How to DOUBLE your Response Rates at HALF the Cost

The Best of Bob Bly's *DM News Columns*

by Robert W. Bly

22 East Quackenbush Avenue, 3rd Floor, Dumont, NJ 07628

(201) 385-1220, Fax (201) 385-1138

e-mail: rwbly@bly.com, web: www.bly.com

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Section 1

How to Write Subject Lines That Get Your E-mail Opened and Read

When prospects get your e-mail marketing message, they make a quick decision, usually in a couple of seconds, to open or delete it based largely on the subject line. But given the glut of promotional e-mail today, how can you convince a busy prospect -- in just a few words -- that your message is worthy of attention?

The "4 U's" copywriting formula -- which stands for urgent, unique, ultra-specific, and useful -- can help.

Originally developed by my colleague Michael Masterson for writing more powerful headlines, the 4 U's formula works especially well with e-mail subject lines. I'll share it with you now.

According to this formula, strong subject lines are:

- *Urgent.* Urgency gives the reader a reason to act now instead of later. You can create a sense of urgency in your subject line by incorporating a time element. For instance, "Make $100,000 working from home this year" has a greater sense of urgency than "Make $100,000 working from home." A sense of urgency can also be created with a time-limited special offer, such as a discount or premium if you order by a certain date.

- *Unique.* The powerful subject line either says something new, or if it says something the reader has heard before, says it in a new and fresh way. For example, "Why Japanese women have beautiful skin" was the subject line in an e-mail promoting a Japanese bath kit. This is different than the typical "Save 10% on Japanese Bath Kits."

- *Ultra-specific.* Boardroom is the absolute master of ultra-specific bullets, known as "fascinations," that tease the reader into reading further and ordering the product. Examples: "What never to eat on an airplane," "Bill it's okay to pay late," and "Best time to file for a tax refund." They use such fascinations in direct mail as envelope teasers and in e-mail as subject lines.

- *Useful.* The strong subject line appeals to the reader's self-interest by offering a benefit. In the subject line "An Invitation to Ski & Save," the benefit is saving money.

When you have written your subject line, ask yourself how strong it is in each of these 4 U's. Use a scale of 1 to 4 (1 = weak, 4 = strong) to rank it in each category.

Rarely will a subject line rate a 3 or 4 on all four U's. But if your subject line doesn't rate a 3 or 4 on at least *three* of the U's, it's probably not as strong as it could be -- and can benefit from some rewriting.

A common mistake is to defend a weak subject line by pointing to a good response. A better way to think is as follows: If the e-mail generated a profitable response despite a weak subject line, imagine how much more money you could have made by applying the 4 U's.

A software marketer wrote to tell me he had sent out a successful e-mail marketing campaign with the subject line "Free White Paper." How does this stack up against the 4 U's?

- *Urgent.* There is no urgency or sense of timeliness. On a scale of 1 to 4, with 4 being the highest rating, "Free White Paper" is a 1.

- *Unique.* Not every software marketer offers a free white paper, but a lot of them do. So "Free White Paper" rates only a 2 in terms of uniqueness.

- *Ultra-specific.* Could the marketer have been less specific than "Free White Paper"? Yes, he could have just said "free bonus gift." So we rate "Free White Paper" a 2 instead of a 1.

- *Useful.* I suppose the reader is smart enough to figure the white paper contains some helpful information he can use. On the other hand, the usefulness is in the specific information contained in the paper, which isn't even hinted at in the headline. And does the recipient, who already has too much to read, really need yet another "Free White Paper"? I rate it a 2. Specifying the topic would help, e.g., "Free White Paper shows how to cut training costs up to 90% with e-learning."

I urge you to go through this exercise with every e-mail subject line you write. You can also apply the formula to other copy, both online and offline, including direct mail envelope teasers, ad headlines, letter leads, Web page headlines, subheads, and bullets.

Rate the line you've written in all four U's. Then rewrite it so you can upgrade your rating on at least 2 and preferably 3 or 4 of the categories by at least 1. This simple exercise may increase readership and response rates substantially for very little effort.

Section 2

How to Build Your E-zine Subscriber List Rapidly and Inexpensively Using "Safelists"

Online marketing expert Debbie Weil recently asked me, "How do you know whether an e-zine is successful?"

"An e-zine is successful if it achieves its stated marketing objective," I replied. "Conversely, if you have no written marketing goal for your e-zine, you have no way to determine whether it is worthwhile."

The original goal of *my* e-zine, "Bob Bly's Direct Response Letter," was simply to update clients, prospects, book buyers, seminar attendees, and colleagues about things I was doing that they wanted to know about, such as publication of a new book or availability of a recent speech on audiocassette.

As a result, I kept it deliberately small: between sign-ups on the home page of www.bly.com and e-mail addresses added from my database, circulation was about 2,000. And that was fine with me.

But my plans changed, and I suddenly wanted to get a lot more subscribers in a hurry. One reason was that a larger e-list would mean more sales of my books when announced in the e-zine. In fact, my publishers were concerned that with such a small circulation, sales of my books to my e-zine readers would be insignificant.

Also, a larger list would allow me to do cross-promotions with other e-zines, enabling me to reach a wider market for my books and tapes, as well as drive more people to my speaking engagements and Web site.

I called Peter DeCaro, my freelance Web master, and gave him the task of adding new e-zine subscribers. To my amazement, within 6 weeks he had built my e-zine distribution list from 2,000 to more than 60,000 subscribers.

"How did you do it so quickly and inexpensively?" I asked Peter (the entire fee was around $1,000). "Safelists," he replied.

As Peter explained it to me, the Internet users on what is known as a "Safelist" have agreed to provide their e-mail address in exchange for the ability to regularly promote to the list's membership. It is known as a Safelist, I suppose,

because it is "safe" to send promotional material to these people -- they have opted in and agreed to receive it.

Peter has joined numerous Safelists for the purposes of promoting his clients' offers, including me and my free e-zine. You and I can join, too. There's no exclusivity. Some Safelists are free to promote to; others require a fee. But the fee is a tiny fraction of what you'd pay to mail to traditional rented opt-in e-lists, which can run $200 to $400 per thousand.

What works in promotions targeted to Safelists? "Free offers tend to pull well in Safelists," says DeCaro. "So by offering a free report or some other freebie in your promotion, you establish credibility with the Safelist subscribers and encourage them to investigate the source of the ad -- you -- further."

Some Safelists permit only text ads; others allow either text or HTML. Peter says HTML ads pull better on Safelists.

I asked Peter where one finds Safelists. He recommends several online directories that contain Safelist listings, including www.mailpro-network.com, www.megasubmitters.com, www.targetsafelists.com, and www.101-website-traffic.com.

Here's how our promotion worked: Instead of sending Safelist subscribers directly to www.bly.com to simply sign up for the free e-zine right away, we first directed them to a special landing page offering a free bonus report as an extra incentive for subscribing to the e-zine. The copy on this landing page began:

"For a limited time, you can get a **FREE** copy of my report offering recession-proof business strategies by clicking here. Apply these techniques to your own marketing and selling efforts during a recession or a down time, and you will survive - even prosper - while others struggle to get by...."

A link at the bottom allowed the reader to click onto my home page to sign up for the e-zine. An autoresponder automatically fulfilled the subscriber's request for the free report.

Peter suggests using a cgi-based autoresponder as opposed to a pay service. A cgi script is prewritten code that performs the autoresponder function of automatically responding to e-mail requests. A good Web site that reviews different cgi autoresponder scripts is www.autoresponder-review.com. Many cgi scripts can be found on www.scriptsearch.com.

At this point you may be thinking that Safelists sound like an Internet scam and that the quality of the names can't be any good. This I don't know yet -- it's too early for me to tell. I do know that the unsubscribe rate for Safelist-acquired names is many times higher than people who subscribe to my e-zine either because they (a) know me or (b) signed up for it on www.bly.com.

What I *do* know is that if you're interested in quantity and not necessarily quality, Safelists can be an effective way to build your e-zine subscriber base in a hurry at very low cost.

Section 3

Reach Your Prospects on a Deeper Level: The BFD Formula for Uncovering Your Customer's Core Buying Complex

How well do you really know your customers?

Reading the list data cards is a good way to find out something about the folks you are mailing to, but it's not enough. Knowing that you are writing to

farmers, Information Technology (IT) professionals, or plumbers is just the start. You have to dig deeper. But how?

To write powerful copy, you have to go beyond the demographics to understand what really motivates these people -- who they are, what they want, how they feel, and what their biggest problems and concerns are that your product can help solve.

One direct marketer told me, "We want to reach prospects on three levels -- intellectual, emotional, and personal."

Intellectual is the first level and, while effective, not as strong as the other two. An intellectual appeal is based on logic -- e.g., "Buy the stocks we recommend in our investment newsletter and you will beat the market by 50 to 100 percent."

More powerful is to reach the prospect on an *emotional* level. Emotions that can be tapped include fear, greed, love, vanity, and, for fundraising, benevolence. Going back to our example of a stock market newsletter, the emotional appeal might be, "Our advice can help you cut your losses and make much more money, so you become much wealthier than your friends and neighbors. You'll be able to pay cash for your next car -- a Lexus, BMW, or any luxury automobile you care to own -- and you'll sleep better at night."

The most powerfully you can reach people is on a *personal* level. Again, from our example of a stock market newsletter: "Did you lose a small fortune in the April 2000 tech stock meltdown? So much that it put your dreams of retirement or financial independence on hold? Now you can gain back everything you lost, rebuild your net worth, and make your dream of early retirement or financial independence come true. A lot sooner than you think."

To reach your prospects on all three levels -- intellectual, emotional, and personal -- you must understand what copywriter Michael Masterson calls the

buyer's "Core Complex." These are the emotions, attitudes, and aspirations that drive them, as represented by the formula BFD -- beliefs, feelings, and desires:

- *Beliefs.* What does your audience believe? What is their attitude toward your product and the problems or issues it addresses?

- *Feelings.* How do they feel? Are they confident and brash? Nervous and fearful? What do they feel about the major issues in their lives, businesses, or industries?

- *Desires.* What do they want? What are their goals? What change do they want in their lives that your product can help them achieve?

For instance, we did this exercise with IT people, for a company that gives seminars in communication and interpersonal skills for IT professionals. Here's what we came up with in a group meeting:

- *Beliefs.* IT people think they are smarter than other people, technology is the most important thing in the world, users are stupid, and management doesn't appreciate them enough.

- *Feelings.* IT people often have an adversarial relationship with management and users, both of whom they service. They feel others dislike them, look down upon them, and do not understand what they do.

- *Desires.* IT people want to be appreciated and recognized. They also prefer to deal with computers and avoid people whenever possible. And they want bigger budgets.

Based on this analysis, particularly the feelings, the company created a direct mail letter that was its most successful ever to promote a seminar "Interpersonal Skills for IT Professionals." The rather unusual headline: "The BFD Formula for Uncovering Your Customer's Core Buying Complex."

Before writing copy, write out in narrative form the BFD of your target market. Share these with your team and come to an agreement on them. Then write copy based on the agreed BFD.

Occasionally insights into the prospect's desires and concerns can be gleaned through formal market research. For instance, a copywriter working on a cooking oil account was reading a focus group transcript and came across this comment from a user: "I fried chicken in the oil and then poured the oil back into a measuring cup. All the oil was there except one teaspoon." This comment, buried in the appendix of a focus group report, became the basis of a successful TV campaign dramatizing the selling point that food did not absorb the oil and therefore was not greasy when cooked in it.

Veteran ad man Joe Sacco once had an assignment to write a campaign for a new needle used by diabetics to inject insulin. What was the key selling point?

The diabetics Sacco talked to all praised the needle because it was sharp. A non-user would probably view being sharp as a negative. But if you have ever given yourself or anyone else an injection, you know that sharper needles go in smoother, with no pain. And Sacco wrote a successful ad campaign based on the claim that these needles were sharp, therefore enabling easier, pain-free insulin injection.

Copywriter Don Hauptman advises, "Start with the prospect, not the product." With BFD, you can quickly gain a deeper understanding of your prospects before you attempt to sell them something. Stronger marketing campaigns usually follow.

Section 4

Breaking into Your Prospect's E-mail "Inner Circle"

With direct mail response rates continuing to decline, telemarketing impeded by the Do Not Call list, and CAN-SPAM controlling e-mail marketing, direct marketers are constantly exploring channels to find the magic formula that will work for them.

In e-mail marketing, the explosion of spam and the widespread use of e-mail filtering software have depressed click-through rates to new lows. So how can you make e-mail marketing work?

According to an article in The Marketing Report (10/27/03, p. 5), a survey by Nielsen/NetRatngs found that most people regularly open and read a maximum of 16 permission-based emails. The only way to break into the inner circle is to displace someone, the survey said.

And an article in DM News (10/16/03) reports, "Marketers will have to enter that emerging inner circle of trusted companies from whom people are willing to keep reading e-mails."

Okay, but how do you break into this inner circle of e-mail senders whose messages your prospects will open and read?

It's not easy, but there are at least six options that seem to work with some level of success:

1. Free e-zine. Write and publish a truly valuable e-zine and offer it free to folks who give you their e-mail address. If you publish regularly (at least once a month) and provide content of genuine worth, readers will come to value your publication and establish a relationship with you. You will have entered their "inner e-mail circle," because they will view anything with your name in the

"From" line as being from a trusted adviser and worth their time to at least read and open. A great example of such an e-zine is Agora's Daily Reckoning (www.dailyreckoning.com).

2. News and updates. Similar to an e-zine, some publishers send short news bulletins to their subscribers on a regular basis. ComputerWorld sends a daily online update with short items from the magazine. You can purchase a short online ad in these   updates, thereby buying your way into the reader's inner e-mail circle. CMP, a trade publisher, e-mails a monthly update, Business Technology Advisor (BTA), to the subscribers of all its publications. For $200 per thousand, you can sponsor BTA, having the entire issue devoted to your firm and products. Since CMP subscribers know and look forward to BTA, your message gets a higher readership and response than it would if you send it under your own banner.

3. Service and upgrade notices. Software users will read and open e-mails from the software publisher that contain news about upgrades, technical information, or service policies. If your customers regularly need to receive service and product news from you, get in the habit of delivering it via e-mail. Then they will be "trained" to read your e-mails, so when you send a promotion, it too will get opened and read.

4. Transaction e-mails. A survey from www.quris.com shows that customers do value and read two specific types of e-mails: (a) transaction confirmations and (b) account status updates. So you can get your promotional message read by embedding it into routine e-mails that contain transactional or account status information. A good example is www.amazon.com, whose customers open and read the e-mails amazon.com sends because they might contain news about their order.

5. Alert services. Consumer newsletters, especially investment advisories, have pioneered this approach. When you pay for your monthly subscription, the publisher offers you a bonus: additional content, sent periodically via e-mail, to keep you updated on the topic between regular issues. The catch: You have to give the publisher your e-mail address to receive this free online bonus. The publisher quickly builds an e-list of subscribers who eagerly anticipate and read the e-mails, because they are viewed as valuable information they pay for as part of their subscription. The most successful publishers keep the information content of the e-mails high, but also liberally promote products and services to these e-mail alert recipients.

6. Club or membership. Your prospects will read e-mails from clubs, associations, online communities of interest, subscription Web sites, and other organizations of which they are members. Therefore, if you can create a club or have your e-mail distributed by one of these membership organizations, you can enter the prospect's e-mail inner circle.

As a rule of thumb, whenever you can send e-mail to your prospect using one of the above methods, your chances of getting opened and read increase exponentially vs. sending a typical promotional e-mail.

Section 5

Persuasion Secrets of the Top Marketing Pros

I've started working on a major long-term project. The book, tentatively titled *The Persuasion Manifesto* (the name, a copycat of the pretentious *Cluetrain*

Manifesto), is a compilation of the most successful persuasive communications techniques ever developed.

My primary research method is to e-mail direct marketers I know who consistently achieve superior response rates and ask them how they do it. My secondary research is a careful study of the few dozen marketing and psychology books every direct marketer should read, to extract the one or two best gems from each (I'll give you a quick round-up of the best of these in a future column or two).

Because I may never finish or publish *The Persuasion Manifesto*, but am getting such good stuff from my e-mail queries, I'm going to reprint some of the best persuasion techniques I've collected in this column. So here goes with the first installment:

1. The "so what" test. After you write your copy, read it and ask whether it passes the "so what" test. Copywriter Joan Damico explains: "If after reviewing your copy, you think the target audience would just respond with 'so what,' then keep rewriting until they'll say something like, 'That's exactly what I'm looking for. How do I get it?'" Copywriter's agent Kevin Finn adds: "When copy is being critiqued, you should ask after each and every sentence, 'So what?' It's a technique that can assist in changing copy to be more powerful."

2. Use the key copy drivers. Make sure your copy hits one of the key copy drivers as defined by Bob Hacker and Axel Andersson: fear, greed, guilt, exclusivity, anger, salvation, or flattery. "If your copy is not dripping with one or more of these, tear it up and start over," says Denny Hatch.

3. The drop-in-the-bucket technique. "You have to show that the price you are asking for your product is a 'drop in the bucket' compared to the value it delivers," says copywriter Mike Pavlish. Fred Gleeck says this is a function of product quality, not just copywriting. "Produce a product that you could charge

ten times as much for," says Gleeck. "If you really have a product that is so much more valuable than the price you're charging, it becomes much easier to sell it hard."

4. Know your audience. Understand your target market -- their fears, needs, concerns, beliefs, attitudes, desires. "My way to be persuasive is to get in touch with the target group by inviting one or two to dinner for in-depth conversation," says Christian Boucke, a copywriter for Rentrop Verlag in Germany. "I also call 15 to 40 by phone to get a multitude of testimonials and facts, and go to meetings or exhibitions where I can find them to get a first impression of their typical characteristics. Ideally, I accompany some of them in their private lives for years. By this, I understand better their true underlying key motivations."

5. Write like people talk. Use a conversational, natural style. "Write like you talk," says Barnaby Kalan of Reliance Direct Marketing. "Speak in language that's simple and easy to understand. Write the way your prospects talk."

6. Be timely. "Pay very close attention to goings-on in the news that you can and should link to," suggests Dan Kennedy in his *No B.S. Marketing E-Letter* (June 2002). "Jump on a timely topic and link to it in useful communication with present clients, in advertising for new clients, and in seeking media publicity."

7. *Lead with your strongest point.* "When I review my writing, or especially others, I find they almost always leave the most potent point to the last line," says John Shoemaker. "So I simply move it to the first line. Instant improvement."

8. The Tremendous Whack Theory. "I employ Winston Churchill's 'tremendous whack' theory, which says that if you have an important point to make, don't try to be subtle or clever," says Richard Perry. "Use a pile driver. Hit the point once. Then come back and hit it again. Then hit it a third time -- a tremendous whack."

9. Build credibility with your reader. "In my experience, the number one key to persuasion is this: communicate trust," says copywriter Steve Slaunwhite. "If you do this well, you at least have a chance at engaging and persuading the reader. If you don't do this well, however, no amount of fancy copywriting techniques will save you."

10. Don't use an "obvious lead." Instead of writing your lead as if you are just starting to talk to the customer, says Bryan Honesty, write as if you were already engaged in a conversation with the customer -- and are just responding to her last statement. Examples: "You have the gift. You just don't know it yet." "You can't quit on your dreams now." "So why is it so hard for you to lose weight?" *Note:* Please e-mail your best persuasive marketing technique to me at rwbly@bly.com. If I use it, you will receive full credit, of course. Thanks!

Also, to be notified if and when *The Persuasion Manifesto* becomes available, go to www.bly.com and sign up for my free e-zine, Bob Bly's Direct Response Letter.

Section 6

Does the Printed Word Matter in the Internet Age?

Those of us who make our living with words are naturally disheartened when we hear the various "war cries" of hardcore online users and marketers: "Nobody reads anymore" ... "Print is dead" ... "Copy doesn't matter" ... "Books will disappear."

The success of James Mustich, Jr. and his eclectic book catalog, A Common Reader -- launched in 1986 -- is a refreshing exception to these claims.

A Common Reader is a mail order seller of, as their slogan proclaims, "Books for readers with imagination." They sell mainly through catalog, though there is also a Web site (www.commonreader.com), which now accounts for 15 percent of orders.

Mustich mails catalogs 15 to 17 times a year. The exact same catalog never mails twice; each edition is new -- although many of the same books are offered from issue to issue.

Several features make A Common Reader unique. First and foremost are a love for, and almost reverence of, the printed word and books -- clearly communicated in every issue.

"Books are the coin of our private realm, and if their power seems ever-diminished in the world at large, nonetheless their value continues to enrich those devoted to them with a reserve of learning, wisdom, and wonder -- both personal and communal -- on which the souls of readers rely," writes Mustich in his introduction to the 226th issue of A Common Reader. "The books we've read comprise a story of intuition and experience that nourishes our hearts and minds, while the books we will read remaining beckoning on the hill, filled with all the promise, danger, and delights any destiny can house."

The second characteristic that sets A Common Reader apart from other book catalogs, such as Barnes & Noble or Edward Hamilton, are the long, literate descriptions of the products.

Each issue of A Common Reader is 128 pages long and features 600 to 700 books. Book descriptions average 300 words and can run 1,000 words or more if the copywriter feels it's needed.

Copy is written in-house by Mustich and staffers Tom Meagher, Charles Newman, and Chris Kearin.

I asked James -- who got his start as a copywriter with book catalog Cahill & Company, and also did direct mail for an educational publisher -- to explain his creative approach to writing copy to sell books.

"Sometimes I read the whole book, but often I don't have to," he explained. "I just have to read enough to get a sense of its character, describe it well, and discover what in it will repay the reader's time."

Catalogs are mailed primarily to a house file with 180,000 names. About 120,000 customers are frequent buyers; another 60,000 are not as active. Many of these names have been regular customers for a decade or longer.

What makes the catalog work?

"We are not just copywriters writing blurbs," says Mustich. "We write on a level of intelligent discourse about books aimed at literary people." He describes the books he sells as "eclectic -- quintessential backlist or midlist books that have not gotten a lot of PR" -- although they do sell bestsellers if they feel the books have literary merit. "We are driven not by market trends, but by what we like," he notes.

And ironically, this catalog that worships print takes a tip from online marketing -- by creating a "community of interest" for a particular audience: book lovers.

"There is a gulf today between the publisher and the reader," observes Mustich. "The publisher is often not thinking of the reader; he's thinking of his sales reps, wholesalers, buyers at the big bookstore chains. Marketing books this way is divorced from readers. A Common Reader bridges the gap directly from book to reader, without being part of the distribution chain."

That's why, Mustich explains, loyal customers eagerly anticipate getting their next issue of A Common Reader in the mail.

"We are readers speaking to other readers," says Mustich. "We're not critics, reviewers, or scholars. Customers have the sense that the books we recommend are parts of our lives. A Common Reader engages them in conversations about good books -- conversations they would like to have but otherwise don't have time for or access to."

Proof of Mustich's instincts about catalog customers viewing A Common Reader as a "community of interest" for serious readers is the large volume of correspondence Mustich gets in which readers comment about the books.

"Clearly a lot of people are reading good books and want to engage in conversation about them," he says. "If booksellers and publishers were more inventive in approaching readers, they would be pleasantly surprised about how vibrant book culture in this country could be."

And does it pay off? Mustich wouldn't give precise sales figures. But he does say that A Common Reader grosses over $5 million annually, has a "single-digit" profit margin, and that he makes "a comfortable living" from it.

But money is not his primary motivation. "I started A Common Reader because books are my passion," says Mustich. "I wanted to stay around books, be in the book business, and to write. The catalog allows me to make a good living combining all of these passions."

I asked James if his devotion to printed books in the Internet age makes him a sort of dinosaur.

"We do live in a non-book age," Mustich concedes. "TV, the Internet, and other media now play a much greater role than books in determining the conversation of our culture, so much so that they threaten to overpower and drown out the more contemplative modes of experience, including book reading.

"The slowness of book reading, its gradual nature, is beneficial. Books provide a kind of corner in life where you can go and sit and collect your

thoughts. You can grow and put ideas together in new ways that you can't when you are only looking for what you know is already there, as with search engines on the Internet."

And will future generations want such opportunities? "Book culture will play less of a role in the conversation," admits Mustich. "But it will not disappear."

Section 7

How to Help Search Engines Find Your Site

Because so many Web sites crowd the Internet, you need to make an extra effort to get yours noticed.

One way to attract attention is to make your site search-engine-friendly -- that is, to increase the odds that search engines will find your site.

There are two key steps that can help you do this. First, submit your site to directories such as Yahoo! and The Open Directory.

Second, make your Web site findable by search engines that send out "spiders" and "crawlers" to scour the Web. Some of the information those spiders and crawlers seek can be found in "META tags" -- words or phrases embedded within the HTML code used to create Web sites.

Before you create your own tags, it's a good idea to take a look at those of others, especially competitors and colleagues. You can easily open a window and view the META tags of any Web site you visit.

From your browser's tool bar, simply choose the "View" menu. Then click on "Source," and a window will open with HTML text that you can study.

The most important META tags are found near the top of the page in between codes like this: <head> and </head>. If you are creating your own Web site, depending on which software you use, all you have to do to add META tags is type the words you've chosen in the appropriate places.

The key META tags for marketing purposes are Title, Description, and Keywords. These tags control what surfers see when your site is listed in the search engines, which means they will help people decide whether to visit your site.

"Title" is what your visitors see at the top of their browser windows when they are visiting your site, as well as what they will see in their bookmark lists.

So make sure each page has a title that makes sense to visitors, not just to you. Be descriptive; failure to put strategic keywords in the page title is often why Web pages are poorly ranked.

When your Web site comes up in search-engine findings, the META tag identified as the "description" is often the opening statement people will use to decide whether to access the link. The description should concisely answer the question "What do you do?" For example: "XYZ Design provides client-focused, creative and effective graphic design, art direction, and project management for marketing communications."

"Keywords" are the terms your prospects and visitors will type into the search field when they are looking for talent. So consider the words and phrases they might use to describe your services.

Put these keywords in your META tags. You also should include your keywords in the first 25 words of your home page.
Here are some additional tips for selecting keywords:

- Use plurals for your keywords, but avoid excessive repetition.

- Misspell keywords if misspellings are common. For example, DIRECTV, a digital satellite television service, is frequently referred to as Direct TV. If your name is misspelled regularly, include that spelling in your keywords as well.

- Don't always use obvious keywords. Include phrases that may get fewer searches but higher results.

- Don't let your combined keywords exceed 1,000 characters. The fewer keywords, the greater impact they will have.

Maintaining a high ranking in search engines is a time-consuming process. And even with due diligence, these efforts may not get you into the top 30 listings, particularly if you're competing in a niche with well-established and better-financed competitors.

The best strategy is to register with the major search engines and free directories, and supply your information every time you find a site that offers a free listing. Have a seven-word description ready to copy and paste as well as 10 keywords. Devote a certain amount of time each month to maintaining your listings in databases and directories.

I had always thought a good strategy for making your Web site easy-to-find was choosing a domain name that is clearly descriptive of what you do; e.g., http://www.divorceonline.com if you are a divorce lawyer.

But Heather Lloyd-Martin, a copywriter specializing in search engine optimization, disagrees. "This doesn't really work," she says. "Plus, it encourages people to come up with those terrible domains like www.make-money-online-with-internet-marketing.com, which are spammy and are usually downgraded in the engines."

She also downplays the importance of tags. According to Martin, "The search engines key on the content -- so that's what's important. The title is also important for positioning and conversion off the search engine results page."

If you want search engines to find you, avoid flash or frame pages. "Search engines can find flash or frame pages, but it's harder for them," says Heather. "Fast has indexed Flash for a long time now, but it can be horrid for usability, and it won't gain the best rankings. HTML is truly the best bet."

Note: Portions of this article are adapted from *The Online Advantage*, written by Ilise Benun for The Creative Group (www.creativegroup.com).

Section 8

10 Steps to Online Marketing Success

"I want to market my business on the Web, but how do I get traffic to my site?" one client asked recently. "And if I want to sell my product or service using e-mail marketing, who do I send the e-mails to?"

Here is one online marketing methodology that has been proven effective for many different types of businesses.

The primary concept is that online marketing works best when you e-mail to people who already know you.

Therefore, successful online marketers build their "house file" or "e-list" (lists of prospects and their e-mail addresses) using the process outlined below, and then sell to those people via e-mail marketing:

1. Build a Web site that positions you as an expert or guru in your field (see steps 2 and 3 below). This is the "base of operations" for your online marketing campaign.

2. This Web site should include a home page, an "About the Company" page, your bio, and a page with brief descriptions of your products and services (each product or service description can link to a longer document on the individual item).

3. You should also have an "Articles Page" where you post articles you have written on your area of specialty, and where visitors can read and download these articles for free.

4. Write a short special report or white paper on your area of expertise, and make this available to people who visit your site. They can download it for free as a PDF, but in exchange, they have to register and give you their e-mail address (and any other information you want to capture).

5. Consider also offering a monthly online newsletter, or "e-zine." People who visit your site can subscribe free if they register and give you their e-mail address. You may want to give the visitor the option of checking a box that reads: "I give you and other companies you select permission to send me e-mail about products, services, news, and offers that may be of interest to me."

6. The more "content" (useful information) on your site, the better. More people will be attracted to your site, and they will spend more time on it. They will also tell others about your site. You can even add a feature that allows your visitors to e-mail your articles to their friends – a good idea since it spreads the word about you and your site.

7. The model is to drive traffic to your site where you get them to sign up for either your free report or free e-zine. Once they register, you have their e-mail address and can now market to them via e-mail as often as you like at no extra cost.

8. The bulk of your online leads, sales, and profits will come from repeat e-mail marketing to this "house" e-list of prospects. Therefore your goal is to

build a large e-list of qualified prospects as quickly and inexpensively as you can.

9. There are a number of online marketing options, which can drive traffic to your site. These include: free publicity; e-mail marketing; banner advertising; co-registrations; affiliate marketing; search engine optimization; direct mail; and e-zine advertising. (I will cover all of these topics in upcoming columns.)

10. The key to success is to try a lot of different tactics in small and inexpensive tests, throw out the ones that don't work, and do more of the ones that are effective.

Another question that comes up is frequency: How often can you send promotional e-mail offers to your house e-list?

Every time you send an e-mail to your house file, a small percentage of the list will "unsubscribe," meaning they ask to be taken off your list. The number of people who unsubscribe is called the "opt-out rate."

Start increasing the frequency of promotional e-mail to your house file. As soon as the opt-out rate spikes upward, stop. You have now reached your maximum frequency.

Many marketers have discovered that the frequency of e-mail promotion to the house file can be much higher than previously thought. Some are successfully e-mailing different offers to their house e-list as often as two times a day or even more.

This is good news for marketers, since the more frequently you can e-mail offers to your list, the more money you can make.

Best of all, the profit on these sales to your house file is extremely high, since the e-mail promotion costs almost nothing. There are no postage or printing costs,

and because you already own the names, you avoid the $100 to $400 per thousand charge incurred when renting outside e-lists.

Section 9

The Magic of False Logic

False logic, a term coined by my friend, master copywriter Michael Masterson, is copy that manipulates (but does not lie about or misrepresent), through skillful writing, existing facts. The objective: to help readers come to conclusions that those facts, presented without the twists of the copywriter's pen, might not otherwise support.

A catalog for Harry & David says of its pears, "Not one person in 1,000 has ever tasted them." The statistic, as presented by the catalog writer, makes the product sound rare and exclusive – and that's how the average reader interprets it, just as the copywriter intended.

But a logician analyzing that statement might say that it simply indicates that the pears are not very popular – almost no one buys them.

It's possible to argue that some false logic borders on deception, but the marketer has to make that call for himself.

A metals broker advertised "95% of orders shipped from stock" to indicate ready availability. But he ran his business out of an office and had no warehouse. How could he claim he shipped from stock?

"We do ship 95% of orders from stock," the marketer explains. "But not from *our* stock – from the *metal supplier's stock*. We are just a broker. But we do not advertise that, since being a broker is perceived as a negative."

A promotion selling a stock market newsletter to consumers compares the $99 subscription price with the $2,000 the editor would charge if he were managing your money for you, based on a 2% fee and a minimum investment of $100,000.

The reader thinks he is getting Mr. Editor to give him $2,000 worth of money management services for $99, and quickly glosses over the fact that the newsletter is not precisely the same as a managed account.

A similar example is the promotion done by my friend Don Hauptman for *American Speaker*, a loose-leaf service for executives on how to give good speeches. In his promotion, he points out that this product can help you with your speeches all year long (it has periodic supplements) vs. the $5,000 it costs to have a professional speechwriter write just one speech. But of course, American Speaker is not actually writing your speech for you.

There is an ongoing debate about whether people buy for emotional or logical reasons, but most successful marketers know that the former is more dominant as a buying motive than the latter. It is commonly said, "People buy based on emotion, then rationalize the purchase decision with logic."

Because they have made the buying decision based on strong feelings and ingrained beliefs, they are in essence looking for justification and support for what they already want to do.

Therefore, as long as the logical argument seems credible and sensible, they will accept it. They do not probe into it as scientifically or deeply as would, say, Ralph Nader or an investigative reporter for *Consumer Reports.*

Some critics view direct marketing as a step below general marketing in respectability, ethics, and honesty. And perhaps they might reason that my advocating the use of false logic adds fuel to their argument.

But in fact, false logic is not just the purview of direct marketers; general marketers use it routinely, some with great success.

For years, McDonald's advertised "billions sold" to promote their hamburger – leading customers to the false conclusion that just because something is popular, it is necessarily good. Publishers use similar logic when they trumpet a book as "a *New York Times* best-seller."

Is all this unethical? You can draw your own conclusion, but in my opinion, no.

A copywriter, like a lawyer, is an advocate for the client (or his employer). Just as the lawyer uses all the arguments at his disposal to win the case, so does the copywriter use all the facts at his disposal to win the consumer over to the product.

Certainly, we should market no products that are illegal, dangerous, or immoral, though one man's *Victoria Secrets* catalog is another man's soft porn. But to not use all the tools at our disposal (including false logic) to persuade the buyer is either incompetence, failure to discharge fiduciary duties, or both.

Section 10

Traditional vs. "Guerilla" Online Marketing

There are two types of marketing in the world today: (1) "Traditional" marketing with its relatively larger budget and reliance on standard methodology and mainstream media, and (2) "guerilla" marketing, which is reliant on non-traditional tactics, alternative media, and such tools as bartering and negotiating to cut costs to a minimum.

In offline direct marketing, "traditional" usually means sending either a solo direct mail package or a catalog to a house file or rented mailing lists. "Guerilla" direct marketing in the offline world, by comparison, can involve anything from a package insert and bill stuffer, to per inquiry advertising and late-night TV spots on cable.

In online marketing, traditional marketing usually means banner ads or e-mails sent to rented e-lists of opt-in names. Cost per thousand (CPM) for these opt-in lists is typically $150 to $400 per thousand.

"Guerilla" online marketing, by comparison, seeks to generate inquiries, make sales, and build files of online customers through CPA (cost per acquisition) deals, banner exchanges, e-zine advertising, e-list swaps, affiliate programs, co-registrations, search engine optimization, and other low-cost methods.

Cost-per-acquisition means you pay for every name that the e-mail adds to your house file. These names are captured when a recipient clicks through to your landing page, registers, and hits "submit." The prospect may be ordering a product, or simply signing up for a free e-zine or special report.

"The idea in e-mail marketing is to acquire new names for the lowest possible cost per name," says Sarah Stambler, president of E-Tactics, an e-marketing agency (www.e-tactics.com).

In this regard, CPM can be expensive. Let's say you send out 1,000 e-mails and have paid $200 to rent the names. Out of the 1,000 people, 2% (20) click through to your landing page offering a free white paper. If 10% of those click-throughs convert to a sign up, you have acquired 2 new names at a cost of $100 per name.

By comparison, some e-mail marketing agencies and consulting firms are arranging CPA deals for their clients. Here the marketer pays a fixed rate per name acquired. For one client, Stambler acquired fresh B2B leads at $5 per name

on a CPA deal. However, she says that CPA deals can be tricky to arrange, and many e-list owners are not receptive.

Al Bredenberg, publisher of EmailResults.com, an online marketplace for opt-in e-mail marketing, agrees, although his site does list a number of CPA providers with contact information.

"You have a much better chance of convincing e-list owners to work on a CPA basis if you can offer a track record of conversion rates established through previous promotions," says Bredenberg. "List providers are hesitant to take a risk on an unproven product."

Offering the e-list owner a piece of the acquisition in a cost-per-order (CPO) deal can also work. "You need to offer the list owner a generous revenue share in the range of 25 to 50 percent of each order," says Al. "A very low price point doesn't stand much of a chance, unless you can prove conversion rates are very high." Stambler says offering $5 to $8 per order on a $40 product is in the right ballpark.

Another tactic favored by guerilla e-mail marketers is co-registration. This is where a Web surfer goes to a site for one offer, such as a free e-zine, and is shown other, usually similar offers he can also sign up for at the same time.

"Cost for co-registrations varies," says Stambler. "At Lycos, you can pay $2 to $3 a name. Sweepstakes sites charge 50 cents a name or so."

The nice thing about co-registration deals is that they can be tested on a small budget. For instance, if the cost is 50 cents per name, a $2,000 investment will bring you 4,000 new names.

Cost per click (CPC), where the marketer pays for every person who clicks through the embedded link in the e-mail message to the landing page, is also available. But Stambler warns against it: "Cost per click is too expensive." If you

pay 10 cents a click and get 1,000 clicks, you are charged $100 total. But if only two people sign up, your cost is $50 a name.

Finally, if you prefer to do more traditional online marketing and rent an opt-in e-mail list, don't be disheartened by the high cost shown on the data card. "Price is extremely negotiable," says Jay Schwedelson, vice president, Worldata (www.worldata.com).

According to Schwedelson, business-to-consumer e-lists renting for $150 to $300 per thousand can sometimes be had for $25 to $100 per thousand, if you negotiate. On business-to-business lists renting for $200 to $450 per thousand, you may be able to negotiate a rate of anywhere from $100 to $250 per thousand.

"Only pay for actual names delivered," says Jay, noting that 32 percent of consumers change their e-mail address each year. He also says that select fees can usually be waived.

Section 11

Reality in Advertising

In 1961, Rosser Reeves published his classic book *Reality in Advertising* in which he introduced the notion of the Unique Selling Proposition, or USP.

Today the book is out of print and difficult to get. As a result, most practicing direct marketers don't know the original definition of a USP. Their lack of knowledge often produces USPs that are weak and ineffective.

According to Reeves, there are three requirements for a USP (and I am quoting, in the italics, from *Reality in Advertising* directly):

1. Each advertisement must make a proposition to the consumer. Each must say, "Buy this product, and you will get this specific benefit."

Your headline must contain a benefit – a promise to the reader.

2. The proposition must be one that the competition either cannot, or does not, offer.

Here's where the "unique" in Unique Selling Proposition comes in. It is not enough merely to offer a benefit. You must also *differentiate* your product.

3. The proposition must be so strong that it can move the mass millions, i.e., pull over new customers to your product.

The differentiation cannot be trivial. It must be a difference that is very important to the reader.

Why do so many advertisements fail?

One reason is that the marketer has not formulated a strong USP for his product and built his advertising upon it.

Formulating a USP isn't difficult, but it does take some thinking; and many people don't like to think.

But when you start creating direct mail and advertising without first thinking about what your USP is, your marketing is weak because there is nothing in it to compel the reader to respond. It looks and sounds like everyone else, and what it says isn't important to the reader.

In general advertising for packaged goods, marketers achieve differentiation by building a strong brand at a cost of millions or even billions of dollars.

Coca Cola has an advantage because of its brand. If you want a cola, you can get it from a dozen soda makers. But if you want a Coke, you can only get it from Coca Cola.

Intel has achieved a similar brand dominance, at an extraordinary cost, with its Pentium line of semiconductors.

Most direct marketers are too small, and have too strong a need to generate an immediate positive ROI from their marketing, to engage in this kind of expensive brand building. So we use other means to achieve the differentiation in our USP.

One popular method is to differentiate your product or service from the competition based on a feature that your product or service has and they don't.

The common error here is building the USP around a feature that, while different, is unimportant to the prospect, and therefore unlikely to move him to try your product or service.

For example, in the pump industry, it is common for pump manufacturers to attempt to win customers by advertising a unique design feature.

Unfortunately, these design twists often result in no real performance improvement, no real advantage that the customer cares about.

Realizing that they could not differentiate based on a concrete design principle, Blackmer pump took a different tack: to create a USP based upon *application* of the product.

Their trade ads showed a Yellow Pages ripped out of an industrial buying guide, full of listings for pump manufacturers, including Blackmer. Their company name was circled in pen.

The headline of the ad read, "There are only certain times you should call Blackmer for a pump. Know when?"

Body copy explained (and I am paraphrasing here), "In many applications, Blackmer performs no better or worse than any pumps, and so we are not a particularly advantageous choice."

But, the ad went on, for certain applications (viscous fluids, fluids containing abrasives, slurries, and a few other situations) Blackmer was proven to

outperform all other pumps, and was the logical brand of choice. Blackmer closed the ad by offering a free technical manual proving the claim.

My old friend, Jim Alexander, of Alexander Marketing in Grand Rapid, Michigan, created this campaign and tells me it worked extremely well.

The easiest situation in which to create a strong USP is when your product has a unique feature – one that competitors lack – that delivers a strong benefit.

This must be an advantage the customer really cares about. Not one that, though a difference, is trivial.

But what if such a proprietary advantage does not exist? What if your product is basically the same as the competition, with no special features?

Reeves has the answer here too. He said the uniqueness can either stem from a strong brand (already discussed as an option 95% of marketers can't use) or from "a claim not otherwise made in that particular form of advertising" – that is, other products may have this feature too, but advertisers haven't told consumers about it.

An example from packaged goods advertising: "M&Ms melt in your mouth, not in your hand."

Once M&M established this claim as their USP, what could the competition do? Run an ad that said, "We *also* melt in your mouth, not in your hand!"?

In his book *Scientific Advertising*, Claude Hopkins gives an example of a USP that has become a classic story.

The short version: An ad man walking through his beer client's brewery was fascinated by a machine that blasted steam into beer bottles to sanitize them.

"Don't use that in advertising," the brewer told the ad man. "It is nothing unique; every brewer does the same."

"Maybe," the ad man replied, "but I had never heard of it before, and neither has any of the beer-drinking public."

He then created a successful ad campaign for a beer advertised as "so pure the bottles are washed in live steam."

One more point: As direct marketers, we – unlike most general advertisers today – are compelled to create advertising that generates net revenues in excess of its cost.

Reeves believed all advertising had to do this. He defined advertising as "the art of getting a USP into the heads of the most people at the lowest possible cost."

If I were to modify his definition, I would change it to "getting a USP into the heads of the people *most likely to buy the product*, at the lowest possible advertising cost."

But who am I to quibble with the master?

Section 12

9 Strategies for Improving Your Outer Envelope

It's not uncommon for a marketer to invest a tremendous amount of time, effort, and money in a new direct mail package, and then create the outer envelope almost as an afterthought.

That's a mistake, because tests have shown that varying the outer envelope can increase or depress response rates in an A/B split – even if the mailing inside is identical – by 25% to 100% or more.

Here are 9 important outer envelope factors to consider when putting together your next mailing:

1. To tease or not to tease? We use outer envelope teasers because we think the strong teaser we have written will increase response.

But there are times when a teaser – even one we think is strong – has the opposite effect and actually *decreases* response.

Some marketers argue that the purpose of the teaser is to get the recipient to open the outer envelope. But a blank envelope from a stranger gets opened every time: you want to know what it is and who it's from.

So why use a teaser at all? Copywriter Bob Matheo says the function of a teaser is to create a positive expectation for what's inside the envelope.

Recommendation: If you can't come up with compelling copy for the outer envelope, don't use a teaser. If you have a teaser you think is strong, do an A/B split test of a teaser vs. no teaser. Then roll out with the winner.

2. Who is it from? The corner card – the sender's name and address on the outer envelope – tells the reader who the letter is from.

Let's say you are doing a mailing to sell subscriptions to an investment newsletter. The letter could be from the editor (Ron Gurian), the publisher (Capital Financial Media), or the publication itself (*Tech Stock Update*).

The corner card copy is not trivial, and should be tested. One publisher had just the name of the editor and the publishing company in the corner card. When they added the name of the publication, it depressed response by 25%.

3. Company letterhead or plain envelope? When the recipient gets an envelope with the logo of a company he does not know, he suspects that he is getting promotional mail and is therefore less likely to open the envelope, read the contents, and respond.

To avoid this from happening, you can omit your logo and set the company name and address in the corner card in plain type, such as Helvetica or New Courier.

When your company or brand is well known, using your corporate logo may lift response. IT professionals, for instance, are likely to read a mailing from IBM because they think it may be important technical or product news.

A number of mailers type the name of the person who signed the letter in New Courier above the logo, so it looks as if it was typed on the envelope by hand. Those who have done it tell me the technique increases their response.

4. Paper stock and color? In a test, a mailer did an A/B split of their control using a kraft envelope vs. a white envelope. The white envelope outpulled the kraft envelope by 25%.

This does not mean that the rule is "white always outpulls kraft." It *does* mean that outer envelopes matter and you should test.

Agora Publishing's long-time control for International Living mailed in a white #10 envelope. When the control threatened to tire, they revived it by taking the entire package, putting it inside a kraft envelope with a cover letter, and mailing it that way.

5. Size? Test different sizes: Monarch, #10, #11, #14, 6 by 9 inches, and the 9 by 12-inch jumbo. In direct mail envelopes, size does matter, so this is worth testing. A common result is that the jumbo lifts response over the #10, but not enough to make it profitable. Exceptions? Tons.

6. Stamp, meter, or indicia? Conventional wisdom says that best to worst, in order of preference, is a stamp, then a meter, then a preprinted indicia. Some marketers report a lift in response when using commemoratives and other unusual stamps. Another technique I've seen work with a jumbo mailing is to use multiple low-denomination stamps to reach the total required for postage.

7. First class or third class? Direct mail that sells a product via mail order is almost always sent third class because of the economics. However, if you are doing lead-generation mailings to business prospects using just a letter in

an envelope with a reply card, and your universe is small, first class may lift your response.

8. Window? Should you use a closed-face envelope? Or should you use a window envelope?

Test. The advantage of a closed-face envelope is that it looks like real personal or business mail. The advantage of the window envelope is that the recipient's name and address can be imprinted or affixed to the reply element, which is positioned so that they show through the window – eliminating the need for the customer to write in his own name and address.

9. Bulk? Should the envelope be flat? Or should you make it bulky, and therefore arouse the reader's curiosity, by putting something inside it other than paper? The marketing director for a national nonprofit told me that all of their best-performing packages have "heft" created by a small, enclosed object, such as a crucifix or necklace.

When I worked for a manufacturer of wire mesh used in chemical plants, we dramatically boosted response by enclosing an actual sample of the wire mesh along with our sales letter (actually, we designed the letter as a faux shipping tag and attached it to the sample). The teaser on the bulky envelope read: "Your FREE mesh mist eliminator enclosed."

Enclosing an unusual object works especially well when you plan to follow up each package with a phone call. A contractor sent a brick with his business card silk-screened on it. When he called to follow up, he told prospects, "I'm the guy who sent you the brick." He almost always got through.

Section 13

Write, Design, and Publish Your Own Free E-zine

My monthly e-zine, The Direct Response Letter (go to www.bly.com to subscribe or view back issues), is not the most successful or widely read e-zine on the planet. Far from it.

But marketing results and comments from subscribers tell me my simple formula for creating the e-zine – which, including copy and layout, takes me just an hour or two per issue to complete from start to finish – works.

In this article, I want to share the formula with you, so you can produce an effective e-zine of your own, sitting at your computer, without hiring a writer or designer, in just a single morning or afternoon.

If you want to market your product or service over the Internet, I strongly urge you to distribute your own e-zine free to your customers and prospects. There are several reasons for doing so.

First, the e-zine allows you to keep in touch with your best customers – indeed, with all your customers – at virtually no cost. Because it's electronic, there's no printing or postage expense.

Second, by offering potential customers a free subscription to your e-zine, you can capture their e-mail address and add them to your online database. You can then market to these prospects, also at no cost.

Whether you are generating leads or direct sales, there are two ways to sell your products and services to your e-zine subscribers. One is to place small online ads in the regular issues of your e-zine. These ads are usually a hundred words or so in length, and include a link to a page on your site where the subscriber can read about and order the product.

Or, you can send stand-alone e-mail messages to your subscribers, again promoting a specific product and with a link to your site.

When you are dealing with a free e-zine (as opposed to an online newsletter which the reader pays for), people spend just a little time reading it before they delete it with a click of the mouse.

I am convinced that most subscribers do not print out the e-zine, take it home, and curl up with it on the couch later to read. Therefore, I use a quick-reading format designed to allow the subscriber to read my e-zine online right when he opens it.

In this formula, my e-zine always has between 5 and 7 short articles. They are usually just a few paragraphs each.

Every article can be read in less than a minute, so it never takes more than 7 minutes to read the whole issue, though I doubt most people do. You can see the most recent issue at www.bly.com to get a feel for the length and content of these articles.

I advise against having just a headline and a one-line description of the article, with a link to the full text of the article. All this clicking forces your subscribers to do a lot of work to read your articles, and that's not what they want.

I do not use HTML; my e-zine is text only. This way it is easy and inexpensive to produce.

I don't "make a production" out of it; it's just straight type. Many readers have told me they like it this way, and that they don't like HTML e-zines, which look (a) more promotional and less informational and (b) seem to have more to read.

When preparing your text e-zine for distribution, type your copy, in a single column, in Times Roman or another easy-to-read typeface.

The column width should be 60 characters, so you can set your margins at 20 and 80. However, to make sure the lines come out evenly, you must put a hard carriage return by hitting "return" at the end of each line.

There are a variety of services and software programs for distributing your e-zine as well as your e-mail marketing messages to your online database. I use and recommend Bulking Pro (www.bulkingpro.com).

My frequency is monthly, though occasionally I do a second issue if there is major news that month.

I am a freelance copywriter. Let me show you specifically how having an e-zine helps bring in business for me.

I recently gave a speech on software direct marketing. It was recorded, so I had audio cassette copies made. In my e-zine, I offered the cassette free to any subscribers involved in software marketing – potential clients for my copywriting services.

Within 24 hours after I distributed the e-zine, we received over 200 inquiries from marketing managers at software companies requesting the tape, many of whom needed copy written for direct mail and e-mail to promote their software.

By comparison, most copywriters tell me that when they send postal direct mail to a list of prospects, they average a 2% response. At that rate, they would have to send out 10,000 pieces of mail to generate the 200 leads I got in an hour for free.

That's what an e-zine can do for you. Once you build your subscriber list, you have an incredibly powerful marketing tool and the most valuable asset your business can own: a database of buyers with e-mail addresses and permission to mail to them at any time.

Section 14

10 Marketing Books Actually Worth Reading

People frequently ask me to recommend my 10 favorite marketing books:

1) *How to Write a Good Advertisement* by Vic Schwab (Wilshire Book Company, 1962). A common-sense course in how to write advertising copy that gets people to buy your product or service, written by a plain-speaking veteran mail order copywriter in 1960.

Best part: 100 "archetypal" headlines that people are still using in various forms today to create new controls (e.g., "When Doctors Feel Rotten, This is What They Do").

Availability: Still in print (Wilshire Publishing) and available on amazon.com.

2) *My First 50 Years in Advertising* by Max Sackheim (Prentice-Hall, 1970). Another plain-speaking, common-sense guide that stresses salesmanship over creativity, and results over awards. The author was one of the originators of the Book of the Month Club.

Best part: The oversize format allows full-size reproductions (large enough for the copy to be legible) of many classic direct response ads (e.g., "They Thought I Was Crazy to Ship Live Maine Lobsters as Far as 1,800 Miles from the Ocean").

Availability: Out of print and difficult to find.

3) *The Robert Collier Letter Book* by Robert Collier. While Schwab and Sackheim concentrate on space ads, Collier focuses on the art of writing sales letters, of which he is a master. You learn how to write persuasive sales letters in a friendly, natural, conversational style.

Best part: While some of the letters may seem old-fashioned and dated, Collier's timeless principles still apply.

Availability: Out of print and difficult to get.

4) *Reality in Advertising* by Rosser Reeves (Alfred A. Knopf, 1961). The book in which Reeves introduced the now-famous concept of USP (the Unique Selling Proposition).

Best part: The idea that every successful ad must (a) offer a benefit, (b) the benefit must differentiate your product from the competition, and (c) the benefit must be big enough to motivate buyers to purchase your product instead of others.

Availability: Out of print and difficult to get.

5) *Breakthrough Advertising* by Eugene Schwartz. A copywriting guide by one of the greatest direct-response copywriters of the 20th century.

Best part: The notion that advertising does not create desires; rather, it focuses already existing desires onto your product.

Availability: In print. Available online.

6) *Tested Advertising Methods, Fifth Edition* by John Caples, revised by Fred Hahn (Prentice-Hall, 1997). An updated version of John Caples' classic book on the principles of persuasion as proven through A/B spit tests.

Best part: The A/B split headline tests with the results (e.g., for an air conditioner, "How to have a cool, quiet bedroom – even on hot nights" pulled 2 ½ times the response of "Get rid of that humidity with a new room cooler that also dries the air").

Availability: In print. Available in bookstores and online.

7) *Confessions of an Advertising* Man by David Ogilvy (Atheneum). Charming autobiography of legendary ad man David Ogilvy, packed with useful advice on how to create effective advertising.

Best part: Chapter 6 on "How to Write Potent Copy."

Availability: Out of print and difficult to get.

8) *Scientific Advertising* by Claude Hopkins (Bell Publishing, 1920). A book on the philosophy that advertising's purpose is to sell, not entertain or win creative awards – and how to apply this philosophy to create winning ads.

Best part: His observation that "specifics sell; superlatives roll off the human understanding like water off a duck's back."

Availability: Since the copyright has expired, this book is now in the public domain and is available as a free downloadable e-book on several Web sites including http://www.marketingresource.com/html/reports/r-scientificadvertising.html. You can also buy it as a paperback on amazon.com.

9) *Method Marketing* by Denny Hatch (Bonus Books, 1999). A book on how to write successful direct response copy by putting yourself in the customer's shoes. Packed with case histories of modern direct response success stories, including Bill Bonner of Agora Publishing, and Martin Edelston of Boardroom.

Best part: The introduction of the concept of method marketing, which states: "You cannot write copy without getting inside the head of the person to whom you are communicating and *becoming that person.*"

Availability: In print and available on amazon.com; also on Denny's Web site www.methodmarketing.com.

10) *Advertising Secrets of the Written Word* by Joseph Sugarman (DelStar, 1998). How to write successful advertising copy by a modern master of the space ad.

Best part: The 24 psychological triggers that get people to buy.

Availability: In print and available on amazon.com.

Have I left any out? Yes, many. But this list is a good start. Here's to happy – and profitable – reading.

About the author:

BOB BLY is an independent copywriter and consultant with more than 20 years of experience in business-to-business, high tech, industrial, and direct marketing.

Bob has written copy for over 100 clients including Network Solutions, ITT Fluid Technology, Medical Economics, Intuit, Business & Legal Reports, and Brooklyn Union Gas. Awards include a Gold Echo from the Direct Marketing Association, an IMMY from the Information Industry Association, two Southstar Awards, an American Corporate Identity Award of Excellence, and the Standard of Excellence award from the Web Marketing Association.

He is the author of more than 50 books including *The Complete Idiot's Guide To Direct Marketing* (Alpha Books) and *The Copywriter's Handbook* (Henry Holt & Co.). His articles have appeared in numerous publications such as *DM News, Writer's Digest, Amtrak Express, Cosmopolitan, Inside Direct Mail*, and *Bits & Pieces for Salespeople.*

Bob has presented marketing, sales, and writing seminars for such groups as the U.S. Army, Independent Laboratory Distributors Association, American Institute of Chemical Engineers, and the American Marketing Association. He also taught business-to-business copywriting and technical writing at New York University.

Bob writes sales letters, direct mail packages, ads, e-mail marketing campaigns, brochures, articles, press releases, white papers, Web sites, newsletters, scripts, and other marketing materials clients need to sell their products and services to businesses. He also consults with clients on marketing strategy, mail order selling, and lead generation programs.

Prior to becoming an independent copywriter and consultant, Bob was advertising manager for Koch Engineering, a manufacturer of process equipment. He has also worked as a marketing communications writer for Westinghouse Defense. Bob Bly holds a B.S. in chemical engineering from the University of Rochester and has been trained as a Certified Novell Administrator (CNA). He is a member of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers and the Business Marketing Association.

Bob has appeared as a guest on dozens of TV and radio shows including MoneyTalk 1350, The Advertising Show, Bernard Meltzer, Bill Bresnan, CNBC, Winning in Business, The Small Business Advocate and CBS Hard Copy. He has been featured in major media ranging from the LA Times and Nation's Business to the New York Post and the National Enquirer.

For a FREE Copywriting Information Kit, or a free, no-obligation cost estimate on copywriting for your next project, contact:

Bob Bly, Copywriter
22 East Quackenbush Avenue, 3rd Floor, Dumont, NJ 07628
Phone (201) 385-1220, Fax (201) 385-1138
email: rwbly@bly.com
Web: www.bly.com