

## **UNCUT – Online Bonus for Owners of The Ultimate Guide to Google AdWords by Perry Marshall & Bryan Todd**

### **Persuasive Ad Copy: The Ultimate Silver Bullet** *How to Mint Money with the Printed Word*

There are many skills that come into play when you run an Internet business: HTML and web servers and all the techie stuff; graphics, Pay Per Click, Search Engine optimization, recruiting affiliates, setting up joint ventures, testing and tracking; analyzing web traffic, avoiding spam filters, developing products, managing projects and teams, setting up blogs and managing discussion forums. The list never ends.

But head and shoulders above all these things is the one skill trumps them all:

#### **Copywriting.**

If you crank out persuasive copy, everything else will ride its coat tails. Entire businesses can be built on a single sales letter. As Dan Kennedy says, one good sales letter can set you up to live in style for years.

Stated another way, really good copywriting is the *only* thing in the above list of skills that you cannot easily hire done. Webmasters – dime a dozen. Good Pay Per Click and SEO people, not as easy to get, but they are readily obtainable.

Products – dime a dozen. You can find hundreds of products at a trade show or swap meet. (Heck, you don't even have to leave your house – you can find 'em on the web.) Managing projects or blogs, you could put an ad on Craig's List or the local newspaper and get a mailbox full of resumes by this time tomorrow.

But good copy isn't cheap. An "A list" copywriter will typically charge \$5,000 to \$20,000 to create a single package or sales letter. Not only that, it's no small task to "hire a voice" for your company anyway. The best voice is yours.

#### **Striking Out On My Own:**

***"I need to get good at copywriting really really fast."***

When I left the Dilbert Cube in 2001 and hung out my shingle, my copywriting skills were more than adequate for corporate client work – writing press releases and product descriptions and magazine articles. However I wanted to sell information: toolkits, books, e-books and the like. I wanted a sales on autopilot business, not a consulting project business.

To do this I had to become a skilled Information Marketer. Given that my specialty was marketing itself, that meant becoming a *marketer's marketer*, competing with the black belts of the copywriting world. At the time my copywriting skills were not up to the task. I needed a mentor.

For years John Carlton had been the hotshot freelancer the Los Angeles ad agencies snuck in the back door to do the work their staff writers couldn't pull off. He had just begun to mentor rookie copywriters like myself and his name was getting out. I heard he was taking new students.

Dan Kennedy, who commands fees of \$50,000 to \$100,000 per copywriting project, had described John as one of the few copywriters he'd hire if he couldn't do the work himself. Pretty convincing vote of confidence. So I joined John's *Insider's Club* and started sending him stuff.

John would reply back, ripping my letters apart and busting my chops. Then he'd bandage my damaged body parts with some words of encouragement and instruct me on how to re-assemble my message for killer persuasion power.

The first letter he made me re-write went from 1% response (a little shy of breaking even) to 2% (solidly profitable). I was elated! John's guidance got me over the hump. I can attribute my business "escape velocity" to his tutelage. His help was essential to moving my rocket ship from launch pad to orbit.

(It's kind of like space travel: your capsule either escapes the earth's gravity and circles our blue planet on its own momentum... or else it burns up in the atmosphere and sprinkles a 300 mile trail of scorched metal parts across southern Mongolia. The latter was not an option, at least for me.)

Well then a couple years later John and I were together at a seminar and he introduced me to his #1 student, Harlan Kilstein. Harlan followed John's advice to the letter and went from zero to charging \$8,000 per project in 18 months and made \$360,000 his first year as a freelance copywriter. (At the seminar, John was complaining to me about how much money Harlan was making, just by ripping off all his great ideas.)

What follows is a shift of gears from the rest of the book, a transcript of a conversation between Harlan and John. As you'll see, these guys don't take themselves terribly seriously... but *you* should. You should scour this chapter and adapt some of these superb examples to your own promotions.

You can get a highly informative free tutorial on John's website at [www.MarketingRebel.com](http://www.MarketingRebel.com). You can hear a hot 1-hour teleclinic I did with John (including a swipe file with three very successful letters John wrote) at [www.perrymarshall.com/copywriting](http://www.perrymarshall.com/copywriting). And if you want to see what Harlan's up to lately (and how high his fees are) he's at [www.overnight-copy.com](http://www.overnight-copy.com).

This interview is a riot, and loaded with nuggets. Enjoy and prosper.

*Perry Marshall*

**Harlan:** Hey John, I'm holding yet another book written by an "online writing expert" who says writing for the web is entirely different than any other kind of writing. He claims web copy demands a different approach, a different voice, and a totally different attitude. "You can't write online in the same way that you write a sales letter..."

**John:** He's got a lot of balls for someone who's so obviously clueless. Toss that book.

Let me make a point I will make throughout our conversations: Effective direct marketing copy which rakes in the cash offline will be profitable online as well. Some of my most notorious and profitable ads which began life as print advertisements or direct mail letters continue to work like crazy now that they're posted online. And without changing a word, copy that works offline will work online as well.

Heck, all my clients did was add a few order links and, voila, they had an instant online sales letter.

Now, there are circumstances online that will limit your choices of what to write, either because of limits on space (such as Google Adwords), or bans on certain words that will get you tossed off search engine searches, or get your email shot down as spam.

But these limitations are physical, such as the number of actual letters you can use in a given space. They do not mean the fundamentals of great direct response copywriting are changed. In fact, these limitations really mean that you must understand and apply those fundamentals even more diligently.

Abandoning great salesmanship would be like firing your sales staff. You'll murder your bottom line.

So whoever is writing that stuff about needing a different voice online is not a copywriter or a marketer – I'll bet on that.

**Harlan:** Actually, you're right. The author has written articles about writing online copy but is not a copywriter himself. But the claim is made regarding the internet that it is not just a marketing channel and everything is different. True or not true?

**John:** The internet in its current incarnation is a direct marketer's wet dream. It is the ideal direct response mechanism because of the ability to get immediate feedback.

Online, you have the ability to conduct massive sophisticated tests and find out if you have a winner or not faster than you can blink. You don't even have to be good at testing -- you just need to understand what important parts of your ad you should test, like price, which benefits to use in your headline, what basic appeal to use.

You aren't penalized, financially, for making a wrong guess -- if your price is driving away customers, you can change it fast, even while new prospects are responding to whatever is driving traffic to your ad.

This eliminates so much of the scary guess-work and gut-based intuition that "old school" marketers had to rely on. On the Web, you can make significant changes to your sales letter, on the fly and for practically nothing, based on solid numbers.

Let's say you send out a direct mail piece and you drop 5000 pieces in the mail. Now, we know – like Halbert teaches – America sorts its mail near the garbage pail into A piles and B piles.

And while we can package our mail to sneak into the A pile, we really have no idea of how many letters get opened. We don't know how much of the letter the prospect reads before he tosses it. Or if he puts it down for a week and forgets about it.

**Harlan:** The only thing you know is whether he orders or not when the envelopes start to come back.

**John:** Right. But online, we can track whether or not he opens the email. Whether he clicks a link in an email and even which link he clicks. We can track visits to web sites and even how much time they spend on our site.

If we have an average time of how long people read our letter, we can figure out at what point people start dropping out like flies and revise our work.

It's really an unfair advantage for the marketer.

And most of all, we can track the numbers of people ordering, opting in to email lists, dropping out of shopping carts -- a big problem we'll solve for people -- clicking on pop-ups and upsells. It's the ideal mechanism for direct response.

So when I say the Internet is no different, I mean in the style of writing that is effective.

**Harlan:** So how exactly would you capitalize on the immediacy aspect?

**John:** I tell people the only way to know what your market wants is to test. Testing via direct mail is costly and time consuming.

Let's say you want to market a golf product and you want to test the prices 49, 59, 69, and 79 dollars. You'll have to send out about 5000 packages to the same list and tabulate your orders. Really, this should be tested a few times and you'll find out which price brings in the most money, or the most customers, or the most buys with least returns, or whatever your benchmark is of success.

Using the mail, even first class mail -- heck, even if you use overnight delivery -- is achingly slow. You'll find the answer to what you were testing to find out... but you'll have invested a tidy bit of cash and a lot of time.

And you know that circumstances can even change in your market during the time you're getting your information. A competitor could arrive, or some new invention could make your product less attractive, or a new war could break out, or all kinds of things could happen that would affect this tested information you now have.

**Harlan:** And, online, we are almost working in "real time", so we can react to anything that happens in the market, as it happens. It boggles the mind. So what would you do online to test efficiently?

**John:** There are bunches of different ways to test, but essentially, I would put up a compelling sales letter, using my old-school gut instinct to make it the best chance I believe I have for this particular market. Just put the gun to my head and make the letter as killer as possible.

And then automatically alternate certain things I want to test -- price, or availability, or promises or whatever -- so each new visitor got a different element I'm testing.

But here's an important aspect a lot of people miss: You need to test wildly opposite options at each stage. Don't just test \$39 against \$49. Also test \$19, and \$199.

And \$999 -- though, as you go up in price, you need to add perceived value, which can either actual additions of materials like special reports or recordings... or just make a better case in your copy about why the high price makes sense.

Say, you'll make the money you spend back within a short time, so it's really just an investment.

I would track the amount of traffic to make sure I had equal number of visitors visiting each version on the site. And I would look at the results and make a decision based on actual numbers.

The whole process can take an hour or less, if you're in a market with real heavy traffic. You are only using your instincts and guessing for the very first posts... after you get numbers back on your tested elements, you can let the market select the best price, the best promises, the best whatever.

Statistically speaking, offline we like to get at least 2,000 to 5,000 people into each test "cell", to be able to trust our results. In other words, to test the value of any large list, you first mail to a random sampling of 2,000 (or 5,000) people. That's what they call a "statistically relevant sample".

A simple way to do this kind of testing online is to put up 4 different sales pages and 4 different order pages and either use the easy way of rotating evenly 4 different Google Adwords ads or using a script to do the same thing.

We'll get into more of this later but like my buddy John Reese says, if you're not testing, you're letting money slip through your fingers online. It's silly not to take advantage of this amazing tool, since it's so easy.

And in marketing, it is always better to know what your market actually wants and proves that they want it by taking out their money and giving it to you... than to bet the farm guessing at what they might buy.

**Harlan:** The claim is made that Internet users have adopted a whole new modus operandi because of the etiquette of newsgroups, forums, brief emails, and that people want everything faster and tighter.

There are unwritten rules of communication online with dictionaries of abbreviations (LOL, ROTFLMAO) so this culture wants smaller and tighter communication. Do we have to take this "online shorthand" into account when selling?

**John:** First of all, the people on a forum are not your customers when they are on the forum. They are looking for information or to be steered in a particular direction.

There's a direct marketing forum I've spent some time on. People give and take advice there freely. But if someone recommends a site to me, I'm still going to check it out on my own. You still have to convince me to trust you and take action.

So bringing someone to a site that sucks isn't going to help you, whether they get to your site on a tip from someone text-messaging them on their Blackberry or they found you by diligently doing a search.

Let's say I'm a little old lady on an arthritis forum and someone recommends some goop that's gonna make me feel better. I'm going to go to the site but you still have to get me to whip out my credit card and buy.

So people talk one way on a forum or in a private email, but they expect something totally different when they're in a position to buy or not. They need to be sold.

I mean if brevity works so well, let these guys throw up a site with a picture of their book and a buy button but no other information about their book and see how many people buy.

You'd be nuts to base your success on something so bone-headed sparse like that. Though many people do.

On the other hand, many top marketers (the guys earning the big bucks and creaming their competition) are posting letters that 20 manuscript pages long. Heck, you showed me a letter that was almost two hundred pages long. It would take someone several hours just to read it all. Yet that letter was the main part of a campaign that pulled in a million bucks.

One of the first things you learn when you start selling stuff is that convincing someone to give you money is one of the hardest human interactions there is. You have to convince, you must present credibility so they trust you, you must get your sales message across, and you must install urgency.

You can't bully or trick someone into buying. You must persuade them.

Most people can't talk a friend into seeing a movie even when the friend would like it. If you insist that someone do something -- as most people try to get friends to see a movie -- you trigger resistance. They won't see the damn movie just to spite you.

It's the same with selling. You can't force someone to trust you, you must persuade them to trust you. You must cover a few basic, fundamental bases first... and that takes copy. This is, essentially, why long copy works so well. It allows you to get an entire, killer sales message across to the reader.

**Harlan:** Hey, Amazon just added the feature where you can actually search inside the book, check out the table of contents to see if you're really interested or not.

**John:** The Internet is the greatest provider of information in history. You can find everything under the sun online. It's changed the entire relationship between doctors and patients. When a doctor gives you a diagnosis, you can now immediately check it out online and find out what he's talking about. A lot of people are challenging their doctors based on what they learn online.

People are information junkies and they want more information -- not less. Just getting that into your head -- that people crave more information, not less -- will help your marketing by a factor of one hundred.

**Harlan:** So all the concepts you've been talking about and teaching for copy all apply online, right?

**John:** Yeah, you need to be using Power Words -- powerful action verbs and phrases that tell a story or pack an emotional wallop that demands readership. So, whenever you can, use words that gently (or

even not-so-gently) shock the reader -- not to insult him, but to help wake him up, and deliver your sales story in a way that rivets his attention.

Reading is a passive behavior. And readers' eyes really glaze over when they encounter advertising -- they're just bombarded with it, constantly, and have their resistance levels set to "high" all the time.

A true Power Word is a word that not only does not contribute to his semi-asleep state... but actually jolts him awake.

For years, I've had a list of powerful words -- verbs and nouns -- that elicit a whole smorgasbord of emotions and associations in most readers.

Words like "embarrass" or "humiliate" -- those words tweak the reader's memory, and offer the promise of tasty storytelling ahead. So I use these Power Words as often as possible when I write... and especially in headlines, where I know I have a fraction of a second to grab anyone's attention.

Depending on your target market, nouns can work the same way. Political fund-raising experts understand this -- they know they can expect a windfall in new donations whenever they can work certain politicians (or Hollywood actors) into their copy. Just reading the name gets people all worked up, and mad enough to send in money.

In golf, I've invoked the mystique of Tiger Woods, Bobby Jones, Ernie Els and a dozen other legends whose names alone can make a golf-oriented reader pay closer attention. It can be just a passing reference -- like lobbing a casual bomb into the reader's lap.

And I'm a huge fan of action verbs. This has become a lost art among modern writers, and that's good for copywriters who want to hit home runs. Don't use any word, at any time, that you suspect your reader won't recognize -- that's not good marketing.

But do use words that he understands, but just doesn't encounter very often. I have written about "murdering your bottom line", or "strangling profits"... or "filthy-good tactics stolen from the wealthy" or "wicked secrets that will ignite your hidden greed gland".

The idea is to NOT rely on boring ways to say what you want to say. Most rookie copywriters aim for a very bland presentation of their sales pitch, as if being too aggressive will frighten their reader or something.

This is nuts. As soon as your reader realizes you're putting a sales pitch in front of him, his defenses go up. And no matter how good your product is, he's looking for a reason to ditch your copy and go do something else.

Boring him is a great reason to leave.

So never write from your heels, afraid to assault your reader's sensibilities. Don't be abrasive or insulting... but it's worse to be boring. He's bored already -- most people do lead exciting lives, or know interesting friends, or have anything fun happen to them anymore.

That's your "in". Don't write like an accountant or insurance agent -- even if that's what you are. For this piece of copy, where you're positioning the reader for a wild ride that ends with him giving you money... use all the tools of great writing.

Action verbs, power words and phrases, and lots of ideas that wake him up and challenge his world-view.

It's fun to write this way, once you get the hang of it. It's all about the unexpected juxtaposition of words that jar him out of his sleep-walking ho-hum existence. You haven't just got a "good" product for him. No way. You've got an amazing opportunity to change his life forever... using embarrassing-secrets that humiliate other experts because they work so darn well...

And on and on.

If you want people to read your sales letter online or off, you better be using action words.

My Insiders ([www.marketingrebel.com](http://www.marketingrebel.com)) send me dozens of web sites to review. When I get to the site and read words like "sell more" instead of "force your customers to stand in line and beg you to take their money" -- words that tell a story -- my Inner Salesman begins to yawn. Look... people are desperate for excitement in their lives and it's up to you, the marketer, to provide it. That's your "in".

And if you are edgy enough with your hook, they're going to stick around to see what else you've got to say and -- if you complete the pitch the right way, using classic "old school" salesmanship -- then they're going to order because you got them so hot and bothered.

Let's go back to the golf market. People actually look forward to my golf ads. They want to see what this self-described "golf nut" Doc O'Leary is going to tell them. I've created this character who is self-effacing, and funny... but who also shares the passion of golf with the reader.

There's an instant recognition factor going on -- I love golf, you love golf... and hey, I've got this amazing information here that I swear will make your golfing buddies hate you, because it's going to make you one hell of a great golfer, almost overnight...

And even if a huge part of them refuses to believe they are going to hit the next ball onto the green on a par 4 hole, they still want to read every word of what Doc is saying. Because he's interesting, and he's their "inside" connection to a world that's more fun and fascinating than the one they're living in.

So when I write they are going to "launch their next drive the distance of three football fields", they're all following along, wanting it to be true. It's similar to what goes on in the bar after a round of golf -- relaxed fantasizing, a little bold story-telling, a few secrets revealed.

I do a lot of writing from the perspective of what people might say or want to hear while sitting in a bar. It helps to keep the reader interested, by imaging his reaction in person. If you make him yawn, you've lost him.

Look, I've made a career being outrageous in my writing but I'm just following in the footsteps of the greats I learned this craft from -- legends like Jim Rutz, Gary Bencivenga, Jay Abraham, and Gary Halbert of course.

In the early days, I just copied the verbs from Gary Bencivenga's letters. Just the verbs. He and Rutz both have "inner Thesauruses" crammed with words that pack a wicked punch. They -- as all great writers do -- understand the power of language.

And you can't do much better than their response rates. Anyone still wondering if long copy really works needs to read a letter by one of us first -- and see if you can pry your eyes away after you've been hooked.

If what we're selling is something you want (or are going to want, after you discover it)... this kind of hard-core old school salesmanship is going to bowl you over. Because, once you're into the copy, you no longer will simply want this product... you won't be able to sleep until you have it in your hands.

That "itch" we install deep inside you will not go away.

It's all about the power of language. The power to move people to action, to rattle their cages, to shock and delight them and bring them into your world shivering with excitement.

Best part: None of this is outrageously difficult.

It's mostly a matter of getting hip to the tools available to you.

Since most people writing for the Web are on their word processors, I challenge them to highlight every single verb they use in their sales letter and replace it with a power word. If you don't have a beat up dictionary AND thesaurus nearby, you're missing some of the best tools you could ever have in your Bag of Tricks.

You may not be instantly good at "powering up" your copy... but every second you spend juicing it up will pay off, eventually.

**Harlan:** Now, you've called me on a weak hook a bunch of times, and insisted I beef it up. How important is the hook online?

**John:** What makes or breaks a sales letter is the compelling hook.

It's not just important. It's the difference between copy that gets read, and copy that gets passed by.

Anyone who has followed my work knows how I have come up with some of the most outrageous and notorious hooks in modern advertising. Like -- just to take the golf market -- the one-legged golfer, the skinny geek who can drive the ball farther than anyone, the blind golfer, and on and on.

Outrageous? Sure.

But here's the kicker: These are all based on true stories connected with the product. (And by the way, they were never picked up by anyone else in the campaign. I had to use my best Sales Detective tactics to uncover these hooks... and then I had to twist some arms and put my reputation on the line -- as well as risking the success of the entire project -- to force the clients to run the ads once I had the hook in place.)

The hook draws readers into the letter. It has to be so compelling and so motivating they cannot drag their eyes away from the ad. A great hook goes straight to the passionate sweet spot of the reader, and sets up camp.

A world-class hook, like a life-changing event, will linger inside a reader's head for a very long time. In a good way, of course... if he buys.

If he demures... well, he may be haunted by what he passed up.

For the most part, reading is a passive behavior. In order to get a reader to become a buyer, you must activate his mind, and especially activate his desire. A great hook actually wakes the reader up, and causes all sorts of chemical and mechanical reactions in his body.

This is the same reaction you've probably had, standing in line in the supermarket, when you glance at one of the tabloids and see something so outrageous, so aimed right at your interest, that you can't stop yourself from reaching out and grabbing the tabloid and giving it a closer look, or ripping through the pages to find the story.

My favorite two tabloid headlines, from many years ago, are "Boy Eats Own Head", and "Preacher Explodes On Pulpit". Four words each, yet the images they invoke demand a reaction from you.

The tabloids earn their bread by writing headlines that force people to pick up the publication and search for the story.

Loiter around a newsstand some time, and watch how people act around the tabloids. Many pick them up, obviously uncomfortable with doing so -- they do not see themselves as someone "who reads that stuff". Yet there they are... devouring another story on Bat Boy.

I've seen publication stats that show more people reading the various tabloids every week... than all the people who read Time, Newsweek and the New York Times combined.

And it's all about using language to hook the reader.

Curiosity, desire, a challenge to your world view... a great hook actually violates your sense of reality on some level, or causes some inner conflict from the incongruity of what you're reading. To the degree that you are compelled to continue reading to find out what the heck this story is all about.

If you golf, I defy you to read this headline, and not care about the story behind it.

How in the world does a one-legged golfer play better golf than you? What ARE these amazing secrets?

Want to slash strokes from your game almost overnight?

**Amazing Secret Discovered By One-Legged Golfer Adds 50 Yards To Your Drives, Eliminates Hooks and Slices... And Can Slash Up To 10 Strokes From Your Game Almost Overnight!**

Now you can learn to use your natural ability to "load" every drive with 200% more

**DEAL OF THE WEEK**

**One Simple "Magic Move"**

Doesn't matter if you're totally out-of-shape, or can barely bend over to pick up your ball without creaking anymore! You simply use these easy secrets to **instantly** unlock the scary turbo-charged potential in your swing. Add 50-to-70 yards to your very next tee shot, no matter how bad you've been playing lately...

I've taught my Insiders to think of the offline prospect as a slothful, somnambulant blob welded to the couch... and so averse to moving that he wouldn't get up to save himself if the house were burning down.

This may be a slight exaggeration of the actual situation... but not by much. Getting another human being worked up enough to take money out of his wallet and give it to you... is easily among the most difficult interactions you will ever face.

So the image of the half-awake blob is actually close to what you're really facing when you're trying to initiate a sale.

Your job -- your ONLY job -- is to get that blob so excited and agitated that he can't sleep or do anything else until he's gotten off his lazy ass and ordered your product. Because you've put an itch on him that won't go away.

If he does try to go to bed, he's gonna wake up at 3 a.m. thinking about your ad, and the promises that ad has installed in his internal hard drive.

You really want the sale to take place while he's reading the ad... because (as old school salesmen understand) once a prospect actually walks away or puts your ad down, your chances of flipping him become small.

But still, if you have a great hook that stays in his head, he's going to be thinking about you and your product all day long.

The best hooks provide the biggest jolt, the most excitement, and the promise of the most fun he'll ever come across today. You become a bright spot in his otherwise boring life. That's your foot in the door.

If you prefer a different image for online, customize it. There are millions and millions of websites on the Internet and billions of pages filled with all kinds of information -- good, bad, and worthless. So this time, picture a huge slug sitting at the computer with his hand twitching on his mouse ready to click away from your site at the slightest hint of being bored.

He doesn't want to be interested in your site. He doesn't want to be persuaded to buy. He's got enough on his mind, and as much as he hopes your promises are really true, he's actively looking for a reason -- any reason at all -- to say "naw, I don't need this." Because that lets him off the hook.

This is why learning the basics of killer salesmanship is so critical to long-term success. If you muck up the sales process, you give him a chance to walk away. And that sale is lost.

You've got to understand this -- your prospect is not usually happy he's found you. If what you offer is something that directly affects the problem he has, or is the very product he really wants... you nevertheless represent a PROBLEM to him.

Because now he has to get out his wallet and do something he really, really, really doesn't want to do: Give his money to someone else.

It's just a hard thing to convince a human being to do, even in our consumer culture. Especially when you're selling online, where your prospect cannot hold, smell, heft or closely examine your product. Or even, in most cases, sample your service.

He's making this tough decision to give you money based entirely on what you've told him in your ad.

This is what you're up against. This is why you need to hook your reader, and stir him up, get his mind engaged.

To this end, there are a few critical metrics you need to track on your website... and the most important one is time on your site.

The average time on a site is less than seven seconds. Top marketers keep track of these stats. Seven seconds is what it takes for a surfer to register an impression from the landing page of your site. That's not enough time to make a buying decision. It's enough time to decide, *naw, I don't want that*.

If your site were a retail store, this would be equivalent of watching people walk in the front door, take two steps in, and then turn around and leave.

That's a lost opportunity.

So, to keep that analogy, you better be darned sure that what a prospect sees first grabs his attention and draws him INTO the store.

Yet most websites -- and, downtown, many stores -- actually drive people away.


Now, Malcolm Gladwell has explained in his book Blink exactly how people make decisions in a fraction of a second and I'm going to prove this even more so later on.

For right now, think of your hook as an actual fish hook flying out of your computer to grab your prospect and hold him in place while your ad invades his consciousness. He won't be able to click away from your site in no stinking seven seconds. His attention has been nabbed.

Take a look at this site Harlan swiped from my One-Legged-Golfer.

*Want to change the way people respond to you? This is the key to what's been holding you back your entire life!*

**Amazing Secret Weapon Hoarded By  
Movie and TV Stars, Singers, Business Leaders, and Politicians  
Skyrockets Your Self Esteem, Transforms Your Voice in Minutes A  
Day, Eliminates Fear of Public Speaking... And Commands Instant  
Respect From The People You Meet.**

<b>Sean Connery</b>	<p><b>The Secret to Unlimited Power!</b> "I was able to learn an incredible amount about my voice and about how to have a great impact with more pleasure and less pain." <b>Tony Robbins</b> – Success Coach</p>	 <b>Heather Locklear</b>
<b>Cathy Lee Crosby</b>	<p>His name is a Hollywood insider's secret. His phone number is in the rolodex of the most famous agents and actors. Singers, TV announcers, Broadcasters, and Politicians vie for his time...because they respect his power.</p>	<b>Sylvester Stallone</b>

There's a really big promise in the pre-head and he's just getting warmed up. The headline is an exact parallel of the one-legged golfer headline hook. Only, this hook is the secret weapon of movie and TV stars and the names going up and down the side of the page prove his claim.

I go into headlines and specifics in my main course and really ripped into them in my Copywriting Sweatshop DVD's. It's fun when you break the code on using language this way.

Your pen really does become mightier than the sword. Mightier than the best salesman you've ever met, too.

This headline follows my headline guidelines: it offers specific benefit, benefit, benefit, and then offers a final killer benefit.

**Harlan:** Whenever I send you some copy to look at, the response I'm looking for from you, John, is when you ask, "Is this for real?" When I get you to ask about the product I know it's a winner. This copy sold around a quarter million dollars of product in about six months.

**John:** Good job. Good illustration, too, of how a good hook will absolutely stop someone from clicking away from your site. They will stay on your site and read every single word while you light a fire under their ass and force them to order.

**Harlan:** There's some evidence we'll get to later saying people scan websites, without actually reading whole sentences. How do you reconcile this with the idea of people reading every word?

**John:** It's not a problem at all. You have this initial rapid scan of the first screen of your site and the mind decides to stay or go.

That takes just a split second. You hook them and they'll stay. Then they come back and scan with an eye for more detail until it's time to go to the next screen and the same process happens all over again.

A great hook will arrest the eyes and force readership. We've known for a long time that, while long copy outsells short copy, most buyers don't read all the copy. They are convinced early, scan the bulk, and figure that when they get the free reports or the package or whatever, they'll get into it deeper.

But the fact they are scanning all this great, hook-laden killer copy makes the case over and over again -- this is something they want, and want right now.

A good letter will have subheads that highlight the main elements of the sales pitch, and these highlights are easily picked up when scanned. Things like urgency, limited time or supply, guarantees, bonuses and the like.

And, always, the biggest and best benefits that outline your USP.

You have to reach out of the screen and grab the reader by the collar and hold his face to the screen until he orders. And all you have to use is language.

Okay, there are a few bells and whistles you can use to increase your chances... but it's the sales pitch that will do the job for you, whether it's written copy, spoken words, or acted-out streaming video.

We'll give away some of the secrets to this a bit further on but right now we are sticking to advanced basics.

**Harlan:** Sometimes people ask me to look at their site and the first thing I see is there's no headline to be found. And I'm sitting there wondering why would anyone stick around and read this? Then I find out, no one is buying and it's easy to tell why.

**John:** The headline on the site has to tell the reader exactly what you're gonna get if you stick around and read.

Just imagine standing next to a passing crowd, say, at a football game as the joint empties. People are rushing by, eager to get to their cars or the bus or whatever, to move on with their busy, hectic lives. Their mind is still half on the game, half on the job of going home.

This is the state of your target audience much of the time -- distracted, and urgently moving past you.

So, what do you say to get their attention? You can't write from your heels. You can't whisper, or be incoherent.

Rather, you need to deliver a solid punch directly to their passionate sweet spot.

No mamby-pamby out and give it your happen when you...

*Learn these amazing moves just from watching... and be able to use them to save your life tonight!*

**"How A Bad-Ass Bouncer Caught The Eye Of The Nastiest Undercover Division Of The U.S. Military... Why They Chose Him Over Spec Op Soldiers To Do The Most Dangerous Job They Had... And How You Can Now Learn This Guy's Secrets To Instantly Dominating Anybody, Of Any Size Or Any Skill-Level, As Easily As**

stuff here. Come best shot. This will

Let's go through my headline off Bob Pierce's [www.trsdirect.com](http://www.trsdirect.com) site. It's a study in grabbing the specific attention of a specific audience.

The pre-head promises that you can learn this just by watching... I'm feeding the slug factor there. He doesn't want to work at anything and I'm telling him just watch this and you'll be able to save your life tonight.

So we're hitting the most important themes: it's simple, quick, and easy to get started.

Now let's move down into the headline. We have a bad-ass bouncer which brings all kinds of imagery to mind... and now, oh wow, he's also part of the Nastiest Undercover division of the military... and at this point the slug is already leaning into the computer screen and that's when I reach out and grab him and yank him into my letter.

Next: You're going to be able to dominate anybody as easy as taking candy from a baby. I've got a huge claim there -- the classic "Big Promise" of old school salesmanship, the key to setting up a quick sale -- and to someone who's interested in the fighting/defense market, I've hit one of his most tender and influential hot buttons.

He doesn't even know what the product is yet but his insides are already saying I want it.

Or check out this puppy:

*Want to start winning motocross races almost immediately... even against stronger, more experienced, and better equipped riders?*



**Astonishing "Insider" Short-Cut  
Secrets to Instantly Faster Times &  
Total Bike Control Finally Revealed By  
The One Expert Many Motocross Pro's  
Want To *Keep Hidden!***

Notice the subtle and not-so-subtle juxtaposition of seemingly opposite concepts. If you're a motocross biker, you're going to thrill at the promise of winning almost immediately... even against much better riders. Hot button, punched.

And while you're still taking that lovely image in, I also promise you the insider secrets revealed by a credentialed motocross expert so powerful, other professionals don't want you to even know he exists.

Aw, the secrets promised here have got the reader sloppy with desire right out of the gate... and we're way under seven seconds.

If you're in this target market, you're gonna read a lot more of this ad, at the very least. Because this is exciting stuff, and it SPEAKS to your heart-of-heart and deepest wishes.

**Harlan:** Secrets is a common theme in a lot of your copy.

**John:** Works, doesn't it.

It's not hard to understand why. Life is difficult, even if you're a spoiled American consumer. We all want respect, wealth, fabulous health, great sex, adventure, all the things that only seem to happen to Hollywood celebrities and a few lucky guys who break away from the pack.

How do they do it? There are hundreds of answers... but mostly it's hard work, and the tenacity of a bulldog to ignore pain and failure and keep driving for your goals no matter what.

But that's a hard thing to make people understand. It's like the diet game -- there's no magic answer, not really. Eat less, exercise... and learn to be happy with your God-given shape and genes.

No one wants to hear that. They WANT the magic. They WANT there to be a secret way to magically lose all the weight you want, overnight while you snooze, with no cravings or discomfort or effort.

And for sure, no exercise.

Still, there are certain things that people have done to lose weight that seem to defy the obstacles. They do it without sweat, without depriving themselves of chocolate cake, without hardly any perceived effort at all.

If you're overweight, and you hear about someone who lost weight fast, simple and easy, without exercise or dieting... that would be something you'd want to know.

The fact you DON'T know about it makes that information a secret.

If I possess that secret, and you don't, and you want it... we're now in the beginning stages of a business transaction, aren't we.

If you want to let your inner cynicism go wild, it's not hard to believe that few people want to take responsibility for anything in this world. They believe there are secrets out there that explain EVERYONE else's success... and if they only knew these secrets, they'd be the world's best whatever. Their lives would change, forever, for the better, in a heartbeat.

Good copywriters understand the psychology of consumers, often better than the prospect understands himself.

Classic salesmanship is really just the oldest form of real-world, practical psychology there is. Most of business deals with people's desires, wishes, demands and fanciful notions. You don't buy a Porsche because you need a ride to the store. You don't load up on jewelry on QVC because of health reasons.

And you don't buy a 5,000 square-foot ranch house in a gated community because you're going to raise cattle and fifteen kids.

All of us share some pretty basic human traits. Like wanting a better deal than your neighbor -- think how happy you'd be to drive home the same car as your neighbor, and find out you paid thousands less.

We all want to be happier than everyone else... we want more recognition for our achievements (even if that achievement is only being a more "quality" individual)... and we want to be on the "inside" of all information sharing.

In short... we all want to be Vin Diesel, dashing and lucky and adored and rich... while knowing all the secrets of living a great life.

**Harlan:** Here's the headline written by Michel Fortin for Jon Reese's *Traffic Secrets*. Jon's wizardry and organizing affiliates to mail for him repeatedly allowed him to gross over a million bucks in one day.

**"If You Can Copy And Paste,  
Then You Have What It Takes  
To Quickly And Easily Drive More  
Cash-In-Hand, Eager-To-Buy Leads  
And Prospects To Your Website  
Than You Can Ever Handle —  
Once You Know The Secrets."**

Michel got this headline after reading one of Gary Bencivenga's Bullets. He qualifies what he is going to say; this is not for everyone – you have to be able to copy and paste – which means, essentially, everyone. Copy and pasting is simple. But the impression of exclusivity is there.

So if you can do something simple, you can drive traffic to your site. Now look at the usage of the adverbs "quickly and easily". That's a sneaky trick few writers pick up on: When you use an adverb ending in an "-ly" before a verb or stack them two at a time as Michel does here, you are giving the prospect no room to say no it doesn't. Pay attention:

You have what it takes to quickly and easily drive more...

If someone resists the implications, and says "no they don't" – what they are really saying no to is the adverb. They aren't rejecting the idea you can drive more traffic but that it can be accomplished quickly and easily.

**John:** Nice illustration of that tactic. Did Michel tell you we could use his headline as an example like that?

**Harlan:** Yes, he did. As you've said before, we truly live in a special time, where so much sharing is being done by top players and experts.

Even a few years ago, you simply wouldn't have been able to locate a book like this that revealed so much of the "behind the scenes" secrets of writing killer copy. We're lucky to live in an age of such generous sharing.

**John:** There certainly wasn't anything like this back when I started out. It was tougher to become a top writer, because you had to do it almost entirely on your own.

I think it's our duty, once we've attained a certain level of expertise, to help others. I get a kick out of hearing about how some piece of advice I gave someone kickstarted their success, or changed everything in their life.

It's odd, too, that when illiteracy is on the upswing and people are reading less novels and avoiding newspapers and generally becoming lazy readers... well, a good copywriter can still cause a financial riot in your bank account.

It's all about the killer salesmanship. It's all about breaking through the fog in your prospect's head, and drilling home your sales pitch.

People will read a LOT of copy, and absorb it, if you stay in their sweet spot.

**Harlan:** That's a good segue to something fascinating. Let's move on to another important area where even other top writers admit you're in a class by yourself – writing bullets.

Here are some of your golf bullets...

- \* How to "empty" your mind of all nonsense as you tee up — the "Zen" secret that will allow your body to *naturally* "**let it rip**" and instantly turn your swing into a *nuclear-powered windmill!* (You'll be the **only** guy on the course who *never* worries about his drives!)
- \* The tiny physics-related adjustment that will *automatically* "square up" your club at impact... **giving you the accuracy of a guided missile, every time you swing!**
- \* How to naturally allow that amazing "**lag**" everyone talks about (but no one knows how to tap) into your swing, *without* effort and *without* worrying about your movements! (The sudden distance you get on your drives will **SHOCK** you!)

**John:** All of these bullets feature what I call the "One Two Punch" tactics of piling benefit on top of benefit. You get a benefit by getting this product but there's a benefit on top of that benefit.

Most rookie writers stop at a simple recitation of a bullet. "How to get your mind in shape to hit a good tee shot." Yawn.

Go deep. Put yourself in a state where you're on the spot to drive home your point as succinctly yet specifically as a man convincing his wife to leave a burning house.

"Honey, wake up. We have to leave." Don't think so. No urgency, no sense of amazement or alarm, no insight to information that changes the way you perceive the situation.

It's more like "We have two seconds to get out of here! Flames are licking at the door already, the roof's ablaze, and if we don't leave right now we're goners..."

Let's look at the first bullet. If you're a golfer, when you're up at the tee, you've got all kinds of crap going through your head. So emptying your mind is going to give you an advantage, sure... but I'm not stopping there.

In fact, we're just warming up. Because, if you'll let us share this stuff, you'll quickly turn your swing into a nuclear powered windmill. What's more -- my God, it just gets better and better! -- you'll never feel anxious about your drives again. Ever.

The image is specific. The benefit is simple: Better skills than the other guys, professional-level secrets that keep you calm, and the end of nervousness over this rather difficult game.

Simple, but dramatic.

**Harlan:** Why do you write so many bullets? Your Rodale sex letter was mostly bullets.

**John:** It's all about the tease. People love to read bullets and try to figure out what it could possibly be talking about. To this day Boardroom Publishing, one of the heavies in the direct mail business, spends an enormous amount of space in its copy just on bullets. They know their customers often buy the product only to find out what the bullets were teasing them about.

Sometimes, in fact, a single well-written bullet can make the sale for you. My friend Jeff Paul is an avid golfer and one of the savviest marketers alive. He stalks my golf ads, because he wants to know what new tactics I'm using (so he can steal them)... but he's always pissed at me because he always winds up ordering the product.

In spite of himself, too. He's already a wicked good golfer. But one or two teasing bullets just drive him nuts, and he MUST find out what the secret is.

I love to hear this kind of testimonial. Because it's not about how "good" the copy is. Bottom line, it's about selling the product.

Like you said, you don't want to hear another writer say "Nice job on the copy."

You want them to beg you to reveal the secrets, so they can finally sleep.

There are two kinds of bullets – open and blind. But both employ the tease concept -- one by being specific, one by being mysterious.

Here's an example of blind bullets from my infamous Rodale Sex Letter:

- ✓ The "***pleasure trigger***" secret *accidentally* discovered by medical doctors that ***sets up more intense and more frequent orgasms for you!*** (It also curbs premature ejaculation! Page 136-141).
- ✓ Amazing trick that **instantly eliminates "performance anxiety"** in men! (Used for centuries by the most daring and successful lovers in the world.)
- ✓ Astonishing "success patterns" that actually give physically unattractive men a *huge romantic advantage* over the good-looking "hunk"!

Notice none of these bullets gives the information the buyer is looking for. They're thinking, what the devil IS the secret pleasure trigger... what is the single most important this I can do, etc... it's driving them nuts. I'm teasing them. I'm pushing their buttons.

And the only way he is going to get this curiosity answered is to order. I'm not going to tell him the answer until he buys the book. But he can't stop reading the bullets. It's driving him nuts.

But then, from time to time, I'll throw him a curve like these bullets:

- ✓ How to replenish (and manage) a steady flow of fresh, youthful testosterone... allowing you to finally experience more frequent, more intense, and more pleasurable orgasms!
- ✓ The five secrets of *kissing* like a world-class lover! (The *stunning* key to "advanced" erotic foreplay women are *demanding* that men learn!) Page 222.
- ✓ Six *hyper-slippery* sexual lubricants that – at one time or another – *will* save your sex life! (Pages 231-234.)

Just looking at these bullets, you can figure out what they are about, but I use powerful visual adjectives to paint a picture for the reader.

I didn't do it in this letter, but often I will even give away the entire secret -- just spell it out. "Move your elbow around the shoulder blade in a clockwise, circular motion -- never counter-clockwise, because that causes irritation -- while pressing a single ice cube firmly against the base of her neck..."

It's good, in fact, to give something away now and again. But not when you're dealing with sex. This was an opportunity to go wild with the tease.

If I were selling a book on home health tips, or gardening (which I've also done for Rodale), I'm always sure to include specific tips in detail. The sales piece becomes an information-heavy resource for the reader, who keeps it around for the advice and tips.

But the best stuff is always blind. You gotta get the product to relieve your curiosity.

This combination of open and blind bullets works like magic on readers. It teases them, cajoles them, and flirts with them until they buy.

**Harlan:** So why not just write blind bullets?

**John:** Because the open bullets serve the purpose of keeping the reader in the ballgame. Their appearance convinces him the whole thing is believable. If I only had blind bullets, their suspicions are up and they don't know whether or not to believe me.

Now there's one more ingredient I use in almost all my copy: subheads. The "official goal" of a subhead is to provide a mini-headline, typically a benefit for the next section.

Here's a subhead from an old Gary Bencivenga letter in my swipefile:

### **What I Learned About the Rich and**

## Powerful When I Worked at the CIA

So what Gary's done here is provide a mini-headline for the next session but it's so compelling, you just gotta read more. No one in the world can stop at the headline without wanting to know what's coming. And that is the whole goal of a subhead.

Here's another Gary Bencivenga subhead:

## A Major New Economic Trend Is Now Solidly in Place... It Will Fool 9 Out of Every 10 Investors and Affect Everything You Own

The financial reader is looking at this and wondering... what is this new economic trend (and how come I don't know about it yet)... and then Gary hits below the belt forcing you into the next paragraph, "...and Affect Everything You Own." That's expert level force-marching readers to go further on into his copy.

**Harlan:** Another aspect setting your copy apart from most others are the pithy testimonials. Many people have testimonials that go on for paragraphs at a time. Your testimonials are a sentence or two and they are extremely tight.

**"John has created millions in profit for us.** We pitted his ads and letters against big-city ad agencies, PR firms, and writers with lots of awards... and John slaughtered them all. He consistently hits 'home runs' for us - a 20-to-1 return in profit is *not* unusual. He has saved our butts on several occasions." **Robert Pierce**, president, Tactical Response Solutions

**John:** A good testimonial is specific "Thanks to one idea you gave me John, I made \$64,212 in one week." It stretches the limits of credibility and pushes believability to the max – "I was an alcoholic in the gutter and I was just elected governor." You aim for that "Whaaaaa?" reaction.

Plus, to be effective, a testimonial has to be exciting so the reader doesn't fall asleep during the testimonials. Boring copy anywhere in your pitch will murder your results.

It doesn't get read.

Here's a good testimonial from a letter Harlan wrote. You've got a celebrity doing the selling for you. And Harlan got cute with the subhead leading off the testimonial but it works in this case.

**"My Name Is Bond – James Bond"**

"Arthur Joseph started as a teacher of mine years ago. Over these years, he has become a good friend whose teachings of Vocal Awareness have become a constant in my life. He enlightens with compassion and understanding of the human spirit and above all else, it works."

- **Pierce Brosnan**, Actor

Here are some weight loss testimonials that work:

**"I went from a size 12 to a size 6!"**

*"My results were immediate. The same day as my first session! I was amazed when I realized that my cravings were now for healthy foods. I didn't even know that I was changing my food intake. I gave up junk foods. It happened naturally! By the next day, I knew I was in control. I melted off over 30 pounds of fat in total. I am happier and feel stronger thanks to XXX Hypnosis." Juana Hernando*

**"Now I can look in the Mirror and Smile!"**

*Immediately after my first session my food preferences changed. I was amazed when I realized that my cravings were now for healthy foods. It happened naturally! By the next day, I walked with a new spring in my step and a smile on my face. I lost 4 pounds my first week and 10 pounds my first month! I melted off over 20 fat pounds in total. I am happier and feel stronger thanks to XXX Hypnosis. Nancy Greenberg*

They work because they are brief, dramatic, and specific. These testimonials are promising immediate results which just happened. Both testimonials "melt off fat" and give a time frame for these results.

Plus, the "voice" is real. Even to the point of being incorrect grammar -- just like real people talk.

Warning: *Never forge testimonials.*

Good grief, especially when you're dealing with markets that are under constant scrutiny by federal "alphabet" agencies, like the FDA, FCC, SEC, etc.

If your product is any good, you can get testimonials. Just ask. Actively solicit them from satisfied customers. Most will welcome a little help in being pithy and succinct -- so interview them, and help them craft their story simply and effectively.

With lots of specifics and credibility and believability.

And if your product sucks so bad, you can't get any testimonials... find another product. Or fix the one you have. Just don't muddy the waters for everyone else by marketing crap.

Your testimonials can say things you can not say yourself. For you to say you're handsome, talented and charming, it's bragging and not to be believed. But to hear someone else say the exact same thing, it's an endorsement.

Never brag in your copy. People hate braggarts.

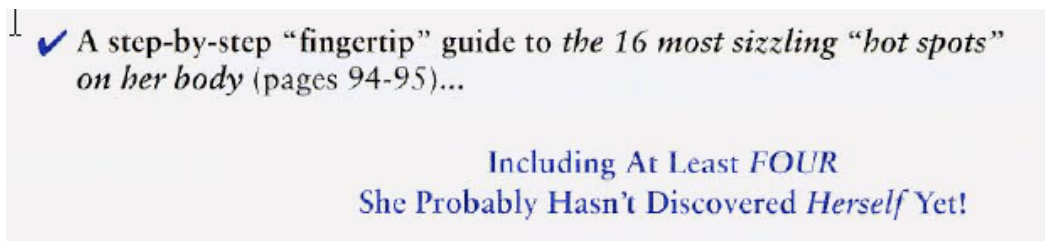
Let your testimonials do your bragging for you.

Second, there are laws governing the use of testimonials in weight loss and with ingestibles, and you should know what the FTC and the FDA say before you write a single word. Even if it's true, it may not be allowed under the strict rules.

There's a ton of money to be made in the diet market, and I've written pitches that ran or mailed for years to that audience. But you must be able to stomach the extra risk inherent in selling certain things. Plus, you're going up against hardened, super-experienced marketers who will eat your lunch if you don't understand the details of the "game."

I don't write diet ads anymore. There's too much opportunity out there in other, untapped markets.

**Harlan:** You've been doing something incredibly sneaky with your subheads for years. Here's an example out of your Rodale letter.



You break the paragraph in mid-thought and forcibly yank the reader into the subhead. It's impossible to bail out at the end of the paragraph. Your subheads represent the second half of a blind bullet so you force someone who is scanning your copy to want more.

**John:** You betcha. Sneaky, and wicked-good stuff.

In the example below, I interrupt the bullet to add "and you're gonna love this" – which keeps punching at their curiosity hot buttons to the point they can not make sense of what I wrote unless they go on and read more.

But here, I sucker-punch the reader by beginning my next paragraph with the word "And." Good old-fashioned "bucket brigade" stuff.

Remember when your teacher told you never to begin a paragraph or a sentence with the word "And?" Well, forget that piece of advice. The word and connects you to what came before. So in the example below, not only do I pull the reader into the subhead, I drag them into the next paragraph as well.

What Bill McKinney focuses on... and you're gonna love this... is...

## Whacking The Stuffing Out Of The Ball!

And that means... you only need to pay attention to the CONTACT you make. And no, it's not hard. It's extremely easy, in fact. Once you know the secret.

In the example below, the subhead gives a stunning benefit. You can master these killer skills just by watching a video. No practice. No effort. It's a slug's wet dream.

Everything is so dead-on simple...

**You Can Master All Of It...  
Just By Watching.**

And here's one of my favorite examples. This is from the famous "nickel letter" we sent out. My boys questioned why they had to mail so many nickels, because it was costing them a fortune... until the orders started flying in the door.

Their staff remembers the nickel letter to this day. Notice how the subhead jumps out at you. And contrary to what your English teacher told you, my next paragraph is so dramatically short that it forces you into the next subhead.

In less than a second, he suddenly realized he was about to be jumped by **three experienced streetfighters...** and if he didn't do something right *NOW*...

**His Life Wasn't Worth  
Much More Than That  
Nickel In His Pocket!**

Well, what would *you* have done? You know, in your heart, you run the risk every day of being in the same situation... cornered by punks who want to do you (and your *family*, too, if they're nearby) **serious harm!** It's not even connected to robbery anymore — they don't want your nickel, they want the thrill of stomping your face into hamburger.

It could be in a parking lot downtown, in a movie theatre, outside your local Seven-Eleven...

**Or In The Cool Darkness  
Of *Your Own Bedroom,*  
Late At Night!**

The goal of copy is to keep the reader interested, involved, and dying to find out what comes next.

And move him along, as if he were sliding down a greased chute. On the ride of his life. And he doesn't get to ride unless... he comes along with you. Mint money by stringing words together, it's the most powerful skill a marketer can have.