



HOT COPY

A Monthly Dose Of Communications Caffeine

Sep/2009

Stand out with Word-Free Copywriting

Intrigue your audience

Back in 1939, Irish author James Joyce shocked the world when he wrote "Finnegans Wake" entirely without punctuation. Now, it's time for a revolution in marketing copywriting!

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Learn more about Word-Free Copywriting by sending \$100 cash or money order to Joe Kul Esq. PO Box 666. Behind-the-men's-room. Union station. Toronto.

Using Humour in Copywriting

Caution is key

I admit it. *Word-Free Copywriting* was a shameless ruse to grab attention. But, you're still reading, so it must have worked.

A few months ago, a TV writer friend of mine launched a comedy news website to showcase his work. It is really catching on and he is seeing some steady traffic. His spoof ads are co-mingled with real ads from Google that people are apparently clicking on quite a bit because of their proximity to the funny ones. And

that means money for him -- and strong numbers for his site. The bottom line? This individual is seeing revenue potential that he never imagined -- all through humour. Check it out if you wish at dailyweek.com.

This success story in the making got me to thinking about something:

Humour sells. It grabs attention. It's memorable.

And it makes people want to like you... and potentially your business.

I know, I know. Many seasoned copywriters warn sternly against merging humour with sales copy. It can offend. It can obscure the message. Customers may not get it. Aye, friends of the Copybard, there's the rub.

But handled skillfully, humour can power your copy and help you truly stand out in a saturated marketplace.

Some safety rules for applying humour to your communications

I. Appeal to your audience

Are they chardonnay sipping punsters? Or beer and pretzel types who like their jokes straight up? Are they ethnic? Should you use Pythonesque wit? or A "Three Stooges" approach? As always, be sure you know your target and what makes them smile.

II. Don't put down your audience...or your business.

There are many ways to poke fun without anyone getting hurt, including your business. Avoid taking cheap shots at your competition population segments or ethnic groups. And don't put your product or service down either.

Use humour to underscore your key benefits, like Titleist, the golf ball manufacturer. They have a spoof blog, ghost-edited by John Cleese. In the voice of an irate scottish man, he complains about how excellent Titleist golf balls are: *"Clearly Titleist will not be satisfied until every green is drivable and every putt is a tap-in. It's depressing. Golf is supposed to be difficult. It's a Scottish game for goodness sakes."*

III. Stay on brand

If you have an understated, classy brand, your humour should reflect that. If you have a big and bold presence, be brave and use some big, bold humour. Also, if your business is closely associated with a certain industry, gently play on imagery or ideas around that niche. Reinforce your brand in all you communicate.

IV. Take care!

Mishandled or unskillfully crafted, humour can indeed obscure the sales message, distract from the call to action and potentially confuse and/or offend your customers. My view is to be cautious and tread carefully. Ask yourself - is it the right medium? message? Is the humour grabbing too much focus etc.?

Roadtest your comedy with some colleagues. Be careful that your business benefits shine through.

V. Not funny? Look to a marketing writer who is.

Humorous copywriting is no easy feat. Look to a funny writer who understands marketing principles. (btw, I actually used to be a comedienne and an Actra comedy writer.... and there are many more like me). Leave the treacherous work to a pro.



Recessionary Times Call for Strong Marketing

And no, this does not have to cost a lot. A seasoned and swift communicator like myself can economically:

- **Update your web content**
Refresh your information and reinforce your message
- **Create a corporate brochure or sell sheet**
Announce your new product or service
- **Generate buzz**
Write a newsworthy media release
- **Craft a quarterly client newsletter or a monthly business blog**
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