How to write killer headlines that sell

2018

BY BERNADETTE SCHWERDT

In this eBook we'll cover

- The importance of headlines
- The role of headlines
- The 3 basic guidelines for all headlines
- The top 19 formulas for creating successful headlines

What does a headline do?

In today's environment where we are bombarded with thousands of messages every day, it's vital that your ad gets noticed. The first impression can mean the difference between success and failure. If the copy offers news or helpful information or promises a reward for paying attention, it is well on its way to persuading the reader to buy your product.

A good headline tells readers what a story is about. It induces them to read the story. It's the ad for the ad!

But successful headlines do more than tell the story. They capture the readers' interest and make them want to read on.

Prospects are in a hurry. They are bombarded with hundreds of ads, letters, postcards, and commercials every day. They tend to skip or tune out any marketing message that looks like it will take too much time or be too much trouble to figure out.

Headlines simplify the learning curve. A reader can scan down your page, quickly digest your headlines, and figure out what you're offering.

Once the prospect knows you have something she is interested in, she will take more time to read your entire letter, ad, or web page.

Most people read headlines first, so concentrate on getting the headline right, and everything else will follow.

Here are 6 basic guidelines on how to write headlines.

Australian School of Copywriting

1. Headlines don't have to be short

One of the misunderstandings many people seem to hold about headlines is the notion they must be short. This is nonsense. Look at some of these headlines in the ads overleaf.

They demonstrate that headlines can be more than just a few words.

2. Headlines should speak to the buyer

They should focus on something that matters to a buyer. If you have news, proclaim it in the headline.

People are always interested in new stuff.

3. Don't make your headlines cute

Many people make the mistake of getting too cute in their headlines. They try to arouse curiosity. When people read a headline, they are mentally saying to themselves:

"So what? What does that mean to me?"

If you can say 'so what' after reading your headline and not have a good answer, you need to change the headline.

4. Get your audience's attention

Always appeal to their self-interest. Certain words always get the reader's attention. Use words like new, introductory, for a limited time only; it's here, at last, discover. E.g.:

"Discover our new rich-roasted taste" - (Nestlé Decaf Coffee)

Free is a very powerful word, so if you can incorporate it into your copy, you're guaranteed to get attention.

Time-Life promotes their CD sales on TV with an offer to give you a free CD if you buy the first one.

Other attention-getting words include how to, why, sale, quick, easy, guarantee, proven and save.



Headlines that offer the consumer guidance are also attention-getters: "Free New Report on Futures Trading and How It Can Help You Retire Within 3 Years" "Three Easy Steps to Clear, Younger-Looking Skin"

5. Speak directly to your audience

You should use your headline to define your audience and to filter out those who aren't in your target market. For instance, if you are selling home insurance to people older than 50, there is no point in writing an ad that generates inquiries from younger people. The headline can narrow in on the ideal audience for your ad and screen out those readers who are not your potential customers.

For example, Australian Pensioners Insurance Agency (APIA) list the following in all their ads: "For those aged over 55 and not working full time". That's very direct and clear and certainly screens out a vast number of people.

Here are a couple more examples:

We're looking for People to Write Children's Books" - (The Institute of Children's Literature)

"Attention: Tennis Court Owners" - (A tennis court cleaning company)

6. Put the headline in quotation marks

In testimonial ads, your customers do the selling for you. Testimonials work because they offer proof that a business satisfies its customers. Always use the customer's own words to make the point as they will sound natural and believable so try not to edit them too much.

Headlines in quotation marks get more attention than those without. It increases readership dramatically, so it's desirable to use them even if the headline is not a direct quotation and the ad is not a testimonial ad. Simply put quotation marks around the headline.

For example, instead of:

"Get all the money you need for your business - guaranteed"

Use:

"Get all the money you need for your business - guaranteed"

This is what's known as the 'unattributed testimonial.' It is the advertisers, not their clients, who are saying the phrases in quotation marks... and they are, in effect, quoting themselves in their copy. It's tricky but perfectly legal and ethical.

Women's magazines

If you're ever in doubt about how to write a headline, all you need to do is buy a woman's magazine like Cleo, Cosmo, Marie Claire etc. and you'll learn everything you need to know about writing headlines.

They are very aware that the headlines they use on their cover are inextricably linked to the sales of the magazines. If the headlines are strong, sales will be strong.







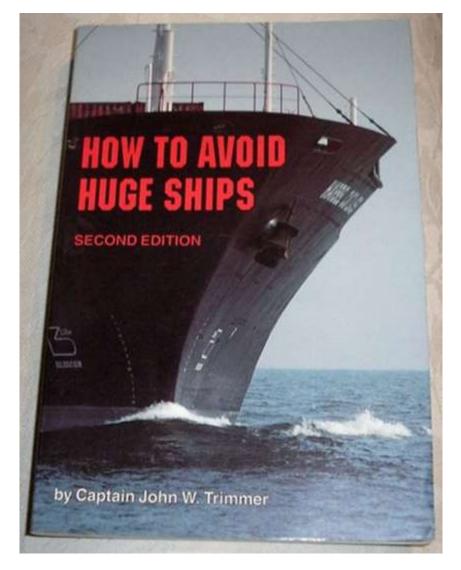
19 proven formulas for creating headlines

There are many ways to come up with headlines. Here are 19 tried and tested formulas for creating successful headlines. If ever you get stuck and can't come up with a great headline, refer back to this eBook for some idea generators.

1. The 'how to'

The simple "How to" headline is still popular for its simplicity and effectiveness.

They work very well because people love information that shows them how to do something. Just think of the thousands of book titles beginning with "How to...".



Think of the benefits your product/service offers and then try creating some "How to" headlines. The benefit must be reflected in the headline.

In fact, using the "How to" formula is one of the best places to start when writing headlines because it forces you to think of what your product/service does for the person.

It also works for reports or letters that provide helpful information.

Even just adding the word "how" in front of a headline gives it an additional appeal.

Compare these two examples:

a. A strange experience saved me from bankruptcy.

b. How a strange experience saved me from bankruptcy.

Which one is more compelling? Option 'b' probably.

'How to' headline examples:

- How to get thinner thighs in 30 days
- How to buy a car without getting a lemon
- How to live to 100 and love it
- How to win friends and influence people
- How to set up your website without spending a fortune
- How to fix a car

Why not spice it up by adding a little something before the 'how to':

Here's how to ...

Discover how to...

Examples:

- a. If you think a 12% return on your money is good, here's how to set your sights on 100% or more.
- b. Discover how to hit golf shots as straight as you can point, or this video golfing lesson is free...and I'll pay you \$25 for wasting your time!

'How to' headline templates:

- How to get
- How to have
- How to keep
- How to start

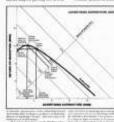
- How to begin
- How to become
- How to improve your
- How to get the most out of
- How to avoid
- How to end
- How to get rid of



How much should you spend on advertising?

Ogilyy & Mather can often answer this question through the use of a new analytical tool.

• Полите на полнатира на по



*

An or consist of the constraints of the constraints

A first or address damp of the second second

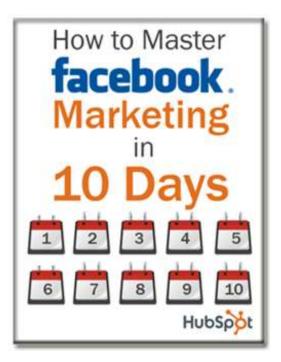
A for each of the second second

Ogiby Mäther















E Inc.

LEAR

How I Learned to Lean Forward,

Every Day BYERCHOLTZCIAN

One secret to my success is a refusal to dwell on the past. Four steps to stay focused on the future.





Q SUBSEIN

🚊 Legin er signes

Inside Mark Cuban's \$2 Million 'Shark Tank' Horror Deal BY CRAHAM WINFREY





Australian School of Copywriting *



2. Ask a question

A question headline gets the reader to answer the question in their mind. This style of headline automatically gets the prospect involved in your message.

Many people will read further into your letter, ad, or web site copy just to find out what answer or solution you provide.

This headline taps into the prospect's problems. Your headline is the magic pill that fixes that problem.

Again, make sure the question focuses on the reader's interest, not yours.

Ask a question headline examples:

- Are you worried about filing your tax return this year?
- Are you tired of being alone?
- Are you sick of being exhausted?
- Are you worried about your financial future?
- Do you make these mistakes in English?
- Have you ever wondered how Paris Hilton stays so slim?

Australian School of Copywriting



Ser J. Market and Ser. 100

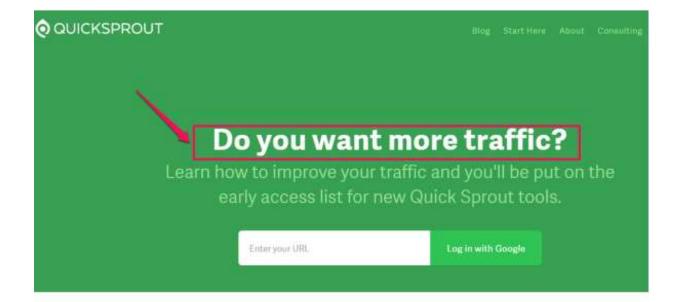
A STORES CAN DATE OF LES

Are you making these mistakes with your digital marketing measurement?





<section-header>





3. Who else wants...

Starting a headline with "Who else wants..." is a classic social proof strategy that implies an already existing consensus desire.

While overused in the internet marketing arena, it still works like gangbusters for other subject matter.

'Who else wants' headline examples:

- Who else wants to earn \$150,000 working from home?
- Who else wants to have fun at work?
- Who else wants to eat what they like when they like?
- Who else wants to have a home like this?

Australian School of Copywriting

WHO ELSE WANTS **TO GET PROMOTED?** A Message from The Wall Street Journal to Men Making \$7000 to \$15,000

Wall Street Journal subsc Wall Street Journal subsystem sted to positions of greater re-during the last 2 minitus. d our readers were made vice anne were finds sales managers, made general menagers, and a mentioned menagers, and

A STATISTICS TAKEN WHICH W

me-minute in mying the r illustrated than in the inc

a recent subscriber to The Wall curnal, "For the first time in my

Address: The Wall Street Journal.

Life. 3.4 DAILY

ADDERTS STREET

and Pessessinn

44 Broad Street, New York 4, N. T.

Who Else Wants To Discover A Foolproof Method To Banking In Hard Cold Cash Day In, Day Out Working No More Than A Few Hours A Day...

If You Are Fed Up Of Mediocre Income And All The Short-Term Money-Making Fads You've Been Trying, It's Time You Put These Behind, Strap Yourself And **Get Ready To Become The Next Marketing Ace!**

4. The secret of...

This one is used quite a bit, but that's because it works.

This works on the principle that an expert has some information or insider knowledge that will translate into a benefit for the reader.

Everybody wants the inside running on how to solve a problem. It's even more effective when the message is coming from an expert.





5. Here is a method that is helping...to...

This style of headline is instructional and feeds upon people's desire to have more information to help them in their lives.

All you have to do is identify your target audience and the benefit you can provide them, and then fill in the blanks.

'Here is a method...' headline examples:

- Here is a method that is helping homeowners save hundreds on insurance
- · Here is a method that is helping kids learn to read sooner
- Here is a method that is helping small businesses to save money on websites

October 28th Restaucant Business

Here is a Method That is Helping Restaurants Get Better Reviews

6. Little known ways to...

This is a more intriguing (and less common) way of accomplishing the same thing as "The Secret of..." headline.

'Little known ways...' headline examples:

- Little known ways to save on your mobile phone bill
- Little known ways to get free software
- Little known ways to lose weight quickly and safely

7. Get rid of...once and for all

This is a classic formula that identifies either a painful problem or an unfulfilled desire that the reader wants to remedy.

'Get rid of...' headline examples:

- Get rid of your unproductive work habits once and for all
- Get rid of ugly bitten nails once and for all
- Get rid of that carpet stain once and for all
- Get rid of acne once and for all



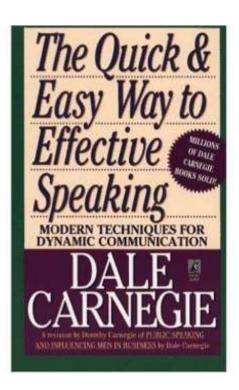
8. Here's a quick way to...

People love 'quick' when it comes to solving a nagging problem.

'Here's a quick way to ...' headline examples:

- Here's a quick way to get over a cold
- Here's a quick way to potty train your baby
- Here's a quick way to back-up your hard drive
- Here's a quick and easy way to lose weight
- Here's a quick and easy way to cook dinner for 10





9. Now you can have...

This is the classic 'have your cake and eat it too' headline – and who doesn't like that?

Use the formula:

'Now you can have...(something desirable) or (great circumstance)

'Now you can have...' headline examples:

- Now you can quit your job and make even more money
- Now you can meet sexy singles online without spending a dime
- Now you can own a cool Mac and still run Windows

10. Have... you can be proud of

These appeal to vanity, dissatisfaction, or shame.

It's not the most creative headline style in the world, but it does work.

Mix it up with, 'Build a...you can be proud of'.

'...be proud of' headline examples:

- Build a body you can be proud of
- Have a smile you can be proud of
- Build a website you can be proud of
- Have a garden you can be proud of

Australian School of Copywriting





PROUD OF

11. What everyone ought to know about...

There is a big curiosity draw with this type of headline, and it acts almost as a challenge to the reader to go ahead and see if they are missing something.

No one likes to miss out on information which means people can't stop themselves from reading it.

'What everyone...' headline examples:

- What everyone ought to know about superannuation
- What everyone ought to know about creating a website
- What everyone ought to know about buying options
- What everyone ought to know about low GI diets

Australian School of Copywriting



Hair Tips WHAT EVERYONE OUGHT TO KNOW ABOUT FALL HAIR **COLOR TRENDS**

www.kerahealth.com > @ @ f

THE BLOG 08/19/2015 10:30 am ET | Updated Dec 06, 2017

What Everybody Ought to Know About Millennials

By Dr. Patty Ann Tublin

12. The testimonial

Why not let your clients do the selling for you?

Their commendations can go a long way in convincing others to use your services.

They also provide proof and evidence that supports your claims. You can't make wild, or even mild claims without backing them up. If you don't, the unanswered question in people's minds is 'Says who?' This stops them from getting involved in the ad and ultimately can mean they stop reading the ad.

When using testimonials, always include as much information about your client as possible. Most people know that you can make up a testimonial. However, if you provide enough detail about the client, the prospect will believe you.

Do celebrity endorsements work?

Celebrity endorsements are very powerful, but they are costly to source, and you are reliant on the celebrity behaving in a manner that is consistent with your brand's image. Michael Jackson and Pepsi? Say no more.

But you can use testimonials from previous clients to support your claims.

Examples of testimonials:

'lan Smith's consulting is pure magic – our sales have increased by 27%!' Annette Bridie, Homewares Emporium, Brighton.

'This product really works. I'm happier and less stressed.' Marina Manson, Print on Demand, Richmond, NSW.

'My hair started growing back in two weeks!' Jason Ronaldson, Mercury Finance, Perth WA.

'I only use Nike.' *Lleyton Hewitt.*

Australian School of Copywriting

"This must be the most dangerous shopping website ever!"

f

Sandra P Member since Jun '11



"I just bought wine from @vinomofo on my mobile while the hairdresser makes my hair blue. F**k yeah, the future!"

> CeadaoinsChild@ Member since Mar '12





Michael R off Sought T case of BLACK MARKET Shiraz 2015



just bought Lone of Big Red Lovers Pack



Michael A just bought Lose of BLACK MARKET Shiraz 2015



Trent to just trought Trave of Penley Estate Cabernet Servignon 2006

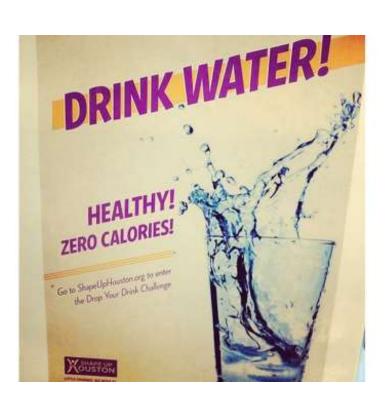
13.Issue a command

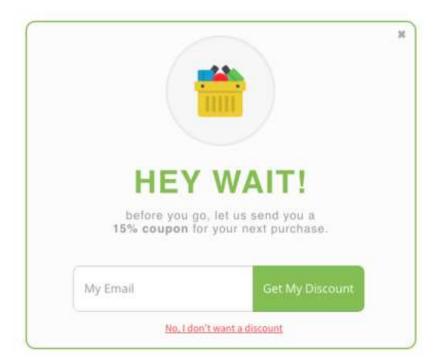
Some classic headlines tell us what to do. They work best when you can turn your most important benefit into a commanding headline.

'Issue a command' headline examples:

- Make more money this month
- Feel better about yourself
- Boost your business today
- Look younger instantly
- Get 7 new clients this month
- Make enough money to buy a new car
- Stop rushing through life

Australian School of Copywriting







14.The news

Caution: This only works if you truly have something big to announce that is of interest to the reader; something that will make their life or business better.

Don't try to make news out of something that's not.

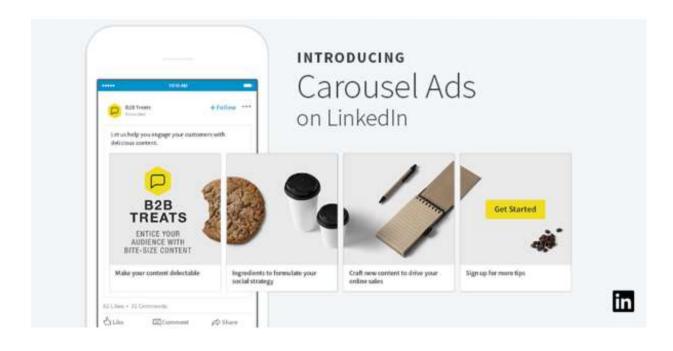
Once your readers know you have something they're interested in, they'll take the time to read your entire article, brochure, letter, ad, ezine or webpage.

'The news' headline examples:

- Introducing our new 7-day tax service
- Amazing new medical breakthrough for fat loss
- Introducing our zero interest rate credit
- Introducing the no fat cinnamon flavoured ice cream

Australian School of Copywriting





15.A deadline for a special offer

Most of us are busy and tend to put off taking action.

If you don't get the prospect to act now, you may never get the sale.

Sometimes a simple headline compelling the reader to take action now can be very effective.

'Deadline of offer' headline examples:

- Save up to \$2000 on an Apple Mac computer before the end of May
- Buy now and pay no interest for 5 years
- Register now for your free gift

Get the LG G6 for \$20 a month.

Get it for as low as \$7.50 a month with select trade-ins.

Get the LG G6 on device payment for \$20/month with digital rebate. Get it as low as \$7.50/month if you're new to Verizon with select trade-ins.



16.Free offers

Free offers can pull the best result.

There is a myth that affluent or professional customers are turned off by free offers. Not true! They love a bargain as much as the next guy. How do you think they got rich?

Simply tailor your free offer to match the style of your customers or industry.

'Free offer' headline examples:

- No-cost initial consultation
- Bonus CD in each package
- Free installation
- Free home delivery
- Free main meal with every meal purchased
- Free upgrade
- Free window tinting

Australian School of Copywriting







Avast Free Antivirus		×
	Thank you for choosing Avast Free Antivirus	
	Try our premium protection for free	
	 20-day free trial of Avast Internet Security Risk-free: Go back to Avast Free Antivirus anytime Secures your online shopping and banking Hides your PC behind a firewall 	
	No. thanks	









17. Alert your target market

These headlines are very straightforward in their message.

They work on the principle that you're busy, are scanning the page for something of interest, and will only be stopped by something that is directly relevant to you.

They work best when they are specifically targeted at a particular group of people.

These headlines stop people in their tracks and force them to read.

We are all motivated by self-interest after all.

'Target market' headline examples:

- Attention teachers!
- Warning: Don't take out a loan before knowing this.
- Single women are you tired of spending New Year's Eve alone?
- Tennis court owners do you hate mowing your court?
- Attention boat owners!
- Property owners 5 things to know before you buy a townhouse.



Australian School of Copywriting



Student from Keilor Makes a Fortune with Bitcoin



We Tested This App to See if You Could Learn a Language in 7 Days



This Method Has Diabetic Pill Companies Going Bankrupt

Actors Wanted For A Short Film





18.Fear of loss

For many people, the fear of losing something is greater than the desire for gain.

The idea of losing money or missing out on something is too powerful for them to resist checking out your offer.

'Fear of loss' headline examples:

- If you don't act now, you'll miss this chance forever!
- Enrolments end tomorrow act now!
- Just how much money are you losing?
- How much are bank fees really costing you?





Who else is watching you shop online?

GC

ACT NOW! To protect your family's online activities

19.Intrigue

This headline lets you flex your creative muscle yet does the important job of pulling the reader into your copy.

The idea is to intrigue your prospect sufficiently to read the next paragraph.

'Intrigue' headline examples:

- Can you pass the cholesterol test?
- I can't believe it's happening to you too!
- Do you know what colour best suits you?
- Are you ready to slash your tax bill by half?
- Are you scared of committing?

Australian School of Copywriting

HOW SECURE IS My password?

Vour password is One of the 500 most common passwords It would be cracked almost instantly

Do you know your risk? Find out at **take2minutes.ca**

Canadian Diabetes Association diabetes.ca (1-800-BANTING

Australian School of Copywriting *

Sub-headlines

Headlines are not the only tool for grabbing attention.

Sub-heads allow you to expand and further what you're doing with the headline.

Headline with sub-headline examples:

- Do you make these mistakes in English? Why most people make mistakes.
- Thin thighs in 30 days! Wear your bikini this summer.
- Can you pass the cholesterol test? Or are you at risk of a heart attack?

If you were to link all the sub-headlines end to end, they should be able to tell the story of the ad.

They need to be short, sharp and punchy.

The body copy that follows needs to expand upon the sub-head, or else it's just misleading and will annoy the reader.

Summary

The headline alerts the reader and captures their attention.

The sub-headline expands on the headline and gives extra detail.

The body copy answers the questions posed in the headline and sub-headline.