



Defining a direct mail copywriter. . .

By Hugh Chewing

As professional direct mail copywriters, we often take a lot of grief about our work. We're told our English isn't proper – maybe even deplorable. We're too emotional, we keep repeating ourselves and the copy is way too long.

It's easy to forget what good direct mail copywriting is all about so let me sum it up. Good direct mail copy is copy that works. It achieves its objective.

At its best, good direct mail copywriting is one letter written by one person to one other person. Whether you're mailing a few hundred letters or millions, direct mail is a personal communication.



Some of the best training I've had for becoming a direct mail copywriter came when I sold magazines door-to-door as a teenager.

Each time you approached a house, you developed a plan before knocking on the door. Then, if you could entice the homeowner into opening the door, you quickly gave them just enough information that they wanted to listen to what you said next.

Not every homeowner was a prospect. You took your clues from what you would observe about the homeowner. Was there evidence of children at home . . .

CHEWNING DIRECT MARKETING

www.cdmdirect.com

Phone: 949-854-5401 Email: hchewing@cdmdirect.com

©Chewing Direct Marketing

indications that someone in the house played sports . . . a newspaper or fancy car in the driveway. You took advantage of all the information you had on the prospect and with this “data,” developed your offer – or which magazines you would talk about.

Then, after showing the homeowner how they would benefit from having these magazines – I never mentioned “reading” the magazines because that might be considered work – it was time to ask for the order.

Never, never, ever did I walk away without asking for the order. And once I got it, I didn’t linger. I said “thank you” and went to the next house.

What we do as direct response copywriters isn’t that much different.

We’re not artists, authors and certainly not general advertisers. Pure and simple, we’re salespeople and we sell benefits.

We don’t sell insurance. But we do sell security, protection and peace of mind. And a good direct response writer doesn’t sell subscriptions. Instead, we offer information that makes the prospect’s life more interesting, enjoyable and profitable. We won’t even sell you a cure for cancer. But we will give you the hope that you and your family can be free of its suffering.

Awards, pretty packages and beautiful designs don’t measure our success. Net profit does.

We don’t always write in complete sentences but we do communicate in language the reader understands. And for some of our fundraising packages, our graphics can be so “elementary” that our artist wants to hide our direct response work when his advertising clients visit the studio.

Yet, better than anyone else, we *motivate people to take a desired action*.

We can prove it too because we measure our results. If we segment our mailing lists differently, revise the offer, rewrite the letter, change the graphics or test a new format, we know exactly how it affects the mailing’s profitability.

A pretty package with moving parts or a creative award won’t save us. Because we document, analysis and record the results of every mailing, our successes and failures are on display for everyone to see.

And when our ideas don’t work, we learn from it. And when it does, we

CHEWNING DIRECT MARKETING

www.cdmdirect.com

Phone: 949-854-5401 Email: hchewning@cdmdirect.com

©Chewning Direct Marketing

capitalize on it. This is what makes us professional direct response marketers.

Is there a moral or lesson here?

You can decide. But I do hope there's a reaffirmation of why we can be proud of what we do.

Let me know what you think. I welcome your thoughts.

Hugh

P.S. If you have a question or comment about this post or direct mail in general, please e-mail me. I'm happy to help anyway I can. Thanks.

CHEWNING DIRECT MARKETING

www.cdmdirect.com

Phone: 949-854-5401 Email: hchewning@cdmdirect.com

©Chewning Direct Marketing