

THE GARY HALBERT LETTER

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From:
South of Jewfish Creek

Dear Friend & Subscriber,

Let me recap for you what I said in last month's newsletter.

I said: When it comes to writing copy, far too much attention is paid to the actual writing and far too little is paid to ferreting out facts about that which the copywriter is trying to sell!

I told you that the first step to world-class copywriting (salesmanship-in-print) is to create a FACT SHEET about that which you wish to sell.

I told you to make your FACT SHEET as detailed as possible and then go over it very carefully and translate the facts therein to benefits for the buyer and to create a humongous BENEFIT LIST.

I then told you to think about what you are trying to sell, think about all the benefits to the buyer and about how (in what manner) you would like to buy what you are trying to sell. And then, you work to come up with the sweetest, most powerful OFFER you can and to create a DEAL SHEET which contains the strongest PROPOSITION you can offer which has been reduced to writing.

I told you to copy, in your own handwriting, the best ads and/or direct mail packages you can find that are related to what you want to sell.

And finally, I told you that, if you would do all this, the next step was for you to take a break and wait for this month's letter wherein I would teach you how to lash all this together in such a way as to create a compelling sales-pitch-in-print.

Let's go for it! Here's what you do now: You get yourself a few boxes of 3x5 index cards and you go back to your FACT SHEET. You copy each fact on the FACT SHEET onto a separate 3x5 card.

Now you go to your BENEFIT LIST and you copy each benefit listed therein also onto a separate 3x5 card.

Set these cards aside in two neat piles on your desk. Now, pick up your DEAL SHEET upon which is written out the sweetest offer you can come up with to entice your prospective buyers. Let's say, as in last month's illustration, you are trying to sell a car and the offer you have written out on your DEAL SHEET reads like this:

I'll sell you my 2-year-old caddy for only \$11,500. I'll let you drive it for a week free before you decide to buy it. Not only that, I'll throw in a free trip to Las Vegas and I'll buy every drop of gas you use for the first 10,000 miles you drive.

Now, armed with all this sales "ammo," let's go ahead and lash everything together and actually create a piece of world-class salesmanship-in-print! In this case, we're going to write a sales letter that we have decided to mail to 1,000 people who live near you who might be interested in buying your 2-year-old Caddy. I think a good place to start would be to get the names of 1,000 people in your area who own an Oldsmobile that is at least two or more years old.

Alright now, the first thing we have to do is we've got to capture these people's attention. And, since we are going to be mailing printed letters (as opposed to personally typed or computer-personalized letters), what we are going to do is write a headline and later emblazon it boldly across the top of the first page of our letter.

Now hear this: There are a lot of good ways to write headlines; there are headlines that ask a provocative question; headlines that reveal a startling fact; headlines that announce something like a special deal or a store opening; headlines that shock; that titillate; etc. So, what you are about to learn here is not the only way to do it but rather, one very good way that will seldom let you down. Namely, we are going to strive to write a headline that offers both news and a big benefit to the readers of our letter!

First, let's take our proposition or offer (it's the one you wrote on your DEAL SHEET) and state that offer in such a way that is both newsworthy and benefit-promising. Now, what is newsworthy about what we have to say? Hmm? It seems to me that it's newsworthy that there is a man somewhere (you) who has a car to sell he thinks so much of he is willing to let someone drive it for an entire week before they decide whether or not to buy. And what are the big benefits, the unusual benefits of this deal? It seems to me free gas for a year and a free trip to Vegas make up some very tasty icing.

Now, who is it that's offering this hot deal? It's you, right? But who are you? OK, let's say your name is John Stebbins. So the first words of our announcement (headline) could reveal who is making this offer, and we could start with...

John Stebbins Says...

But wait. You say you're not well-known and your name won't mean much to the people reading your letters? OK, let's try again. You're a local resident, right? So let's start off with...

Local Man...

Can we improve on that? You bet. If we can be more specific (specificity always enhances response) we can do even better...

Especially if we can be more specific in a way that immediately implants in our reader's mind that you are someone real, someone he could pick up the phone and call or go visit if he needed to!

So, let's say you're a dentist and let's begin our headline like this...

Local Dentist Says...

So far so good. What's next? Well, what is it you are saying? Uh, let's see. Oh yea, you're saying you'll buy a trip to Vegas and a year's worth of gas for anybody who buys your 2-year-old Caddy. So, let's simply say it. Like this:

**Local Dentist Says He
Will Buy A Free Trip To
Vegas And A Year's Worth
Of Gas For Anybody Who
Decides To Buy His
2-Year-Old Caddy!**

That headline is a simple, uncomplicated statement of fact. It offers news. It offers two strong benefits. And there is a "hidden" lesson here for those of you perceptive enough to catch it. It's this: One of the secrets of writing great copy is just...

Saying What You Have To Say!

Don't discount the importance of this just because it is such a simple and obvious thing. People pay me ungodly amounts of money to simply help them say what they have to say. And when I do it, they accuse me of being a genius and I'm always amazed. You see, what I really am is simple-minded. Here's a typical conversation between me and someone I'm trying to help:

"Gary, I'm going nuts trying to write this ad. I've been struggling with it for weeks and I just can't seem to make any headway."

"Well, John, what is it you're trying to get across? What is the big thing you have to say?"

"Gosh, Gary, I can give people the best deal on washers and dryers that anybody has ever seen!"

"Oh, yeah? Why is that?"

"It's because of my wife. She's really p.o.'d at me. She says I'm a workaholic and she's sick of it. She says we haven't had a vacation in 14 years and if I want to keep her, I better close the damn store for a month and take her to Europe. She says she doesn't care if I almost have to give away my inventory."

So I start scribbling on a piece of paper and a few seconds later I show him this:

She's fed up...

**Angry Wife Forces Local
Businessman To Almost Give
Away Everything He's Got
In His Store!**

"Hey, that's it!" he says. "You've got it! That's just what it is I wanted to say. You truly are a genius!"

Maybe I am. I know I'd certainly be the last to deny it. However, all I did here is say what he had to say.

Which brings me to a crucial point I intend to pound into your head until you are sick of hearing it. It's in response to something I hear all the time and it usually goes something like this: "But Gary, I don't have anything special to say. My offer is really pretty ordinary. Pretty standard."

Oh yeah? Well, if that's the case, you need to forget about writing copy until you "sweeten" your offer enough so you do have something to say. Contrary to popular opinion...

**What You Have To Say
Is Enormously More Important
Than How You Say It!**

Listen, if I just found out you had won the Irish Sweepstakes, there is now way I could tell you that would be dull and boring. On the other hand, I probably couldn't entice you to read a book on the history of farm machinery (there really is such a book) no matter what my headline said.

Back to the salt mines. If you were paying attention, you will have noticed that our headline to sell your 2-year-old Caddy didn't mention that you would let someone test drive it for a week free. Let's put that fact in a lead-in subheadline. And now, what we've got is this:

And he'll let you drive it
a week for free!

**Local Dentist Says He
Will Buy A Free Trip To
Las Vegas And A Year's Worth
Of Gas For Anybody Who
Decides To Buy His
2-Year-Old Caddy!**

And that's what we're going to print in big bold type on the top third of the first page of our letter. And next? OK, next, let's tell our reader who this letter is from. He already knows there is a local dentist involved but let's make you even more real in his mind by telling him exactly where you are located. It's simple -- we just write:

**From:
John Stebbins
123 Oak Street
Massillon, Ohio 44646**

And next? Ah, now it's time for our salutation. It's surprising to me how many people struggle with this part of a letter unless, of course, it is personalized. Should it be "Dear Reader"? "Dear Occupant"? "Dear Resident"? "Dear Lover of Fine Cars"? "Dear Fellow Massillonian"?

No, no, no, no... NO! The way I always start a non-personalized letter is...

Dear Friend,

I don't know, it just seems to me a... a... a friendly way to begin.

And now, after all this, we are finally ready to write the first sentence of our letter. And what should that first sentence communicate? Veddy simple. It should...

**Tell Our Reader
What's In It For
Him If He Takes The
Time To Read Our Letter!**

Like this: "If you would like to own a 1987 Cadillac and get it real cheap, here is some good news."

That's the first paragraph and, in the next paragraph or two, you

tell the reader (by elaborating on the headline) what the good news is. Like this:

"My name is John Stebbins and I am a dentist here in Massillon. I've got a 2-year-old Caddy and it is in almost perfect shape and I have to get rid of it for reasons I'll tell you later. But anyway, I just want to sell this car fast and I'm willing to let you test drive it for a week free if you are really interested.s

"Not only that, if you do decide to buy it, I'll give you a very low price and I'll buy you a trip to Vegas and I'll pay for all the gas you use for the first year you have the car."

Now, can you imagine what our reader is thinking at this point? It's easy, he wants to know... WHY?!! Why are you offering such a good deal? And, if you want to sell him, you've got to tell him.

Which is what comes next and you should address the issue like this:

"Why am I offering such a good deal? The reasons are simple. First, I hate car dealers. I tried to sell my Caddy back to the dealer I bought it from and he said stuff to me that was an insult to my intelligence. That's why I'd rather sell it cheaper to a regular person than hassle and bargain with some guy who cheats people for a living.

"And the reason I'm willing to buy all your gas for a year is because, unless you had a Caddy before, you probably don't know but... Caddys, at least the ones in excellent condition like mine, get very good gas mileage."

Now, listen to me: At this point you've captured your guy's attention and you've give him enough to decide whether he's interested or not. If he is interested, what he wants now are some facts. And a simple way to give him these facts is to simply enumerate them like David Ogilvy did in the classic Rolls Royce ad I reprinted for you last month. How's an easy way to introduce these facts? Like this:

"And here are 10 important facts about my car:"

And then, you pick up those two piles of 3x5 index cards on your desk (the ones that enumerate the facts and benefits pertaining to your car) and you arrange those cards in rank sequence with the card that contains the hottest fact and/or benefit at the top of the pile. Then, what you do is you start at the top of the pile and you transfer those facts/ benefits on the 3x5 cards to your letter. You simply enumerate them. The first three might look like this:

1. This car has the strongest, most rigid construction of any car built in America and it is the safest car you can use to transport your loved ones.

2. It has automatic everything and it is the easiest car on the road to drive.
3. This car only has 7,413 miles on it and it should give you many more years of luxurious trouble-free driving.

And so on.

And now we come to one of the most important elements of all. Remember how I told you the single most important thing to concentrate on was your offer? OK, the second most important thing is to make your offer believable. We've already put a lot of believability into this letter by revealing your exact name, occupation, and address and giving our reader specific info. But we must do more. You see, if you've got this prospect wanting the car, wanting the deal, what he wants most right now is...

**More And More Reasons
Or At Least One More Powerful Reason
Why He Can Believe
You!**

Again, why are you offering such a good deal to him? It's not enough that you hate car dealers... if the car is so good, why the heck are you even willing to sell it? Here are some possible reasons:

1. You need the money and you need it now.
2. Your wife hates the color.
3. You've decided to go to Africa and become a missionary.
4. You want to take flying lessons and buy a sea plane but you can't afford both the plane and the Caddy.
5. Your eyesight is going bad and soon you won't be able to drive anymore.

But whatever the reason is, it must be reasonable. It must be believable. It must be real... and true. It should take the question mark out of the mind of your prospect. It should give him an "aha" experience sort of like this:

"Oh gee, no wonder the guy wants to sell the car so fast. I would too if I had a chance to go live in Paris for 3-years!"

There's just one thing left: We've got to ask for action which in this case means simply telling him if he's interested to call you on the telephone.

Oh yeah, and you'd better give him a reasonable reason why he should call right now, like maybe simply the truth that you've mailed nearly 1,000 of these letters and you don't expect the car to remain unsold for much more than 48-hours.

And then you sign off by writing...

Sincerely,

John Stebbins

P.S. Don't forget to always add a P.S. because some people read that part of the letter first. And what the P.S. should say is some little thing additional about one of the items of hot enticing info you've already given him like...

"P.S. That free trip to Vegas has got to be confirmed in the next 11-days or else the coupons I won at the Dentist's Charity Ball last month will revert to the second-place winner."

Let's sum it all up:

1. You create a **FACT SHEET**.
2. You create a **BENEFIT LIST**.
3. You reduce your OFFER to writing on a **DEAL SHEET**.
4. You write a headline that contains news and the promise of one or more benefits.
5. If you have more than two hot benefits, you can put another in the lead-in sub-headline.
6. You reveal exactly who the letter is from.
7. You begin the salutation, "**Dear Friend,**".
8. You write a first sentence that tells what's in it for your prospect if he reads this letter.
9. You use the next few paragraphs to elaborate specifically on your promises.
10. You next tell him why you are offering such a good deal.
11. You enumerate facts that translate to benefits and you simply list 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc., etc., as many as you've got.

12. You next write a true and believable "reason why" explanation of why you are willing to part with this wonderful car.
13. You ask him to respond and urge him to hurry.
14. You sign off with "Sincerely,".
15. You write a P.S. that gives him a little new wrinkle on one of the hot reasons you've already given him as to why he should buy this car now.

And you typeset, type, print, fold, address, stamp and mail your thousand letters.

And live happily ever after.

I hope.

Now hear this: I was going to, after I got this far, write that Caddy letter myself so you could see it all strung together. But I've changed my mind. Some of you are more serious than others about learning to write copy and, if you are, I want you to write a sales letter about your car and send it to me. Make sure I get the letter by the end of this month and on the first of the month, I'll read all the letters and I'll reprint the best one and send a really valuable (honest) free gift to whomever I think has written the best letter.

But don't write about anything except your car because that will make my judging job easier and likelier to be more fair.

Do this! You can't lose! My little contest is really secondary. The main thing is you will have gotten off your lethargic keister and stretched your mind a bit and the doing of this will prove to you that...

**You Don't Have To Get
It Perfect, You've Just
Got To Get It Going!**

Sincerely,



Gary C. Halbert

The Wizard of Words

P.S. Look, this isn't the last thing I have to say about writing copy. Not by a long shot. It is not everything you need to know about this important subject. But... it is enough. Enough to get you going. Enough to give you a workable

formula to get started while we are waiting for absolute perfection.

P.P.S. Don't even think about missing next month's issue! Why? Simply because I'm going to give you a piece of hot info that is so totally important it could enhance your chances of success by 1,000%

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