

Writing good advertising copy (Part 2)

 By [Chris Brewer](#)

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Last week [I discussed](#) how important it is to extol a product's benefits once you know who your target market group (TMG) is and once you've become totally familiar with the product or service itself.

This time, I'd like to examine some more homilies.

Being modern

The homemaker of today has different values to the homemakers of only ten years ago. The reason so many great copywriters are young is that they are in tune with the current values of life – and that's important. However, as much as the younger writers will be modern and trendy (because of their youth), how many of them will be out of touch with a more mature TMG (by virtue of their inexperience in life generally)?

Therefore, being young is definitely not a prerequisite. But being “modern” is.

Jerry Della Femina famously said he'd never seen a copywriter over the age of 40. Maybe he hadn't but it's interesting to note that David Ogilvy (widely regarded as one of the last century's best ever writers) only **began** his copywriting career at the age of 39. His biggest talent was the ability to empathise with his TMG – what we call now “being modern”.

The ‘slice of life’ approach

Depicting any form of emotion in a TV commercial (for example) is difficult enough and, as we shall see, some of the approaches available to the writer are more difficult to accomplish than others – particularly humour.

The slice-of-life commercial often makes audiences cringe because it's incredibly difficult to appear authentic in such a short space of time. Mostly this approach is as credible as last night's Foo Yong – totally unacceptable.

There have been hundreds, if not thousands, of commercials which tried to imitate “real life” and failed. It's really a question of not keeping in touch with the real consumer and the way their lives are conducted. Writers really have to **BE** the consumer.

If we follow this logic to its obvious conclusion, we will see that it is unrealistic for a man to write advertising copy for tampons or for a teetotaler to write an ad for a hangover cure.



Method writing... © Peter Bernik – 123RF.com

It's what's called "empathy" and we'll look at that closer some other time. Actors do it all the time, of course (what Johnny Vegas calls "method") so if the rôle calls for you to be a drunk then you'll do better if you spend time with drunks. Advertising is no different (especially when it comes to drunks).

An important point is best made at the beginning of the text or at the end. Words in the middle of body copy are more easily forgotten.

Unpleasant things are perceived and received equally as well as pleasant things. Pleasant and unpleasant approaches infer a degree of emotion – and a lack of emotion (aka not being "modern" or not addressing your TMG as a friend) is the result of bad copy.

There are some other writing tips that I'll be sharing with you next week. In the meantime it's vital to remember that you have to understand your Target Market Audience, how they think, how they behave and what motivates them.

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