



How to Ignite Your Writing

When you're on fire with a great idea, you just want to TELL someone. But too often, poor writing douses the flames. With a soft "psshhh...", the heat of your ideas dissipates in seconds, leaving a half-baked thought and unimpressed readers.

When your writing fails to ignite your clients' interests and give them good reasons to buy they make another sound. Listen closely and you'll hear them quietly walking away. You may even hear the sound of your phone *not* ringing. Ouch!

So, how to avoid the "psshhh..." effect, and make your client communications sizzle? Overleaf are 12 tips to get your business booming with responses to your writing. They're drawn from our **Write More Business** one-day training course that helps businesspeople like you get more kick from your keyboard.

Enjoy!

Paul Jones
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Twelve Ways to Ignite Your Writing

1. Don't stare at a blank page (or screen) for hours

You can't inspire others when you're uninspired yourself. So DIG for interesting information. Give your mind the raw material it needs to work with. Ask lots of questions. Explore the problem from every angle. Touch, taste, smell, listen, feel, experience, test, bounce and stretch your product or service. Get to know it intimately. Consult the dictionary, compare and contrast it with things similar and different. Seeing something in a new light means disrupting your mind's patterns, so let yourself come up with crazy, silly and plain *dumb* ideas.

Too often people aren't clear on what they want to say, so they write waffle—that's *words looking for an idea*. The result is ugly writing. The answer? WARTTS. That is, ask yourself, "What Am I *Really* Trying To Say?" Then just *say* it. Then you'll have an *idea looking for words*—beautiful!

Also ask yourself: when are your most productive idea-generating times in the day? Is your writing space alive with inspiration and motivation?

Finally, don't get stuck trying to say it perfectly from the start. Be prepared to ditch your first draft. Simply writing something—anything—will help you work out what you think. Just *start!*

2. Know thy audience

Who will read your marketing copy? Why will they read it? What are *they* interested in? What do they like? Dislike? What's important to them? What are their likely objections to your offer? What motivates them? Why should they care about your message? What do they already know or think about you and your business?

Don't write to thousands; write to ONE. Get a picture of a "classic" member of your target market, and put it in front of you. Find a photo, make a collage, write a character profile of who you're talking to. If you've never met anyone like them, it's time to meet them!

3. Benefits, benefits, benefits

Forget what your product or service can do (features). Work out what it can do *for your audience* (benefits). Will it save them time or money? What value does it add? What difference does it make? Find a Raving Fan of your product or service and ask them why they love what you do for them. Ask them why they choose you above others. Ask them what's unique and special about what you do. Then share those insights with your audience in a way that's relevant, exciting and focused on what matters most to them.

4. Know their personality and their buttons

Personalities are like belly buttons: we all have one, but no two are exactly the same. There *are*, however, ways to categorise some major personality traits. One stems from Carl Jung's work, from which the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and DiSC personality profiling systems arose. Being aware of these helps you make an educated guess as to whether your target is more interested in facts or feelings, results or relationships, and so on—all of which help you generate faster rapport and press their collective "hot buttons." You can't *tell* an audience why they should know and care; you have to make them *want* to know and care. (Tip: devour "People Styles at Work," by Robert Bolton, 1996, Amacom.)

5. Charmed, I'm sure!

Think of your writing as someone knocking on your reader's door—say what you'd say, the way you'd say it, if you could be there speaking directly to them. You'd slam your door on a boring salesperson's face, wouldn't you? But you'd probably keep talking to someone charming.

So how do you write charming copy? Think of the most charming person you know. What qualities do they exude? Are they friendly or abrupt? Relaxed or hurried? Positive or negative? Assertive or submissive?

Charmers vary what they say depending on the listener—and on their relationship to them. The more charming you are in person, the more those skills will transfer to your writing.

6. Write a killer headline

Keep headlines simple, short, punchy and to-the-point. Eighty percent of readers will only look at your headline, so if your first line doesn't bite, you've lost them from the start.

Two life observations will help you write better headlines:

- (a) People are **lazier** than you think, and
- (b) People are **smarter** than you think.

Let's discuss **lazy** first. Do whatever it takes to make it easy for your readers to "get" your message. Spoon-feed them. Only two things motivate people: making a gain, or avoiding a pain. So ask, "What gain or pain does my product or service address?" Remember, they're only tuned to one radio station—WIIFM (What's In It For Me?)—so *tell* them what's in it for them *fast*.

Now let's talk **smart**—people are smarter than you think. They'll see through boasting, trickery or dishonesty. But if you understand what motivates them and genuinely try to meet their needs there's an excellent chance they'll buy from you. Especially if they've learned to trust you.

7. Ask for action

Rookie salespeople (and many seasoned ones) sometimes do everything right in the sales process but balk at asking for the sale. They fear rejection or coming across as "high-pressure" salespeople. A good cure is to turn things on their heads—they should think of themselves as "assistant buyers" instead of "salespeople." Their job is then to simply help prospects buy—meeting their needs, and closing the sale.

It's the same with your sales copy. If they've read to the end of your copy, they *must* be interested. They're not reading for fun—they *want* something! So give it to them. Politely ask for the action you want. And make it fast and easy for them (see point 6 above—they're lazy!). Next, make it even more attractive to *act now* by including devices like incentives, risk-free guarantees, and limited-time deadlines.

8. Master the basics

Spelling, grammar, punctuation...you learned it all in school, right? Well, you *would* have if it didn't seem so boring at the time! Unfortunately, it shows. Writing riddled with mistakes is sloppy, unprofessional and leaves a bad impression. Trouble is, mistakes slip easily under our radar. Then they detract from the sharp, polished image we deserve [tip: donut trust you're spelling chequer (oops!)]. Start learning more about your weak areas. If the pen is mightier than the sword, you'd be wise to sharpen yours before you fight for new customers.

9. Give them a smooth ride: inject “flow”

Writing that lurches from one idea to a seemingly unrelated one is like a speed-bump on the page, jarring your reader and slowing them down. The best writing is bump-free. Your thoughts should smoothly transition between each other. It should be hard to remove one sentence without it affecting everything else, because each sentence should spring naturally from the one preceding it. Transitions also link your ideas together logically—they are important cues that help readers understand your argument.

10. First impressions count

Good writing is about more than just words. Would you buy from a well-spoken but smelly and scruffy salesperson? How you *present* your words visually is vital—the font and type-size you use, the amount of white space on your page, the placement and balance of images and copy. Every choice you make should work to attract your reader to your page and make it easy and enjoyable to digest. Rule of thumb: “KISS” (Keep it Short & Simple). You want to cut *through* the clutter, not add to it.

11. Learn to edit like a pro

Like most things worth having, good writing takes work. It’s 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration. If you want a professional piece that packs punch, rewriting and editing are inescapable. The three primary things you should edit for are content, style and correctness. If you’re on track you should be able to answer these questions: Is it easy and enjoyable to read? What’s my one Big Idea? Is it benefit-driven? What’s my offer?

Remember—even the most experienced writers still have to proofread every line.

12. Leave your desk for a while

Henry David Thoreau sagely said, “How vain it is to sit down to write when you have not stood up to live.” To put more life in your writing, put more living in your life! Get out and talk to people, form an opinion, soak up others’ thoughts, explore, experience, question, and read widely. You’ll write better...and have more fun!

Congratulations on your first step to igniting your writing!

If you *really* want to **turn your message into money**,
 enrol in Paul’s hands-on, one-day writing course,

Write More Business.

“Probably the best thing...was the amount of substance. Most trainers seem to take an hour of content and stretch it for seven hours, but you managed to deliver seven hours of actual content, which was very valuable.”

Public and corporate courses available.

Like to know more? Fire an email to info@magneto.net.au

Magneto Communications is a copywriting and training agency.

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