



Why a very small group of knowledgeable direct marketers are enjoying such a *massive* advantage these days...

It's great to have an advantage.

Something a bit extra special. Something that other people don't have...

Take the crazy marketing and communications business. Now things are tougher than at any time in our history, everyone is trying to find that special something that will give them that vital advantage.

But, some of us aren't looking. Because we already have it.

I'm talking about experienced direct marketers. Those that have grown up in the business and got better by studying. Individuals who realise that the only way to get better, is to learn from someone better than them.

This group isn't very large. That's because it's tough to stay the course.

You have to be very good. Consistently. It's a ruthless business. If you can't deliver results, you are history.

In truth, most people don't make it.

But that's OK to most of them. The second tier is always waiting. General marketing will take them in.

It's nowhere near as tough in there. You can create one disastrous campaign after another for years - and still keep your job. You can even share the hospitality on your agency's table when they win an award for your latest campaign that didn't work...

...simply because it looked *nice*...

It would never happen in DM. Our sole objective is getting *results*. Getting a performance for our clients from the campaigns we write and create.

And now, because mass marketing is long dead and we are communicating to savvy, sceptical *individuals*, who recognise they are in charge, special qualities are needed to get the results our clients need.

That's why the experienced direct marketer is once again ruling the roost.

One of the key advantages our exclusive club members have over general marketers and advertisers, is understanding. An understanding of people.

It is a proven fact that central to good copy, is an understanding of people, an insight into them, a sympathy towards them. That's why the best writers are well-read and have an enormously wide range of interests and knowledge.

Not only do they study their art with a passion that is unrivalled in the communications business these days, they are also great listeners and have insatiable curiosity.

They question *everything*. And they *test*.

This gives them an enviable advantage - an understanding of the human animal. Using this knowledge and other related elements, the writer is able to connect - and influence the reader to respond in the positive manner required.

Yes, it is that clinical. Copywriting for response is a technical discipline.

Herschell Gordon Lewis referred to part of it as writing within the '*experiential background of the reader*'. You introduce as many facts as you can which are likely to come within that experience.

When you do that, you will connect immediately. The reader's reaction is likely to be: "Yes I know that, so it's likely that the other facts are true."

In the vast majority of the copy I see these days, this is not happening. I believe this to be one of the fundamental flaws of contemporary copywriting in current times. Most copywriters haven't the faintest idea about why knowledge of human psychology is important, let alone how to use it.

This is best illustrated of course, when copywriters from traditional agencies or in-house marketing departments, write copy for a direct response challenge.

They write storytelling copy, not selling copy. Copy that is completely unstructured, with little or no technique, which always talks about them, their company, their mission statement and other useless bits of garbage.

What happens? The campaign bombs. Because the copy is so off beam, it does not interest or connect, at any level – and ultimately costs the client valuable budget that he or she cannot afford.

Jerry Della Femina, who wrote an excellent book on advertising called "*From Those Wonderful Folks Who Brought You Pearl Harbor*" (which is on my desk now) - had an interesting view on this.

"Young creative people start out hungry. They're off the street; they know how people think. And their work is great. Then they get successful. They make more and more money, spend their time in restaurants they never dreamed of, fly back and forth between New York and Los Angeles. Pretty soon, the real world isn't people. It's just a bunch of lights off the right side of the plane. You have to stay in touch if you're going to write advertising that works".

Jerry was spot on. You have to stay in touch. With real people. Recognise who and what they are. And what turns them on and off.

Here's a secret I want to share with you. It's a good one, too. Never forget it.

People only buy for two reasons – solutions to problems and good feelings. Every reason to buy, comes under those two headings, when you think about it.

So, to be successful with contemporary communication campaigns these days, it's essential to recognise this. And wrap your approaches around it.

Because remember, the power is firmly in the hands of your customers and prospects. THEY are in charge now. Not YOU. Or your brand.

It's all about understanding human psychology, this selling business. After close to 30 years at the sharp end of this business, I have no doubts at all.

Whatever you sell, however you sell it, you must have an understanding of the people your message is aimed at. The more you know about them, the more you will sell.

Many years ago, I saw some research that I think was done by McGraw Hill.

They asked both consumers and business people why they bought where they bought. Why is that restaurant your favourite? Why do you use that hotel group? Why do you shop at that store all the time?

Here are the top five reasons, in descending order.

5th, was Price. (*That was a great surprise to a lot of people.*) 4th, was Service.
3rd, was Selection, 2nd, was Quality (whatever that means).

The Number One reason was CONFIDENCE. “I have confidence in them, that they will consistently deliver what I want”.

Initially, this surprised me. Then the more I thought about it, the more simple and logical it became. So, I never forgot it.

Every campaign we create, every word I write, has that in mind.

You must link the *benefits* and *advantages* of your product or service with what people want to gain, be, do, and save. If you do that, you will have taken giant strides in influencing them to respond and buy.

Which is the biggest challenge in business right now.

Napoleon said, “*There are two motives to action: self-interest and fear.*” He was right, of course.

So, I’ve mixed those two action motives to the two reasons people buy - ‘solutions to problems’ and ‘good feelings’ and I’ve come up with some very interesting selling platforms for you to consider, when you are preparing your next campaign.

Here are a dozen motivators that your customers and prospects will be looking for – no, demanding - from your products or services, in these tough times.

I have loads more, but these are good to start with...

Are you embracing the relevant ones in your campaigns? If you’re not, then you are showing a worrying lack of knowledge of your audience – and giving them little or no reason to buy from you.

1. I'd like to make money or to save money

Money is always a key factor for any prospect. I'll go a bit further - *if there is no offer, there will be no sale.*

They will be asking, "Is this a good deal?" Will I enjoy greater earnings with this investment? Will I save money by buying this, rather than buying an alternative? Can I save by buying today instead of leaving it until tomorrow? If you can actually quantify the saving, then do it. Actual amounts always work better than %'s off.

2. I want to save time, avoid extra work - and make life easier, more pleasant

In today's relenting pressure cooker, saving time nearly always offers benefit. By becoming more efficient, we should hopefully be more effective. This should then give us more time for other more pleasurable things.

If your product or service can make the reader's life easier and more pleasant, then this is a prime benefit and should be up there in lights.

Everyone says we have less time these days than ever before. That, of course, is total poppycock. We all have the same amount of time available to us as our predecessors did - decades, centuries, millenniums ago.

What we do with it - well, that's another story.

3. I don't want to be left behind

Fear of loss is considerably more powerful than the promise of gain. So, if you're selling something that offers an advantage - perhaps a new electronic device or mobile phone - or a sub to a cutting-edge magazine, then you should underline how damaging it could be by not having this product.

You could be left behind by your peers...

4. I like to be in "style" and to be an individual

Fashion will always be about style and individualism. This reflects in how we look, the cars we drive, the cologne we use.

Plus, the swanky hotels we prefer and our association with certain branded products. In the main, younger people and the wealthy, tend to be more style conscious than others. Certain industries, and companies, underline everything with the "style" message.

A lot of them - it should be said - to the detriment of the selling message.

Individual style is a challenge. And it *is* why certain people buy. But we have to give them the right reasons to do that.

5. I want to take advantage of this opportunity.

Every now and then, an opportunity presents itself. It jumps out at us. It hits us at exactly the right time. And, because it is a 'solution to a problem' we quickly take action and buy. The product or service could be just about anything. Something financial. A gift idea just when you're thinking about what to buy your best friend.

Or a top copywriter writing to you, just when you need to get some copy done.

If you understand your targets, the opportunity of delivering special appeal to them, will open the door to turn more prospects into customers.

6. I want to "belong" and be seen as part of this group

No one wants to be unpopular. Except one. Ryanair. And they do a superlative job at it, too...

But, for the rest of us, we all like to be liked. And it appears important to us to belong. The growth of LinkedIn, for example, demonstrates this. So, whether the needs of your target are social, political, religious, business or something else - they do want to be part of a gang.

Very few can be leaders. It's not in their DNA. But everyone can be part of something - and most people want that. As a group. As an individual. They will buy that, if offered.

7. I want to support this

It's a way of making a personal statement.

It could be political. Religious. Sporting. Social. Environmental. Economic. Business. It could be for an association or organisation. Or a school or a city.

It could be on behalf of children or seniors. Singles or couples. It could be all fun or very serious. It really doesn't matter - people become passionate about what they believe in.

What's more important in our context is they spend their money on what they have become passionate about.

8. I need to get better at what I do and how I look and feel

Most individuals want to get better at what they do. (*Mind you, there are some marketers out there that I have serious doubts about...*)

But, for the selling process, if your product or service is sold in the right way - to make them feel good about themselves - you stand a better than average chance of success.

Cosmetics and plastic surgery, plus almost anything to do with health, wellness, exercise and diet, obviously fit into this category. Products that help you emulate others.

Curiosity can feed an appetite. Create curiosity and you can create a customer.

9. I want to stop worrying

Some people worry about all sorts of stuff - and others worry about very little.

As Paul Simon said many years ago "*Some folks' lives roll easy as a breeze - drifting through a summer night, heading for a sunny day. But most folks' lives, they stumble, Lord they fall, through no fault of their own, most folks never catch their stars..."*"

If your offer gives the recipient the ability to avoid, or ignore, anything worrisome, you've probably got a winner. It's a solution to a problem. Of course, it helps if you know generally what your audience worries about before you start. (*Back to the knowledge of people again...*)

They might be concerned about timing, delivery, training or back-end support. Make sure you tell them.

10. I love to own beautiful things

Whether we are willing to admit it or not, there is a bit of 'snobbishness' lurking in all of us. Most of us like a label or two.

What's more, we are often willing to pay a little more to own something that's a little bit exclusive - just for the pride we take in owning it. And, of course, showing it off.

It might be a designer dress. A piece of expensive furniture. Or the very latest high-tech mobile phone. Whatever it may be, there is a certain "high" that one gets, in being able to purchase such a sought-after item.

People will say, "Oh, I want to buy that...it's so beautiful". Yet, what is beautiful? It can be many things to many people. You have to know your audience. And maybe even each member of your audience.

11. I deserve the best. I want the best

Everyone has ego. For some, it's important to flaunt it. For others, they hide it under a rock. In most cases, alcohol normally budges it.

Ego-minded people think only of themselves. It is all about them and no one else. Always 'I' and never 'we'. For those individuals, key words can include "special" 'A special offer' or 'exclusive' 'An exclusive deal'.

'Only for you - only from us'. Stroke, stroke, you're a rare bird...

For these individuals, status and position are key. Titles are important. Position is important. Give them the ego trip they crave. Front row seats. Back stage passes for after the concert.

12. I want to be loved

It's about the satisfaction of emotion. We want to be loved and we want to see our loved ones happy too.

That's why people are often willing to make significant purchases - from expensive rings and bracelets to luxury vacations. It feels good when you pick up the tab for your dinner companions at an expensive restaurant, doesn't it?

That pride in caring and providing special things for those who are important to us, is at the very heart of our make-up. Using this knowledge in your selling messages and delivering it right on the nose, can produce stunning results.

So, there you are. A good dozen interesting and proven insights into those powerful people your campaigns are targeted at. All of them are priceless tools in the selling process.

The knowledgeable direct marketer who writes copy for a living, will dip into that pool and embrace and include any that are appropriate, every time he or she hits the keyboard. The charlatans will not.

That's why only 1% of the work the marketing and advertising industry produces, is any good. The amateurs are in the majority.

As everyone surely knows, people buy for emotional reasons – and justify with logic. This is true for consumers and business people (the latter are only consumers at work, by the way. They don't change when they sit at a desk).

The more you know about the individuals you are talking to, the better you will craft your approach. And, the more knowledgeable you are about key aspects of human buying behaviour, the closer you will get to them.

The closer you get, the more likely that individual will connect with your words and follow your instructions to respond and buy.

Keep the faith...



About the Author

Andy Owen is Managing Director of Andy Owen & Associates, a leading International direct marketing consultancy, specialising in all aspects of creative, copy and strategy for direct marketing.

The company has offices in UK, Dubai, Bucharest and Moscow.

The company's corporate website is www.andyowen.co.uk The specialist copy division has its own site at www.copywritingthatsells.com

Andy is personally involved in every creative and copy element that is produced by Andy Owen & Associates.

As well as his International speaking engagements, Andy runs in-house copywriting and direct marketing Masterclasses, Workshops and Seminars for companies and organisations all over the world. <http://www.andyowen.co.uk/speaker-presenter.html>

If you feel your company could benefit from any of these, or if you would like further information on any aspect of copywriting and creative for direct marketing, please contact Andy personally at andyowen@aol.com

All Andy's previous articles are available to view and download at
www.andyowen.co.uk/articles.html

Andy has had a busy 2011 already with international events in *Denmark, Germany, Belgium, Czech Republic, Croatia and Isle of Man*, plus a number of events in the UK. Further events are being considered, with discussions going on at this time.

Potential countries may include: *Bulgaria, Norway, Poland, Chile, UAE, India, Palestine and Ukraine*. Please check the website for the latest information.