procrastinating, they need to be sold on how critical or urgent their problem is (Stage #1). If your prospect has objections about how effective your type of product or service is, they belong in Stage #2.
If they have objections about your prices or the general effectiveness of your product or service, they belong in Stage #3.

#2 Tell Them What Will Happen Next

This is where you tell your prospect exactly what will happen when they buy your product, sign your contract, or make the first deposit for your services. This serves two purposes.

First, it dissolves your prospects' fear of uncertainty by telling your prospect when and how their product or service will be delivered. Your prospect is more likely to buy now if they have some certainty about what to expect next, and when to expect it. The more money you're asking for, the truer this becomes. The clearer you are about what will
happen next, the less uncertainty and hesitancy your prospect will have about getting started. For example, let's assume you're a B2B content marketer selling ad placement services. Here's an example of a message you'd use to tell your prospect what's coming next:

"Once we've received your deposit, our research team will contact you within one business day to start your first ad campaign."

You can use this message anywhere that you explain your sign-up process. You can also include it in your email when you send them a PDF version of your contract, or even as part of the description on your first invoice. The point is to give them a quantifiable assurance of what will happen next.

For example, the above message tells them that your research team will contact them within "one business day." This sets a clear expectation and eliminates a lot of the uncertainty that comes with signing a contract or paying a deposit. You can do the same thing when selling a product.

For example, let's assume you're a B2C content marketer selling home made soaps online. Here's an example of a message you'd use to tell your prospect what's coming next:

"Once your order is complete, we'll email you a tracking number and update you when your order is shipped, along with an estimated delivery time."

You can use this message on your shopping cart page, your checkout page, and a slightly different version on your thank you page. This is how you reduce any last minute uncertainty and hesitancy your prospect might have about getting started.

The second thing this step does is to reduce premature service cancellations and refund requests by disclosing any additional actions, costs, or delays your customer can expect. In my experience, a lot of marketers and salespeople are afraid to disclose these details because they think it will stop their prospect from buying.

This is an irrational belief that leads to high refund and cancellation rates. Ironically, it's also the cause of about half of all abandoned purchases online. Cart abandonment statistics tell us that about seventy-five to eighty percent of online shopping carts are abandoned before a purchase is made.

The two leading causes of this are: unexpected shipping costs (accounting for 25% of abandoned carts), and having to create a new user account (accounting for 22% of abandoned carts).

These statistics prove that failing to disclose what will happen next is far more costly than disclosing it. The fear that disclosing these details will cost sales is irrational and contrary to the above statistics. This is true both online and offline and in B2B and B2C selling situations alike. I saw this statistic play out when I managed sales teams in the corporate world. Sales reps with the highest cancellation rates and no-show rates were the least consistent in disclosing the "fine print" to the customer. This is why your Stage #4 content marketing message should tell your prospect exactly what will happen next.

Before we wrap up this point, let me say something about people abandoning their shopping cart because they were forced to create a new account. Instead of forcing your prospects to do this before they purchase, invite them to do it afterward. Give them an incentive, like a coupon, for doing so, but make sure they have a choice to opt out. This way, if they don't want to set up an account, you can still earn their business and collect an email for future followups.

#3 Give Them a Reason to Act Now

There's a smart way to do this, and there's a dumb way to do it. The dumb way is to use tired urgency tactics like expiring discounts, or phony claims about having only a limited supply of your product.

A good example of this is those webinar invitations with the laughable claim about a "limited number of seats." Another example is those long sales pages that claim to have a "limited supply" of an eBook or other downloadable product.

These phony appeals to urgency only work on low-quality prospects. Low-quality prospects are more likely to complain about trivial things, demand refunds (sometimes without returning the product), or to leave nasty reviews online. They are also likely to treat your "discounted" price as your real price. In my experience, there are two methods for creating urgency without looking like a snake oil salesman:

- **Method #1: Use Waiting Lists for Services**

If you have a good service, you will inevitably end up with a waiting list. In fact, I've advised many service providers to keep a limited staff on hand to ensure they have a waiting list for new clients.

If your prospect sees that you have a waiting list, they'll be less likely to procrastinate when an opening finally becomes available. Of course, I advise you to use this method responsibly. Don't claim to have a waiting list if you don't have one. It might take you a while to get to this point, but it's better to do it honestly than to try and fake it till you make it.
Once you have a waiting list, I suggest collecting a deposit from your prospect in order to secure their slot. Give them a limited time to pay the deposit and make it clear that if this time runs out, you'll need to move them to the end of your waiting list so you can give the next person a chance.

Create a simple message stating this, and use it everywhere that you explain your sign-up process. You can also include it in your email when you send them a PDF version of your contract, or even as part of the description on your first invoice. The point is to give them a legitimate reason not to procrastinate.

- **Method #2: Checkout Bonuses for Products**

A checkout bonus is any item that you add to your product checkout page. The prospect only gets the bonus item if they check out before leaving the page. If they leave the checkout page without buying, they lose the bonus.

I suggest making this an extra item (like a product, upgrade, add on, or product sample) as opposed to a coupon or discount. Discounts will only cheapen the perceived value of your product and create the expectation that the discounted price is the real price.

Bonuses, however, increase the perceived value of your prospect's purchase. You can also use bonuses to introduce your customer to products which were not included in their original order.
To summarize this section, Stage #4 (Negotiating) Prospects have the problem that your product or service solves, and they know they have it. They experience the symptoms (early or progressing) of this problem in their everyday life and they're aware of how relevant, critical, and urgent it is. They're also sold on your product or service type, and have decided to buy from you.
Your job is to address common objections, tell them EXACTLY what will happen next, and give them a reason to act now. We'll explore more strategies for doing this in the chapters ahead.

Final Thoughts

The strategies in this introduction will help tremendously in creating and implementing your content distribution and content creation plan. We'll unpack each of these stages in detail throughout this book, giving you the exact formulas and templates you need to create high-converting marketing messages for each stage of the buyer's journey.

This is the single most important subject for any modern marketer to study. This is why I've created my books and other supplementary materials on the topic. However, the best learning on this subject will happen as you start using these strategies in your content marketing and testing your prospects' responses.
For example in The Antifragile Sales System, I discuss three types of channels:

- Paid: channels where you pay to have your content published.
- Earned: channels where you earn the right to publish your content.
- Owned: channels where you own and control the means of distribution.

Each of these channel types will require its own messaging strategy. Ideally, you want to reach most of your Stage #4 Prospects and ALL of your Stage #5 prospects through owned channels. You might find that your earned content distribution channels are better for reaching Stage #1 and Stage #2 Prospects, while paid channels are best for reaching Stage #3 Prospects.
Don't assume that if a Stage #1 message doesn't work in one distribution channel it won't work in others. Test your messages in multiple channels and let your prospects' responses tell you which approach is best for each of your distribution channels. This will take time and diligence, but in

time you will gain a wealth of insight into how to reach your prospects and become a thought leader in your industry.

Remember, building an Antifragile Sales System isn't about getting rich quick. It's about creating a sustainable, scalable business that gets stronger with each challenge it faces. The strategies in this book will help you do exactly that.

Let's get started.



Technique #1: Relevance

Why Relevance Works

Relevance is the most important principle in marketing

Rubber Chicken Marketing consultants who couldn't define it in concrete terms, even if you held a gun to their head.

(Don't try that BTW, kind of illegal).

I'll give you a useful definition of relevance soon. First, let's talk about the problem we're out to solve (it's a big one).

Overmarketed and Misunderstood

We live in the most aggressively solicited society in history. Human attention is practically an economic currency. If you want to see what I mean, do some paid advertising online. Most platforms will tell you how much money you paid for just a few seconds of someone's attention. It's painful to look at these metrics when your marketing messages aren't connecting with your reader.

Before you make attention-grabbing statements, you need to make a connection. Otherwise, you're doing what I call "Pick-Up Line Marketing." Pick-Up Line Marketing is when you try to grab someone's attention by being clever. It makes no lasting connection, and you end up paying a lot of money for those few seconds of attention.

It's like when some insecure young dude sees a pretty young woman standing in line at the bakery. He immediately starts trying to think of something clever to say to her–something that will grab her attention or make her laugh. Finally, after a few minutes of sweaty-palmed brain-storming, he walks up to her with some Rubber Chicken pick-up line like this:

"Hey, one of my buddies and I are trying to settle a bet...do you consider kissing to be cheating?"

Unless he looks like Brad Pitt (in his prime), he probably won't get far with her. His "opener" is too random, and a little creepy. It's irrelevant to what's going on in her head at the moment. He would have done better with something like this:

"Ever tried the blueberry muffins?"

That's a RELEVANT conversation opener. It relates to her present experience and the conversation that's likely happening in her head. That's the big non-sexy "secret" to writing a headline or opener

that CONNECTS with your reader. That's also how you apply relevance. You connect with the conversation that's already present in your reader's mind.

Copywriting is all about getting your reader to absorb and respond to new information. Unless you make a connection first, your reader won't "get" any of the information in your message. They'll treat it like every other "hey, hey look over here!" marketing message that's competing for their attention.

People don't have time to pay attention to every message demanding their attention. Selective ignorance is practically a survival mechanism in the information age. It's as if we're all walking around inside our own little bubble.

As writers, we have a simple choice. First, we can try to break this trance. This is a hell of a lot of work, and even if we succeed, we still have to hold our reader's attention long enough to get the rest of our message into their head. The less relevant our headline or opener is, the harder it is to hold onto someone's attention once we have it.

The second choice is to step inside our reader's internal world and become the voice inside their head. We do this by opening our message with something that's relevant to what's already on our reader's mind–or bubbling just below the surface. When we do this, we're well-positioned to get the rest of our message into their head.

Pick-Up Line Marketing is for Rubber Chicken Copywriters who don't understand the difference between getting someone's attention and making a connection. The difference is Relevance.

Examples of Relevance

There are two types of relevance:

1. Semantic: your reader's internal dialog.
2. Emotional: the emotional frame of that dialog.

For example, imagine a parent whose teenager didn't come home last night. Their internal dialogue might sound like this:

- "Maybe they lost their phone and ran out of gas!"
- "I can't bear the thought of something happening to her."
- "She better not be with that boy she brought over last week!"

These are examples of semantic relevance. They match the internal dialog of our worried parents. But, what emotions are behind this internal dialog? What is this parent feeling in their nervous system as these thoughts race through their mind? Fear? Anger? Frustration? This is what I mean by

emotional relevance, which we'll cover in later techniques of this book. Bottom line, if your product or service solves a real problem (most do), you can bet on two things:

- Your prospects are thinking about that problem.
- Your prospects are feeling something when they think about it.

The thinking deals with semantic relevance, and the feeling deals with emotional relevance. You apply relevance by matching your message to both.

Relevance Example #1

Imagine our reader is an athlete. They work out six days a week to keep in peak shape. One day at the gym, they feel a slight pinching pain in the inner elbow of their right arm. They assume it will pass and continue their workout.

When they wake up the next day, the pain is worse. Day by day, it gets more painful. Six weeks later, they're in so much pain, they have to take a week off of training. After their week of rest is up, they return to the gym. A few days later, the pain is back.

They try ice packs, pain medications, stretching, and another method that they found watching YouTube videos. Nothing works. The pain seems permanent. Pretty soon, your reader is feeling this biting pain in their right elbow every time they pick up something heavier than a few pounds. It's devastating to their athletic performance. It's gnawing away at their confidence.

Then one day our reader is in a bookstore and they see this headline on the front of a magazine:

"What's This Pinching Pain in My Right Elbow?"

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #1 of the Buyer's Journey)

Would they read the article? You're damn right they would. Not because the headline is cool, clever, or even interesting. In fact, most people would pass this headline by without a second thought. If you were to write this headline and ask a non-copywriter what they think, they'd probably be unimpressed.

Yet, to our readers, this headline is pure gold. Why? Because it joins a conversation that's already happening in their mind. This is an example of semantic relevance. This is how we become the voice inside our reader's heads. Once we've done this, our next step is to add emotional relevance to our message.

Getting back to our example, imagine our reader is an amateur golfer and that their inner elbow pain is so severe, they can barely play anymore. When they do, they're embarrassed at how bad their game is getting. They don't enjoy it as much. Friends whom they once outplayed are now beating the hell out of them. This gives us a glimpse into the emotional context of their internal conversations about their elbow pain.

Now, imagine again that they see the headline mentioned above. They open the magazine and turn to the article, that starts out like this:

"What's This Pinching Pain in My Right Elbow?"

David loved golf. He played every weekend. Then one day at the gym, he felt a pinching pain in the inside of his right elbow. A year later, he had to make a choice... spend $10,000.00 on surgery, or give up golf for good.

"It felt like someone had grabbed a bundle of my nerves with a pair of vice pliers. I thought it would go away, but it didn't. Now, I can barely swing my club. I'm too embarrassed to even play anymore." If you love golfing, but elbow pain has taken the joy out of it, you'll breathe a sigh of relief when you hear what David is doing now.

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #1 of the Buyer's Journey)

Notice how we've applied semantic and emotional relevance. If our article is targeting men between 45 and 60 who love golf but suffer from Golfer's Elbow, this is our FIRST STEP to getting inside their heads. This is far more effective than the Pick-Up Line Marketing we talked about in the first section of this chapter. Again, it boils down to the two types of relevance:

1. Semantic: your reader's internal dialog.
2. Emotional: the emotional frame of that dialog.

Let's dig into one more example before I show you how to master this first persuasive copywriting technique.

Relevance Example #2

Imagine our reader is a 52-year-old man who is overweight. He's not worried about his size though. In fact, he assumes he's in pretty good health. However, his ankles have been swelling lately. At first,

he assumes it's a passing thing. A few weeks later, the swelling is still there. He's feeling more tired than usual. Then, he sees this post on a social media website:

Are Your Swollen Ankles A Warning Of A Coming Heart Attack?

Look at your right thumb. Now, try pressing that thumb into the soft area just below your kneecap.

Does it feel swollen?

Try this on both your ankles. Is one more swollen than the other? If so, here's why you could be in danger of a fatal heart attack...

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #1 of the Buyer's Journey)

What are the odds that our reader will finish reading that article? Pretty damn good. It applies semantic relevance by talking about our reader's swollen ankles. Notice also how it gets our reader involved by having him check his ankles. Then, we take his internal dialogue to the next level with this question:
"Does it feel swollen?"

The next line then applies emotional relevance by confirming our reader's fear that the swelling might be a sign of something serious. Again, there is nothing cool, clever, or even interesting about this headline and opening. It simply applies relevance, using the simple principles you've just learned.
Now, let's talk about how to apply this first persuasive copywriting technique.

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How to Apply Relevance

The smartest way to master relevance is by:

- Defining Your Buyer Persona.
- Defining Their Typical Day.
- Defining Their Internal Dialog.
- Defining Their Emotional Frame.

I cover how to define your Buyer Persona in my book “The Antifragile Sales System.” Once you have your Buyer Persona defined, your next job is to get inside their head. You do this by defining a typical day in their life.

Imagine your reader's typical day from the moment they wake up to the moment they fall asleep. Picture it as a filmed documentary or reality TV show. If you could plant hidden cameras and microphones to capture every single experience of your reader's day, what would it look like? Keep in mind that they are still struggling with the problem your product or service solves. Think about how they experience the symptoms of this problem. Remember that your goal is to create a copywriting message that leverages both types of relevance:

1. Semantic: your reader's internal dialog.
2. Emotional: the emotional frame of that dialog.

What internal conversations are they having as they experience the symptoms of their problem? What emotions might they experience as a result of those internal conversations? The more clearly and vividly you define these two things, the more relevant, interesting, and authentic your opening and headline will be. Here are some tips on to uncover the two types of relevance:

Semantic Relevance

Let's use our previous example of our amateur golfer with elbow pain. As we define his typical day, we discover five moments when his internal dialogue would be about his elbow pain:

- "This elbow pain seems worse in the morning."
- "It even hurts when I open my car door."
- "I hate to miss another workout, but this elbow is killing me."
- "I couldn't even open a pickle jar with my right hand."
- "I hope this elbow pain is gone when I wake up."

Here's how you'd use these statements to create a semantically relevant copywriting message for your reader:

"I Hope This Elbow Pain Is Better When I Wake Up"

You thought your elbow pain would be gone by now. Instead, it's getting worse.

It hurts when you open your car door. You're opening the pickle jar with your left hand. You're missing workouts, which you hate to do. But your elbow is killing you–especially in the morning.

Worst of all, it's taken the joy out of playing golf. You used to look forward to heading out to the green with your friends on Sunday.

All you want is to wake up in the morning and feel better. You want your game back. You want to look forward to Sundays with your friends again.

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #1 of the Buyer's Journey)

Can you spot every place we used your reader's internal dialog snippets in this message? We used all of them. This is how defining your reader's typical day helps you apply semantic relevance. This is how you get inside your reader's head and make a genuine connection. The trickier part is decoding the emotions behind their internal dialog.

Emotional Relevance

Emotional relevance is a simple concept, but it takes practice to learn how to apply it. That's why we'll explore this in Technique #8 (Human Needs). For now, read the above copywriting example and ask yourself what emotions are in play. Notice how the final two sentences in this example talk about the personal and social impact of your reader's problem.

This is how you apply emotional relevance. You take the symptoms of your reader's problem and connect them to their lifestyle impact. Later in this book, I'll show you the three basic human emotional needs and how to use them to make these connections. More importantly, I'll show you how to do the same thing when you're talking about the benefits of your product or service.

How to Master Relevance

Nothing will turn you into a master copywriter quicker than the Buyer Persona exercise in my book "The Antifragile Sales System." and the AI prompts for defining yours. The information you collect during this exercise will also help you apply the other persuasive copywriting techniques in this book. If you start to get impatient, remind yourself that relevance is the foundation of writing great copy. Let me make one final point before we move on to the next technique.

Empathy is the true secret behind this copywriting technique.

You might have read the copywriting examples in this book and wondered why they're so focused on the problem and its symptoms. The answer is simple...if your reader doesn't think you understand their problem, they won't trust you when you prescribe a solution. More importantly, you show

empathy for your reader by proving that you understand their problem and the pain it's causing them.

This is why your first job is to define your Buyer Persona, define their typical day, and gather the crucial information you need for applying both types of relevance. This will make your message much more powerful and authentic when you apply the next technique.



Technique #2: Curiosity

Why Curiosity Works

If relevance is how you connect with your reader, curiosity is how you turn that connection into interest. Think of curiosity as the psychological glue that keeps your reader's eyeballs stuck to the page or keeps them tuned in to your video or audio message.

This is why I've made curiosity the second persuasive copywriting technique. It's the bridge between relevance and the remaining techniques. In this chapter, we'll define curiosity as "the expectation of a relevant and valuable discovery." When your reader expects to discover something relevant and valuable by reading or listening to your message, they are much more likely to stay with you. Some marketers call this "holding their attention," but that description doesn't capture the full essence of curiosity. Remember, we live in the most aggressively solicited society in history. Even if your reader is interested in your message, the odds of them being distracted away from it are damn high. Curiosity is how you make sure that, even if this happens, they'll want to return to your message to satisfy their curiosity. The tricky part is learning to use this persuasive copywriting technique the right way.

Two Types of Curiosity

Thomas Hobbes called curiosity "the lust of the mind," due to its tendency to lead us down wasteful or even dangerous paths. I believe this is half true when it comes to copywriting. There are two types of curiosity in marketing:

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1. High Value Curiosity.
2. Low Value Curiosity.

Low value curiosity appeals to our base desire for novelty and intrigue. This is a frail foundation for building interest with your reader. Spammers, tabloid writers, and other Rubber Chicken marketers depend mostly on this type of curiosity. It's useful for getting clicks, but horrible for retaining the person's interest for more than a few seconds.

A good example of low value curiosity is those stupid "Weird Blah, Blah, Blah..." headlines that were popular back in 2012 and 2013:

"Weird Weight Loss Trick Discovered."

The word "weird" creates the impression that you'll discover something interesting or unusual if you read the ad or article. But it creates no anticipation that the discovery will be valuable or even relevant. That's the difference between high value curiosity and low value curiosity—high value curiosity leverages relevance, curiosity, and value. A good example would be an email with a subject line like this:

"I closed a $100,000 SEO client with this..."

Assuming that this email is going out to someone who is running an SEO business and opted into my email list to download a book on closing SEO clients. I know this message is relevant because it matches something my reader is currently thinking about (closing SEO clients). It also implies that I just used "this new method..." to close four new SEO clients.

So, my subject line is telling my reader that if they open the email, they can expect to make a valuable and relevant discovery. That's the smart way to use curiosity. If you've had some results with your marketing but are frustrated that you've attracted mostly price shoppers and low value leads, this is probably the secret ingredient you've been missing.

Anyone who has worked in sales has had to deal with what I call "curiosity seekers." These are prospects who call or email your company in response to an advertisement, but they have no intention to buy anything. They are simply curious and "looking for information." Car salespeople call them "Tire Kickers."

They're curious enough to waste your time with questions about your product or service, but they have no intention to buy anything. Many times, they can't even afford to buy. While every business attracts its share of curiosity seekers, bad marketing makes this problem much worse.

The big, paradigm busting secret is that low value curiosity attracts these types of shoppers, but high value curiosity attracts people who are serious about spending their time, energy, and money to discover (and to own) something of relevant value. Now let's look at some examples of curiosity.

Examples of Curiosity

The first four persuasive copywriting techniques in this book form the foundation of good copywriting. They also build on one another. In the previous chapter, we talked about two types of relevance. These examples will build on what we've covered by adding multiple appeals to high-value curiosity.

Curiosity Example #1

You'll recognize this example from the first chapter. The appeals to curiosity are highlighted in the final sentence of the first paragraph and the final sentence of the example:

"What's This Pinching Pain in My Right Elbow?"

David loved golf. He played every weekend. Then one day at the gym, he felt a pinching pain in the inside of his right elbow. A year later, he had to make a choice... spend $10,000.00 on surgery, or give up golf for good.

"It felt like someone had grabbed a bundle of my nerves with a pair of vice pliers. I thought it would go away, but it didn't. Now, I can barely swing my club. I'm too embarrassed to even play anymore." If you love golfing, but elbow pain has taken the joy out of it, you'll breathe a sigh of relief when you hear what David is doing now.

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #1 of the Buyer's Journey)

Let's examine our first appeal to curiosity...

"A year later, he had to make a choice... spend $10,000.00 on surgery, or give up golf for good."

What is our reader thinking as they read this sentence? Remember that our reader is an amateur golfer whose game (and life) is suffering because of a sharp and persistent pain in their right elbow. This pain is a symptom of the problem your product or service will solve for them. This copywriting example introduces our reader to a golfer named David. David once suffered from the same problem as our reader.

In our first appeal to curiosity, we tell our reader that David had to make a costly choice...surgery, or giving up golf. Do you think our reader will want to know which one David chose, and why? Of

course. Not just because we left them on a cliffhanger by not telling them. They'll want to know because they're now nervous that they might have to make a similar choice themselves.

This is the first secret to using curiosity. Our point of curiosity has to be RELEVANT to our reader's problem AND to its emotional impact on their life. In the case of this example, the surgery option is relevant because our reader probably fears the price tag, hassle, and pain of having surgery. The giving up golf option is relevant because it relates to the emotional impact our reader's problem.
In other words, we're not just leaving our reader on a generic cliffhanger. We're basing that cliffhanger on something that is relevant to their problem and to its emotional impact on their life.
That's a breakdown of our first appeal to curiosity. Let's unpack the second: *"If you love golfing, but elbow pain has taken the joy out of it, you'll breathe a sigh of relief when you hear what David is doing now."*
What is David doing now? More importantly, why will our reader "breathe a sigh of relief" to hear about it? Read the first half of our sentence again and notice how it contrasts their love of golf with the painful symptoms of their problem: "If you love golfing, but elbow pain has taken the joy out of it..." By starting this sentence with "if," we're anchoring their problem and its emotional pain to the curiosity appeal that comes at the end of the sentence:
"...you'll breathe a sigh of relief when you hear what David is doing now."

Again, we're not just leaving our reader on a generic cliffhanger. We're basing our cliffhanger on something that is relevant to their problem and to its emotional impact on their life. This gives personal significance and emotional weight to the question of what David is doing now. Our reader will read on with more than just idle curiosity. They will read with the hope that we're about to deliver some good news about their problem. This will be the perfect setup for the next technique in this book.

Curiosity Example #2

Imagine our reader is a woman who fears her husband is having another affair. A few weeks after nervously watching him text someone late at night, she finds this article online:

How I Caught My Husband In His Second Affair

It's taken years to forgive your husband for his first affair. He promised he'd never hurt you like that again. You believed him. But, who is he texting late at night?

Dr. Ken Hitchens, a 30-year marriage counselor, believes science has a clue.

"A man's second affair is different," says Dr. Hitchens. "He usually does two things different. Once you know what these things are, you'll know whether he's cheating."

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #1 of the Buyer's Journey)

It's taken years to forgive your husband for his first affair. He promised he'd never hurt you like that again. You believed him. But, who is he texting late at night?
Dr. Ken Hitchens, a 30-year marriage counselor, believes science has a clue.

"A man's second affair is different," says Dr. Hitchens. "He usually does two things different. Once you know what these things are, you'll know whether he's cheating."

This example is oozing with high value curiosity. The opening sentences nail several of the internal conversations our reader has almost certainly had about her problem. It also puts her problem into an emotional context with statements like "he promised he'd never hurt you" and "you believed him."

The wording of these statements is intentional. While I don't actually have 30 years of marriage counseling experience, I do have about 10,000 hours of one-on-one coaching experience. This experience taught me that the deepest emotional pain of being cheated on again by the same person is that you believed them. You feel stupid for doing so. You feel like they've taken advantage of your decision to forgive them. That's how this example nails the semantic and emotional relevance we talked about in the previous chapter.

Next, we make an appeal to curiosity with this statement:

"A man's second affair is different," says Dr. Hitchens. "He usually does two things different. Once you know what these things are, you'll know whether he's cheating."

Do you think our reader wants to know what "two things" Dr. Hitchens is talking about? Hell yes, she would. Again, we're not using a generic cliffhanger here. We're talking about something that's deeply relevant to our reader. If for no other reason, she will keep reading in hopes of finally settling that toe-curling uncertainty about whether her fears of a cheating husband are true.

These are examples of high value curiosity. Are you starting to see the difference between this and the low value appeals to curiosity you've seen in tabloids, click bait social media posts, and those damn bait and switch videos on YouTube? Again, low value curiosity attracts low value customers and clients, but high value curiosity attracts high value customers and clients.

If your business is attracting too many price shoppers, complainers, and freebie seekers, this technique could hold the keys to your kingdom. Let's talk about how to apply this persuasive copywriting technique.

How to Apply Curiosity

The smartest way to master curiosity is by starting with relevance. This applies to every technique in this book, so always start your copywriting project with the relevance exercise. Next, ask yourself this question, and don't stop until you have an answer:

"What is the most mind-blowing thing I can tell my reader about their problem?"

By "mind-blowing," I mean something that either:

- Shatters your reader's assumptions about their problem.
- Reveals a blind spot in their knowledge of the problem.

In other words, we're looking for a piece of knowledge that your reader either doesn't have (blind spot) or is misinformed about (assumption). It should be something that impacts their ability to solve their problem. Something which, once they learn it, would change their approach to the problem.

When you introduce your reader to a new and useful idea, you literally change their brain chemistry. This happens because your brain releases a neurotransmitter called dopamine:

"Novel experiences induce dopamine release in the hippocampus, a process which promotes memory persistence."

–National Library of Medicine

Dopamine has been called a "driver of exploration" because of its role in rewarding new discoveries. Your brain releases this hormone in response to novel experiences. It gives social media, video games, and even pornography their addictive quality. When your reader's brain releases dopamine, they are more likely to remember and act on the information that triggered this release.

I'll give you a personal example to clarify this point. I love lifting weights. I've have since I was thirteen years old. In my mid thirties, chronic shoulder pain forced me to stop lifting. Many of my friends had the same problem and ended up quitting, getting rotatory cuff surgery, or both. I tried everything to get rid of the pain, including shoulder stretches, meditation, ice packs, heat, rest. Nothing worked.

Then, I met a Master Level Specialist of MAT® who got to the root of my shoulder pain in less than ten minutes. To my shock, it had nothing to do with my shoulder at all. Years before my shoulder pain started, I had broken three toes in my left foot. I shifted all the workload to my outer foot

while the toes were healing, but it turned out that the muscles in my foot had adapted to that movement, and never fully engaged. As they became weaker, I shifted more weight to other muscles groups, and that started a chain reaction that affected muscle groups in the left side of my lower back, and even in my neck.

As we reactivated and strengthened these muscles, the pain and stiffness in my right shoulder vanished. Two weeks later, I was doing heavy shoulder presses again, and haven't had a problem since. This happened in 2013, and I'm writing this in 2021. Seeing that MAT expert did two things for me:

1. Shattered my assumptions about my problem.
2. Revealed a blind spot in my knowledge of the problem.

I assumed that shoulder pain meant shoulder problems. So did my friends. That's why I wasted my time and energy trying to solve my shoulder pain, but got nowhere. That's also why my friends burned up their money on expensive shoulder surgery. I also had a blind spot about my problem. I had no idea my broken toes had set a chain reaction in motion that led to crippling shoulder pain. Seeing an expert shattered my assumptions, revealed my blind spots, and cured what would have otherwise been a life-long health problem.

Think about the last time you had a complicated problem that no one could solve. Maybe it was a health problem or an injury. Maybe your phone, car, computer, or some other machine in your house wasn't working. You went to multiple experts (friend or a professional) about the problem, but they couldn't figure it out. Then, you found that blog or that video online that gave you the answer in just a few minutes.

Your copywriting message should do the same thing. It should deliver one mind-blowing revelation that either:

- Shatters your reader's assumptions about their problem.
- Reveals a blind spot in their knowledge of the problem.

Think about the problem your product or service solves. What are the most common assumptions your readers have about this problem, its symptoms, and its cause? What are the most common blind spots in their knowledge of the problem? Find one (or both) of these, and you've got your primary ingredient for using curiosity.

Ideally, you want this to be a piece of information that is so valuable, your reader benefits from knowing it even if they don't buy your product or service right away. I assure you that if you teach them something that helps them see their problem in a new light, they are very likely to buy from you when the time comes for them to invest money in a solution. Here's an example using the story I just shared:

SURPRISE: Your Shoulder Pain Has Nothing To Do With Your Shoulder

You've tried everything...stretching, ice packs, heat, yoga, meditation. NOTHING works.

You cringe at the thought of shoulder surgery, but what's left?

Ten years ago, I was in the same place. I was shocked to discover that my shoulder pain had nothing to do with my shoulder.

"When I found the real cause, I was back in the gym within two weeks," I said. "I never had to have surgery. I'm still lifting today and enjoying it more than ever."

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #2 of the Buyer's Journey)

Notice how I teased the reader by hinting at the real cause of my shoulder pain. I didn't tell them anything, yet. I want them to keep reading and find that out for themselves. Most of them will, and if I deliver on my promise, my reader will see me as an expert at solving their problem. Notice also how I've listed all the failed things they've tried (stretching, ice packs, heat, yoga, meditation).

These negations are important when you're applying curiosity. I am making it clear that my reader isn't about to hear more of the same solutions they've tried and failed with already. By teasing my mind-boggling revelation and assuring them that they're about to learn something new, relevant, and possibly life-changing, they will read on in eager anticipation of what I'm about to tell them.

How to Master Curiosity

You've just learned about the two types of curiosity:

- High-Value Curiosity
- Low-Value Curiosity

Low-value curiosity appeals to our base desire for novelty and intrigue. This is a frail foundation for building interest with your reader. It attracts low-value clients and customers, and it makes you look like a Rubber Chicken marketer. High-value curiosity, on the other hand, is RELEVANT to your reader's problem AND to its emotional impact on their life. It attracts high-value clients and customers, and this makes your business more profitable and drama-free.

Most importantly, high-value curiosity builds on the first persuasive copywriting technique in this book and sets the stage for the next one by setting up a mind-blowing revelation that either:

Shatters your reader's assumptions about their problem.
Reveals a blind spot in their knowledge of the problem.

One of my early mentors told me that the best writing doesn't just convey information. It helps people see things as they've never seen them before. In copywriting, our goal is to help our reader see their problem in a way they haven't seen it before. By giving them this new perspective, we fill them with the most powerful emotion for inspiring action and change. That's the topic of the next chapter.



Technique #3: Hope

Why Hope Works

If relevance is how you connect with your reader, and curiosity is how you turn that connection into interest, hope is how you turn your reader's interest into a burning desire.

Think of hope as the fuel that turns up the volume on that interest until they can literally feel it in their nervous system.

Icall this creating a "synthetic experience." A synthetic experience is where your reader can imagine the benefits of your product or service so clearly and vividly that it changes their brain chemistry (more on this in the next section).

"Hope is the only thing stronger than fear." – Suzanne Collins

I'll define hope as "the anticipation of a relevant and valuable experience." The keyword is "anticipation." Hope is when your reader expects to experience the benefits of your offer and is emotionally involved with that expectation.

- Think about how many qualified prospects see your ad several times (or more), and never respond.
- Think about how many visitors land on your website, read a few pages, and never come back.
- Think about how many people subscribe to your email list, then never open your emails.
- Think about how many visitors leave your site and buy from a competitor instead of you.

At some point, they were interested enough to take a look at your website, read your content, watch your videos, or subscribe to your email. But as time passed, they simply lost the perceived value of your product. They didn't so much forget about it as they forgot how they felt about its value. In other words, they lost the anticipation of experiencing its benefits.

Can people really remember how they feel about a product? Don't you have to build their desire back up every time they see another message from you? Scientifically speaking, no you don't. But rather than bore you with a lecture on emotions and human memory, let me appeal to your intuition and personal experience to make my case.

Have you ever really wanted something? I have. Hell, I still remember how badly I "needed" my first guitar. I'd wanted to play the guitar since I was seven. But I didn't get to buy a guitar until I was 17. Still, my burning desire to own a guitar never waned. In fact, it got stronger every year.

Icould almost feel the damn thing in my hands every time I heard a song by Bon Jovi, Journey, or Poison. When I was seventeen, after my first two weeks having a job, that feeling made me run to the gas station with my first paycheck (that's where we cashed checks back then), hurry to my local music store, and dump every penny of my check into putting my first guitar on layaway.

Ten years dammit! And I never once lost the desire to feel that guitar in my hands. Have you ever wanted something this badly, and for this long? Maybe you had to save up the money for it. Maybe you needed to shop around for a few weeks. But that anticipation of driving the new car, living in the house, taking a vacation, or playing with the new toy never left you.

My point is, that when you really want something, you can't help but remember how you feel about it. This is the difference between interest and anticipation. This is the secret to using hope in your copywriting.

Iremember my first kiss. I remember my first time catching a large-mouthed bass without my dad's help. I remember the first time I shot a gun, the first time I lifted weights, the first song I wrote, my first-time playing rock guitar with a band. I remember my college graduation ceremony, the first time I voted, my first day working a job, and my first car accident. I remember vivid and specific details about my first three dates with my wife.

I'm sure you have your own list of memorable experiences. You remember where you were when they happened. You remember who you were with. You probably remember the song that was playing. Most importantly, you remember how you felt.

You remember these things because you relive them every time you think of them. That's the difference between a "high-definition" memory, and a bland, black and white mental record of raw facts. The purpose of hope is to create this same feeling in your reader every time they imagine themselves using your product or service.

Examples of Hope

The first four persuasive copywriting techniques in this book form the foundation of good copywriting. They also build on one another. In the previous chapter, we talked about two types of

curiosity. These examples will build on what we've covered so far by converting high-value curiosity into hope. We apply hope much in the same we applied relevance, by focusing on two types of hope:

1. Semantic: your reader's internal dialog.
2. Emotional: the emotional frame of that dialog.

The difference is that, while relevance is based on the problem your product or service solves, hope is based on its benefits. What is our reader's internal dialog when they imagine themselves enjoying the benefits of our product or service? For example, imagine our reader is an amateur male bodybuilder who wants to gain twenty pounds of lean muscle. Here's what he might say to himself during his daydreams about his goal:

- "I want to build a bigger chest and arms." "I want
- to be one of the biggest guys at my gym." "I want
- people to stare when I take off my shirt."

These are examples of semantic hope. They match the internal dialog of our young amateur bodybuilder. Semantic hope is important for clarifying our reader's desires in plain language. However, it lacks the emotional fuel needed to turn their hope into eager anticipation.

What emotions are behind our young amateur bodybuilder's internal dialog? What is he feeling in his nervous system as he pictures himself twenty pounds bigger? Pride? Validation? Excitement? Does he feel safer being one of the "big guys" who nobody would dare to mess with? Answer these questions, and you've got both the essential ingredients of hope.

Bottom line, if your product or service delivers a valuable benefit, you can bet on two things:

1. Your prospects are thinking about that benefit.
2. Your prospects are feeling something when they think about it.

The thinking relates to their internal dialog. The feeling relates to the emotional context of that dialog. You apply hope by matching your message to both of these. This is how we'll turn our reader's curiosity into an eager interest.

Hope Example #1

VQ Success

Let's stick with our example of the young amateur bodybuilder who wants to gain twenty pounds of lean muscle. In this example (and all going forward) I'll use [BRACKETS] to show you where I've applied the techniques we've covered so far in this book:

How I Went From Being A Hard-Gainer To One Of The Biggest Guys At My Gym

[RELEVANCE >] I once idolized the big guys at my gym. They'd stroll in with Jason Momoan pecs, delts like football helmets, and rippling biceps with garden hose veins. I'd just stare in boiling envy.

"That guy's got to be on the juice!" [< RELEVANCE].

Five years of killing myself at the gym and eating like a horse. Just to gain a whopping ten pounds.

[HOPE >] Today, I'm one of the biggest guys at my gym. Now the big guys stare when I take off my shirt. I get comments and questions from skinny guys:

"What bicep exercises do you do?"
"What supplements do you take?"
"What's your chest routine?" [< HOPE]

Think this can't happen to you too? You won't for long. [CURIOSITY >] Here's the first thing you need to know about getting big... [< CURIOSITY]

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #2 of the Buyer's Journey)

Notice how the "HOPE" section of this example is based on our reader's internal dialog:

- "I want to build a bigger chest and arms." "I want
- to be one of the biggest guys at my gym." "I want
- people to stare when I take off my shirt."

More importantly, notice the emotional context we add by saying that the "skinny guys" are now making comments and asking questions. This ties back to the opening sentence where we say "...I once idolized the big guys." We're subtly telling our reader that the hero of our story is now a role model for other men. This strikes at the need for Validation, which, in my experience, is at the core of a man's desire to look and feel powerful.

We'll discuss the need for Validation and other emotional needs later in this book. Before we look at our second example of hope, let me draw your attention to the terms "hard-gainer" and "Jason Momoan pecs," "delts," and "garden hose veins" as used in the example above. This is what Dan Kennedy calls "Dog Whistle Language."

Dog Whistle Marketing is an advanced application of the first technique in this book (relevance). It's also an elite-level secret of master copywriters. You can learn more about this in The Antifragile Sales System, where I discuss these advanced marketing concepts in detail.

Now, let's check out our second example.

Hope Example #2

Imagine our Buyer Persona is a mom in their mid-thirties who wants to lose the weight gained during her second or third pregnancy. Here's an example of what her internal dialog might be:

- "I just want to feel good again."
- "I just want to be a size eight again."
- "I want to eat dessert without feeling guilty."

The language in this example is damn important for a few reasons. First off, having written for this audience, I know that a woman's motives for losing weight change drastically after her second or third child. It's no longer about looking sexy in her bathing suit or even fitting into size four jeans again. It's more about feeling good about herself again.

"I Just Want To Be A Size Eight Again."

[HOPE >] Nellie just wanted to feel good again. She didn't need to be a size four. She didn't need to run a 5k as she did in high school.

"I just want to be able to eat dessert without feeling guilty," she said, pulling a pair of size 8′ jeans from her closet. "If I could just fit into these jeans again, I'd be happy."

If you're a mom of two or three kids who wants to feel good again, you'll be inspired by Nellie's story. One year ago, she was a size 14′. Today, she's a size 7′, and happier than ever. [< HOPE]

[RELEVANT >] "I was tired of feeling guilty about eating a piece of cheesecake," said Nellie "I tried every diet and workout. I was tired of starving myself. Tired of feeling worn out. [< RELEVANT] [HOPE >] Then I learned something that changed my life." [< HOPE]

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #2 of the Buyer's Journey)

Notice how the "HOPE" section of this example is based on our reader's internal dialog:

- "I just want to feel good again."
- "I just want to be a size eight again."
- "I want to eat dessert without feeling guilty."

Notice also that this is the first example where I've put the "HOPE" section before the "RELEVANCE" section. I did this based on what I know about this buyer's persona and their attitude toward the problem we're trying to solve. Weight loss is still a sensitive topic for women in their mid-thirties. While it's still important to show them that we understand their problem, we don't want to create more guilt or shame about their present circumstances. This is why I opened this example with hope and moved to relevance after.

Finally, you'll notice that I made happiness and feeling good the emotional context. Contrary to the common assumption, validation is not the primary emotional hot button for this buyer's persona. Not when it comes to losing weight. They just want to feel happy and comfortable in their clothes again. They want to be free of guilt and shame and enjoy their life.

If we were to take this same example and base it on the need for validation, or excitement, it would be far less compelling. This is why it's so important to define your Buyer Persona and understand their internal dialog, and their emotional frame of reference. That said, let's talk about how to apply this persuasive copywriting technique.

How to Apply Hope

The smartest way to master hope is by:

- Defining Your Buyer Persona.
- Defining Their Ideal Day.
- Defining Their Internal Dialog.
- Defining Their Emotional Frame.

You might recognize this list from the first chapter in this book, and from my book, “The Antifragile Sales System.” The only difference is that we're defining your reader's ideal day instead of their typical day. We're defining what a day in their life might look like after they've bought your product or service and are enjoying its benefits.

Imagine this ideal day from the moment they wake up to the moment they fall asleep. Picture it as a filmed documentary or reality TV show. If you could plant hidden cameras and microphones to capture every single experience of your reader's day, what would it look like? Think about how they experience the benefits of your product or service. Remember that your goal is to create a copywriting message that leverages both types of hope:

1. Semantic: your reader's internal dialog.
2. Emotional: the emotional frame of that dialog.

What internal conversations is your reader having as they experience the benefits of your product or service? What emotions might they experience as a result of those internal conversations? The more clearly and vividly you define these two things, the more relevant, interesting, and authentic your opening and headline will be. Here are some tips on how this exercise helps you uncover the two types of hope.

Semantic Hope

Let's use our previous example of a mom in their mid-thirties who wants to lose the weight gained during her second or third pregnancy. Here's an example of what her internal dialog might sound like:

- *"It feels so good to wear these jeans again."*
- *"I'm glad I stopped those fad diets."*
- *"I can enjoy dessert without feeling guilty."*

Here's how you'd use these statements to create a semantically relevant copywriting message for your reader:

"I Just Want To Be A Size Eight Again."

[HOPE >] "It feels so good to wear these jeans again," said Nellie, pulling a pair of denim jeans from her closet. "I'm glad I stopped those fad diets. I'm so much happier now."

If you're a mom of two or three kids who is tired of fad diets and just wants to feel good again, you'll be inspired by Nellie's story. One year ago, she was a size 14′. Today, she's a size 7′, and happier than ever. [< HOPE]

[RELEVANCE >] "I tried every diet and workout." said Nellie. "I was tired of starving myself and feeling guilty about eating a piece of cheesecake. [< RELEVANCE] [CURIOSITY >] When I learned why all that wasn't working, my whole life changed. [< CURIOSITY] [HOPE >] Now I can eat dessert without feeling bad." [< HOPE]

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #2 of the Buyer's Journey)

Can you spot every place we used your reader's internal dialog snippets in this message? We used all of them. This is how defining your reader's ideal day helps you apply semantic hope. This is how you get inside your reader's heads and turn their curiosity into eager interest. The trickier part is decoding the emotions behind their internal dialog.

Emotional Hope

Read the above copywriting example and ask yourself what emotions are in play. Notice how the first part of the final paragraph talks about the personal impact of your reader's problem. This is how you discover the emotional frame of your reader's internal dialog. You think about how the benefits of your product or service will change your reader's daily experience.

If you're struggling with this, don't worry. It will be a recurring theme as we unpack the remaining techniques. Later in this book, I'll show you the three basic human emotional needs and how to use them to find your reader's emotional hot buttons. For now, practice thinking about your reader's ideal day. Think about the larger emotional context of their daydreams about solving their problem and enjoying the lifestyle they really want. The better you get at this, the quicker you'll master all the copywriting techniques in this book.

How to Master Hope

By now, you should be realizing why it's so important to define your buyer's persona and to define their typical day and their ideal day. Remember, their typical day is what their life looks like before

using your product or service and their ideal day looks like after using it. No other exercise can make you a master copywriter faster than this. We'll be using it to apply every technique in this book.

This is why your first job is to define your buyer's persona, define their typical day and their ideal day, and gather the crucial information you need for applying the three techniques we've covered so far. If you don't plan on doing this work, there's no point in continuing with this book. Your marketing messages are only as good as the information and data they're based on.

Rubber Chicken Marketers ignore this principle and rely on Pick Up Line Marketing and amateur shortcuts like copying their competitors. Having been in sales, marketing, and copywriting most of my adult life, I can tell you that the one thing that separates great copywriters from ordinary ones is their willingness to gather accurate information, to THINK about what they've gathered, and use it to craft an authentic message.

Lazy marketers, on the other hand, waste their time and energy creating content that doesn't connect with their readers. If you want to rise above this cesspool of mediocrity, start with the above technique. This is the skeleton key for unlocking your potential as a master copywriter.

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Technique #4: Rapport

Why Rapport Works

If relevance is how you connect with your reader, and curiosity is how you turn that connection into interest, and hope is how you turn that interest into desire, rapport is how you turn that desire into motivation.

Before I reveal the secret to building rapport, you should know that motivation isn't enough to get your reader to act now. That takes urgency. This is why the final technique in this book focuses on building real urgency. For now, our job is to answer the question that's on every reader's mind when they see your message:

"Who is this person and why should I listen to them?"

Ultimately, we want our readers to see us as someone they can trust. When our readers trust us, it dissolves the fear barriers that would otherwise cause them to doubt our message. We do this by building rapport. The dictionary defines rapport as a relationship of "mutual trust or emotional affinity."

This definition contains the simple secret to building rapport, "emotional affinity" being the key term. Affinity is an inherent likeness or agreement; close resemblance or connection.

In other words, if you meet someone who shares your interests and values, you have an affinity with that person. If their speech patterns and emotional reactions are similar to yours, you have a lot of affinity with them. Here's the mind-blowing secret about the link between affinity, trust, and rapport.

People trust people who are like them. This is not speculation. Contrary to what most of us believe, human beings don't generally trust each other based on logical reasons. That includes people who insist that they are the exception to this rule. Scientists call this the "mere liking effect" and it's been verified by plenty of scientific research.

The first part of the study had participants taking a test on major political issues. They were asked their opinions on social and political issues, including abortion, gay marriage, and a theoretical government jobs program.

After answering these questions, the subjects were provided with a form supposedly filled out by another person. These forms had actually been filled out by a computer and made to agree or disagree (to varying degrees) with the responses given by the subject.

The participants were then asked their impression of the "person" who had filled out the form. They were specifically asked whether they found the person moral, competent, or trustworthy. The questions were based on hypothetical scenarios such as whether the other person would return a lost wallet to its owner. Their responses revealed that the subjects found people who shared their views to be more moral, competent, and trustworthy.

The study conducted three more tests. The second test introduced a control group that only had a picture to go on. The control group's answers were then compared to those who were provided with the other person's test results. The third test connected the results of the previous tests to another sociological phenomenon called the "mere-exposure effect." This third test showed that the subject's opinions about how moral, trustworthy, or competent improves as we see a certain person (or personality/character traits) more frequently.

The final test was a computer image of an actor whose mannerisms mimicked the facial expressions of the test subjects as they were taking a quiz about emotions which involved them making faces. The subjects ranked the actor to be more trustworthy and moral when the actor's facial expressions mimicked theirs. The mimicry did not affect their perception of the actor's competence, but the results of this study (and others like it) reveal a mind-boggling connection between perceived affinity and perceived trust.

In every test, the subjects concluded that people most similar to them were more moral, more trustworthy, and (in some of the tests) more competent. The study also revealed that the subjects liked the people whom they believed to be similar to them. Every stage of this study (and many others like it) validates the link between perceived affinity and trust.

The bottom line, we like people who we believe are similar to us. We also find them to be more moral and trustworthy. This is how we answer the question that's on every reader's mind when they see your message:

"Who is this person and why should I listen to them?"

The best answer to this question is:

"This is someone like you."

That's the simple secret to building rapport. Show your reader the affinity between them and you, or between them and your previous clients (or both). Do this, and your reader will see you as a moral and competent person who they can trust. Now let's look at some examples.

Examples of Rapport

The first four persuasive copywriting techniques in this book form the foundation of good copywriting. They also build on one another. In the previous chapter, we talked about two types of hope. The following examples build on what we've covered so far by converting hope into motivation. First, let me cover a couple of points about building rapport.

First, you can't use this technique without the information gathered during your Buyer Persona Exercise. This is why I've been hammering this point over the past three chapters. As I explain in The Antifragile Sales System, building rapport is all about creating the perception of affinity. Your reader needs to see, for themselves, that either you (assuming you're the seller of your product or service) or your clients have an affinity with them. This means similar desires, hopes, fears, struggles, and life experiences.

If you want to go deeper (which I suggest you do), you can include similar interests and other demographic details. If you're creating a new product and you don't have much (or anything) in common with your reader, that's okay. In the examples below, I use a story to create affinity between my reader and a "hero" who once struggled with the same problem as my reader.

Rapport Example #1

Let's continue with our previous example of the young amateur bodybuilder who wants to gain twenty pounds of lean muscle. Once again, I'll use [BRACKETS] to show you where I've applied the techniques we've covered so far in this book:

How I Went From Being A Hard-Gainer To One Of The Biggest Guys At My Gym

[RELEVANCE >] I once idolized the big guys at my gym. They'd stroll in with Jason Momoan pecs, delts like football helmets, and rippling biceps with garden hose veins. I'd just stare in boiling envy.

"That guy's got to be on the juice!" [< RELEVANCE].

Five years of killing myself at the gym and eating like a horse. Just to gain a whopping ten pounds.

[HOPE >] Today, I'm one of the biggest guys at my gym. Now the big guys stare when I take off my shirt. I get comments and questions from skinny guys...

"What bicep exercises do you do?"
"What supplements do you take?"
"What's your chest routine?" [< HOPE]

Think this can't happen to you too? You won't for long. [CURIOSITY >] Here's the first thing you need to know about getting big... [< CURIOSITY]

You And I Didn't Win The Genetic Lottery

[RAPPORT >]Like you, I didn't win the genetic lottery. I was "the skinny guy" in gym class. I was embarrassed to take off my shirt. In High School, I missed out on a lot of dates with girls. I missed trips to the beach with my friends.

Since I was ten, all I wanted to do was lift weights, get big, and stop being the skinny guy.

Istill remember the "new car" smell of my first weight set. I used to wake up in the middle of the night, go out to the garage, and just stare at those shiny plates. The steely Olympic barbell cool to my touch. I couldn't wait to get home from school the next day. I just wanted to pump iron, eat protein, and watch my bird chest and pencil arms transform into rippling slabs of lean, sleeve-busting muscle.

At first, my gains exploded. I was confident when taking off my shirt. I started getting attention from girls. Still, I was puzzled at those guys who blew past me in their gains. I lifted all summer. I sweated for hours in my garage, five, six, seven days a week. Not these guys. They'd take entire months off. Still, they were getting bigger and more ripped than me. I remember looking at them and thinking.

"Are these guys on drugs or something?"
"Do they just have better equipment than me?"
"Maybe I'll hit a late growth spurt."

I was stumped. I had to push, pull, kick, bite, spit, sweat, and bleed for every ounce of my gains. This blood-boiling struggle continued into my late twenties. [< RAPPORT] [CURIOSITY] Then I stumbled onto a sobering secret every hard-gainer needs to know... [< CURIOSITY].

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #2 of the Buyer's Journey)

There's a TON of rapport building in this example, but it's easy to miss if you're new to this technique. The first example is in the sub-header, where we say:

You And I Didn't Win The Genetic Lottery

Notice my use of the phrase "You And I," followed by the first sentence that starts with the words "Like you." Then, I move immediately into a story that should (If I've done my buyer's persona research properly) sound painfully familiar, and even nostalgic to my reader. Assuming I've hit the nail on the head with this story, my reader will read this and think:

"This sounds like my life."

Read the example again, and notice how I use these phrases:

- I was always "the skinny guy" in gym class.
- I was embarrassed to take off my shirt.
- I missed out on a lot of dates with girls.
- I missed trips to the beach with my friends.
- I still remember the "new car" smell of my first weight set.

Notice the vignette (miniature story) I include about my hero waking up in the middle of the night to go out to the garage and admire his weight set. Notice my use of Dog Whistle Language when I use terms like "pump iron," "bird chest," "pencil arms," "blew past me in their gains," "more ripped than me," and "hard-gainer." Notice the three pieces of internal dialog I include before the final paragraph in this example.

Every time I season my message with one of these familiar terms, experiences, or pieces of inner dialog, I fortify the bond between my reader and the hero of my story. By the time they hit the second appeal to curiosity (at the end), my reader should feel like he's met a kindred soul. Most importantly, the more my reader identifies with the hero of my story, the more hope he'll have that my story holds the answer he's been so desperately seeking.

Rapport Example #2

Let's build on our previous example of a mom in their mid-thirties who wants to lose the weight gained during her second pregnancy. Once again, I'm including the entire example for context, but you'll find the rapport section under the second sub-header:

"I Just Wanted To Be A Size Eight Again."

[HOPE >] "It feels so good to wear these jeans again," said Nellie, pulling a pair of denim jeans from her closet. "I'm glad I stopped those fad diets. I'm so much happier now."

If you're a mom of two or three kids who is tired of fad diets and just wants to feel good again, you'll be inspired by Nellie's story. One year ago, she was a size 14'. Today, she's a size 7', and happier than ever. [< HOPE]

[RELEVANCE >] "I tried every diet and workout." said Nellie. "I was tired of starving myself and feeling guilty about eating a piece of cheesecake. [< RELEVANCE] [CURIOSITY >] When I learned why all that wasn't working, my whole life changed. [< CURIOSITY] [HOPE >] Now I can eat dessert without feeling bad." [< HOPE]

What Made Your SecondPregnancy So Different?

[RAPPORT >] Your second pregnancy was different. You showed sooner. You were more tired. You had more aches and pains, more Braxton Hicks contractions and, while your labor was shorter, your pains were worse.

Worst of all...you still can't lose the weight.

If this sounds familiar, you're not alone. Most women don't know why their second pregnancy has a slower recovery. Nellie didn't either. [< RAPPORT] She had tried every diet, supplement and exercise program. Nothing worked, and she was about to give up.

That's when she learned that the problem was lurking in her immune system.

"If you have a mildly inflamed system (signs of headache, weight gain, stuffy nose) you may be able to resolve your condition by making just a few adjustments to your daily habits," says Patricia Ladis,

a renowned NYC physical therapist and co-author of The Wise Woman's Guide To Your Healthiest Pregnancy. "If you see no change in some of your symptoms or you have difficulty losing weight, then you should consult with a doctor, preferably a functional medicine doctor."

[RAPPORT >]"I couldn't afford to see a functional medicine doctor," said Nellie. "My husband and I make less than $50,000 a year and we have a toddler and young baby. I started doing research, and was shocked at what I learned next."[< RAPPORT]

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #2 of the Buyer's Journey)

Again, this example is loaded with subtle rapport-building language. First, notice that I'm focusing on this being her second pregnancy. Clearly, my product is making a special appeal to women who are on their second pregnancy. If I wanted to target new moms with the same product, I'd create another message, and possibly even a second version of the product, to appeal to that demographic.

Notice how I then zero in on experiences common to a second pregnancy. I then tie these back to the star of my story, just before giving my first clue about the solution to my reader's problem. I then build more rapport with the final paragraph, where I identify with my reader's marital status, family size, and income range. Again, every time I season my message with one of these familiar terms, experiences, or pieces of inner dialog, I fortify the bond between my reader and the star of my story.

That's all there is to building rapport. It's tempting to think that this is an irrational way to build trust, but we've already talked about the scientific link between perceived affinity and perceived trust. Later in this book, I'll share scientific proof that the conscious reasons people give for their decisions are often irrational and even untrue.

The bottom line is that our brains are goal-seeking mechanisms. They learn by association and can make false associations with stunning efficiency. They also often value speed over accuracy. This is true for everyone, including people who think they are the exception. Likability is one of the mental shortcuts the human brain uses to decide who to trust, and how much. The secret to building rapport is to use this shortcut as a route into your reader's mind.

How to Apply Rapport

The smartest way to master rapport is with the information you gathered using your Buyer Persona exercise. I covered this exercise in earlier chapters and extensively in The Antifragile Sales System. Once you have this information, rapport building can be simple, or complex, depending on how many of the following data groups you work into your copywriting message.

Data Groups for Building Rapport

- Demographic Data: details defined while creating your Buyer Persona.
- Psychographic Data: emotional hot buttons of your Buyer Persona (more on this later).
- Dog Whistle Language: words, phrases, and references unique to your Buyer Persona (aka, Semantic Relevance).
- Stage of Awareness: your reader's stage in the Buyer's Journey.

If you're overwhelmed by this list, don't worry. I'm only including all four data groups to show you the full scope of possibilities for building rapport. If you're new to this idea, start with the demographic data for now and stick with that until it's second nature to work it into your message. The better you get using demographic data in your messages, the easier it will be to add psychographic data and Dog Whistle Language.

As for your reader's Stage of Awareness, don't worry about that data group for now. That's a Ph.D. level copywriting concept that I deal with in The Antifragile Sales System. The better you get at weaving demographic data into your message, the easier it will be to add the remaining three data groups.

If it feels awkward working these details into your message, leave them out of your first draft and add them during your content editing process. The secret to building rapport is to be subtle and make it sound natural. If your reader gets the sense that you're not being genuine or authentic, they WILL dismiss your message as being awkward or phony. That said, there are three types of affinity you can focus on when adding this "seasoning" to your copywriting messages.

#1: Affinity With The Seller (or Writer)

This is where you emphasize the affinity between your reader and the person selling your product or service. This only works if the affinity between your buyer and your seller is real. If the service provider or product creator doesn't fit the profile of your buyer's persona, you'll have to use one of the other two approaches.

Either way, I recommend that you find as much common ground as possible between your seller and your reader, and use this in your message. For example, your seller might have created the product or founded their company based on values or interests they share with your reader. Work these into your message.

#2: Affinity With Your Clients/Customers

This is where you emphasize the affinity between your reader and the other people who have bought your product or service. This is a powerful approach for a few reasons.

First, it bypasses what I call the expert intimidation factor. If your seller (service provider or product creator) is an expert, or is higher up the mountain of success than your reader, or is perceived to have some advantage that your reader doesn't, your reader might secretly fear that the product/service won't work for "someone like them."

This is a very real fear that I've seen sink entire marketing campaigns. In fact, when I was managing sales teams in the corporate world, I had a consultation with a sales manager whose team had been in a sales slump for months. After some rigorous questioning, I discovered that the slump started just after my client had held a party for her sales staff at her house. Her house was worth a few million dollars and sat on ten acres of land with a waterfront view.

Isuspected that her team had secretly envied their manager's success and had thus lost their motivation to "keep making her rich." I helped her put together an employee survey to uncover whether this was the case. The results were undeniable. Her sales team had not been inspired by their trip to her house. Many of them were jealous or intimidated to see her success. She ended up losing several team members. The others only came around after a lot of work in rebuilding trust and rapport.

This is why I suggest people use client and customer testimonials to supplement their personal story about their own success or expertise. Your readers need to understand that your product or service will work for people on their level.

#3: Affinity With The Star of Your Story

This is where you emphasize the affinity between your reader and the star of a story told in your copywriting message. This is the most flexible approach. First, it bypasses the expert intimidation factor mentioned above. Secondly, it allows your reader to experience the benefits of your product or service vicariously, simply by reading your message. If the star of your story happens to be your seller, or one of your clients or customers, even better.

We will cover this in the next chapter and in later techniques in this book. One of my early clients used this approach to create a multi-million dollar business selling bodybuilding and weight loss products. The principles he used are the same ones I teach in The Antifragile Sales System.

Those are the three contexts you can use to build affinity with your reader. Of course, if you can do all three of these, even better. You'll discover more creative ways to do this as we unpack the rest of the copywriting techniques in this book.

How to Master Rapport

Congratulations. You're now familiar with the four foundational persuasive copywriting techniques: relevance, curiosity, hope, and rapport.

To recap, relevance is how you connect with your reader, curiosity is how you turn that connection into interest, hope is how you turn your reader's interest into a burning desire, and rapport is how you turn their desire into motivation. As I said at the start of this chapter, motivation isn't enough to get your reader to act now. That takes urgency.

This is why urgency is the final technique in this book. Between now and then, we'll unpack five more persuasive copywriting techniques for applying what you've learned so far and what you'll learn in the final technique. Before we hit the first of the next five techniques, let me remind you that your success with all these techniques depends on how diligent you are in using the Buyer Persona exercise in my book “The Antifragile Sales System.”

Let me show you what I mean with a rather humbling story...

Several years ago, I got an interview request from an entrepreneur who you've probably heard of. I won't share his name because, well, he turned out to be a real hard-headed dumb ass. One of his first questions was:

"What's the most important thing for writing good copy?"

My response was simple:

- Know your reader.
- Speak their language.

Unsatisfied with my "non-sexy" answer, he kept asking the question, as if digging for some hidden treasure. Being my usual mild-mannered self (he said sarcastically), I finally said:

"You obviously want a shortcut. Everyone wants a shortcut. That's why they suck at copywriting."

Obviously, he was butthurt and never published the interview. But the lesson of this story is worth its weight in gold...

There's No Shortcut To Great Copywriting

There is no "one big thing" that you can do to go from being good to great. Like any other trade, copywriters come in all kinds. Some are Rubber Chicken Marketers, others are practically modern-day sorcerers.

While I consider myself far above average, I still have a lot to learn. That's why I work on my craft every day. I work damn hard at it and don't plan to slack off until I can't write anymore.

Ihope you'll do the same. The world has enough mediocre and even downright sucky copywriters. Most of them are either too dumb or too lazy to use what I teach.

Occasionally, someone sends me an email digging for the same "big secret" that this dude was digging for in our interview. You can save yourself a lot of time and energy by accepting that there is no shortcut, no big secret, no code to crack.

The one thing that separates great copywriters from ordinary ones is their willingness to gather accurate information, to THINK about what they've gathered, and use it to craft an authentic message. This is the start of your journey, and there are no shortcuts. You have to pay the price to become great.

Let Rubber Chicken Marketers waste their time and energy looking for that "one big thing" that will transform them from novice to master. The road to mediocrity is studded with crude road signs and promising shortcuts. In the end, they're nothing but detours that dump you right back out at the place you started.

Do the work. Keep doing it until it becomes easy, then find another challenge to tackle. Keep getting better, and you'll be amazed at where this journey takes you. Let's continue with the next set of persuasive copywriting techniques.



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Technique #5: Storytelling

Why Storytelling Works

In the first four chapters of this book, we talked about turning attention into interest, interest into desire, and desire into urgency. The final two techniques will focus on turning urgency into action.

Between now and then, we'll unpack four more persuasive copywriting techniques for applying what you've learned so far and what you'll learn in the final two techniques. I've made storytelling the first of these next four techniques because it's the master method for applying nearly all the copywriting techniques in this book.

There are two ways to use storytelling, the right way, and the wrong way. The right way is to make storytelling the medium through which you apply the other persuasive copywriting techniques in this book. The wrong way is to do it while ignoring these techniques, in hopes that your story will do the job anyway.

In the third chapter of this book, I talked about creating a "synthetic experience" in your reader's imagination—one which literally changes the state of their nervous system. Storytelling is the absolute best way to accomplish this. Just look at the billions of dollars spent on entertainment every year: television, books, movies, plays, operas, and even magazines that use stories as their content.

Think about the last time you watched a good movie, or (better yet) read a good book, and lost yourself completely in the story. Great stories can dissolve the reality around us and take us into a world created by the author. I've read books that did this so well that for a time the world of the author's story became more real to me than the room I was sitting in. Stories have had a similar effect on humankind for as long as we have been telling them.

Thousands of years ago it was prophets, scribes, and minstrels that brought us the magical power of stories to shape history and even drive cultural evolution. Today the storytellers are movie and television directors, songwriters, writers (both fiction and non-fiction), and yes, even advertisers and marketers. These modern storytellers drive the evolution of culture and civilization, just as their predecessors did.

In fact, most modern stories are based on a format that has been around for eons. A great example of this is the format Joseph Campbell talks about in his book "The Hero of a Thousand Faces." A great story can affect our emotions (and even our beliefs) the same way regardless of whether it's based on truth or fiction. Great stories can even make us believe in new ideas that have never been tested in the real world. This includes books on political theories or spiritual ideas or even moral philosophies.

It's all a question of whether you use your story to apply the persuasive copywriting techniques in this book. The secret is to create a story that your reader can insert themselves into as the hero or the beneficiary of the story. In his book "On Writing," author Stephen King (one of the most addictive writers of our time) talks about making the reader a "sensory participant" in the story.

In other words, your reader should be able to insert themselves into your story using their imagination. One of my favorite radio broadcasters used to call this "The Theater of the Mind." If your copywriting messages (or even your books or screenplays if that's your thing) can insert your reader into this virtual theater, they will literally enjoy the experience of reading your message.

When you reach this level of persuasive storytelling, getting them to act on your offer will be easy. Now, let's look at some examples of storytelling.

Examples of Storytelling

You can use storytelling to apply any of the other persuasive copywriting techniques in this book. You probably noticed it in some of the examples already. This technique is especially effective when combined with the next two techniques in this book. Let's get right into our first example.

Storytelling Example #1

Imagine our reader is suffering from persistent allergies. Almost every morning, they wake up coughing, or sneezing, or with a runny nose or watering eyes. They've tried allergy medicines, aroma therapy, herbal teas, meditation, and all kinds of crap. Nothing has helped. Then, one day they find this post on Social Media:

The Horrifying Reason Your Allergies are Worst in the Morning

[RELEVANCE >]Ever wake up with sneezing, watery eyes, or a runny nose?[< RELEVANCE]

That's because you're not sleeping alone.

[STORYTELLING >]Every night, you lie down with thousands of crab-like, microscopic parasites called dust mites. They don't bite, pinch, or burrow in your skin, but they're crawling all over your sheets and pillows. That's why you sometimes wake up with watery eyes, a runny nose, or an itch-like cough. As you sleep, you're breathing in their fecal pellets and body fragments.[< STORYTELLING]

[RELEVANCE >]Allergies, asthma, and a weak immune system have all been medically tied to the long-term impact of breathing in dust mite filth.[< RELEVANCE]

[CURIOSITY >]Here's why washing your bed sheets isn't enough...[< CURIOSITY]

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #1 of the Buyer's Journey)

Do you think they're going to keep reading? You're damn right they will. I just turned their stomach with this vignette (aka, little story) about dust mites in their bed. This story is effective for two very important reasons.

First, it leverages relevance by tying this toe-curling description of dust mites to symptoms that my reader is already experiencing during a typical day of their life. This is a very, very important detail. Regardless of how graphic my story is, I assure you, it would be far less effective if my reader wasn't waking up with these symptoms. Unless they were a raving germaphobe, they would probably go home and sleep in their bed (without washing the sheets) and sleep soundly.

But, if my reader (or one of their children) is suffering from allergies, asthma, a weak immune system, or any of the mild allergic reactions mentioned in the first sentence of my example...they will read on with eager interest. Especially since I made an appeal to curiosity in this final sentence:

"Here's why washing your bed-sheets isn't enough..."

While we're talking about that sentence, let me point out that I used the phrase "washing your bed-sheets" for a good reason. This example comes from an ad I wrote back in 2010. As is my usual practice when writing sales copy, I asked my client if I could interview a few of their inbound sales staff. I asked them for the most common objections they got when talking to customers on the phone. ALL of them told me that the customers assumed washing their sheets regularly would solve this problem.

See what I did there? I didn't just guess which objection might stop my reader from reading the rest of my ad. I did my homework and defused the objection right out of the gate. Guess which objection the sales staff DIDN'T have to overcome when customers called in response to this ad?

This is one of the most important jobs of a copywriter. Your message won't always lead to a direct sale. It can, however, make them much more likely to buy, and with less price resistance, when they finally talk to a salesperson. Good copywriting can do more than generate direct sales. It can dramatically increase the closing rates, upsell frequency, and average dollars per transaction for your incoming leads.

If you're a freelance copywriter, keep this in mind the next time you're pitching a new client on the value of your service. If you're good (which you will be if you use what you're learning) this nugget of knowledge could make you a lot of money in new client business, and help you justify premium rates for your service.

The second reason this story is effective is that it uses words "crab-like," "bite," pinch," "burrow in your skin," "crawling all over your sheets and pillows...", and "you sometimes wake up with watery eyes...", "you're breathing in their fecal pellets and body fragments." I'll explain why these words are so effective when we cover the next persuasive copywriting technique in this book. However, let me point out two important points about what I did here.

First, notice my use of the word "don't" in this sentence:

"They don't bite, pinch, or burrow in your skin..."

If dust mites don't do any of these things, why include these sentences in my story? Because your reader will STILL have a negative physiological response to the words "bite," "pinch," and "burrow in your skin." The human brain experiences the world through associations. It also learns through associations, and the associations don't have to make sense. Politicians and the media frequently use this technique to plant false narratives into people's minds.

I am NOT suggesting that you do this yourself. Although, I can't stop you if you're determined. I'll only say that you should use it responsibly, and at your own risk. Bottom line, this vignette hits a nerve because it combines the technique of relevance with a vivid and horrific description of the hidden cause of my reader's problem. I'll show you exactly how I made it so vivid when we unpack the next technique. Let's look at one more example just to hammer this point home.

Storytelling Example #2

Let's revisit our example from the previous chapter about our young amateur bodybuilder who wants to gain twenty pounds of lean muscle. Once again, I'll use [BRACKETS] to show where I've applied the techniques we've covered so far in this book. Pay attention to how I combined the techniques of Relevance, Rapport, and Storytelling in this example:

You And I Didn't Win The Genetic Lottery

[RAPPORT >]Like you, I didn't win the genetic lottery. I was "the skinny guy" in gym class. I was embarrassed to take off my shirt. In High School, I missed out on a lot of dates with girls. I missed trips to the beach with my friends.

[STORYTELLING >]Since I was ten, all I wanted to do was lift weights, get big, and stop being the skinny guy.

I still remember the "new car" smell of my first weight set. I used to wake up in the middle of the night, go out to the garage, and just stare at those shiny plates. The steely Olympic barbell is cool to my touch. I couldn't wait to get home from school the next day. I just wanted to pump iron, eat

protein, and watch my bird chest and pencil arms transform into rippling slabs of lean, sleeve-busting muscle.

At first, my gains exploded. I was confident when taking off my shirt. I started getting attention from girls. Still, I was puzzled at those guys who blew past me in their gains. I lifted all summer. I sweated for hours in my garage, five, six, seven days a week. Not these guys. They'd take entire months off. Still, they were getting bigger and more ripped than me. I remember looking at them and thinking:

"Are these guys on drugs or something?"
"Do they just have better equipment than me?"
"Maybe I'll hit a late growth spurt."

I was stumped. I had to push, pull, kick, bite, spit, sweat, and bleed for every ounce of my gains. This blood-boiling struggle continued into my late twenties. [< STORYTELLING][< RAPPORT] [CURIOSITY] Then I stumbled onto a sobering secret every hard-gainer needs to know... [< CURIOSITY].

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #2 of the Buyer's Journey)

Notice, again, how I based my story on details relevant to my reader's problem, their hope to solve it, and other rapport-building data covered in the previous chapter. Notice how I use words and phrases like "the 'new car' smell of my first weight set," "those shiny plates," cool to my touch," "bird chest and pencil arms, " and "rippling slabs of lean, sleeve-busting muscle." I continue in the second paragraph of my vignette with phrases like "my gains exploded," "guys who blew past me in their gains," "sweated for hours in my garage," and references to my reader's internal dialog.

All of these words and phrases have something in common. I'll tell you what it is when we get to the next technique, but here's a clue to whet your appetite. Read these two versions of the intro to my vignette and see if you can tell the difference (it's subtle but important):

"I still remember the "new car" smell of my first weight set. I used to wake up in the middle of the night, go out to the garage, and just stare at those shiny plates."

"I still remember my first weight set. I used to wake up in the middle of the night, go out to the garage, and just stare at it."

The first version creates a mental picture in my imagination. The second version does not. If I were to rewrite this entire example in the style of the second version, the new version would have less of an impact on my reader. Yet, the difference is subtle enough to where only an experienced writer would even notice. The better you get at recognizing these subtle differences, the better you'll get at polishing up your messages and giving them that seasoned edge you only see in great writers.

How to Apply Storytelling

There are two rules to effective storytelling. First, as with all the techniques I teach, your storytelling should be based on the four data groups I laid out in the previous chapter. If your storytelling isn't based on relevant data, it will fall flat. This is true even if your storytelling skills are top-notch and your story reads like a best-selling suspense thriller. Sure, your reader might read the entire story for the pure entertainment value. But they won't buy anything.

Secondly, your story should advance the sale of your product, service, or idea. The best way to ensure this is by combining the simplified version of the 12 Stages of The Hero's Journey (laid out below) with the Five Stages of the Buyer's Journey covered in The Antifragile Sales System.

Hero's Journey: A common and universal story structure where the main character ventures into unfamiliar circumstances to achieve something they desire or to save something (or someone) they value. The character faces adversity, and sometimes failure and despair, but achieves victory in the end, and is transformed by the experience. In marketing, the Hero's Journey is a tool for guiding prospects through one or more of the Five Stages of the Buyer's Journey. The stages are:

1. Desire
2. Resistance
3. Failure
4. Insight
5. Success.

Keep in mind that the hero of your story can be anyone who has an affinity with your buyer persona, as I explained in the previous chapter. To further clarify this, let's look at an example for each stage of the Hero's Journey, each one based on the experience of someone who represents your buyer persona:

Stage #1: Desire

At this stage, the Hero discovers or decides on something they want to change. They are driven by a desire to gain something positive or get rid of something negative. This stage of the Hero's Journey usually corresponds to Stage #2 of The Buyer's Journey. The example below demonstrates Hero's Journey Stage #1 Storytelling.

Notice the [BRACKETS] where I've referenced the Hero's desires (positive and negative), and the contrast between the two. I've also bracketed out the places where I've used other copywriting techniques from this book:

Since I was ten, all I wanted to do was lift weights, [POSITIVE >]get big,[< POSITIVE] and [NEGATIVE >]stop being the skinny guy[< NEGATIVE].

[SYNTHETIC EXPERIENCE >]I still remember the "new car" smell of my first weight set. I used to wake up in the middle of the night, go out to the garage, and just stare at those shiny plates. The steely Olympic barbell cool to my touch.[< SYNTHETIC EXPERIENCE] I couldn't wait to get home from school the next day. I just wanted to pump iron, eat protein, and [CONTRAST >]watch my bird chest and pencil arms transform into rippling slabs of lean, sleeve-busting muscle[< CONTRAST].

At first, [HOPE >]my gains exploded. I was confident when taking off my shirt. I started getting attention from girls[< HOPE].

Stage #2: Resistance

At this stage, the Hero encounters internal or external resistance to the change they want. They are either in denial about it or trying to overcome it by sheer persistence. This stage of the Hero's Journey can correspond to Stage #1 or Stage #2 of The Buyer's Journey. The example below continues from the example above to demonstrate Stage #2 Storytelling.

Notice the [BRACKETS] where I've referenced the Hero's frustration in trying to achieve their desires (positive and negative) and where I've used other copywriting techniques from this book:

Still, I was puzzled at those guys who [FRUSTRATION >]blew past me in their gains. I lifted all summer. I sweated for hours in my garage, five, six, seven days a week. Not these guys. They'd take entire months off. Still, they were getting bigger and more ripped than me.[< FRUSTRATION] I remember looking at them and thinking...

[RELEVANCE >]"Are these guys on drugs or something?"
"Do they just have better equipment than me?"
"Maybe I'll hit a late growth spurt."[< RELEVANCE]

I was stumped. [FRUSTRATION >]I had to push, pull, kick, bite, spit, sweat, and bleed for every ounce of my gains. This blood-boiling struggle continued into my late twenties.[< FRUSTRATION][CURIOSITY >]Then I stumbled onto a sobering secret every hard-gainer needs to know...[< CURIOSITY]

Stage #3: Failure

At this stage, the Hero suffers a substantial setback or failure. They know they need to change their approach, but don't know how and may have lost hope. This stage of the Hero's Journey can correspond to Stage #1 or Stage #2 of The Buyer's Journey. The example below continues from the examples above to demonstrate Hero's Journey Stage #3 Storytelling.

Notice the [BRACKETS] where I've referenced the Hero's failure and despair in trying to achieve their desires (positive and negative) and where I've used other copywriting techniques from this book:

It Started With A Tiny Pain In My Shoulder

[FAILURE >]It started with a tiny pain in my shoulder. Six months later, I couldn't even pour a cup of coffee with my right arm. I was forced to stop lifting heavy.[< FAILURE][DESPAIR >]My gains vanished within just six weeks, it looked like I'd barely touched a weight in my life.

I wanted to quit. My heart was a lead balloon when I started seeing that skinny guy in the mirror again. [< DESPAIR]

But I couldn't give up now. I KNEW there had to be a reason, and I was determined to find it. Exercise research became my part-time job that summer.

[CURIOSITY >]That's when I discovered something that changed my life. It happened one night while I was poring through scientific studies on muscle growth and recovery.[< CURIOSITY]

Stage #4: Insight

At this stage, the Hero discovers something that renews their hope. This can include the discovery of a flaw in their approach, a new method, or a self-sabotaging belief, action, or habit. This stage of the Hero's Journey usually corresponds to Stage #3 of The Buyer's Journey. The example below continues from the examples above to demonstrate Hero's Journey Stage #4 Storytelling.

Suddenly Everything Made Sense

I could hardly believe it. After hours of studying scientific research on muscle growth and recovery, [CURIOSITY >]I discovered a pattern. It wasn't about genetics, or finding the perfect routine. It

wasn't about diet, sleep, or any of the patter you hear from guys who show up at the gym every day, but never look any different.

Suddenly everything made sense: my slow gains, my seeming genetic resistance to putting on muscle, my failure to sustain results, even my shoulder injury. They were all connected. More importantly, I realized why those big guys at the gym didn't talk about this secret. They were too busy perfecting their physique, and now I'd discovered their biggest secret.[< CURIOSITY]

Notice how I didn't reveal what the insight was. Instead, I applied a technique called "breadcrumbing" which we'll explore later in this book. The secret to this Stage of the Hero's Journey is to present insight as the solution to our Hero's problems and the cause of their success. If you do this right, your reader will keep reading in hope of discovering the insight for themselves.

Stage #5: Success

At this stage, the Hero achieves a substantial series of wins that can only be attributed to the insight discovered at Stage #4. They are now driven by a desire to share this insight with others. This stage of the Hero's Journey usually corresponds to Stage #5 of The Buyer's Journey. The example below continues from the examples above to demonstrate Hero's Journey Stage #5 Storytelling.

Notice the [BRACKETS] where I've referenced the Hero's successes (semantic relevance) and renewed hope (emotional relevance) and where I've used other copywriting techniques from this book:

---

3 Years Of Progress In Just Six Months

After my big discovery, I completely changed my training routine and eating schedule.[SEMANTIC RELEVANCE >]By the first week, my shoulder pain was almost gone. Within 30 days, my shirts started tightening. I was seeing ripples of muscle tone and veins in places I'd never seen either. Even my shoulders and biceps (my most stubborn muscles) were getting bigger and more defined.[< SEMANTIC RELEVANCE][EMOTIONAL RELEVANCE >]Men and women at my gym who had never talked to me started making comments.

Six months later, the owner of my gym asked if he could put my "before and after" pictures on the wall. Three years later, my picture is still there, and I hardly recognize that skinny guy on the left.[< EMOTIONAL RELEVANCE]

I'm still not the biggest guy in my gym. But that's because I've upgraded to a gym where professional bodybuilders and athletes frequently train. Every now and then, I visit my old gym to see my picture on their wall. It's amazing to see the progress I made in those first six months. [HOPE >]I'm

confident that you can do the same over the next six months.[< HOPE][BREADCRUMBING >]That's why I now consider it my life's mission to share what I've learned with you.[< BREADCRUMBING]

Storytelling Formulas

1.The Hero's Journey Story

- Stage 1: Desire - The hero discovers or decides on something they want to change
- Stage 2: Resistance - The hero encounters resistance (internal or external)
- Stage 3: Failure - The hero suffers a substantial setback or failure
- Stage 4: Insight - The hero discovers something that renews their hope
- Stage 5: Success - The hero achieves wins attributed to their insight
- Stage 6: Contribution - The hero shares their insight to help others

2. The Conspiracy Story

- Stage 1: Desire - Protagonist wants to solve a problem or achieve a goal
- Stage 2: Resistance - They encounter resistance from "the system"
- Stage 3: Persecution - They face active opposition for questioning status quo
- Stage 4: Discovery - They secretly uncover why the system resists change
- Stage 5: Success - They find a way to work around or beat the system
- Stage 6: Contribution - They expose the truth to help others break free

3. Tragic Teacher (Blackie) Story

- Stage 1: Desire - Protagonist seeks knowledge or transformation
- Stage 2: Resistance - They struggle to find answers through conventional means
- Stage 3: Encounter - They meet a wise but unorthodox mentor figure
- Stage 4: Overconfidence - Initial success leads to taking mentor for granted
- Stage 5: Tragedy - Mentor dies or disappears before sharing all their wisdom
- Stage 6: Contribution - Protagonist honors mentor by sharing what they learned

Each of these story formulas can be matched to your market type:

- B2C Products and Services: Hero's Journey works best, telling a story about someone who had a life-changing experience with the product or service.
- B2B Products and Services: Tragic Teacher works well, revealing secrets learned from a mentor to position you as an expert.
- Information Saturated Markets: Conspiracy Story works best, exposing mistakes and hidden truths others won't tell.

- Product/Service Saturated Markets: Hero's Journey focused on debunking alternatives works best.

The key is choosing the right story formula based on:

- Your market type (B2C, B2B, saturation, etc)
- Your prospect's stage in the Buyer's Journey
- The type of positioning you want to establish
- The specific objections you need to overcome

How to Master Storytelling

Congratulations. You're now familiar with the four most important persuasive copywriting techniques (relevance, curiosity, hope, and rapport), along with the technique of storytelling. There are two secrets to mastering the technique of storytelling:

- Mastering the other techniques in this book
- Good data gathering and interviewing skills

The first secret is addressed in the other chapters of this book. Data gathering and interviewing are beyond the scope of this book, but just as necessary. In the previous chapter, I introduced the four data groups necessary for creating good content:

1. Demographic Data
2. Psychographic Data
3. Dog Whistle Language
4. Buyer's Journey Stage

Dog Whistle Language is one of the most important, and yet most commonly neglected. It's the key to applying the first and most important technique in this book: relevance. By far the best way to learn the Dog Whistle Language for your Buyer Persona is through good interviewing skills.

Interviewing is an essential skill for becoming an effective copywriter. I've seen many marketing campaigns flop because of poor messaging. In most cases, the root of the problem is poor data gathering, and bad interviewing skills are a huge part of this process.

In my experience, the best person to interview for a Hero's Journey story is the star of your story. However, you'll also want to interview salespeople who actually sell your product or service, either over the phone or in person.

Good interviewing skills will help you tremendously in drafting your content and empathizing with your target customers. This is why I suggest having a Salesperson as part of your content marketing team. A good salesperson will know how your prospects and customers describe their problems,

their assumptions about alternative solutions, and many important things that can only come from conversations with real customers.

Pick interviewers who have a genuine interest in different perspectives, respect people, and value authenticity. Listen to how these interviewers dig out the personal stories and gems of insight that only come from a solid one-on-one conversation. The better you are at this skill, the richer and more authentic your vignettes and Hero's Journey stories will be.

The better you get at gathering real data from real customers, the more authentic and compelling your stories will be. This is what separates master copywriters from Rubber Chicken Marketers who rely on recycled formulas and tired clichés. In The Antifragile Sales System, we explore these concepts in even greater detail, but for now, focus on mastering these fundamentals.



Technique #6: Hypnotic Copywriting

Why Hypnotic Copy Works

In the first four chapters of this book, we talked about turning attention into interest, interest into desire, and desire into urgency. As mentioned before, the final techniques will focus on turning urgency into action.

Techniques 6-8 focus on applying what you've learned so far and what you'll learn in the final techniques. Trance is sixth of these techniques. Trance is the active technique behind the practice called "hypnotic copywriting."

While I did not coin the term hypnotic copywriting, the practice of hypnotic storytelling has been around for a long time—possibly thousands of years or more. Since this is my book, I'll give you my definition of hypnotic copywriting:

"Creating a synthetic experience in your reader's imagination and thus literally changing the state of their nervous system."

What is a synthetic experience?

In a moment, I want you to close your eyes and imagine yourself about to dig into your favorite dish. You're sitting down in comfortable clothes at a nice quiet restaurant. Your best friend is with you. The waiter slides the dish onto the table right under your nose.

The fresh aroma rises into your face as you breathe deeply, taking in the smell of every ingredient. You pick up your fork, plunge it into the heap of delicious food and lift it to your mouth. Your taste buds light up as you take the bite and start to slowly start chew. It's the perfect temperature and texture. You can taste every ingredient, from the most abundant, down to the most subtle.

"How is it?" your friend asks.
"Amazing," you answer. "Like, better than I've had anywhere."

Now, close your eyes and really imagine that scene in your mind, down to the last detail. Feel the temperature of the dining room, the relaxing music, and the fresh aroma of your favorite dish wafting up from the table. While you're not actually sitting in the restaurant eating your favorite dish, you are experiencing it in your imagination AND in your body. This is what I mean by a synthetic experience.

The experience itself is not real, but if the imagination of it is clear and vivid enough, your nervous system will respond almost as if it were. Now, let's think about what I just did to create this scene in your mind.

I wrote this while sitting at my desk in Tampa, Florida at 11:57 EST on a Wednesday night. I'm probably miles away from where you sit reading this, and I just transmitted a message into your mind across time and space using only the words written on this page.

More importantly, I influenced the state of your nervous system by creating a synthetic experience of you enjoying your favorite dish. Keep in mind that I was limited to writing about a generic dish. If I'd known that your favorite food was deep dish Chicago style meat lover's pizza, roasted Italian Eggplant Parmesan, or Raspberry Cheesecake with Oreo crust, I PROMISE you I could have you driving to your favorite restaurant sometime in the next 24 hours.

This is the power of creating a synthetic experience with your writing. The secret is to create a story that your reader can insert themselves into as the hero or the beneficiary of the story. In his book "On Writing," author Stephen King (one of the most addictive writers of our time) talks about making the reader a "sensory participant" in the story. In other words, your reader should be able to insert themselves into your story using their imagination.

In copywriting, this "story" is the synthetic experience of your reader enjoying the benefits of your product or service. The clearer and more vivid you can make this synthetic experience, the greater impact you'll have on your reader's nervous system. I'm talking about real and present biological responses, including hormone release, body temperature changes, elevated heart rate, pupil dilation, and even (if the content calls for it) sexual arousal.

The mind is a powerful thing, and by mastering the persuasive copywriting technique of trance, you step into your reader's mind and direct a mental movie that will be so enjoyable, that they'll be filled with the desire to buy your product or your service so they can have the experience in real life. This is the power of trance and the simple secret to learning and applying hypnotic copywriting.

Examples of Hypnotic Copy

The first secret to hypnotic copywriting is to use words, phrases, and descriptions that appeal to one or more of your reader's five senses (sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste). A lot of Rubber Chicken Marketers use abstract words and phrases like "cozy," "comfortable," "smells great," "looks amazing," "beautiful design," or (one of the worst offenders) "state of the art ____." These abstractions give the reader's imagination nothing to work with.

The second secret to hypnotic copywriting is to use words that prompt your reader to imagine the sensory stimulus so that their brain experiences it as real. The scientific evidence behind this is abundant, so I encourage you to research it yourself. However, I will mention one 2018 brain imaging study led by the University of Colorado Boulder and Icahn School of Medicine researchers.

This research suggests that imagination is so close to reality that it can help people overcome fear and anxiety-related disorders.

"This research confirms that imagination is a neurological reality that can impact our brains and bodies in ways that matter for our wellbeing."
-Tor Wager, director of the Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience Laboratory at CU Boulder and co-senior author of the paper.

If the imagination is powerful enough to help overcome real fears, it can certainly invoke emotion. It's simply a matter of you mastering this technique in your copywriting. In my experience, most of the copywriting instruction on this topic is vague and unhelpful, so if you've been struggling, you're not alone. But I think you'll find the technique simple when you use the approach I teach in this section. Let's start with an example for each one of the five senses.

Hypnotic Copy Example #1 (Sight)

Imagine our prospect loves the outdoors and enjoys relaxing and spending time in nature. They work hard and are long overdue for a personal getaway so they can relax, clear their mind, and get their creative juices flowing again. One morning, they open their favorite magazine and a full-page ad that starts like this:

Just Picture This...

You step out of bed in the morning and walk just ten steps onto your pine-wood balcony to gaze at endless miles of mist-wrapped, blue mountains.

Imagine cooking breakfast over a wood-fire stove, and sipping coffee on your back porch where bald eagles and red-shouldered hawks soar across a bright summer sky.

In the afternoon, you'll tour the winding wooded nature path where beams of golden sunlight shine through crisp maple leaves. At sunset, relax on your wrap-around porch with a warm cup of tea and watch the star-studded vertical horizon of the milky way fade into view.

This is a glimpse of the soul-soothing treasures that await you at your blue-ridge cabin getaway.

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #3 of the Buyer's Journey)

Notice how I used sight words in this example. Notice also that, instead of going for a clever headline, I primed their brain for the visual experience to come using the words "...Picture This."

Assuming I've placed this ad in front of the right type of reader and included a good offer and call to action (which we'll discuss later in this book), it's bound to get a good response rate.

Before we look at the next example, let's look at a few other techniques I used in this one. First, notice that I assumed the sale with this statement, "In the afternoon, you'll." I could have written "In the afternoon, you can..." but that would not have the same effect. I also used phrases like "your porch" and "your blue-ridge mountain getaway" to apply a powerful copywriting technique that we'll cover later in this book.

The idea is to create an experience in their imagination that's so desirable, that they won't stop thinking about it, even if they don't respond to my offer right away. They might even tear the page out of the magazine and post it on their refrigerator as a reminder to investigate my offer later. Now my message is occupying a space in their imagination. This is the power of hypnotic copywriting.

Hypnotic Copy Example #2 (Sound)

Imagine that our prospect is someone who loves tropical vacations, but hasn't been on one for a while. They live in a big city and (most likely) work in a noisy office with tight deadlines and lots of interruptions. Then, they check their mail one day and get a postcard like this:

Listen Closer...

You can almost hear the soft crash and hiss of waves, the cry of seagulls, and the summer breeze whistling through palm leaves.

"Would you like another drink?"
"Yes please," you answer.

Your waitress slides a frost-caked bottle of Corona from a bucket of ice, cracks it open and sets it on your table with a fresh slice of lime.

Isn't it time to turn off the clamoring of ring tones, text chimes, email alerts, and office chatter to fall in love with the sounds of the ocean again?

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #3 of the Buyer's Journey)

Again, check out how I used sound words in this example. As with the previous example, I also primed my reader's brain for the auditory experience to come using the words "...Listen Closer." I also used a chain of negative sound words (clamoring of ring tones, text chimes, email alerts, and

office chatter...") to take them out of their imaginary beach getaway and drop them back into their noisy office.

This creates a contrast between the pleasant image of life at the beach and the clanging chaos of life at the office. This makes their imagined trip to the beach even more appealing, but it also takes it away from them. This is an example of a persuasive copywriting technique I call dissonance, which we'll cover later in this book. The idea is that the contrast between the pleasant daydream and the unpleasant reality will create an internal pressure for your reader to act.

Hypnotic Copy Example #3 (Touch)

Imagine our prospect is a man in his early to late 40s who loves lifting weights, but whose energy level is decreasing as he gets older. His workout schedule is frequently interrupted by back and/or shoulder pain. Still, he frequently sees men his age and older who seem to be doing great in this area. He knows there has to be an answer and suspects it has something to do with his energy level. Then, one day he finds an offer online that reads like this:

You Can Feel It...

Raw animal power surges through your veins, your muscles vibrating with pure energy. You just slammed your first all-natural, delicious Honey Badger Pre-Workout Formula, and you're ready to wrap your hands around some cold-hard iron.

Sick of feeling like a blown-out tire halfway through your workout? Remember when you could push your physical limits for hours, without waking up to throbbing pain in your shoulders and lower back the next day?

Now you can get that surging explosive beast-like energy back and stack on rippling slabs of sleeve-busting muscle by squeezing every drop of juice from your workout time. Grab a pack of smooth, delicious, all-natural, energy-packed Honey Badger Pre-and-Post-Workout Formulas, and get ready to feel your beast awaken again.

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #3 of the Buyer's Journey)

Again, check out how I used touch and movement words in this examples. As with the previous examples, I also primed my reader's brain for the synthetic experience to come using the words "...You Can Feel It." I also used a chain of negative touch words (throbbing pain in your shoulders and lower back...") to contrast my product's benefits with their current experience. Again, this is an example of dissonance.

Another copywriting technique I used in this example is Dog Whistle Marketing. Contrary to how political commentators use the term, Dog Whistle Language is an important tool for making authentic connections with your reader. For example, the terms "raw animal power," "cold-hard iron," and "feel your beast awaken..." are Dog Whistle Words.

They have a unique and meaningful appeal to the prospect described above, but will likely seem uninteresting or even stupid to people outside this target market. This is how "private language" gives our ad an authentic ring that simply can't be achieved by trying to use words that appeal to a broader audience. This will make your hypnotic copywriting even more effective and genuine.

By far one of the most common mistakes I see in marketing is the impulse to favor vague, vanilla language over audience-specific language, all for the sake of trying to appeal to "everyone." Vagueness does not create value, and it makes your writing unmemorable and unpersuasive. This is another good reason to start EVERY content marketing strategy by defining your Buyer Persona.

Hypnotic Copy Example #4 (Taste)

This example is for anyone who is hungry and who enjoys fresh gourmet Pizza:

Now Take a Bite...

Sink your teeth into the hottest, crispiest, most delicious slice of deep dish, New York Style Pizza you've ever tasted.

Taste the thick layers of chewy mozzarella over a bed of fresh, tangy homemade tomato sauce.

All our pies are made with hand-tossed crust and baked to piping hot perfection in a wood-fire oven imported directly from Italy!

Each thick, hearty slice is loaded with fresh, organic herbs, picked right from our local garden, just this morning!

Hungry? Enjoy a taste of authentic homemade goodness tonight. You've worked hard and it's time to reward yourself with a mouth-watering pie (or two) of our hot, crisp, award-winning New York Style Pizza.

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #4 of the Buyer's Journey)

Again, notice how I used taste, texture, and temperature words to create a vivid "mind movie" of our reader enjoying pizza. As with the previous examples, I also primed my reader's brain for the

synthetic experience to come using the words "...Now Take a Bite." If our reader loves Pizza and happens to be hungry when they get this ad in the mail, and if the call to action and offer is good, they're very likely to either visit our website or call and order a pizza.

Hypnotic Copy Example #5 (Smell)

Imagine that our prospect is a career driven woman who enjoys decompressing at a high-end spa. She is in a new city for a week on a business trip and wants to visit a good local spa. While searching listings online, she finds a business with good reviews, visits their website, and reads this:

Breath It In...

Enjoy the sweet smell of citrus candles, and warm cinnamon, pine, jasmine, fig, or floral massage oil as you lie down for a deep tissue Swedish facial massage.

Our scientifically designed scent profiles activate your smell receptors, sending messages to your body to regulate heart rate, breathing patterns, lower your blood pressure, and reduce anxiety.

Start your custom spa experience by choosing your private scent profile below:

- Floral: rose, lavender, lotus, crimson.
- Fruity: tropical, mandarin orange, lemon.
- Sweet: chocolate, caramel, vanilla.
- Herbal: eucalyptus, rosemary, ginger.
- Plant: pine, jasmine, cedar, maple.
- Musk: sandlewood, cinnamon, patchouli.

Choose your scent profile now, then book your spa date, and come breath in the aroma of relaxation and rejuvenation.

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #4 of the Buyer's Journey)

Again, notice how I used smell words to drop our readers directly into their spa experience. As with the previous examples, I also primed my reader's brain for the sensory experience to come using the words "...Breathe It In."

I also created a "soft sell" by giving them a list of custom scent profiles to choose from, which would then lead them to a page where they'd book their appointment. This is an example of using a soft call to action (choosing their scent profile) to mentally prepare my reader for a hard call to action (setting their appointment).

We will discuss the difference between soft and hard calls to action and how to combine them for maximum response later in this book.

How to Write Hypnotic Copy

Learning hypnotic copywriting starts with understanding a concept called The Ladder of Abstraction. The Term "Ladder of Abstraction" was coined by S.I. Hayakawa in his book "Language in Thought and Action," published in 1949. Since then, other writers, marketers, and communication experts have created various adaptations of the model. My own adaption is defined below:

Ladder of Abstraction: *a conceptual model that organizes writing on a continuum, with the top of the ladder representing the most abstract writing and the bottom representing the most concrete. The five levels (from top to bottom) are: 1) Conceptual Writing, 2) Topical Writing, 3) Storytelling, 4) Descriptive Writing, and 5) Hypnotic Copywriting.*

The Ladder of Abstraction is not a shortcut writing technique. It's a complex skill that takes time and effort to learn, practice, and master. The good news is, it's also the secret to mastering many essential writing techniques, including hypnotic copywriting.

You'll notice that the levels of the Ladder of Abstraction can sometimes overlap. For example, you can be in the middle of a story (Storytelling) and make a quick trip up the Ladder to explain a concept (Conceptual Writing). You can also move down the Ladder of Abstraction to describe (Descriptive Writing) something in more detail, or to engage the reader's emotions through Hypnotic Copywriting.

The secret is to understand the effect of each level on your reader and to use this knowledge to intentionally manage your reader's awareness. In my experience, the best writers (fiction and non-fiction) are masters of navigating the Ladder of Abstraction.

Whether they're consciously aware of the concept itself is irrelevant. Great writers do this instinctively but don't assume that this means they do it effortlessly or that you can't learn and master this skill through conscious effort.

In fact, I argue that when you learn and apply The Ladder of Abstraction consciously, your writing becomes more enjoyable and more effective. Lack of knowledge of the fundamentals of good writing is the root of much writing anxiety, and of the need for a writer to edit, revise, or even rewrite their work in order to make it "flow right."

How to Master Hypnotic Copy

Once you can recognize Conceptual Writing, Topical Writing, and Storytelling, you're ready to start analyzing other people's writing and recognizing the difference between the bottom two levels (Descriptive Writing and Hypnotic Writing). Here's a list of some authors who move fluently between all five levels to create truly magical reading experiences:

- Charles Dickens
- Earnest Hemingway
- Mark Twain
- James Joyce
- Agatha Christie
- H.P. Lovecraft
- Hunter S. Thompson
- Toni Morrison
- Edgar Alan Poe
- Stephen King
- Chuck Palahniuk
- J.K. Rowling
- Margaret Atwood
- Suzanne Collins

As you read the work of these writers (and others not included in this list), ask yourself two questions:

1. Which level of The Ladder of Abstraction is this author working on right now?
2. How is this affecting my engagement, awareness, and emotions as the reader?

The more you do this simple analysis, the clearer picture you'll get of the function and value of each of the five levels. Soon, you'll find yourself using them in your work, and your writing will elevate to a whole new level.

Descriptive Writing vs Hypnotic Writing

"Don't say the old lady screamed. Bring her on and let her scream."
— Mark Twain

This quote defines the difference between Descriptive Writing and Sensory (Hypnotic) Writing perfectly. More formally stated, Descriptive Writing uses conceptual or concrete descriptions, while hypnotic writing uses sensory descriptions. From the reader's perspective, Descriptive Writing creates a picture in the mind while hypnotic writing creates the imagined impression of actions unfolding in real-time.

For example, if I describe a character by saying, "Greg was a father of two children, a devoted husband, and a passionate minor league baseball coach." that's a conceptual description. It gives you general demographic information about Greg but doesn't create a picture in your mind.

If I describe Greg by saying, "Greg stood 5'10, stout and broad-shouldered with gold-rimmed glasses and calloused hands from swinging wooden bats in batting cages..." you now have a concrete description of Greg that creates a basic picture in your mind.

However, this picture is more like a statue in a wax museum than a real person. But if I say, "Greg's icy-blue eyes peered from behind thin gold-rimmed glasses. His hands clenched into white-knuckled fists and pearls of sweat broke out on his broad gray-haired chest as he belted commands at his players in a voice that sounded like a cross between a tuba and a chainsaw..." Greg suddenly comes to life. He's now animated in a way that reveals subtle impressions about his personality.

I don't have to tell you that Greg is past middle age or that he's passionate and intense, and that he has a physically intimidating presence. In fact, you probably filled in other details about Greg that weren't mentioned at all in my example. This is how hypnotic writing engages your reader's imagination and makes them active participants in your story. This makes it very effective for engaging the emotions and making your writing more memorable and persuasive.

To wrap things up, here's a quick summary of each writing style on The Ladder of Abstraction, and an explanation of what happens when you use them too little or too much in your writing:

Conceptual Writing:

Purpose: establishing context, definitions, and distinctions.
Too Little: writing will lack a broader meaning and direction.
Too Much: writing will be boring and hard to digest.

Topical Writing:

Purpose: conveying ideas and information.
Too Little: writing will lack clarity and focus.
Too Much: writing will be generic and pedantic.

Storytelling:

Purpose: makes ideas and information more relatable.
Too Little: writing will not be relatable to the reader.
Too Much: writing may not communicate its intended idea.

Descriptive Writing:

Purpose: creating a picture in the reader's mind.

Too Little: writing will have little emotional impact.
Too Much: writing will seem tedious and oversold.

Hypnotic Writing:

Purpose: engaging reader's emotions and stirring desire.
Too Little: writing will be less persuasive and memorable.
Too Much: writing could lose its broader purpose and direction.

I also suggest you start building a collection of sensory words for each of the five senses. Here are some ideas to get you started:

Sight Words:

- gleaming, shimmering, sparkling, glowing, dazzling
- murky, shadowy, dim, hazy, cloudy
- vibrant, radiant, brilliant, luminous
- mottled, speckled, spotted, striped
- transparent, opaque, crystalline
- crimson, azure, emerald, golden

Sound Words:

- whisper, murmur, hum, buzz, whirr
- crash, bang, clang, thud, slam
- crackle, sizzle, snap, pop
- roar, rumble, thunder, boom
- screech, shriek, wail, howl
- tinkle, chime, ring, jingle

Touch Words:

- smooth, silky, velvety, soft
- rough, jagged, coarse, gritty
- burning, freezing, scorching, icy
- sticky, slimy, greasy, oily
- damp, moist, wet, dry
- tender, firm, tough, solid

Taste Words:

- sweet, sugary, honeyed, syrupy
- bitter, tart, sour, tangy
- spicy, peppery, fiery, zesty
- savory, rich, buttery, creamy

VQ Success

- fresh, crisp, juicy, succulent
- bland, tasteless, flavorless

Smell Words:

- fragrant, aromatic, perfumed
- musty, moldy, stale, rancid
- fresh, clean, crisp, pure
- pungent, sharp, acrid, bitter
- sweet, floral, fruity, citrusy
- earthy, woody, smoky, spicy

You now have some invaluable insights and tools for learning and mastering hypnotic copywriting. It will be hard work, and your writing might seem odd or unnatural when you first start using these tools. But keep practicing these techniques and they'll become second nature.

Soon, hypnotic copywriting will become a seamless part of your writing process and will help you develop your own unique voice. The next step will be learning to lead your reader with a combination of two copywriting techniques, which we'll discuss in the next chapter.

VQ Success

Technique #7: Human Needs

WhyHumanNeedsWork

So far in this book, we've talked about turning attention into interest, interest into desire, and desire into urgency. The final two techniques will focus on turning urgency into action.

This chapter introduces the seventh persuasive copywriting technique: understanding and leveraging human needs. This technique is the glue that holds all your copywriting together. You can master all the copywriting techniques in this book, but it takes this one to make your writing come to life.

Human needs are based on two central rules. The first rule is that your prospect's interest in your offer is usually based on an internal conflict between their drive to meet a need and the pain of not having that need met.

The second rule is that effective copywriting contrasts the pain caused by your prospect's unmet need with the promise of solving the problem that's depriving them of that need.

If this sounds complicated, that's because it is. The good news is that understanding human needs becomes simple once you grasp these two rules. In my experience, writing coaches who try to simplify this topic provide little or no practical advice for writers who want to learn and master it.

Some writers naturally understand how to connect with human needs in their content, even if they can't explain in detail how they do it. Other writers have to learn the skill intentionally. The good news is that if you learn it intentionally, you'll understand what you're doing and why. You'll be able to call up this skill on command, instead of waiting for the fickle mistress of inspiration.

Understanding the Basic Human Needs

Everything in copywriting comes down to three basic human needs:

- Validation: the need to feel important.
- Excitement: the need for variety and stimulation.
- Security: the need for comfort and safety.

Of course, everyone is a little different in how they relate to these needs. Some people need excitement more than security, others favor security, and there are multiple ways for us to seek validation.

This is why some people are comfortable taking risks while others prefer to protect the status quo. Likewise, some people find validation through accomplishment, while others find it through social approval. I explain these personality dynamics in detail in The Antifragile Sales System.

For now, the important thing to understand is that these needs are universal. Once you learn to recognize them, you'll also realize that they're self-evident in people's behaviors. This is the foundation of the first rule we discussed.

Again, this rule is that your prospect's interest in your offer is usually based on an internal conflict between their drive to meet a need and the pain of not having that need met. For example, a person who seeks validation through social approval may have a problem that makes them feel rejected, unloved, or unwanted by others. Likewise, a person who seeks validation through achievement may have a problem that makes them feel foolish, ineffective, or like a failure.

These are examples of the negative side of the need for validation, which we'll call shame. You can call it something else if you'd like. The labels don't matter. What matters is that you understand the human need underlying your prospect's problem.

Your prospect may have a problem that makes them feel bored, burned out, or unhappy. These are examples of the negative side of excitement which we'll call boredom. Finally, your prospect may have a problem that makes them feel anxious, fearful, frustrated, or threatened. These are examples of the negative side of security, which we'll call fear.

To summarize, the three basic human needs each have a polar opposite:

- Validation vs Shame
- Excitement vs Boredom
- Security vs Fear

Again, change the labels if you want. As long as you grasp the underlying idea. Your prospect will most definitely call these emotions by other names, and may even deny them or rationalize them using more sophisticated language. What matters is that you learn to recognize three things during your Buyer Persona research:

- The Emotional Need(s) Behind Your Prospect's Problem
- The Language They Use to Describe it (Positive and Negative)
- The Experiences Associated With it (Positive and Negative)

Earlier in this book, I spoke about the second and third of these points ^ using the terms "Semantic Relevance," and "Emotional Relevance." In a moment, I'll show you how the three emotional needs (and their negatives) fit into this picture and how you'll use them when researching and crafting your messages. First, let's get some context by looking at a few examples of human needs in copywriting.

IMPORTANT: When using this technique in your copy, do not be overly literal by using the labels of the needs or their opposites (validation, shame, excitement, boredom, security, purpose, futility). Rather, embody them as concepts in your writing by using concrete and relatable examples (joining the conversation already in their head), and by painting sensory images in their head (mind movies using the hypnotic copywriting technique).

Examples of Human Needs

Using human needs in copywriting is all about understanding tension and release. This tension is created by your reader's internal conflict between the emotional needs and the polar negatives mentioned in the previous section. Our job is to contrast the pain caused by your prospect's unmet need with the promise of solving fulfilling that need. The following examples demonstrate this using each of the three emotional needs (validation, excitement, and security).

Human Needs Example #1 (Validation)

Let's assume our Buyer Persona is a business coach or consultant. They're trying to write a book, but unsatisfied with how it's coming out. They suspect that becoming an author is their ticket to attracting better clients and bigger opportunities. However, they're starting to ask whether the effort will be worth it.

They're now back on LinkedIn trying to build their reputation there. It's a slow, tedious process, and they're debating whether that's worth the effort either. Then, they find a professional Ghostwriter and editor with a LinkedIn profile that reads like this (I've used [BRACKETS] to highlight the places where I leveraged human needs):

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You Know That Book You're Writing?

I'll [VALIDATION+SECURITY >]help you FINISH IT and FEEL GREAT about promoting yourself with it.[< VALIDATION+SECURITY]
Despite the rise of social media, the evidence tells us that writing a book is the best way to become a TRUSTED AUTHORITY to your audience.
According to a 2020 study of 2,560 web users, readers who discovered a new author's work were most likely to do this next:

- "Search for books written by the author." (39%)
- "Search for the author's official website." (32%)

- “Search for the author on social media.” (18%)
- “Search for videos featuring the author.” (11%)

Wow! Imagine that. Readers who find your content online are first and foremost interested in whether you’ve written a book. [URGENCY >]They could be looking for your book right now. What are they finding?[< URGENCY]

[VALIDATION >]Imagine being recognized as a KNOWLEDGEABLE and TRUSTWORTHY authority in your subject. Imagine your insights and advice being sought by other experts all over your industry and the world.[< VALIDATION] [SHAME vs VALIDATION >]Imagine becoming known as a one-of-a-kind authority instead of being commoditized as just another voice in the crowded online marketplace.[< SHAME vs VALIDATION]

[VALIDATION >]Your expertise matters. But do your readers know this? Do they see you as a one-of-a-kind authority? Do they take your advice to heart, and act on it? [< VALIDATION] [SHAME+FEAR >]Or do they think they’re better off with someone cheaper, or more likable? [< SHAME+FEAR] [VALIDATION >]As a Thought Leader, you could GET PAID MORE for your knowledge, and have the pleasure of working with clients you most enjoy working with.[< VALIDATION]
[SHAME vs VALIDATION >]Which would you rather do?[< SHAME vs VALIDATION]

The 2019 Edelman-LinkedIn B2B Thought Leadership Impact Study surveyed 1,200 US business decision-makers, content creators, and salespeople to see how they perceived the value of the companies or service providers they did business with. Here are three findings from the survey:

- 47% of C-Suite executives say that they are willing to share their information with a company after reading content that demonstrates Thought Leadership.
- 58% of decision-makers say that they choose to do business with a service provider or company based on what they perceived to be Thought Leadership.
- 61% of decision-makers say they are more willing to pay premium prices to work with brands that show clear vision through Thought Leadership.

Just [VALIDATION >]imagine what this means for your professional reputation. Your ability to MAKE AND IMPACT depends on whether you become recognized as a one-of-a-kind expert.[< VALIDATION] A well-written book is one of the best ways to do this. LET’S WORK TOGETHER and [VALIDATION+SECURITY >] create a book that positions you as an AUTHOR and an AUTHORITY.[< VALIDATION+SECURITY]

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #3 of the Buyer's Journey)

There are literally DOZENS of super-valuable points I can make about this example. We'll start with those most relevant to human needs. First, notice that I've focused primarily on contrasting validation with its opposite (shame). While I also leveraged the need for security, I focused mainly on validation. There's a HUGE reason for this, which I bet you can guess if you've been following the progression of these techniques. It's the primary emotional need for this audience and for this offer.

I didn't happen on this information overnight or by guesswork. It took a lot of research and one-on-one interaction with this audience to provide this exact service. There is no substitution or shortcut for this when it comes to digging out the emotional need behind your prospect's problem. This is why I've been beating the drum on the Buyer Persona exercise mentioned in my book "The Antifragile Sales System."

I've bracketed out the places where I used this knowledge about my reader's emotional need for validation. Notice that I did four things in this example:

- I used evidence to settle their internal debate over writing a book and networking on LinkedIn.
- I used a combination of Semantic and Emotional relevance to appeal to validation and its negative (shame).
- I contrasted the negative emotion of shame with the positive emotion of validation and attached it to a question.
- I used the contrast between validation and shame to create urgency (this will be important later).

Notice how all the above points worked together to get them off the fence about whether they should invest in networking (which they've already tried) or hire me to help finish their book. This is especially important for readers who are in Stage #3 of the Buyer's Journey. and who are not (yet) sold on the type of solution you offer.
If I had simply yammered on about what a great editor I was, the effect of this example would have been greatly diminished. You must sell your reader on your type of solution before you try to position your brand as the superior provider of that solution.

I've also applied Dog Whistle marketing (see the Dan S Kenney's foreword for my book "The Antifragile Sales System") in this example with the term "Thought Leader" and the statement "...better off with someone cheaper, or more likable."

This, again, is a demonstration of a deep knowledge of this audience. The term "Thought Leader," will mean nothing to some readers, and even sound gimmicky.

But for this audience, it's a term loaded with semantic and emotional meaning. By using it, I'm important a truckload of hidden value that's undetectable to readers who are not part of this audience. The statement "...better off with someone cheaper and more likable..." hits another HUGE emotional hot button for this audience.

Having consulted one-on-one with thousands of solo entrepreneurs, speakers, coaches, and consultants, I can tell you that they secretly resent seeing people in their industry thrive simply because they are likable or charismatic. They want to escape the commodity trap and enjoy working with clients who will value them for who they are, instead of evaluating them by price, or personality. Again, this is why it's super important to understand who you're talking to, what matters to them,
and (most importantly), the internal dialog and external experiences that give context to their desires. This is the foundation of all great copywriting. I'll make two more points about this first example before we move on.

First, you'll notice that I did all of the above things without sounding awkward and weird about it. This is an important point if you happen to be an introvert who is often misunderstood. I'm one of those myself, and I can tell you that when I first started using this technique, it sounded damn clunky. Creepy even. It took conscious effort for me to make this sound natural. Even today, I sometimes run my writing by my wife, who is an extrovert and naturally great with people. Maybe this will come naturally to you and you'll hit the ground running. But, if you're anything like me, it will take work and you'll most certainly suck at it when you start. DO NOT give up! You will get there with practice. Secondly, you might be reading my comments above and thinking: *"Is this ethical? I mean, I don't want to shame anybody."* This is a self-centered mindset. The shame is already there before they find your ad. The question is
whether they'll benefit from it by responding properly and getting your help by hiring you or buying your product. True, their shame may also be rooted in some deeper psychological cause. Let that be what it is.

You're not a psychologist, and even they have a hard enough time unraveling people's mental health challenges. You are offering your reader a healthy way to meet their need by solving the problem at hand. If
your product or service doesn't actually do that, shame on you for misusing this information.

If it does, and you hold back for fear that you're "shaming someone," then shame on you for not doing your part to make their life better. Either way, any hesitation you have about using these techniques ethically is more about your own insecurity than it is about being nice to your client. Authentic courage is rooted in empathy. Tell your reader the truth and be confident that you're doing them a service in doing so. My bet is, that they'll thank you for your courage and your compassion (see what I did there?).

Human Needs Example #2 (Excitement)

In this example, our Buyer Persona is a single man in his mid-40s to early 50s. He has always been ambitious and hard-working. But he's also deeply interested in exploring the world and experiencing a spiritual awakening. He recently ended a long-term relationship, and his children are grown.

He has no geographical ties and very few financial obligations at this stage of his life. He's about to leave the office after a long day at work when he finds a website with this message that starts like this (I've used [BRACKETS] to highlight the places where I leveraged human needs):

Are You Missing The Adventure Of Your Life?

You've always wanted to travel the world. [EXCITEMENT >]Live where you want. Work when you want. Explore distant lands. Feed your mind. Experience strange new cultures.[< EXCITEMENT] [BOREDOM+SHAME >]Now, you're watching the sunset every day outside your office window. Every adventure, every promise, every 3 am beer conversation with that old friend you see now and then on Facebook. There's so much you wanted to do with this life. Now, it's been years since your 40th birthday, and you haven't done any of it.[< BOREDOM+SHAME]

[EXCITEMENT >]What if you could?

What if you could finally walk amidst the ancient stone megaliths of Machu Picchu, explore the dark and musky chambers of the underground city of Derinkuyu, or feel your plane touchdown amongst the mist-wrapped peaks of the Himalayas as you prepared yourself for your pilgrimage amongst the rock-hewn Buddhist monasteries.

Your heart is just racing at the thought of it all.[< EXCITEMENT]

Now it's time…

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #1 of the Buyer's Journey)

Again, this example is packed with multiple applications of the techniques from this book. I contrast excitement with boredom and validation with shame. By now, it should be self-explanatory how this contrast ignites the reader's internal desire to move away from boredom and toward the excitement promised by this message.

Later in this book, I'll show you how this coupling of excitement vs boredom and validation vs shame work together to turn urgency into action and to reduce the toxic marketing side-effect of buyer's remorse. For now, I'll let the emotional contrast in this example speak for itself and make three more points.

Firstly, you might have noticed this (seemingly) peculiar reference to "..3 am beer conversation with that old friend you see now and then on Facebook." You'll also notice that I referenced specific travel destinations like Machu Picchu, Derinkuyu, and the Buddhist monasteries of the Himalayas. While these references might seem odd or irrelevant to some audiences they are both deeply meaningful for the audience I'm writing to in this example. They are examples of Dog Whistle marketing.

Being a part of this demographic myself (I'm writing this in 2022), I can tell you that men in this generation and age group are often nostalgic about the richness of our younger life relationships. We remember the days before social media when friends would talk (sometimes until sunrise) about things that had much deeper intellectual and spiritual meaning than the conversations that dominate our later lives.

Over the years, many of us lost touch with relationships, but not with the memory of those conversations. Reconnecting with these people on social media is just not the same, and it often reminds us of something we lost touch with.

Again, this is something that might sound irrelevant or even cheesy to another audience, but that's why we call it Dog Whistle Language. Your audience hears something completely different than everyone else does, and that's how you make copywriting authentic and relevant. This also applies to the travel destinations I've chosen to cite in this example.

Again, some audiences won't care about these destinations or even know where they are. But remember that our reader is someone who is deeply interested in exploring the world and experiencing a spiritual awakening. The odds of our reader knowing about these destinations and being interested in them are very, very high. By referencing them in our message, we add a rare and refreshing authenticity that magnifies our use of this technique.

My only caution is that Dog Whistle Language is NOT something you want to guess about. If you get it wrong, your message will fall flat. You have to pay the price by clearly defining your buyer persona and using that to guide your research.

My second point is that this example leverages something that marketers and investors call "FOMO" (an acronym for "Fear of Missing Out"). In my experience, FOMO is a huge, huge incentive for excitement-oriented people and for offers that appeal to the need for excitement and validation.

Read the headline of this example, and the paragraph that starts with this statement "...Now, you're watching the sunset every day outside your office window." Notice how I'm using the "FOMO Factor" to nudge up the emotion. We will revisit this topic in the final chapter of this book. My third and final point is that this example leverages a psychological theory called Erikson's life stages.

Erikson's theory states that people in this age group are in the seventh of the eight stages of Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development ("Generation vs. Stagnation").

According to the theory, the term "generativity" refers to making your mark on the world by creating or nurturing things that will outlast you. In other words, it's all about legacy at this stage of a person's life. My own experience in counseling men of this age group tells me that this is a pretty reliable model, which is why I often use it to inform my buyer persona research. I have especially noticed that men in this age group are likely to become more introspective and adventurous (sometimes seen as reckless), while women are more likely to seek out more meaningful connections with others.

Now scroll back up and read this example again, keeping in mind what I just said about this target audience and their stage in Erikson's model. Notice how I appealed to my reader's desire for introspection and adventure and tied it to their needs for validation and excitement. Again, this is only possible because I took my time to define a specific Buyer Persona and to use that person to do deeper and more targeted research. My only caveat on this point is that you should never give one model too much weight when doing your own research. Erikson's life stage model is just one of many models I use to inform my research.

Test everything you find during your research against multiple models, and a clearer picture of your reader's psychology will start to emerge. I'll share some specific research methods after we look at our final example.

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Human Needs Example #3 (Security)

This final example combines the emotional contrast between security and fear with an appeal to disgust. I will explain the reason for this in my comments below. In this example, our Buyer Persona is a new mother whose baby has just started learning to crawl.

Lately, she's been concerned about red spots showing up on her baby's arms and feet. She's researching the topic online when she finds a website with a message that starts like this (I've used [BRACKETS] to highlight the places where I leveraged human needs):

Red Spots On Your Baby's Hands And Feet? Brace Yourself...

See those red, itchy spots on your baby's hands and feet?

Now look at your carpet. [FEAR >]You can't see them, but they're there...

[DISGUST >]Wriggling swarms of tiny tic-like carpet beetles. Eager to sink their nasty little pinchers[< DISGUST] into your baby's tender hands, feet, and legs. Even a three-foot crawl across your "clean" carpet can put your baby's hands and feet at risk.

Can you imagine what happens when they put those fingers in their mouth?[< FEAR]

But that's not all...

Since 1948, dermatologists have reported on case histories of dermatitis caused by contact with carpet beetles. Victims suffered pruritic itching and papulovesicular eruptions. Some developed respiratory tract and eye irritation.

The cause?

[DISGUST >]The clinical research describes what appears to be an allergic reaction to carpet beetle larval hairs and hemolymph (insect blood).
How gross is that?[< DISGUST]

[FEAR vs SECURITY >]Of course, you can wait until your baby's skin is desensitized through long-term exposure...or you can purge those nasty little creepers from your home for good.[< FEAR vs SECURITY]

[SECURITY >]And now you can do it safely and effectively, without exposing your little one to toxic chemical cocktails.[< SECURITY]

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #1 of the Buyer's Journey)

Notice how this example contrasts security with fear, just as we've seen with the emotions in the other two examples. But the real emotional magic in this example lies in the appeals to disgust. Three things make disgust a powerful tool for leveraging human needs in your copywriting. Firstly,

disgust can move your reader to rapid and decisive action faster than any other emotion.
This is because disgust is biologically rooted in our motive to avoid disease*. We don't just move away from things that disgust us. We have a primal impulse to exterminate them completely, AND to purify (or even destroy) anything that came into contact with the object of our disgust.

***SOURCE:** https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3189352

Other manifestations of fear and anxiety don't have the same effect. We only try to avoid things that we fear. But disgust awakens our primal impulse to "cleanse" our life of the object of our disgust.
Secondly, disgust is culturally linked to our concept of moral purity. Cognitive linguists call this relationship a "conceptual metaphor." A conceptual metaphor is when we think or talk about an abstract concept in terms of something concrete and physical. For example, when we describe someone as "cold," or "warm," we're linking the abstract concepts of friendliness and unfriendliness to the concrete concept of physical temperature. What's fascinating about this is that a conceptual metaphor can literally cause our physical experience of the concrete thing to activate an internal experience of the emotions and judgments associated with the abstract concept. For example, multiple scientific experiments* have found that the physical sensation of warmth or coldness can influence our interpersonal judgments.

***SOURCE:** https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6680237

These experiments found that everything from the temperature in a room, to the temperature of a drink and other objects in a person's hand, can influence their judgments of people in their environment.

Similar experiments have found that people can be primed with physical sensations of movement (back or forward) to influence how they think and talk about the movement of time.
Again, this is because we use spatial terms like "back" or "forward" as conceptual metaphors to describe the abstract concept of time. In my philosophical work, I explain how people in some cultures have conceptual metaphors for time that are backward to ours in the West. For example, in

the Hebrew language, the root word for future is built on the root word meaning "behind" and the word for past is built on the root word for "in front."

I won't go into detail here, but the impact of these cultural metaphors is astounding. You see their influence in the historical and philosophical texts of these cultures and even their attitudes and actions. By appealing to the concrete features of a conceptual metaphor (i.e., physical cleanliness), we indirectly invoke the emotions associated with the abstract conceptions linked to them (i.e., moral purity).

Cognitive linguists call this "semantic priming*," and it's a powerful concept for leveraging human needs. In the above example, I leverage the concept of moral purity by creating an urgent desire for physical cleanliness. By appealing to disgust, we indirectly ignite our reader's ethical motivation to purge her home of something she now perceives as physically repulsive.
SOURCE: https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/psychology/semantic-priming

My third and final point is that disgust is "stickier" than other manifestations of fear or anxiety. Humans have a remarkable ability to mask fear and anxiety through rationalization, denial, projection, and other psychological defense mechanisms. Disgust, however, is not so easy to dismiss. Once it takes root, it sits in our psyche like an egg-laying insect, poking, pinching, and gnawing away at our peace of mind with invisible teeth (see what I did there?).

Are you starting to see why disgust is such a powerful technique? Of course, this is also why you should use it wisely, so I'll close this section with a few caveats. First, only use disgust if it authentically applies to the problem that your product or service solves.

Don't use it simply because it's a powerful tool for invoking action or because you think your reader should feel disgusted about something. Every emotional appeal must be relevant to your reader.
Second, never use disgust to attack a direct competitor. Such attacks against people who sell solutions similar to yours are more likely to backfire.
Always remember that the human brain learns by association. If you associate your competitor's product or service with the emotions of disgust, that association could carry over when you talk about your own product or service.

Third, never make your reader feel disgusted about themselves, even if they already are. You might get them to buy, you will likely trigger buyer's remorse, which means high refunds and lower chances for repeat and referral business.

Finally, don't overdo it with your appeals to fear, shame, or disgust. There's a fine line between authentic copywriting and Rubber Chicken carnival barking. While the difference is obvious to your reader, it's not always obvious when your head is buried in the work of writing copy.

In the final chapter of this book, I'll introduce the technique of subtlety as a means of invoking disgust, excitement, fear, shame, and other powerful emotions without making your copy sound like an ad for snake oil. For now, let's unpack some research techniques for uncovering your reader's emotional hot buttons.

How to Apply Human Needs

The secret to applying human needs in your copywriting is to become an emotional detective using the insights covered in this book. To recap, leveraging human needs is all about contrasting three basic needs with their polar (negative) opposites:

- Validation vs Shame
- Excitement vs Boredom
- Security vs Fear

Call these emotions by other names if you must, as long as you grasp their underlying concepts. Your job is to train yourself to recognize three things during your Buyer Persona research:

- The Emotional Need(s) Behind Your Prospect's Problem
- The Language They Use to Describe it (Positive and Negative)
- The Experiences Associated With it (Positive and Negative)

When your prospect talks about their problem, they will almost certainly talk about its symptoms, not its cause. The odds are good that they either don't know the cause or assume it to be something different than what it really is. Your job is to find out how they're talking about, even if they're "wrong." This is the secret to writing with empathy and authenticity.

The most common mistake I see marketers make is talking about the problem from their (expert) perspective instead of talking about it from their reader's perspective. This is, hands down, the #1 reason so many knowledgeable experts fall flat when they try to write their own copy.

I can't overstate how common this is, or how easy it is to fall into this trap. The trick is to focus 100% of your research efforts on getting into the mind of your prospect.

The internet has made this task easier than ever. If your product or service solves a real problem, you can bet there's a place online where your target market is talking about it. Your first job is to find

out where those places are and to see what people are saying. You can do this by typing queries into search engines using query formulas like these:

1. [problem] inurl:forum
2. [problem] site:quora.com
3. [product/service] reviews
4. [product/service] complaints
5. [product/service] Reddit discussion
6. [problem] Facebook group discussion
7. [product/service] vs [competitor] review

Notice that each of these search query formulas includes a command like "inurl:forum." This command tells the search engine to look for content generated by users inside forums. You can also add the command "site:website" to the end of your query (example query: "what is the best nootropic" website:quora.com) to target places where end users are asking questions and discussing things relevant to your product or service, or to the problem it solves and the competing solutions for solving it.

I also suggest you look for reviews written by people who have used a product or service like yours. Pay close attention to their complaints. Look for the most commonly stated benefits people experienced using the product. Do enough of this and you will start to find common denominators, common words, and common phrases. These are all clues about how to talk to your readers at all five stages of the Buyer's Journey and to apply Dog Whistle Language in your copy.

I can't overstate how important it is that you look for content generated by people in your target audience. We don't want articles written by people who either didn't do any buyer persona research, or who did their "research" by reading articles written by the first type of person. It doesn't matter what bloggers or even other marketers are saying. We want to know what our audience is saying about things like:

- The problem our product or service solves
- Their misconceptions about its cause
- Its impact on their everyday life
- How they're currently trying to solve it
- Their perceptions of our TYPE of product or service

We don't want blogs, articles, or ads with out-of-touch assumptions or guesses about these things. We don't want to hear what self-proclaimed "experts" are saying either (there are a lot of these on the internet, and most of them are just repeating things they read somewhere else). In my experience, the biggest problem with doing research online is that too many people are talking, and not enough people are listening to end-users.

Even the content ranking at the top of search engines, and on popular content sites like YouTube doesn't tell us what end users are saying about a topic. That's all I care about.

If I have a question that requires expert input, I ask my client or another expert, who I know to be an expert. But when it comes to authentically connecting with my readers, my goal is to study them, not other people's opinions about them.

Most online content is created by writers researching other online content and rewriting it in their own words. This is how even good content gets watered down, spread to other "researchers" who water it down even more because they didn't take the time to consult their audience and may not even be clear on who they are.

Content repurposing and dilution is a huge, huge problem on the internet. It's an even bigger problem when you realize that most content creators are either too lazy, ignorant or not being paid well enough to even define their target market, let alone find out what matters to them. If you break this mold and take the time to define your buyer persona, and look for user-generated content, your copywriting will be much more authentic and compelling.

Find out what your audience is saying, and ignore everyone else until you do. If you can't find enough user-generated content, KEEP LOOKING. Find salespeople who talk to your audience in person-to-person settings (not online) every day, and ask to interview them. Go offline and attend a local meetup group with members of your target audience and take notes if you have to. Once you've gathered this user-generated content, take your time reading it, and use it to uncover:

- The Emotional Need(s) Behind Your Prospect's Problem
- The Language They Use to Describe it (Positive and Negative)
- The Experiences Associated With it (Positive and Negative)

If you can't answer these questions even after doing your research, reading the content, and reflecting on these questions, you either missed the mark on your research, or you don't know this topic well enough. Print out this book and read it again, and again, and again, until the ideas start to click.

If this sounds like a lot of work, that's because it is. Doing this work will put you head and shoulders over the crowds of writers who either don't understand how important this process is or who are too lazy to follow through. In my experience, the best way to rise above the crowd is to spend your time doing things that they don't want to do. Do the work. It will be worth it.

How to Master Human Needs

There are two secrets to leveraging human needs in your copywriting: emotional contrast and logical justification. This chapter has focused on emotional contrast. We'll unpack logical justification in chapter nine. We'll also be revisiting this topic in the final technique in this book, which focuses on turning urgency into action.

Until then, I'll make one final point about the three emotions introduced in this chapter:

Each emotion (validation, excitement, and security) has its own set of advantages and disadvantages.

For example, excitement is good because people naturally move away from boredom and toward excitement. However, excitement is also fleeting. When I was managing sales steams in the corporate world, I learned that salespeople who rely too much on excitement have the highest cancellation, no-show, and chargeback rates. The same is true with copywriting messages that rely too much on hype.

The best messages combine all three emotions by using excitement to initiate action, the promise of comfort to keep them committed, and validation to give them ownership of their decision to buy. Metaphorically speaking, validation puts them in the driver's seat, security gets their foot off the brake, and excitement puts their foot on the gas. Fear is a low-value way to initiate action. Excitement is too fleeting to keep someone committed to their purchase, and buyers who don't own their decisions don't stay committed to them.
What is holding and pulling you questions – handwriting on a napkin with a cup of espresso coffee

If you've ever sold a high-ticket service that depended on your client's ongoing trust in our expertise, you know what I'm talking about. Clients who fully own their decision are all in, and they get the most value out of working with you because they trust your expertise.

Others remained half-heartedly committed, or uncooperative. They keep working with you, but they continue to waste your time and their money by failing to follow through and do the work required to benefit from your service. Eventually, these clients will quit, and they rarely generate referral business or positive endorsements.
Sometimes, this is due to poorly managed expectations on your part. Other times, the prospect was never fully sold on your services in the first place. But in my experience, it makes a huge difference when your marketing messages attract the right prospects and properly prepare them for a great experience working with you. I'll explain how to achieve this using the remaining five techniques.

Technique #8: Breadcrumbing

Why Breadcrumbing Works

This chapter teaches a copywriting technique that I call “breadcrumbing.” Breadcrumbing is the secret to creating suspense. It’s how you turn your reader’s attention into momentum and prepare them for action.

The only thing harder than getting your reader’s attention is holding it, and building on it. This chapter gives you the absolute most powerful and practical way to make this happen by building on the other techniques in this book.

Breadcrumbing is the one copywriting technique that can double, triple, or quadruple your conversions. You’ll see why in a moment. First, let’s define our terms, starting with breadcrumbing. Breadcrumbing is all about creating and suspense in your copywriting. The dictionary defines suspense as “uncertainty, worry, or excitement in wondering about the result of something.” The better job you do at creating this uncertainty, worry, or excitement in your reader, the more likely they are to stay with your message until the end.

I’m going to put this definition into a more relevant context by defining breadcrumbing as “the delayed satisfaction of curiosity.” This starts with creating curiosity, which we discussed in the second chapter of this book where I defined curiosity as “the expectation of a relevant and valuable discovery.” I expanded on this in chapter three where I defined hope as “the anticipation of a relevant and valuable experience.”

But, since today’s readers are pummeled with interruptions and distractions, you need to build on this anticipation until your message has accomplished its mission. It’s not enough to keep your reader in suspense. You have to build your case along the way, or your reader will feel strung along or even misled. This technique is best used by TV series writers.

Think about the last time you binged on a TV or Netflix series. At the end of each episode, the writers left you on a cliffhanger so that you would watch the next episode to see it resolved. During the next episode, they resolved enough of the cliffhanger to satisfy you. They also left you on another cliffhanger.

If the writers were good, they did this while getting you emotionally invested in the fate of the characters. Before you knew it, you had binge-watched several episodes (or the entire season). When

you made it to the end of the season, the show writers probably hit you with another cliffhanger to lead you into the next season.

This is an example of breadcrumbing at work. You create a chain of anticipations, partial resolutions, and new anticipations, leading your reader to believe that the next (and final) resolution will be worth their continued attention. The secret is to never resolve the anticipation completely, while at the same time adding value to your message.
The trick is accomplishing this without frustrating your reader, and without misleading them by overselling your next big reveal. For example, think about the last time a TV show left you on a cliffhanger that either didn't advance the plot, or misrepresented its direction. This is a good way to lose your audience. You need a good balance between suspense, resolution, and value. This is why breadcrumbing is one of the harder persuasive copywriting techniques to master.

You want to create a chain (or breadcrumb trail) of anticipations, and resolutions (full or partial) and set up new anticipations. This creates a snowball effect and builds momentum so that your reader continues reading until the end. Most importantly, you want your reader to take action when you finally ask them to, and to be grateful that they stuck with you.

Examples of Breadcrumbing

Breadcrumbing is about two things. Firstly, it's about getting your reader to read the next line of your copy. While this is not easy, it's much easier than the second thing, which is building momentum.

It does nothing to hold your reader's attention if you never turn that attention into constructive action. This is an important distinction that Rubber Chicken marketers fail to make. They mistake any kind of attention for genuine interest.

For example, I've seen discussions in marketing forums and social media groups where some troll makes a stupid yet provocative claim about marketing or copywriting. After eliciting dozens of responses (and causing a few fights on their thread), they'll say something like:

"You say I don't know marketing, but look at all the attention this post got!"

This is a prime example of what I mean by Rubber Chicken marketing. Like trolls, Rubber Chicken marketers are good at getting attention. Sometimes, they get a lot of it.

Sometimes they rent space in other people's heads for days, months, or even years. But they suck at turning attention into constructive momentum and action. This is because they rely on low-quality

emotions like fear, envy, and resentment and on appeals to low-value curiosity. Because of this, Rubber Chicken marketers typically have high-refund rates, low product/service participation, and little or no repeat business, reviews, or referrals.

They're also a puss-packed boil on the face of the marketing and copywriting profession.

The most explicit example of this Dumpster fire style of marketing is Saul Alinsky's Rules for Radicals. Clearly, his techniques are effective because they've become very popular in the political domain. But they add no value apart from mobilizing people to gather in mobs and demand the destruction of things that they hate. Even when these techniques work, their collateral damage (tribalism, moral panic, mass formation psychosis) eclipses any benefits.

Good marketing, on the other hand, build up momentum and advance their readers toward a high-value action using a combination of the techniques we've covered in this book. This is the proper use of breadcrumbing. Let's check out a few examples, then I'll give you some tips on how to apply this technique in your own work.

Breadcrumbing Example #1

This first example revisits an example from earlier in this book. In this example, our reader is an amateur bodybuilder who wants to gain twenty pounds of lean muscle. I use [BREADCRUMBING] brackets in this example to show where I used curiosity to lead them to the next section. I also use [BREADCRUMBING] brackets to show where I give them just enough of a clue to keep them reading.

VQ Success

You And I Didn't Win The Genetic Lottery

Like you, I didn't win the genetic lottery. I was "the skinny guy" in gym class. I was embarrassed to take off my shirt. In High School, I missed out on a lot of dates with girls. I missed trips to the beach with my friends.

Since I was ten, all I wanted to do was lift weights, get big, and stop being the skinny guy.

I still remember the "new car" smell of my first weight set. I used to wake up in the middle of the night, go out to the garage, and just stare at those shiny plates. The steely Olympic barbell cool to my touch. I couldn't wait to get home from school the next day. I just wanted to pump iron, eat protein, and watch my bird chest and pencil arms transform into rippling slabs of lean, sleeve-busting muscle.

At first, my gains exploded. I was confident when taking off my shirt. I started getting attention from girls. Still, I was puzzled at those guys who blew past me in their gains. I lifted all summer. I sweated for hours in my garage, five, six, seven days a week. Not these guys. They'd take entire months off. Still, they were getting bigger and more ripped than me. I remember looking at them and thinking...

"Are these guys on drugs or something?"

"Do they just have better equipment than me?"

"Maybe I'll hit a late growth spurt."

I was stumped. I had to push, pull, kick, bite, spit, sweat, and bleed for every ounce of my gains. This blood-boiling struggle continued into my late twenties. [BREADCRUMBING >]Then I stumbled onto a sobering secret every hard-gainer needs to know...[< BREADCRUMBING].

It Started With A Tiny Pain In My Shoulder

[BREADCRUMB >]It started with a tiny pain in my shoulder. Six months later, I couldn't even pour a cup of coffee with my right arm. I was forced to stop lifting heavy. My gains vanished within just six weeks, it looked like I'd barely touched a weight in my life.[< BREADCRUMB]

I wanted to quit. My heart was a lead balloon when I started seeing that skinny guy in the mirror again.
But I couldn't give up now. I KNEW there had to be a reason, and I was determined to find it. Exercise research became my part-time job that summer.
[BREADCRUMBING >]That's when I discovered something that changed my life. It happened one night while I was poring through scientific studies on muscle growth and recovery.[< BREADCRUMBING]

Suddenly Everything Made Sense

I could hardly believe it. [BREADCRUMB >]After hours of studying scientific research on muscle growth and recovery, I discovered a pattern. It wasn't about genetics, or finding the perfect routine. It wasn't about diet, sleep, or any of the patter you hear from guys who show up at the gym every day, but never look any different.[< BREADCRUMB]
Suddenly everything made sense: my slow gains, my seeming genetic resistance to putting on muscle, my failure to sustain results, even my shoulder injury. They were all connected. More importantly, I realized why those big guys at the gym didn't talk about this secret. They were too

busy perfecting their physique, and [BREADCRUMBING >]now I'd discovered their biggest secret.[< BREADCRUMBING]

3 Years Of Progress In Just Six Months

[BREADCRUMB >]After my big discovery, I completely changed my training routine and eating schedule.[< BREADCRUMB] By the first week, my shoulder pain was almost gone. Within 30 days, my shirts started tightening. I was seeing ripples of muscle tone and veins in places I'd never seen either. Even my shoulders and biceps (my most stubborn muscles) were getting bigger and more defined. Men and women at my gym who had never talked to me started making comments.

Six months later, the owner of my gym asked if he could put my "before and after" pictures on the wall. Three years later, my picture is still there, and I hardly recognize that skinny guy on the left. I'm still not the biggest guy in my gym. But that's because I've upgraded to a gym where professional bodybuilders and athletes frequently train. Every now and then, I visit my old gym to see my picture on their wall. It's amazing to see the progress I made in those first six months. I'm confident that you can do the same over the next six months. [BREADCRUMBING >]That's
why I now consider it my life's mission to share what I've learned with you.[< BREADCRUMBING]

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #2 of the Buyer's Journey)

Let's take a moment to unpack the chain of tension and (partial) release points in this example, starting with this statement:
Then I stumbled onto a sobering secret every hard-gainer needs to know…

Notice that this "sobering secret" suggests a benefit for the reader by saying "…every hard-gainer needs to know." The term "hard-gainer," is an example of Dog Whistle language. It refers to my target market using a term that shows them I understand the private language of the amateur bodybuilding subculture. More importantly, it builds rapport between the hero of the story and the reader, since we're both hard-gainers.

So I have now used high-value curiosity to lead my reader to the next section. I then followed up on the above statement by saying:
It started with a tiny pain in my shoulder. Six months later, I couldn't even pour a cup of coffee with my right arm. I was forced to stop lifting heavy.

I did two important things in this statement. First, I bought myself some more of the reader's time and attention by not giving away the big secret. Secondly, I used the words "it started" to suggest that the big secret I had discovered was linked to the shoulder injury and its impact on my training.

This may seem random, but not when you understand my strategy. When I wrote this copy (it was for a direct mail campaign), my market research revealed that shoulder injuries are common for hard-gainers who overtrain trying to put on muscle.

I've now increased by message's momentum by telling my reader that the big secret they were about to learn was connected to two of their biggest challenges (muscle gain, and shoulder injuries). After leveraging human needs to magnify the impact of the injury, I use this statement to circle back to the secret mentioned earlier:

That's when I discovered something that changed my life. It happened one night while I was poring through scientific studies on muscle growth and recovery.

Notice how I piled on more momentum here by revealing a clue about the secret. My reader now knows that my secret is based on my own life experience, but also on scientific studies on muscle growth and recovery. I only revealed enough to increase the perceived value of my secret, without giving it away. I then follow up that statement with another breadcrumb, another set of clues:

After hours of studying scientific research on muscle growth and recovery, I discovered a pattern. It wasn't about genetics, or finding the perfect routine. It wasn't about diet, sleep, or any of the patter you hear from guys who show up at the gym every day, but never look any different.

This statement uses a powerful marketing technique that I call apophatic positioning. The word "apophatic," means to define something by negation. Instead of saying what something is, you say what is not. This technique requires a thorough knowledge of your target market, otherwise, it will come off as a cheap parlor trick.

Regarding this example, I know that amateur bodybuilders frequently hear promises about a magic diet program or perfect routine. They also secretly fear that their genetics might be an obstacle to a program working for them.

By telling them that my secret "...wasn't about genetics, or finding the perfect routine" and that it "...wasn't about diet, sleep" I'm accomplishing two goals.

First, I'm researching them that my secret is different than the advice they heard everywhere else.

Secondly, I'm assuring them that their genetics aren't going to be an obstacle. Again, I'm building momentum by increasing the value of my secret, without giving it away completely. After another teaser, I used this statement to set up the final section before my big reveal:

After my big discovery, I completely changed my training routine and eating schedule. By the first week, my shoulder pain was almost gone. Within 30 days, my shirts started tightening.

Notice that I've now given them the biggest clue of all: my secret has something to do with training routines and eating schedules. This might seem like a contradiction considering what I said it wasn't about a diet or a perfect routine. But this is another place where target market knowledge is important. Anyone who has more than a few years of experience working out and trying to build muscle knows that building muscle is more complicated than it first seems.

They know routines, diet, and sleep, are all important. By dropping this hint about changing my routine and eating schedule (which is different than diet content), I'm assuring them that the answer isn't some magic pill, powder, or potion. When I make my big reveal, I'll give them just enough information to settle this contradiction, and by that time, I'll be able to introduce my product. Notice how I add value to this breadcrumb by saying:

I was seeing ripples of muscle tone and veins in places I'd never seen either. Even my shoulders and biceps (my most stubborn muscles) were getting bigger and more defined..
This reference to growth in my shoulders and biceps is no accident. Firstly, hard-gainers typically have trouble growing these two muscle groups. So by including them, I suggest that there is something truly game-changing about my program. I do the same thing with the statement "...muscle tone and veins in places I'd never seen either." I've now moved my reader all the way to the section where I'll reveal my product.

I've kept them on a cliffhanger, but I haven't left them high and dry. I've fed them a little more information with each new clue, and I've done it while building up the value of my coming offer. Now that I've shown you how this process unfolds step by step, let's see if you can spot how I did it in this next example.

Breadcrumbing Example #2

This example revisits and expands on one from earlier in this book. In this example, our reader is an overweight 52-year-old man. He's not worried about his size and assumes he's in pretty good health. However, his ankles have been swelling lately. At first, he assumes it's a passing thing. But as the swelling persists, he starts researching the issue and finds an article that starts like this:

Are Your Swollen Ankles A Warning Of A Coming Heart Attack?

Look at your right thumb. Now, try pressing that thumb into the soft area just below your kneecap.

Does it feel swollen?

Try this on both your ankles. Is one more swollen than the other? If so, [BREADCRUMBING >]here's why you could be in danger of a fatal heart attack…[< BREADCRUMBING]

I Didn't Think It Would Happen To Me Either

It happened in my early fifties. [BREADCRUMB >]I wasn't worried about being overweight. I felt healthy. I wasn't worried when my ankles started swelling either. I wasn't worried about those dry, itchy spots on my knees, elbows, or my scalp.[< BREADCRUMB] But then it happened…

One moment, I was enjoying my daughter's 10th birthday party. Ten minutes later, I was dead on a hospital bed. I was clinically dead for seven minutes. 90 more seconds and I'd have woken up a vegetable.

[BREADCRUMBING >]I was lucky. Maybe you will be too. But you might want to read this first…[< BREADCRUMBING]

Here's Why Your Ankles Are Swollen

[BREADCRUMB >]Think about the last time you woke up short of breath.

You were lying on your back, weren't you?

This is another early warning sign.[< BREADCRUMB]

During congestive heart failure, one (or both) of your heart's lower chambers loses its ability to effectively pump blood. Blood backs up in the veins that connect your lungs and heart and fluid leaks into your lungs, causing shortness of breath. This is why you're waking up short of breath and why blood is backing up in your ankles and feet. If one side is more swollen than the other, that's the side where your heart chamber is failing.

[BREADCRUMBING >]If this worries you, here's what you need to do next…[< BREADCRUMBING]

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #1 of the Buyer's Journey)

Notice how I created suspense at the end of each section of this example, followed by a breadcrumb in the next section. Each breadcrumb added a little more value to my coming reveal. But I applied another strategy in this example. I responded to the internal dialog of my reader until my message became part of that internal dialog. For example, notice how the first subheader says:

I didn't think it would happen to me either. I wrote this subheader under the assumption that my reader would be thinking "...that will never happen to me." Why did I assume my reader would be thinking that? Because it's a natural human tendency based on what cognitive scientists call optimism bias*. Optimism bias is a mental shortcut that causes people to overestimate their odds of future success while minimizing their probability of failure. **SOURCE:** https://thedecisionlab.com/biases/optimism-bias This subheader is a direct answer to the "...that will never happen to me" objection. But I didn't stop there. I also referred to my age (this story isn't actually about me BTW), and to my assumptions that my weight and my swollen ankles were nothing to worry about. I also added an additional symptom by referring to the "...dry, itchy spots on my knees, elbows, or my scalp."

This is a reference to psoriasis, which is another early symptom of heart disease. I included this because I knew that most of my readers were likely to have this symptom. Now it's even harder for them to say "...that will never happen to me." But I'm doing something else with this technique. I am building a bond with my reader, which allows me to lead them to the next subheader with this statement: I was lucky. Maybe you will be too. I have now accomplished two very important things.

First, I've built a bond with my reader by talking about what we have in common. Secondly, I've used this bond to confirm that if this happened to me, it could very well happen to them next. In the final section of this example, I answered the next question my reader was likely to ask, by revealing the connection between their swollen ankles and heart disease. I also added a third symptom (waking up with shortness of breath), and made a logical connection between that and their swelling ankles. So I've now answered the question posed in my headline, eliminated their excuses, and created a bond with my reader. More importantly, I've followed their internal dialog by responding to the thoughts they were most likely to be thinking in response to my message. This is one of the most powerful ways to hold your reader's attention and guide their internal dialog.

Before you right your next line of copy, you simply ask yourself "...what is my reader most likely to be thinking right now?" If you do this throughout your message, you'll become the voice in their head.

Notice how I did this in the above example. Every time I created suspense, I prompted my reader to ask another question. Then I gave the answer, while simultaneously giving them a new question to ask.

After a few rounds of this, I simply turned those answers into the command "...here's what you need to do next." This is a powerful persuasion technique that we'll revisit in the next few chapters of this book. For now, let's talk about how you'll apply this in your own writing.

How to Apply Breadcrumbing

The secret to breadcrumbing is to answer three questions as you're writing and editing your copy. First, ask yourself this as you write and edit each new section of your message:

What is my reader thinking now?

This is where you apply the first technique in this book, relevance. Relevance is how you step inside our reader's internal world and become the voice inside their head. This starts with understanding what's already going on in their head and in their heart. Since we covered this topic in the first few chapters of this book, I'll leave it at that and move on to the second question:

How can I use this to set an expectation?

This is where you apply the techniques of curiosity and hope, which are the second and third techniques in this book. What is your reader most likely to be hopeful about? How does your product or service fulfill these hopes? More importantly, what fears or misconceptions is your reader most likely to have about solving their problem? How would your product or service alleviate these fears, and how does it defy your reader's misconceptions?

Make a list of these things and use them to respond to whatever your reader is thinking as they read your message. As you do this, ask this third and final question:

How can I add value to my message with each new breadcrumb?

Don't just respond to whatever conversation is happening in your reader's mind. Use those responses to create suspense, drop a breadcrumb, and, most importantly, build motivation and ad value with each new breadcrumb.

For instance, in the first example above (the amateur bodybuilder who wants to gain lean muscle), I predicted that my reader would be hopeful about gaining muscle.

I also predicted that he would be curious about the cause of his persistent injuries. Moreover, I predicted that he would be hesitant to try another magic workout or diet program.

Now, go back and read that example again, and notice how I used these points to create suspense at the end of each section and to follow it up with a breadcrumb in the next.

Notice the pattern of tension and release as I use contrasting emotions (see chapter seven) to build momentum and desire. Most importantly, notice how each breadcrumb is a response to my reader's hopes, fears, and misconceptions. As they move through my message, I'm building their hope, mitigating their fears, and gently correcting their misconceptions. That's the simple, three-step breadcrumbing formula.

How to Master Breadcrumbing

Congratulations. You're now familiar with the four foundational persuasive copywriting techniques (relevance, curiosity, hope, and rapport), and with the middle techniques of storytelling, hypnotic copywriting, human needs, and breadcrumbing.

To recap the first four techniques: Relevance is how you connect with your reader, Curiosity is how you turn that connection into interest, Hope is how you turn your reader's interest into a burning desire, and Rapport is how you turn their desire into motivation.

To recap the second four techniques: Storytelling adds authenticity, Hypnotic Copywriting and Human Needs turn up the volume on your reader's desires, and Breadcrumbing holds their attention while building momentum and preparing them for action. The final techniques in this book will focus on turning urgency into action. This is where the rubber meets the road for most copywriters.

There's a difference between being ready to act and being ready to act right now. If you've worked in sales, you know what I mean.

Some prospects will remain engaged during the entire sales process, only to bow out at the last minute with this old line:

"Let me think about it."

In the world of copywriting, this problem manifests itself in high content engagement, but low conversion rates.

Readers find your content, read it, but don't act on it. The final techniques in this book show you how to bridge this gap. But first, let me make one final comment about mastering breadcrumbing.

Timing is everything.

There's a fine line between keeping someone in suspense and frustrating them to the point of suspicion and mistrust. Too little suspense and you lose your reader's interest. Too much suspense and you lose their trust. I know of no way to measure this difference, but you'll develop an intuition for it the more you practice this technique.

I can feel when I'm losing a reader the same way I used to feel when I was losing a connection during a sales call or therapy session. It's a hard feeling to describe, but once you learn to recognize it, it's surprisingly reliable. I don't feel it while I"m writing content. I only feel it when I'm reviewing and editing it for clarity and color (see my the chapter on hypnotic copywriting for details).

I've also found it very helpful to have someone with sales experience review your draft, and tell you the specific place where you either lost their interest or their trust. The more you do this, the easier it will be to recognize and correct these patterns on your own.

As you master the art of timing, your writing will become more authentic and compelling. Your readers will sense the good timing in your writing, even if they can't place their finger on it.
In fact, the better you get with all of these techniques, the less noticeable they will be to the initiated reader. As great fiction writer (and prophet) George Orwell once said, "good prose is like a windowpane."

Bad writing stands out like a sore thumb, but good writing dissolves into the message, and the message finds its way into your reader's mind and heart. My only caveat is that, at first, these techniques will stand out in your writing. They might even sound weird or awkward. Don't give up. This is a natural part of learning new techniques. Remember that everything you now do naturally was once hard for you.

This includes simple things like talking, walking, going to the bathroom in the toilet, driving, and dozens of other things that we do every day. Don't assume that mastering this technique will be any different. Keep at it, and in time you'll become comfortable with using this masterful technique.

Technique #9: Positioning

Why Positioning Works

What is positioning? It's based on one of the most misunderstood ideas in modern marketing, which I'll introduce in a moment. First, let me clarify something about positioning in general.

Positioning only applies to prospects in Stage #3 of the Buyer's Journey. If you're positioning your brand, product, or service for Stage #1 or Stage #2 prospects, you're doing it too early.
If you're doing it for Stage #4 prospects, you're misdiagnosing which stage your prospects are in.
This is why positioning is one of the last two copywriting techniques in this book.

Positioning: *influencing your prospect's perception of your product or service in a way that makes it appear 1) superior to alternative solutions and 2) uniquely distinct from direct competitors who offer the same product or service.*

In the first four chapters, we talked about turning attention into interest, interest into desire, and desire into urgency and action. The second four techniques focused on keeping your reader engaged, building their hopes, and clearing up their misconceptions. The final two techniques focus on turning urgency into action, and this starts with dissolving these common obstacles:

- Mistrust about whether your product or service works.
- Insecurity about whether your product or service will work for them.

These are distinctly different obstacles. The first one is self-explanatory. No matter how great your promise is, your sales will fall apart at the last minute if people don't trust you. Positioning is how you clear this first obstacle.

The second is more complicated and often neglected by salespeople and marketers. It's when your prospect believes that your product won't work for them, even if it has worked for other people. If you talk to them on the phone or in person, they might even appear to mistrust you.

But if you ask the right questions, you'll realize that their doubts are more about their own personal situation than they are about your product or service. In short, the role of positioning is to answer two questions:

- "Does this work?"
- "Will this work for me?"

This is why positioning works. But I'll say again that positioning is something you only do for prospects in Stage #3 of the Buyer's Journey.
A Stage #3 Prospect is someone who is sold on your type of product or service and is now comparing you with other brands.
Your job is to dissolve their mistrust of your brand and their insecurities about whether your solution will work for them, and that's the role of positioning. Here are the common symptoms of poor (or non-existent) positioning:

- Attracting price shoppers.
- Sales falling apart at close time.
- Poor post-purchase participation.
- Low repeat business rates.

If you've ever wondered how some marketers make tons of money while you have to fight for every dollar you earn, this is most likely why. The good news is that once you get your brain wrapped around this technique, EVERYTHING you do becomes easier and more profitable. Especially if you're selling a product or service that has a broad appeal or a lot of direct competitors.

Examples of Positioning

Positioning is all about selling your prospect on three things:

- The Relevance of Your Brand.
- The Superiority of Your Brand.
- The Uniqueness of Your Brand.

Together, these three selling points will dissolve your prospect's doubts about your brand, and mitigate their personal insecurities about whether your product or service will work for them. Let's check out an example for each one. Then we'll unpack some strategies for applying all three in your copywriting messages.

Positioning Example #1 (Relevance)

Relevance is how you answer this question:

"Is this the best solution for someone like me?"

For B2B prospects, the question will be more like:

"Is this the best solution for a company like ours?"

The key phrases in the above questions are "someone like me" and "a company like ours." Remember, some prospects will doubt whether your product or service works. Others will doubt whether your product or service will work for them. While Relevance answers both objections, it focuses mainly on the second one.

For example, let's assume your Buyer Persona is a physically active man in his 50s suffering from severe foot pain due to frequent gout flareups. He is health conscious and mistrusts prescription medications and other conventional medical interventions. He is especially averse to the idea of getting surgery and prefers natural, non-invasive treatments. The following example shows how you might position a product for this audience:

Reason #1: It's YOUR Treatment Something changes when a man turns 50. Diets, workouts, and pain treatments don't work as they did in your 30s. That's why our all-natural gout treatment was custom-made for active men between ages 50 and 65. This means FASTER, SAFER, and LONG LASTING relief from the crippling pain of sudden gout flareups. You're getting a treatment custom created with YOU and your body in mind. That's what makes us the most popular provider of all-natural gout treatments in America.

Reason #2: All Natural AND Doctor Recommended

There are only a handful of all-natural gout treatments on the market.

They'll all tell you that their product is made with all-natural ingredients. What they won't tell you is whether those ingredients are also cut with trace amounts of chemicals they are not required to list on their labels. What's the point in an "all-natural" product that smuggles in a cocktail of potentially carcinogenic chemicals?

Some claim that their product is "doctor recommended." What they won't tell you is whether those doctors were paid a commission to promote the product to their patients.

Why trust a recommendation from someone who makes money selling the product?

Reason #3: Our LIFETIME Satisfaction Guarantee

We're 100% confident that you'll love our product, and order again, and again, and again. Even if you've tried dozens of treatments and had zero success with any of them.

In fact, some of our happiest customers tried dozens of gout treatments before they discovered us. After 30 days of using our product, they were relieved to discover that they wouldn't need expensive surgery or prescription medications. Try it for 30 days, and see for yourself. If you're unhappy with our product at ANY time after purchasing it today, just send us the empty bottle and ask for a refund. We'll also pay for your next gout treatment product!

We're not worried about losing money. Our refund rate is less than one percent!

This is a LIFETIME guarantee.

Here's how to order...

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #3 of the Buyer's Journey)

I'll focus my comments on two types of relevance used in the above example:

- Demographic Relevance.
- Psychographic Relevance.

These are different than Semantic and Emotional Relevance, which we covered in the first few chapters of this book. Demographic relevance, for example, focuses on demographic details that your past (or existing) customers have in common with your reader. For instance, notice how the example above uses statements like "…something changes when a man turns 50" and "…diets, workouts, and pain treatments don't work as they did in your 30s" to communicate with my reader in a way that empathizes with his life experience. These are examples of demographic relevance.

I've also used statements like "…the crippling pain of sudden gout flareups" to empathize with his experience of the problem and its symptoms.

The statements like "…some of our happiest customers tried dozens of gout treatments before they discovered us" empathize with their experience of the problem and their past disappointments with other products. Most importantly, I used statements like "…they were relieved to discover that they wouldn't need expensive surgery or prescription medications" to relate to their bias against surgery and pharmaceutical drugs, and preference for all-natural health solutions. These are all examples of psychographic relevance. Together, these two types of relevance answer this often unspoken objection:

"Is this the best solution for someone like me?"

This is how demographic and psychographic relevance begins to dissolve your reader's fears about their situation being too complex or unique for your product or service to help them. That's the first rule of applying positioning.

Positioning Example #2 (Superiority)

Superiority is how you answer this question:

"How do I know this product/service works?"

The answer to this question boils down to four factors (listed from most important to least):

- Results: successes your customers have had using your product or service.
- Reviews: what other customers have said about your product or service.
- Endorsements: what industry experts have said about your product or service.
- Experience: years you've been in business and/or number of customers you've served.

If your message nails all four of these points, you've effectively answered your reader's question about whether your product works.
In this example, our reader is a business owner whose tax records and payroll are a mess because he simply hates dealing with such things. He has Libertarian-leaning political beliefs and resents the IRS's constant demands on his time and money. He believes that a good CPA should share his values and help him keep more of what he earns. He finds a CPA whose website copy reads like this:

Are You Tired Of Being "Legally Robbed" By The IRS?

Do you feel like most CPAs only want to nag and needle you about complying with the IRS and playing by the "rules?"
Do you feel like your tax savings are maxed out and that you just have to pay what the IRS demands of you?
That's how a lot of my clients felt before finding me. But what they've found is that hiring me is the fastest and least time-consuming way to gain a powerful ally in their battle to keep more of their money.

Like you, I'm an old-school unapologetic American entrepreneur. I believe small businesses are the true heart of the American economy. That's why I hate seeing you forced to hand boatloads of your hard-earned money to an irresponsible and incompetent government.

My goal is to help you:

- Keep as much of YOUR money as possible.
- Keep the IRS off your back so you can serve your customers.

You could be saving 30% or more on your taxes by the next quarter, without long meetings, even if your tax records are a mess and you don't know where to find everything.
When you hire me, I guarantee to maximize your deductions quickly, and without distracting you from running your business. Just like I did for these business owners:

— SECTION HERE WITH CLIENT TESTIMONIALS —

Join My Alliance Of Happy Customers

These are just a few of HUNDREDS of entrepreneurs who have put MORE money in their pockets, simply by keeping me on their payroll.
Other CPAs might promise you the same results, but what they WON'T tell you is whether their clients are actually getting them!
I've worked with over 5,000 entrepreneurs across 102 industries. I've saved my clients a total of more than a BILLION dollars over my 30-year career.
So why trust your financial future to someone without a PROVEN track record, when you can hire a fellow liberty-loving citizen who knows how to keep the IRS off your back?

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #3 of the Buyer's Journey)

Notice how I demonstrated both Relevance, and Superiority in this example. I used Dog Whistle Marketing by saying "'Legally Robbed' by the IRS," and "...old-school unapologetic American entrepreneur." I said I believed that small business entrepreneurs are the heart of the American economy, and I called the government irresponsible and incompetent.
These are appeals to psychographic relevance using Dog Whistle Language. They mean nothing to people outside my target audience, and might even seem offensive or over-the-top. But for my Buyer Persona, they're loaded with meaning and value. Moving on to Superiority, notice how I addressed these three points:

- **Results:** I mentioned that I'd saved my clients a total of over a billion dollars.
- **Reviews:** I included a list of reviews from my past and existing clients.
- **Experience:** I mentioned that I'd been in business for 30 years, and served over 5,000 clients in 102 different industries.

The only point I'm missing is expert endorsements. I'd address this by including some positive reviews and/or endorsements from public figures who my clients were likely to know, love, and respect. This might include Conservative or Libertarian politicians, authors, political activists, or other public figures.
These endorsements would demonstrate both Relevance and Superiority for my target market. Now, we'll add the third and final ingredient of positioning.

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Positioning Example #3 (Uniqueness)

Uniqueness is how you answer this question:

"Can I get the same thing somewhere else?"

This is the most important part of positioning. It's also the most widely neglected and easily misunderstood. It starts with finding your Unique Selling Proposition, which is defined as:
USP: (USP) the one thing that makes your brand, product, or service uniquely superior your competitors.
Your USP is the one thing that makes your brand, product, or service uniquely superior to your competitor. The worst (and sadly the most common) attempts to define a USP sound like this:

- "We stand by our product."
- "We pride ourselves on quality and service."
- "We guarantee your satisfaction."
- "We really care about our customers."

These are not Unique Selling Propositions. They're vague cliches that circle directly back to the question they're supposed to answer:
"Can I get the same thing somewhere else?"

You're convinced that your product or service really is better than competitors. Your existing customers probably are too. But your prospects haven't used your product or service yet. They have no first-hand experience as to whether you're telling the truth or what you even mean by vague statements about "quality," "service," or how much you "really care" about your customers.
Your USP shouldn't require your prospect to know something that only you and your existing customers can know. It shouldn't even try to convince them that you're better. It should explain how you're different in a way that adds value for them. Here are three rules for defining your USP:

- **Make it Specific:** Don't use abstract words or phrases that require extra explanations or examples. This includes words like "quality," "satisfaction," "excellence," and "services." Your competitor can easily say the same things. Use concrete words and statements to make claims that can be objectively verified by examples, customer reviews, or scientific data.
- **Make it Beneficial:** Promise a specific benefit to your prospect and tie it to the thing that makes your product or service unique. This promise should be concrete enough to paint a "before and after" picture in the mind of your prospect. If your prospect can see a "mind movie" of themselves living out this promised benefit, you're on the right track.

- **Make it Unique:** Your USP should allow you to claim something that your competitors can't claim without legal consequences. Some examples include patented formulas or other legally protected features of your product or your service. This is where most companies fail to define a solid USP. They make claims about why they're better, but not how they're unique.

Here's a simple example of a USP that does all three of the above. This is based on the same Buyer Persona and offer we used in the previous example:

Here's A Promise No Other CPA Can Make You

During my 30 years in business, I've discovered and tested 77 checkpoints EVERY business tax return should undergo before being submitted to the IRS.
Any one of these checkpoints could uncover something that saves you from being robbed at tax time or subjected to an intrusive, time-sucking tax audit.
I keep a hard copy of this checklist in a safe in my office, and another xeroxed copy in a safety deposit box. I've never shown it to anyone. That's why I'm 100% confident that no other CPA can offer you what I can.

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #3 of the Buyer's Journey)

In the first paragraph of this example, I make a SPECIFIC claim about how I deliver my service. In the second paragraph, I promise a specific BENEFIT to my prospect. In the final paragraph, I explain why my service is UNIQUE in a way that my competitors can't duplicate. If you've nailed the first two points of positioning (Relevance and Superiority), this simple USP formula will position your product as the absolute best choice.

How to Apply Positioning

There are three ingredients to positioning:

- Communicating Relevance
- Communicating Superiority
- Communicating Uniqueness

Relevance starts with defining your Buyer Persona using the Buyer Persona exercise and the related Data Groups exercise from chapter one this book. This should be the foundation of all your

copywriting and marketing efforts. The more you know about your Buyer Persona, the easier it will be to answer this question:

“Is this the best solution for someone like me?”

Once you’ve uncovered the Demographic and Psychographic details of your Buyer Persona, make a list of Dog Whistle words, phrases, and concepts to include in your sales copy. Your company story (or Hero’s Journey Story from chapter five) is another important ingredient for communicating Relevance. This is the first ingredient of applying positioning. It should also be the starting point of all your marketing efforts.

The next ingredient is Superiority, which involves four things:

- Results: total and average per customer results you’ve produced for your clients.
- Reviews: collecting and publishing positive reviews from your happiest customers.
- Endorsements: collecting endorsements from other experts in your industry.
- Experience: total time in business and total customers (and industries) you’ve served.

These four ingredients will answer this question for your prospects:

“How do I know this product/service works?”

I recommend treating review and endorsement collection as a part of your ongoing marketing efforts. You should always be reaching out to your existing customers to ask for reviews. You should also make a list of a dozen experts or influencers in your industry and reach out to them until they either respond or ask you to stop.
When reaching out for expert endorsements, don’t use email or social media. Use physical mail. Also, don’t ask for their endorsement right away. Powerful people never approach other powerful people by asking for things. They do it by offering something mutually beneficial.

If you don’t have money, influence, or connections to offer, you can still offer recognition and respect. Write a book or a printed newsletter and either quote them in it or write a review of them or one of their books, lectures, or products.

Stick this newsletter or book into a physical envelope, bookmark the place where you wrote about them, and mail it to them with a handwritten note saying something like, “[NAME], thought you might like to see this.” If you’re writing a book, send them the manuscript before you publish it with a note that says, “[NAME], I paraphrased your work on page [PAGE #]. Please review and make sure I’ve represented you accurately.”

Public figures are constantly misrepresented, and resent it deeply when someone misquotes them or distorts something they said. Asking a known expert to review and approve your work in advance will win their respect and likely their endorsement or even their friendship.

If you do a good job communicating Relevance and Superiority, your final job is to define and clarify your Unique Selling Proposition. This is absolutely the #1 secret to mastering positioning.

How to Master Positioning

As I mentioned above, there are three rules for defining your USP:

- Make it Specific
- Make it Beneficial
- Make it Unique

The ultimate goal of your USP is to positively shape your prospect's perception of your product or service, and you do this by changing their perspective. By changing their perspective, you'll change the way they value your product or service, and that changes everything. I call this Angle Selling. Here are three classic examples of Angle Selling.

USP Example #1: The Pet Rock

Gary Dahl was a copywriter who sold ordinary rocks by getting people to see them as pets. That was in the 1970s, yet people are still buying and collecting pet rocks today.

Why would someone pay for an ordinary rock when they can pick one up off the road for free? Because people don't see pet rocks as ordinary rocks. They see them as personified decorations endowed with all the emotionally endearing qualities of live pets.

By changing our perspective of ordinary rocks, Gary Dahl brilliantly changed our perception of their value. You can do the same thing by changing the angle from which your prospects see and evaluate your product or service.

USP Example #2: Blublocker Sunglasses

Blublockers are sunglasses. But their original ad (and corresponding infomercials) literally said:

"They look like sunglasses."

The ads and infomercials for Blublockers didn't position them as mere sunglasses. They positioned them as a solution for clearer vision and better eye health. Their angle is still working today. Here's a statement from their website:

"We've received several letters from people who were in serious car accidents who would have been blinded had it not been for their shatter-resistant BluBlocker sunglasses."

And another...

"Blue light focuses in front of the retina, which is the focusing screen of your eyes. The remaining colors focus on the retina. So when you block blue light, objects tend to appear sharper and clearer. And squinting is dramatically reduced. Squinting is often the cause of wrinkles around the eyes. BluBlockers block those rays that cause squinting and the results are less wrinkles."

Notice how these sunglasses are positioned as tools for fighting wrinkles, protecting your eyes, and even preventing blindness. As of 2022, Blublockers have earned over $60 million in total revenue and average about $186,000.00 per employee in yearly revenue.

USP Example #3: The George Foreman Grill

George Foreman was a champion boxer and the personality behind the George Foreman Grill. The grill was originally marketed as a Taco Maker. When it bombed, a brilliant entrepreneur from Chicago repositioned it as a grill for cooking low-fat foods and eating healthy. He and George Foreman made millions, but that's not all.

Their marketing campaign changed people's perception of the product and of George Foreman.

Here's a quote from an article in Business Week Magazine:

"In 2002, George Foreman was in Memphis working as a boxing commentator for Home Box Office Inc. when he ran into a group of preschoolers walking down the street. Their teacher explained to the children that Foreman had won the gold medal in heavyweight boxing at the 1968 Olympic Games. One little boy refused to believe it. 'That's the cooking man!' shouted the tot, referring to the former boxer's promotions of his George Foreman grill. Says Foreman, laughing at the memory: 'They don't even know me as the champion anymore.'" The success of this product had less to do with George Foreman's celebrity status and much to do with how the product was positioned as a solution for healthy living.

In fact, dozens of celebrity-promoted food products have failed so badly* that Paul Newman had to use his own fortune to launch his "Newman's Own" brand. Newman's brand is another good example of Angle Selling, being promoted as an ongoing worldwide mission to "...nourish and transform the lives of children who face adversity."

SOURCE: https://cafemom.com/entertainment/celebrity-product-brand-fails

How to Find Your USP

The three examples above have one thing in common. They tie the product to a larger lifestyle benefit which, to the ordinary person, would seem to have nothing to do with the product or even what it does. This is especially effective when the lifestyle benefit is tied to one or more of these universal human desires:

- Health and Longevity
- Love and Admiration
- Wealth and Status
- Purpose and Justice

Which of these does your Buyer Persona want the most, and how does your product or service help them get it?

Answer this question first. Then, define the one thing about your product or service that makes it effective in delivering this. Make it something that your competitors cannot offer without violating a patent or stealing one of your trade secrets. You might even consider patenting this feature of your product or service.

If you can't find anything unique about your product or service, you'll want to improve it until you have something that your competitors can't legally duplicate. Finally, use the Typical Day exercise my book "The Antifragile Sales System" AND the Ladder of Abstraction from my chapter six of this book to write out your promised lifestyle benefit in vivid detail.

Combine this with the ingredients of Relevance and Superiority, and you've got the perfect formula for mastering positioning. We have now covered all the persuasive copywriting techniques for turning attention into interest, interest into desire, and desire into urgency. The final chapter of this book shows you how to turn urgency into action and close the sale.

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Technique #10: Cognitive Dissonance

Why Cognitive Dissonance Works

There are two ways to create urgency: external pressure and internal pressure. External pressure is simple. All it takes is an irresistible limited-time offer.

Internal pressure is more complicated but also more powerful. In fact, if you create enough internal pressure, your limited-time offers will become much, much more effective.

Creating internal urgency is all about leveraging what psychologists call “cognitive dissonance.” The term "cognitive dissonance" is routinely misused by the bobbleheads in the mainstream media and by keyboard warriors on social media. In most cases, they use it when they should be using the term “confirmation bias.”

The real meaning of cognitive dissonance is much more interesting. Cognitive dissonance is the uncomfortable feeling you get when you hold contradictory beliefs, ideas, feelings, or values. It’s that uncomfortable feeling you get when you realize your behaviors don’t match your beliefs or values or that your present habits are out of sync with your future goals.

Cognitive dissonance theory states that people may change their attitude or their behavior to relieve themselves from this psychological discomfort:

“*Cognitive dissonance is purported to be a powerful motivator for change. People find consistency comfortable and prefer to be consistent in their thoughts, beliefs, emotions, values, attitudes, and actions. When inconsistency exists, an individual feels an imbalance or dissonance. To reduce this feeling of imbalance, Individuals may change their attitude or behavior to regain the feeling of consistency.*”

SOURCE: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/14676611

This is the scientific secret to creating internal pressure and urgency. For example, let’s assume you give a speech about the value of sobriety one Saturday morning. That night, your friends invite you out drinking. You say yes, but as you arrive at the bar, you feel a twinge of guilt. You worry that someone might see you there and recognize you as the person who gave the speech that morning. You order a beer, but when the bartender brings it, you feel so uneasy that you excuse yourself and leave the bar without taking a sip. That twinge of guilt you felt is cognitive dissonance. In this

example, it motivated you to change your behavior to match the beliefs and values you had professed while giving your speech on sobriety.

However, cognitive dissonance can also motivate you to change your beliefs or values to match your behavior. For example, let's assume you'd stayed at the bar and had several beers. Let's also assume that you were scheduled to give another speech on the value of sobriety the next Saturday.

If you were to continue this habit of drinking and speaking on sobriety you would eventually either cancel your speaking schedule or build a complex rationalization to excuse or even romanticize your behavior. If you do neither, you will continue to feel guilty about your drinking, or your speaking, or both. Soon, you will either drown out this physical anxiety through more drinking, or you'll change your behavior and stop drinking.

This motivation to change either your beliefs, your values, or your behavior is the psychological principle behind urgency. If your message makes a clear and compelling contrast between the pain of staying where they are, and the imagined pleasure of using your product or service to solve their problem and change their life, your prospect will only have two options.

1. Change their behavior by taking action
2. Bury their cognitive dissonance in rationalizations

You can't control which choice they make, but you can create enough internal pressure that they have to do one or the other.

If you get your Buyer Persona and your marketing channels right, and if your product or service solves a real problem, and your message is clear and compelling, you'll get plenty of responses using this persuasive copywriting technique. That's how cognitive dissonance works. Now let's look at some examples.

IMPORTANT: When using this technique in your copy, do not be overly literal by using the labels of the needs or their opposites (validation, shame, excitement, boredom, security, purpose, futility). Rather, embody them as concepts in your writing by using concrete and relatable examples (joining the conversation already in their head), and by painting sensory images in their head (mind movies using the hypnotic copywriting technique).

Examples of Cognitive Dissonance

The secret to creating cognitive dissonance is to contrast your reader's most basic emotional needs with their polar opposites. I introduced these three basic emotional needs from chapter seven:

- Validation: the need to feel important.

- Excitement: the need for variety and stimulation.
- Security: the need for comfort and safety.

I also introduced the negative polar opposites of each need:

- Shame
- Boredom
- Fear

You can call them by other names if you don't like mine, but the needs are universal and transcend language. Some people value excitement over security, and others value security over excitement. Some people seek validation through achievement, others through praise. But the needs themselves are timeless and universal.

Your job is to identify how your Buyer Persona relates to each need, and which need(s) are most relevant to the problem that your product or service solves. You'll then create a contrast between the positive emotional experience of solving their problem, with the negative experience of staying where they are.

This way, your reader isn't just choosing to buy or not. They are choosing between validation and shame, excitement and boredom, or security and fear. In the following three examples, I'll share three versions of an excerpt from a video script selling a mastermind coaching program. Each version targets one of the three needs mentioned above and was written to target a different psychographic dimension of the Buyer Persona.

Cognitive Dissonance Example #1 (Validation)

In this example, our reader is a business coach who is making an average of $5k a month. They want to break the six-figure mark, and go beyond to build a seven-figure income. However, they feel stuck because time saturation is keeping them from doing the things necessary to grow their business.

Which Type Of Entrepreneur Do You Want To Be?

In the world of entrepreneurship, there are winners and losers. Some business coaches will tell you that anyone can win. [CONTRAST >]What they won't tell you is that only a small percentage of entrepreneurs ever break the six-figure mark. Even fewer become millionaires. The others remain stuck chasing these goals until the most productive years of their lives are over.[< CONTRAST] Having helped hundreds of entrepreneurs break the six-figure mark and more than a dozen become self-made millionaires, I can tell you that life is much, much better for those who win.[CONTRAST

>]It's better to be paid what you're worth than to haggle with clients over price. It's better to wake up every morning to a coaching calendar than to spend half your time chasing new business.[< CONTRAST]

[HOPE >]It's better to have the freedom to invest your energy into meaningful projects, to choose who you'll associate with, and to choose where, when, and how you'll do business while the most productive years of your life are still ahead of you.[< HOPE]

[REVISITING PRESENT PAIN >]Now that you've seen the first step to making this dream real, this is all you'll think about. You'll remember this every night when you lie awake wishing you had the time and money to finally break your income plateau.[< REVISITING PRESENT PAIN]

[CONTRAST WITH HOPE >]Or, you can join this program now, get unstuck, and join the small select group of entrepreneurs who are living the kind of life most people only get to dream about.[< CONTRAST WITH HOPE] Book first your call now, and let's start winning.

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #3 and #4 of the Buyer's Journey)

Notice how this copy appeals to their need for validation by drawing a contrast between winners and losers. This contrast is connected to my reader's need for validation and its polar negative. These contrasting emotions will drive them to move away from the pain of the present, and toward the hopeful picture I've created in my copy.
You'll also notice that I planted a "splinter in their mind," with this statement:

"Now that you've seen the first step to making this dream real, this is all you'll think about. You'll remember this every night when you lie awake wishing you had the time and money to finally break your income plateau."

This is a powerful technique for making sure that people who don't buy right away are still haunted by your message. If you have a robust follow-up strategy using email, SMS, or retargeting, this is a powerful way to prepare them to take action and buy later.

Cognitive Dissonance Example #2 (Excitement)

In this example, our reader is a business coach who is already making more than six figures a year. They want to go beyond this and build a seven-figure income. However, they feel stuck because they've run out of ways to attract more traffic, leads, and sales. They've spent money on ads and are willing to spend more in the future, but they can't get their paid ad traffic to convert.

Isn't It Time To Break Your Income Plateau?

You want to scale from six to seven figures. By now, you know that there are only two choices left:

- [BOREDOM >]Keep burning yourself out hoping to "go viral."
- [EXCITEMENT >]Learn to convert cold traffic into leads, sales, and revenue.

[CONTRAST >]Forget all the boring theories about delegation, systemization, and building "scalable business processes." None of that matters until you can attract a flood of brand new, ready-to-buy inbound traffic.[< CONTRAST] [REVISITING PRESENT PAIN >]Your warm network will only get you so far. It takes time, energy, and attention to build it. Cold calling and cold emailing have their limits. Same with writing SEO content and with every other non-scalable lead generation method. You've burned yourself out doing it this way.[< REVISITING PRESENT PAIN]

You're running out of warm contacts, and you can only invest so much time into finding new ones.

Ready to get unstuck and explode your income?

[CONTRAST >]It's simple. Join this program, and learn to convert cold traffic into leads, sales, and repeat revenue. Your business will never grow to seven figures without it. You'll burn yourself out trying.[< CONTRAST] [CONTRAST WITH HOPE >]Once you crack the cold traffic code, you can happily invest money into buying traffic because you KNOW it will bring you more customers, more revenue, and the kind of life most entrepreneurs only get to dream about. It's that simple.[< CONTRAST WITH HOPE]

But it's not easy. That's why so few marketing "experts" dare to talk about this subject. They don't know how to make it work. [PLANTING A SEED >]Now that you know this, you'll remember it every time you're struggling to find new business.[< PLANTING A SEED] [CONTRAST WITH HOPE >]It's time to break past your income plateau so you can create the explosive growth you've been dreaming about.[< CONTRAST WITH HOPE] Book your first appointment now, and let's get started. _____

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #3 and #4 of the Buyer's Journey)

Notice how this copy appeals to their need for excitement by drawing a contrast between their present burnout and the growth they're hoping for. This contrast is connected to my reader's need

for excitement and its polar negative, boredom. These contrasting emotions will drive them to move away from the pain of the present, and toward the hopeful picture I've created in my copy.

You'll also notice that I planted a "splinter in their mind," with this statement:

"Now that you know this, you'll remember it every time you're struggling to find new business."

This assures that my message will stick in their mind, even if they don't buy right away. If you have a robust follow-up strategy using email, SMS, or retargeting, this is a powerful way to make sure you can reengage your reader and close the sale later.

Cognitive Dissonance Example #3 (Security)

In this example, our reader is a business coach who is already making more than six figures a year. They want to build a seven-figure income. However, they feel stuck because they've run out of ways to attract more traffic, leads, and sales. They know they need to start buying traffic, but they're afraid their ads won't convert and they'll lose their money.

Take The Guesswork Out Of Growing Your Business

You want to scale from six to seven figures. By now, you know that there are only two choices left:

- [BOREDOM >]Keep rolling the dice on new ad ideas.
- [SECURITY >]Learn a proven system for turning cold traffic into leads, sales, and revenue.

[CONTRAST >]Forget all the unproven theories about delegation, systemization, and building "scalable business processes." None of that matters until you can attract a steady and predictable flow of inbound business.[< CONTRAST] [REVISITING PRESENT PAIN >]Your warm network will only get you so far. It takes time, energy,
and attention to build it. Cold calling and cold emailing can be unpredictable and waste time. Same with writing SEO content and with every other non-scalable lead generation method. You've already lost a lot of time and opportunity doing it this way.[< REVISITING PRESENT PAIN]
You're running out of warm contacts, and you can only invest so much time into finding new ones.

Want to take the guesswork out of buying new traffic?

[CONTRAST >]It's simple. Join this program, and learn a proven system for turning cold traffic into leads, sales, and repeat revenue. Your business will never grow to seven figures without it. You'll risk your money trying to do it on your own.[< CONTRAST]

[CONTRAST WITH HOPE >]Once you crack the cold traffic code, you can confidently invest money into buying traffic because you KNOW it will bring you more customers, more revenue, and the steady and sustainable growth you've been looking for. It's that simple.[< CONTRAST WITH HOPE]

But it's not easy. That's why so few marketing "experts" dare to talk about this subject. They don't have a tested formula for making it work. [PLANTING A SEED >]Now that you know this, you'll remember it every time you're thinking about risking money on paid ads.[< PLANTING A SEED]

[CONTRAST WITH HOPE >]It's time to break past your income plateau so you can create the steady growth you've been dreaming about.[< CONTRAST WITH HOPE] Book your first appointment now, and let's get started.

(**NOTE:** The example above is relevant to Stage #3 and #4 of the Buyer's Journey)

Notice how this copy appeals to their need for security by drawing a contrast between their fear of spending money on ads and the certainty that comes from having ads that convert. This contrast is connected to my reader's need for security and its polar negative, fear.

These contrasting emotions will get them out of their present fear and set their focus on the certainty that will come from having a predictable stream of inbound business.
You'll also notice that I planted a "splinter in their mind," with this statement:

"Now that you know this, you'll remember it every time you're thinking about risking money on paid ads."
This assures that my message will stick in their mind, even if they don't buy right away. If you have a robust follow-up strategy using email, SMS, or retargeting, this should help my message remain fresh in their mind until they finally decide to buy.

Most importantly, notice the subtle difference in word choices between the above example, and the excitement example. This is a demonstration of Dog Whistle Language. Notice the subtle differences in my word selection from the excerpts below (I've bolded them to make them more obvious):

- The excitement example says "...keep burning yourself out hoping to 'go viral,'" while the security example says "...keep rolling the dice on new ad ideas."
- The excitement example says "...keep burning yourself out hoping to 'go viral,'" while the security example says "...keep rolling the dice on new ad ideas."

- The excitement example says "...None of that matters until you can attract a flood of brand new, ready-to-buy inbound traffic," while the security example says "...None of that matters until you can attract a steady and predictable flow of inbound business."
- The excitement example says "...you've burned yourself out doing it this way," while the security example says "...you've already lost a lot of time and opportunity doing it this way."
- The excitement example says "...You'll burn yourself out trying," while the security example says "...You'll risk your money trying to do it on your own."
- The excitement example says "...It's time to break past your income plateau so you can create the explosive growth you've been dreaming about," while the security example says "...It's time to break past your income plateau so you can create the steady growth you've been dreaming about."

Notice how the security words contrast the fear of risk and loss with the promise of steady and predictable results while the excitement words contrast the fear of more boredom and burnout with the promise of big, explosive, results.

These minor differences in word selection will make a big impact on how your reader responds to your message. The question is, how will you know whether to craft your message to target the need for Validation, Excitement, or Security?

How to Apply Cognitive Dissonance

The secret to applying cognitive dissonance is to combine the Ladder of Abstraction technique from the chapters six and seven with what you've just learned in this chapter. If this sounds like a lot of work, that's because the payoff is HUGE if you get this technique right. The first step is to define your Buyer Persona so you can get crystal clear on three things:

- Their present experience of the problem you promise to solve for them.
- The emotional need that's driving their desire to solve the problem.
- A description of what their life will be like after solving the problem.

Once you know these three things, you create a message that contrasts your reader's present experience of the problem (Semantic and Emotional Relevance) with the promise of what their life will be like after you've helped them solve it. You can use this message in your headlines, your openings, in the body of your sales copy, just before your first and/or your final call to action. The examples in this chapter came just before the final call to action. This is the ideal place to crank up the internal pressure and push your reader to take action. The previous chapter of this book shows you how to answer the above three questions. You would then use words and phrases that appeal to your primary need, and its negative opposite.

Here's a list of such words that I've collected over the years:

- Validation vs Shame
- Excitement vs Boredom
- Security vs Fear
- Purpose vs Futility

To recap, start by defining your Buyer Persona. Then, you use the Semantic Relevance and Emotional Relevance techniques from earlier in this book to identify their present experience of the problem your product or service solves.

Then, you identify the need behind this problem. You then use words, phrases, metaphors, and stories that contrast their present experience of the problem with the hope of what their life will look like after you've helped them solve it.

This is a simple formula for applying cognitive dissonance. It's powerful, which is why it's not easy. Just remember that the payoff will be big if you learn and master this final persuasive copywriting technique.

How to Master Cognitive Dissonance

The secret to mastering cognitive dissonance is to stop selling products and services and to start selling experiences. In fact, this is the secret to mastering all the persuasive copywriting techniques in this book.

You sell an experience by creating such a clear and vivid picture of what your reader's life could look like that they're compelled to take action and make that experience real. You then contrast this with a clear and vivid description of their present experience with the symptoms of the problem that your product or service solves.

If you do this right, your reader's desire for your product will persist for days, weeks, or even months until they finally buy your product. Most marketing messages fail to do this for one simple reason...the prospect forgets how they feel about the product or service. Think about all the people who have seen your marketing message and who never bought. What happened?

At some point, they were interested enough to take a look at your website, read your content, watch your videos, or subscribe to your email. But as time passed, they simply lost their perceived value of your product. They didn't so much forget about it as they forgot how they felt about it. Can people really remember how they feel about a product? Don't you have to build their desire back up every time you market to them? Scientifically speaking, no you don't.

But rather than bore you with a lecture on emotions and human memory, let me appeal to your intuition and personal experience to make my point. Have you ever really wanted something? I have. Hell, I still remember how badly I "needed" my first guitar. I'd wanted to play the guitar since I was seven. But I didn't get to buy a guitar until I was 17. Still, my burning desire to own a guitar never waned.

In fact, it got stronger every year. I could almost feel the damn thing in my hands every time I heard a song by Bon Jovi, Journey, or Poison. When I was seventeen, after my first two weeks having a job, that feeling made me run to the gas station with my first paycheck (that's where we cashed checks back then), hurry to my local music store, and dump every penny of my check into putting my first guitar on layaway.

Ten years dammit! And I never once lost the desire to feel that guitar in my hands. Have you ever wanted something this badly, and for this long? Maybe you had to save up the money for it. Maybe you needed to shop around for a few weeks. But that giddiness to drive the car, live in the house, take a vacation or play with the new toy never left you. My point is, that when you really want something, you can't help but remember how you feel about it.

I remember my first kiss. I remember my first time catching a large-mouthed bass without my dad's help. I remember the first time I shot a gun, the first time I lifted weights, the first song I wrote, and my first-time playing rock guitar with a band. I remember my college graduation ceremony, the first time I voted, my first day working a job, and my first car accident. I remember vivid and specific details about my first three dates with my wife.

I'm sure you have your own list of memorable experiences. You remember where you were when they happened. You remember who you were with. You probably remember the song that was playing. Most importantly, you remember how you felt. You remember these things because you relive them every time you think of them. That's the difference between a "high-definition" memory, and a bland, black and white mental record of raw facts.

So don't settle for this myth that your prospects will eventually respond to your ads if they just see enough of them. They can see your ad dozens of times and still ignore it.
Likewise, some prospects will see your ad once, and it will stick in their mind so much that they'll actively search for your product and buy it.
It all boils down to whether you create an intense and persisting desire for the experience that your product or service promises to deliver. The persuasion by repetition mindset is a fossil of the industrial age. Modern marketers who rely on it will always be scrambling to stay ahead of their competitors.

Good marketing messages gradually build up emotional "buy-in" with every blog or article your prospect reads, every video they watch, and every email they open. This desire builds until they finally can't take it anymore and they happily pay top dollar to make their imagined experience real by purchasing your product or signing up for your service.

When done right, copywriting can create imagined experiences that will make your prospect giddy to do business with you. Rubber Chicken marketing lacks the proper emotional context required to form one of these "high-definition" connections. This is why even qualified prospects can see your ad several times (or more), and still not respond.

This is why some prospects land on your website, read a few pages, and never come back. This is why they subscribe to your email list, but never open your emails. Most importantly, this is why they end up leaving your site and buying from a competitor with an inferior product.

The good that news is, you can make your copywriting messages so emotionally compelling that your prospects will relive that emotion every time they see your brand or read one of your messages. This is how you create cognitive dissonance and make your messages irresistible. Not by external pressure through limited-time offers, but through an internal pressure that can only be resolved by a decision to buy RIGHT NOW.

VQ Success

About Seth Czerepak

Seth Czerepak has spent nearly three decades doing what no one in the persuasion world has done: systematizing influential communication in a way that any committed person can learn, practice, and master.



Across 30,000+ hours of coaching experience, Seth has worked inside real conversations — marketing campaigns, sales calls, negotiations, presentations, written persuasion, and high-stakes moments where words either land cleanly or fail quietly. What emerged from Seth's experience was not theory, but a repeatable pattern.

Persuasion does not break down because people lack intelligence or good ideas. It breaks down because clarity loses structure under pressure. When stakes rise, even capable communicators drift: they over-explain, hedge, soften conclusions, or push at the wrong moment. Persuasion isn't about effort; it's about structured execution.
Seth solved this by building persuasion on verifiable science, not opinion or intuition. His work is grounded in Formal Axiology — the science of value judgment — a rigorous framework for understanding how humans assign meaning, make decisions, and commit to action. Formal Axiology identifies three measurable dimensions of value that govern all persuasion and decision-making:

- **Intrinsic Value** — Identity, self-concept, and self-trust
- **Extrinsic Value** — Behavior, performance, and execution
- **Systemic Value** — Structure, meaning, and order

From this scientific base, Seth developed his Mastery Program, **The Quiet Authority** — a progressive system that trains persuasive mastery through stages of readiness, speaking postures, and sequenced frames. Rather than relying on talent or personality, Seth's method teaches communicators how to:

- Recognize where another person is in their stage of awareness
- Apply the correct posture of influence for that moment
- Sequence frames that move conversations forward without resistance
- Guide decisions from clarity rather than pressure
- Maintain authority before, during, and after the decision

Seth's results speak for themselves. He has helped hundreds of clients reach six-figure income levels, dozens cross the seven-figure mark, and trained communicators who began with no background in

persuasion to achieve extraordinary outcomes — including one copywriting student who went on to write a funnel generating over **$10 million** in revenue.

Seth's ability to make persuasion teachable has earned rare praise from industry legends. Dan S. Kennedy, widely regarded as the godfather of direct-response marketing, wrote:

> *"Seth Czerepak has accomplished a Herculean purpose… taking some of the most sophisticated aspects of writing to influence, motivate, persuade, and sell — and making them pragmatically useful, nearly to the point of fill-in-the-blank systemization."*

Beyond written persuasion, Seth is also known for spoken communication that carries unmistakable presence. Legendary speaker Les Brown said:

> *"Seth brings the kind of presence and power that commands the room. His words don't just inspire — they ignite a fire in your spirit."*

Seth is the author of multiple works on persuasion, language, and influence, including *Sales Sorcery*, *You Are Your Stories*, *A Master of Metaphor*, *10 Persuasive Copywriting Techniques*, *Copywriting for Aspiring Cult Leaders*, and many more.

Clients who work with Seth experience clearer thinking under pressure, fewer softened or reopened points, and a measurable reduction in post-conversation second-guessing. If you are serious about mastering persuasive communication — not based on talent or tricks, but by following a disciplined system you can practice and refine — Seth's work offers a path that is both exacting and durable.

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