

Do Your Headlines and Calls-to-Action Go Ka-Ching?

by Debra Jason



**BONUS: 5 Fill-in-the-Blank Headline
Templates**

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<http://writedirection.com>

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When you're writing copy, with a scant 1-3 seconds to catch a prospect's attention, your goal is to do so long enough for your prospect to decide to continue reading ALL of your content.

My mentor, the late Eugene Schwartz - who was a veteran direct response copywriter admired by many in the industry - wrote the must-read book *Breakthrough Advertising*. If you haven't read it, see if you can get your hands on a copy (it's not always easy to find). You might contact the original publisher, Boardroom Books, or check on Amazon - as they occasionally have copies available.



According to Gene (that's him to the left), ***“your headline has only one job – to stop your prospect and compel him or her to read the second sentence of your ad.”***

As advertising guru David Ogilvy said, *“On the average, 5 times as many people read the headlines as read the body copy.”*

So how do you create a rock-solid headline that grabs attention?

Here are 12 pointers to consider:

1. Ask a question in the headline. *“With 1 in 2 people getting osteoarthritis in their lifetime, can you afford to ignore your joints?”* A classic headline used for a promotion for *Psychology Today* was *“Do you close the bathroom door even when you’re the only one home?”*

2. Give news using words such as “introducing,” “announcing” or “new.” *“Announcing 10 remarkable ways to stay in shape without exercising daily.”*

3. Address your prospects’ concerns. I call it pushing their buttons so when they read, they think *“yeah, I need/want this. I gotta have it.”* For instance:

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"Facing foreclosure? Here are 3 questions to ask your lender before they take your home away from you."

4. Promise something wonderful, but do not lie. You'll lose more customers than you gain that way (bad news travels fast). *"For deep-clean, oil-free skin, Noxzema has the solution."*

5. Be specific. This well-known Rolls Royce headline from David Ogilvy did the job: *"At 60 miles an hour, the loudest noise in this new Rolls Royce comes from the electric clock."*

The Rolls-Royce Phantom II (1929)

"At 60 miles an hour the loudest noise in this new Rolls-Royce comes from the electric clock"

What makes Rolls-Royce the best car in the world? "There is really no magic about it—it is merely patient attention to detail," says an eminent Rolls-Royce engineer.

1. "It is 60 miles an hour the loudest noise comes from the electric clock," says the Technical Editor of our service. There and there you get your engine—unusually.
2. Every Rolls-Royce engine is not for some hours at full throttle before reaching and each car is a new design for hundreds of miles over varying road surfaces.
3. The Rolls-Royce is designed so no motor driver can see it. It is eighteen inches shorter than the largest domestic car.
4. The car has power steering, power brakes and automatic gear shift. It is very easy to drive and to park. No chauffeur required.
5. The finished car spends a week in the final workshop. Being the usual, there is a job period in 10 separate units. For example, the engine can be assembled in hours for only when.
6. The Rolls-Royce is guaranteed for three years. With a safe network of dealers and parts-dealers from Coast to Coast, service is no problem.
7. The Rolls-Royce radiator has never changed, except that when Sir Henry Royce died in 1933 the company HP was changed from red to black.
8. The coachwork is given five coats of primer paint, and hand rubbed between each coat, before any coats of finishing paint go on.
9. The steering is made on the steering wheel, you can adjust the shock absorbers to suit road conditions.
10. A glass table, mounted in French wall, can slide out from under the dash. Two more swing out behind the front seats.
11. You can get such optional extras as an optional coffee-making machine, a drinking machine, a hot and cold water for washing, an electric stove or a telephone.
12. There are three separate systems of power brakes, one hydraulic and one mechanical. Damage to one system will not affect the other. The Rolls-Royce is a very safe car, and also a very handy car. It comes usually at eight-hundred top speeds to around 100 m.p.h.
13. The Rolls-Royce is made by Rolls-Royce. Except for the valves, they are identical to the cars manufactured by the same engineers in the same works. People who had difficulty about driving a Rolls-Royce can buy a Bentley.
14. The Rolls-Royce (illustrated) is the advertisement. Each principal part of every car is \$12,000.
15. If you would like the working experience of driving a Rolls-Royce or Bentley, write or telephone to one of the dealers listed on the opposite page.

Rolls-Royce Ltd., 10 Berkeley Place, New York 20, N. Y. Circle 5-1114.

March 1929

6. Give the reader a command – tell him/her to *do* something. *"Go ahead, throw away this **free** offer."*

7. Promise your prospects helpful/useful information. *"3 Ways you can avoid foreclosure," or "4 tips for losing weight without feeling starved for your favorite foods."*

8. Promise to reveal a secret. *"Discover the secret to writing thought-provoking, compelling copy," or "Explore the secret to connecting and engaging with your prospects."* <NOTE: Be sure you do indeed reveal the secret - bad news travels faster than good when you disappoint your customers.>

9. Give your prospects good news. *"You're never too old to tone your body and be in great shape."*

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10. Target a particular type of reader. *“Do you aspire to write children’s books?”*

11. Tie in to current events. The most well-known example of this is the *“Official car (camera, airline, beverage etc.) of the Olympics.”*

12. Highlight your guarantee. *“Lose 10 pounds in 10 days or your money back.”*



Read even more <http://www.writedirection.com/copywriting-tips-headlines>

6 of Gene Schwartz' Favorite Headline Tips

As a bonus, since I mentioned Gene Schwartz earlier, here are 6 of his favorite tips for writing great headlines. They are:

1. State the claim as a question. *“Could you use \$200 a week extra income?”*

2. State the difference in your headline. *“The difference in premium gasoline is right in the additives.”*

3. Address the people who can’t buy your product. *“If you’ve already taken your annual vacation, don’t read this. It will break your heart.”*

4. Address your prospect directly. *“To the man who will settle for nothing less than the presidency of his firm.”*

5. Accuse the claim of being too good. *“Is it immoral to make money this easily?”*

6. Challenge the prospect’s present limiting beliefs. *“You are twice as smart as you think.”*

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Read even more at <http://www.writedirection.com/copywriting-headline-tips>

One of the best ways to improve your copywriting skills is to learn from others (like I learned from Gene Schwartz). You can do so by doing what many of the professionals do - maintain a swipe file.

There are surely hundreds—if not thousands—of headline swipe files available online; a quick Google search will show you that.

Here are a few resources that I believe give you the best information for the time you'll spend reading them:

- Copyblogger's free eBook, "How to Write Magnetic Headlines."
- Jon Morrow's "52 Headline Hacks: A Cheat Sheet for Writing Blog Posts that Go Viral."
- And of course, my own "12 Pointers for Writing Attention-Getting Headlines and A Baker's Dozen of Fill-in-the-Blank Templates You Can Use Right Away."

Read even more at <http://www.writedirection.com/secret-to-writing-better-headlines>

Speaking of fill-in-the blank templates, here's a BONUS for you.

5 Headline Templates You Can Use Right Away - Just Fill in the Blanks



1. Introducing 5 tips to _____ without _____.

Example: *"Introducing 5 tips to shed those pounds without giving up the foods you love."*

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2. With _____ can you afford to/not to _____?

Example: "With 1 in 2 people getting osteoarthritis in their lifetime, can you afford to ignore your joints?"

3. 10 things your _____ won't tell you about _____, even if you asked.

Example: "10 things your doctor won't tell you about weight loss, even if you asked. After all, if you knew them, you just might lose weight"

4. 3 secrets _____ don't want you to know about.

Example: "3 little secrets your boyfriend doesn't want you to know about and how to get him to let you in on them."

5. 5 biggest mistakes _____ make and how to avoid them.

Example: "5 biggest mistakes investors make and how to avoid them."

3 Tips for Creating Your Own Swipe File

In addition to the resources I mentioned earlier, your own swipe file could be a:

- Document on your computer where you can copy and paste exciting headlines you find online.
- Folder in your e-mail program where you tuck away e-mails with headlines that compelled you to open.
- File for those direct mail pieces you received in your mail box (yes, good 'ol "snail mail") that grabbed your attention.



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Finding the styles that speak to you, in these swipe files and elsewhere, helps you develop your skill with writing headlines that get read — and better yet — *acted upon*.

Read even more at <http://www.writedirection.com/secret-to-writing-better-headlines>

Okay, so you've grabbed your prospects' attention with your headline and your copy has been captivating and engaging, but now it's time for them to respond.

What About the Call-to-Action?

Often, my phone rings and the person on the other end is asking me if I'd review their Web site. He/she says something like, *"I paid a lot of money to have a Web site created & I loved the design. However, time has gone by and I haven't had any inquiries . . . responses . . . sales."*

As a copywriter, I go to the site and am surprised by what I see or I should say, by what I *don't* see. One major aspect that is missing is the CALL-TO-ACTION. And, I don't mean on one page - I mean a call-to-action on all the pages.

It may sound obvious, but it is vital that you tell your readers what it is you want them to do. Should they:

- Send for more information?
- Call or e-mail you?
- Register online?

And, this doesn't just apply to Web sites, but to any marketing materials such as brochures, catalogs, direct mail, etc.



John Jantsch of Duct Tape Marketing said this:

"... you see so many ineffective uses of direct mail – pieces that don't really offer a call to action, a place for someone to get more information. . . "

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9 Call-to-Action Tips

- 1. If you have a toll free number, say so and highlight it in larger type and tell people to call you.**
- 2. If you take PayPal and credit cards, list which ones you accept.**
- 3. If your product is sold by direct mail ask the reader to fill out the order form and return it in the mail.** Include a self-addressed envelope for their convenience. Put order forms in catalogs and reply cards in mailers.
- 4. If your product is sold at retail make sure you include the name and address of your store.** Obvious, you say? I've seen ads that omit these important details. Perhaps you might include a coupon in your ad and ask the reader to clip it out and bring it in to you.
- 5. If possible, give prospects an incentive for responding NOW.** Can you include a price-off coupon, a time-limited sale, a discount to the first 100 people who order, a free gift?
- 6. Make it *easy* for them to take action.** On your Web site, include a button/link to the registration page. If you're a retail store, include your company name, address and phone number. Include store hours and your various locations (if it applies).
- 7. Give them the opportunity to order for friends.** I was attending a webinar where they said "register now, bring a friend & your friend gets 50% off." What a great idea.
- 8. Give them the opportunity to spread out their payments.** Pay \$997 today or 3 easy payments of \$347.
- 9. Let them know their satisfaction is guaranteed.** A written guarantee relieves risk, especially when selling through mail order or on the World Wide Web.

Read even more at <http://www.writedirection.com/call-to-action>

AND here's a bonus tip #10 - one word you can add to your call-to- action that "tips readers over the edge."



In his book entitled, *Influence*, Robert Cialdini talks about a psychological study that focused on the power of the word: ***because***.

In short, the study found that when someone used the word “because” when asking to cut in line for the Xerox machine, even if the reason given was “*because I need to make copies,*” **people were 93% more likely to comply**. Now *that’s* compelling.



Whether you’re writing blog posts, web pages, advertising, or any other copy, be sure you include a call-to-action along with a compelling reason why your readers should act, “**...because you need to tip readers over the edge and give them a reason to take action,**” as Jonathan Goodman of Viralmomics says.

Whatever the reason may be, give them the BENEFITS of following your call-to-action and encourage more of them to follow your directions

Read even more at <http://www.writedirection.com/does-your-call-to-action-put-readers-to-sleep>

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When discussing calls-to-action with one client he said to me, *“my phone number is on my Web page.”* And, it was – in tiny type at the bottom of the page. Nowhere did the content say *“call me today,”* or *“dial this number and let’s talk.”*

If you want to hear from your prospects, visitors to your site, clients, etc. don’t forget to tell them what you want them to do and why.

Take another look at your marketing materials. Yes, your phone number might be in there along with your e-mail. However, it’s not enough to just put them in there and hope for the best. **Ask your prospects to respond and *make it easy for them to do so.***

Put this report down and take a deep breath. I know we've covered a lot, but I hope you'll walk away with 1 or 2 tips that you will implement as soon as you're done reading (and have taken that deep breath - or two). The faster you take action, the better your results.

About the author:



A recipient of the Rocky Mountain Direct Marketing Association's (RMDMA) "Creative Person of the Year Award," **Debra Jason** started **The Write Direction** in 1989. Past President of the RMDMA, she is a seasoned copywriter with more than 25 years of experience in the field of direct marketing.

When other writers have researched books on freelance writing and direct mail copy, they've turned to Debra for her input. She has been quoted in:

- *The Complete Guide to Writing Web-Based Advertising Copy to Get the Sale* by Vickie Taylor
- *Second Lives: Becoming a Freelance Writer* by Bill Harris
- *Modern Media Writing* by Rick Wilber & Randy Miller
- *Smart Business Solutions: Direct Marketing & Customer Management* by Douglas Gantenbein
- *Copywriting Success* by Darren Andrews

She is the author of the soon-to-be-released book entitled, *Millionaire Marketing on a Shoestring Budget™* (<http://millionairemarketingonashoestringbudget.com>) and co-author along with NY Times best-selling author, Joel Comm, and 40+ colleagues in *So What Do You Do? Discovering the Genius Next Door with One Simple Question* (<http://writedirection.com/so-what-do-you-do>).

In 2012, after 10 years living in paradise on the Garden Island of Kaua`i, Hawaii, Debra returned to Boulder, Colorado where she first started her business. In addition to being a featured guest on online programs she has presented numerous live workshops on marketing, social media and copywriting.

As a multi-faceted marketing mentor and found of the [Freelancers' Freedom Playground](#), Debra educates and inspires creative solopreneurs, passion-driven coaches and enthusiastic business owners to create a lifestyle business that provides them with the flexibility, fun and freedom to do what they love and live their dream!

She empowers you to communicate your message in a way that captivates and converts your prospects into loyal customers - *even if you have been struggling with how to transform your ideas into words in the past. This way you reach a broader audience, create a stream of clients and generate more income so that you can live the lifestyle you've dreamed about, which is why you went into business for yourself to begin with - isn't it?*

Marketing and writing with heart, not hype.

Debra offers one-on-one consulting and group trainings about marketing, copywriting, and LinkedIn as well done-for-you copywriting services specializing in content for brochures,



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catalogs, direct mail packages, sales pages, Web sites and more. Schedule a brief session with her to see if you're a fit at <http://writedirection.com/talkwithdebra>

If you're seeking a dynamic speaker for your organization or event, Debra speaks on the value of building relationships and the art of engaging as they relate to copywriting, marketing, networking, and social media marketing. You may reach her at **debra@writedirection.com**. Or online at <http://writedirection.com>.

Please connect with her on:

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