

Marketing Made Easy

by Karon Thackston
<http://www.ktmarketing.com>



Hello!

Welcome to Marketing Made Easy - a compilation of some of the most popular Ezine articles I have written and published over the last 2 years. I appreciate your interest and sincerely hope you find this book to be of value.

This ebook is designed to address the primary setback most entrepreneurs have... failure to know and understand their target audience in every aspect of marketing. Through each of the articles contained within this ebook, you will find information that will greatly expand the ways you think of your target audience and how you apply that knowledge.

My company, KT & Associates, offers targeted copywriting, copy editing, ezine article promotion and marketing assistance for small businesses. I encourage you to visit the article archive of the Web site where I post all new articles as they are written. You can find KT & Associates at www.ktmarketing.com.

This ebook is intended for free distribution. Feel free to give it away as a bonus for subscriptions to your ezine, a gift for a purchase made at your site or in any other legal way you see fit. This book is copyrighted and all rights are reserved by KT & Associates.

Table of Contents

Chapter I: Getting Inside the Mind Of Your Customer

- [The Most Important Thing To Know About Advertising](#)
- [So What?!](#)
- [Customer Preferences In Online Advertising](#)
 - [Part One](#) - Information Rules Over Entertainment
 - [Part Two](#) - The Annoyance Factor of Online Advertising
 - [Part Three](#) - Look At Behavioral Traits Not Demographics

Chapter II: Develop A Plan of Action That Works

- [Putting Together the Pieces of the Marketing Puzzle](#)
- [There's Free Advertising Money Out There](#)
- [Fast, Good, Cheap](#)

Chapter III: Successful Copywriting

- [Headlines - Life or Death of Your Advertising](#)
- [Discover THE Most Important Element of Your Web Site](#)
- [Long Copy or Short Copy](#)
- [Should I Say Me or We?](#)
- [Light a Fire Under Your Customers](#)

Chapter IV: Offline Marketing With Online Results

- [Free Offline Methods To Promote Your Internet Business](#)
- [Do It Like A Pro ~ How to Create A Brochure](#)

Chapter V: Publicity - It's FREE & It Works

- [Getting Free Publicity – How to Write A Press Release](#)

Chapter VI: Don't Waste Your Time - Track Your Advertising Results

- [Which Ads Work and Which Ones Don't](#)

Chapter I: Getting Inside the Mind Of Your Customer

- [The Most Important Thing To Know About Advertising](#)
- [So What?!](#)
- [Customer Preferences In Online Advertising](#)
 - [Part One](#) - Information Rules Over Entertainment
 - [Part Two](#) - The Annoyance Factor of Online Advertising
 - [Part Three](#) - Look At Behavioral Traits Not Demographics

The Most Important Thing To Know About Advertising

© 2000 Karon Thackston

<http://www.ktamarketing.com>

I am often asked, "What is the most important thing to know about advertising?" The answer is simple, although it eludes many people.

Know your target audience!

When you ask most business owners who their target audience is, you are generally quoted a list of demographics. While demographics are a portion of the make up, to know your target audience goes far beyond statistics.

Advertising is a message you send to the people whose business you would like to gain. It is a form of communication to a specific group of buyers. When you communicate with friends and family, you take the communication style of that particular person into account before you speak or write. The same holds true for your target audience.

When you begin to write a letter, you don't sit down and begin writing without first determining who the letter will be addressed to. If you are writing your mother, you will no doubt design the message differently than if you are writing your best friend. Your verbiage changes and your style changes according to who you are writing. You make a point, although sometimes subconsciously, to write in such a way that your audience will be receptive. These same principles apply when addressing your target audience via advertising messages.

Find out all you can about what kind of people your target group consists of... not just what demographic segment they fall into. Find out if they are analytical or creative types, if they are business professionals or stay-at-home moms. The closer you get to those in your target audience, the more effectively you'll be able to communicate with them...and the better received your advertising will be!

So What?!

© 2000 Karon Thackston

<http://www.ktamarketing.com>

When writing advertising copy, asking this question is essential. Why? Because your customer is going to ask it over and over again.

Customers do that. I'll bet you do it, too! Customers want to know what's in it for them. That's why it is vitally important to constantly work the answers to "So what" and "Why" into your copy. This is done by listing features, but more importantly by listing benefits.

Let me give you an example. Let's say you see an ad for a cat litter. The ad indicates this cat litter offers specially enhanced particles. Everyone's next question will be "So What?" The specially enhanced particles are a feature of the cat litter. The feature doesn't relate why the customer needs this product. The feature may be quite impressive, however the person watching wants to know why they should be interested in those particles. To answer the question at hand we need to list the benefit.

It just so happens that these specially enhanced particles were developed to absorb every single bit of odor left in the litter box. These particles will leave the litter box just as fresh smelling as before kitty did his business. That is what the customer needs to know. That information is what the customer will relate to. Now, are you asking, "So What"? Ok, I'll tell you.

When writing copy, be sure to include features and benefits. Let's look at our cat litter ad again. If we make just one small adjustment to the copy it becomes much more powerful.

Kitty Fresh cat litter was developed with specially enhanced particles that adsorb all odors from the litter box. Your house stays fresh smelling all day. And because these particles work so well, you won't need to change the litter box as often. Try Kitty Fresh cat litter today!

How's that? That answers "so what" and "why". The customer understands what the particles are and why they need them.

Here are some other questions to remember when writing ad copy:

- 1) Why does that feature benefit me?
- 2) Why would I use that product?
- 3) Why should I buy your service/product over any other?
- 4) What's in it for me?

When writing, focus on what is going through the customer's mind. Try having a friend or associate give you feedback on your copy. Tell them to answer the question "So what". If they can, you've done your job!

Customer Preferences in Online Advertising-Part 1 of 3 Information Rules Over Entertainment

© 2000 Karon Thackston

www.ktmarketing.com

Online consumers have given some very explicit information regarding their preferences when it comes to advertising. According to research conducted by Jupiter (www.jup.com), a worldwide authority on Internet commerce, there are several things online business people need to be aware of in order to increase their advertising effectiveness.

I have created this 3-part series of articles as a commentary relating to the results of Jupiter's study entitled, "Inside the Mind of the Online Consumer". It will help you understand what the information means to you. Taking heed to the recommendations Jupiter reveals will most certainly improve your advertising response rate.

Customers Use the Internet for Information

Forty-eight (48) percent of consumers online use the Internet primarily as a utility device, not an entertainment device. This means they are using the Internet as a tool, not a toy. Because of that fact, consumers are primarily looking for information, not games. This is not a new revelation. However, how this fact relates to advertising is new.

Customers Want Information-Based Ads

According to the customers in Jupiter's survey, they respond to advertising that compliments their online activities. Forty (40) percent said they respond more readily to online ads that are informative rather than entertaining. This would include new product developments, benefits-oriented ads and those focusing on service issues.

Notice that one of the categories listed is "product benefits". This is where the majority of online advertisers fall to pieces. It is simply imperative that online advertising copy be filled with benefits. Online consumers are looking to answer the question, "What's in it for me" over and over again. They are seeking information and the advertising you give them should fill that need.

How to Build An Information-Oriented Ad

So now that we've learned that customers are ready and waiting for us to provide them with information-based advertising... how do we do it? Does that automatically mean you have to go with long copy? No, not at all.

According to Jupiter, "Advertisers that are marketing high-consideration products, which require a more informed purchase process, should focus more exclusively on consumers' online information needs. Advertisers that are marketing low-consideration products – for which consumers require little information in order to complete a purchase – have more leeway to take a less informative and more entertaining approach to their advertising."

It's just as I've stated for years. Let your target market lead your decision to use long or short copy. Those seeking information on affiliate programs, MLM programs, high-investment products or services, etc. are going to be seeking more information than someone in search of a new bathrobe. For more detail in this area, visit http://www.ktamarketing.com/articles_longcopy.html.

Here are some suggestions you can use to help build a successful information-type ad:

1. **Include statistics** – When you make a sales claim, back it up with information, including statistics. You might say, "Our saucepans have a non-stick coating that's guaranteed for life. In actual, in-home testing, food did not stick to our saucepans 98.3% of the time."
2. **Include targeted benefits** – You must include targeted benefits to make your message hit its mark. Let's take the saucepan example a bit further. "Our saucepans have a non-stick coating that's guaranteed for life. In actual, in-home testing, food did not stick to our saucepans 98.3% of the time. You get omelets that come out of the pan whole. You get sautéed chicken that makes a beautiful presentation on the plate. You get less waste, less burnt food and more healthy cooking because you use no oil." Now those are benefits any chef would think are important.
3. **Provide content on your site that backs up your claims** – As you surf the Web take note of information that supports your advertising claims. Surveys, research, reports, testimonials, etc. can all provide valuable information that could move a customer from the point-of-decision to the point-of-purchase.
4. **Submit articles** – Customers looking for information are much more likely to respond to a URL listed in an article than a bold-faced advertisement. Because articles provide information in a non-threatening way, they work along the same level as endorsements and referrals. Write articles relating to your area of expertise and submit them to article archive sites and Ezine publishers.
5. **Offer a free report** – Give away information free with a purchase or subscription to your newsletter. Since information is what surfers are looking to receive, it will work as a big incentive.

Next in the series will be a focus on ads that are avoided and shunned by online customers... and how to be sure yours isn't one of them!

Customer Preferences in Online Advertising-Part 2 of 3

The Annoyance Factor of Online Advertising

© 2000 Karon Thackston

www.ktamarketing.com

In part one of this series, we discussed the fact that studies show information leads over entertainment. We discovered that Web site visitors are primarily looking for information, and therefore, ads should be more information-oriented.

The second of the three discoveries in the Jupiter Communications (www.jup.com) survey that I will comment on is the discovery that some online advertising is seen as an extreme annoyance. Let's be sure your ads aren't included in that group.

What They Hate

No one likes to be bombarded with advertising. We all see it everywhere we go. It's on television, the radio, billboards, and even grocery story carts for goodness sake. However, online advertising is viewed as the most aggressive.

Jupiter found that 49% of those surveyed said online advertising was the most intrusive of all. Many were willing to tolerate ads in broadcast or print media, probably due to the fact that they could leave the room, change the station or turn the page. However, online ads hold an extremely negative reputation.

From my experience, this is most likely due to the fact that online ads often have a "used car dealer" air to them. I have seen many that look like they're all produced from the same template.

These ads promise the sun, the moon and the stars. They scream about why you simply must buy the product or service. Then, to make it worse, the site captures your email address and you receive hundreds of email advertisements via an autoresponder that apparently has no end.

The Worst Possible Ads

The worst offender is pop-up ads. These are the advertisements that pop onto the screen as you click through a Web site. They advertise specials or offer subscriptions to Ezines, etc. Once thought to be a tremendous sales tool, these ads have become increasingly offensive.

Sixty-nine percent (69%) of those in the Jupiter survey viewed pop-up ads negatively. Almost 25% found them so annoying they would completely avoid sites that used them. That's a powerful statistic. Can you afford to have 25% of your Web site traffic never return simply because you employ pop-up ads?

What We Can Do To Make It Better

So, now that we know what our site visitors hate, how can we adjust our advertising in order to please them (and make them buy)?

Here are some recommendations to consider when creating your next piece of advertising:

1. Don't do "anything and everything" to get the buyer's attention. Everyone that comes to your site isn't going to buy. The harder you try to get their attention and force them to read your ad, the harder they will try to escape.

2. Remember from Part 1 in this series, site visitors are looking for information primarily. Include your ad along with other, useful information. Perhaps you might try offering a free report or article that provides information the visitor can use. At the bottom, insert an advertisement for a product or service you offer that can help them further.
3. Don't use pop-up ads.
4. Keep your target audience in mind. Business people aren't going to have the time or inclination to participate in game-type ads. On the other hand, teenagers love them. If your target group is younger people, games might be the thing for you. Design your ad to meet the preferences of your target customer.

Using these suggestions will help your ads be more readily received – instead of avoided at all costs!

In Part 3, the final article in this series, we'll look at the behavioral aspect of online advertising and discover what characteristics and traits should be kept in mind.

Customer Preferences in Online Advertising-Part 3 of 3 Look At Behavioral Traits Not Demographics

© 2000 Karon Thackston

www.ktamarketing.com

In part two of this series, we discussed the annoyance factor of online ads and how to overcome them. In this last article, I'll tell you how to use behavioral traits to direct advertising efforts rather than demographics.

I am a strong proponent of defining your target audience. If you don't know who you are communicating with, how will you be able to do it effectively? Jupiter Communications' (www.jup.com) survey backs up my claims.

What Difference Does Behaviorism Make?

I'm sure almost everyone has heard the phrase features vs. benefits. The entire premise behind this statement is that you must tell the audience what's in it for them. How, if you don't know their concerns, their hopes and their needs, are you going to define benefits that will make a difference to your target customer?

The difference between demographics and behaviorism is that one tells you the basics and the other tells you the details. Demographics let you know that your customer is a man employed in upper management who is 45 years old, has 2 children and makes approximately \$50,000 per year.

Behaviorism tells you that, because he's a man, he is compelled by information-type ads. (If he were a she, she would most likely respond to animation or sound.) It also tells you that he's burned out on corporate politics, having a mid-life crisis, can't bring to think of how he's going to pay for college for 2 kids and is in bad need of a raise! Now... which profile do you think you could communicate more effectively with? The demographic or the behavior? (It's a rhetorical question!)

Target Everything About Your Advertising

People hear the phrase "target marketing" and "target audience" all the time. But do you understand how extremely important those phrases are to the success of your marketing campaign? You simply must, MUST know your target audience.

When you communicate with them through advertising, you absolutely have to be able to address their fears, their problems and their concerns with a solution. They want to know what's in it for them. If you don't understand what they need, you simply can't answer that question.

Targeted advertising increases sales!

When you create an advertising piece, especially online, every aspect should reach out and grab your target customer. This means the copy (especially), the design, the colors, the photos, the graphics, the packaging (if applicable), the ordering process... absolutely everything.

Segmenting Your Broad Market

One trouble that often plagues businesses is the fact that their target audience is so broad. If that is the case with your company, try segmenting the market and appealing to each segment's behavioral traits.

For example: perhaps you're a Real Estate agent. You need a Web site and want to appeal to several segments of the Real Estate market. What can you do to incorporate the behavioral traits and other preferences of so many people?

Divide your site into smaller areas specifically targeted to each segment. You might choose to have a link on your home page that says "Need to sell your home? Click here!" In that section you can speak specifically to the needs and concerns of home sellers. (Who are usually women!)

Another area might be directed toward home buyers. These people want lots and lots of information, including pictures. Be sure to give it to them along with some articles dealing with hiring a moving company, transferring your utilities to a new address and how to prepare children for a new school. Get it? Major decisions require lots of information.

Keep Focused On the Customer

Above all, keep focused on your customers and their needs. Resist the temptation to use your favorite shade of pink as a primary color in your Web design if your customers are mostly men. Remember that you can choose to include an optional flash presentation within your site if you're dealing mostly with women. And always, always address your target market's concerns and needs with benefit-oriented copy.

By combining the information within the 3 parts of this series, you can truly make your online advertising more powerful... and more readily received by your customers.

***The initial survey (about which I have written this commentary) was conducted by Jupiter (www.jup.com), a worldwide authority on Internet commerce.

Chapter II: Develop A Plan of Action That Works

- [Putting Together the Pieces of the Marketing Puzzle](#)
- [There's Free Advertising Money Out There](#)
- [Fast, Good, Cheap](#)

Putting Together The Pieces of The Marketing Puzzle

© 2000 Karon Thackston

www.ktamarketing.com

When I started in advertising... too many years go to admit to... I began to notice that most "do-it-yourselfers" were making the same mistakes. They were treating each aspect of marketing and advertising as a separate entity. Instead of creating a plan based on the marketing process, they were picking and choosing individual areas to concentrate on. Needless-to-say, they didn't have much marketing success.

Marketing is the entire process from product conception to delivery. Most people mistakenly believe that the words "marketing" and "advertising" can be interchanged. In actuality, advertising is only one part of the entire marketing process.

The marketing process is like a puzzle. If you leave out any of the pieces, you'll find a big hole that detracts from your end result. So what are the pieces and how do you put them all together? Here, I'll show you the basics that must be included in your marketing plan.

Product Conception and Definition

The first step to marketing a product (or service) is deciding what the product is going to be. Before doing anything else, write down a clear definition of your product or service. What is it basically? What will it do/provide? What are the features? What are the benefits?

Your Customers

Next, and most importantly, you'll need to decide if there are people who will have a need for your product. This group of people is called your target audience. They are the ones that you will advertise to in an effort to sell your wares. It does no good whatsoever to have the best product or service if no one will buy it. Who will have a need for your product or service? Why will they find it useful? What problems do they have that your product or service will solve? How often will they need to buy it? Are multiple purchases possible?

Reaching Your Target Audience Through Advertising

Step three is to determine a plan of action for reaching your target audience through advertising or publicity. Where does your target audience spend time? What magazines or newspapers do they read? What radio stations do they listen to? What TV shows do they watch? How do you plan to reach these people where they are? Can you reach them with ads, brochures, Web sites, mailings or how?

Your target audience will also give you what you need to know in order to package your product and design your advertising efforts. Follow their lead. If you are marketing professional services to corporations, you'll need to stay with darker colors, professionally printed brochures and flyers (instead of homemade with templates) and above all, copy that speaks their language.

This is where advertising comes into play. Again, it does no good to have a super ad or the best-looking Web site on the 'Net if you can't get it seen by the right people. Spend a lot of time and consideration on this step of the process. It will make or break your business.

Packaging

Packaging is not only a step used for products. How you package your services plays a major role in your success, too.

Again, follow the lead of your target audience. What will appeal to them? Bright colors, dark colors, a hard plastic casing or a cardboard box?

For services, your packaging comes in the form of your Web site design, brochures, corporate profiles and other marketing materials. Make sure they fit with the profile of your customer – not necessarily with your personal tastes.

Distribution

For products, the distribution step involves things like inventory, shipping and returns. For services, it involves delivery time, follow-up and refunds. How will you handle this piece to the puzzle? Will you need to rent a warehouse? Have private trucks or use a freight carrier? Can you provide services in a timely manner? How will you handle returns and refunds? All these questions must be considered, and proper arrangements made, before planning to sell the first item.

Sales

Even if you're a one-man show, you'll need to have a sales strategy in place. Most small business owners wear several hats. One of yours might be that of "salesman". Things to consider during this phase of your marketing plan will be: what sales methods can you employ that will appeal to your target audience? Can you use a sales letter for direct mail or your Web site? Will you have "live" salespeople who employ telemarketing to make sales? Will you have a brick and mortar shop where customers visit you and meet a salesperson face-to-face? The process of selling can't be overlooked as it is what takes over once advertising has done its job.

Customer Service

Finally, no basic marketing plan is complete without proper thought being given to customer service. "Customer service isn't part of a marketing plan", you say. It most certainly is! It is much easier (and cheaper) to sell to an existing customer than it is to sell to a brand new customer. Not to mention, without excellent customer service, your repeat sales will dwindle into nonexistence.

Create a plan for handling your customers properly and professionally. Will you have a frequent buyer program? What will you do when someone has a special situation that goes against normal company policy? How will you let your customers know you appreciate their business? How can you encourage repeat business?

As you see, each step is intertwined with all the others. Customer service issues relate back to sales and distribution. Sales questions make you think of advertising. Your target audience plays a major part in all areas of the plan.

Don't sell yourself short. Leaving one or more pieces of the puzzle out will certainly cause problems. Putting all the pieces together will give you a definite plan-of-action and a much more positive result.

There's Free Advertising Money Out There. Do You Know Where To Find It?

© Karon Thackston 2000

<http://www.ktmarketing.com>

Even those with very little experience in advertising know running ads can get quite expensive. There's the cost of designing, copy writing, placing ads and tracking ads. The bill runs very high sometimes. However, there might be money available to help you with your advertising expense. It's called Co-Op (cooperative) Advertising.

Co-Op ads are those that highlight a specific manufacturer (usually) in addition to your business. I'm sure you've seen them before. For example, McDonald's® will run a flyer in the Sunday newspaper featuring Coke® as a part of a combo meal. When McDonald's® does this, Coke® picks up part of the expense for those ads. McDonald's® and Coke® work in cooperation to promote both products.

How does it work? Many manufacturers set aside a certain amount of co-op funds each year in order to give some help to those who sell their products at the retail level. By helping you promote your business, the manufacturer is also helping to promote his product. It's a cheap way for the manufacturer to pick up some additional exposure.

This type of program also applies to specials and sales. I'm sure you've noticed that most computer manufacturers offer discount or free printers in their packages. The maker of the printer and the PC company are producing co-op advertising in order to promote both products. In return, they share the ad expense.

Each co-op plan is a little different. Normally the manufacturer will set forth stipulations as to how many times their name or logo should appear in the advertisement, what frequency the ads should run, and perhaps one or two other guidelines. You may be required to get approval prior to submitting ads to the media. Once the ad has run, simply send a copy of the ad, along with your invoice, and you'll receive a portion of what you spent back in return.

Co-op ads can apply to any business. Perhaps you offer an on-site car detailing service. You might check with the manufacturers of the soap and wax you use. These companies could very well offer you co-op funds for including their name and/or logo in your advertising pieces.

If you own a restaurant, definitely check with the beverage distributor you use. Most soft drink companies offer co-op funds.

How much will you save by working in cooperation with other companies? I have seen some outfits that pay as much as 75% of the ad cost. Most pay between 35% - 50%. That's quite a bit of savings.

If your company sells products made by other manufacturers, you may very well have co-op money available to you. The best way to find out is to ask. Usually your manufacturer's representative will know who you should call to find out the details about any co-op programs they offer.

Sound too simple? Well, you do have to play by the rules – and co-op advertising will not be available to everyone. If you find a program you are eligible for it would certainly benefit you to participate.

So what if you don't work in conjunction with any manufacturers? You might try creating your own co-op advertising program. For example: if you are a landscaper, try approaching some lawn care maintenance companies in your area. Because you both are aiming for the same target audience (but for different reasons) this would be a perfect match.

Your ads could list the benefits of having the lawn professionally designed, and then maintained by the lawn care firm. The two companies would split the cost of the ad, saving both a good deal of money.

Whichever direction you choose to take, co-operation in advertising always benefits those involved by creating greater exposure and drastically reducing ad costs. Be a savvy advertiser...create or participate in a co-op program before your next ad goes out.

Fast, Good, Cheap – Pick Any Two

© 2000 Karon Thackston

<http://www.ktamarketing.com>

Think about that statement for a minute. Is it true? Sure it is! Especially for small businesses. If you want something in a hurry and you need it to be of good quality, it won't be cheap. On the other hand, if you want something quick and you don't have a lot of money chances are it won't be the best there is. Now we get to the combination most small businesses need - good and cheap. You're right... it won't happen quickly.

This is where the majority of small businesses and e-businesses find themselves. I fall into this category, too. We want to look professional in all our efforts, but we aren't made of money. I need my advertising, my customer service efforts, my billing, my database management, my web hosting and everything else to be quality - and to be inexpensive. So what does that mean according to the equation above? It's going to take some time.

Patience is not a well know attribute for entrepreneurs. So those who are lacking in this area will be excited by this article. I speak from the arena of attracting and keeping customers through advertising and customer service. Let's look at some ways to gain ground in these departments without a lot of cash.

- **Ezines** - I know, I know. Everyone you talk with is screaming the praises of Ezines and Newsletters. I don't intend to rehash the same 'ole routine. I want to bring up 2 things that will promote your business at no charge with more speed than conventional marketing.

(1) Advertise in your own Ezine. I receive countless Ezines and newsletters in my mailbox each day. Many of them carry advertising throughout or at the end of the publication. Do you know that I've only seen 3 newsletters (besides my own) that had an advertisement for it's own company listed. If you have a monthly special, a web special, a discounted price, a free product... list it in your Ezine. It only makes sense to take full advantage of the database you've built.

(2) Submit Guest Articles. This is a long-time advertising/publicity practice that has rolled over into the web world. When you submit articles for publication in other newsletters you do 2 things: (a) you create a forum for your business or web site by placing it in front of the targeted reader; and (b) you create an image for yourself as an expert. "Those who get published must know what they are talking about", is the common thinking. Both are excellent forms of advertising and over time they tend to have a snowball affect!

Please remember to require the publisher to include your tag line (your name, company name and web address) with each article, and only submit articles to Ezines that fall in line with your target market. (Quick trick: submit the articles you've already run in your own Ezine!)

Where do you find lots of newsletters and Ezines that fall into your target group? Check out: <http://scout.cs.wisc.edu/scout/caservices/new-list/>

- **Appreciate Your Customers** - There is no better way to build a reputation in customer service than treating your customers well. You don't have to let people run all over you. The statement I love is, "The customer isn't always right, but he is always the customer." Basically, show your customers appreciation for their patronage. It would have been very simple for them to choose another business to buy from. They didn't... they chose you! Like using Ezines and newsletters in your advertising, showing appreciation reaps its reward fairly quickly. Think about it... when someone treats you in a special way, you want to be around that person. The same applies to customer service. Appreciation is cheap and it is wonderful for building customer loyalty. So exactly how can we show appreciation without blowing the budget?

(1) **Tell your customers "Thank You"**. Every time your customers buy something, tell them "thank you". When they complain, tell them "thanks for bringing that to my attention". At every opportunity, let them know they are appreciated.

(2) **Start a database**. If you can, collect the birthdays of your customers. Mail them a birthday card and they will remember you forever! Everyone likes to be remembered on their birthday. If you choose to include a coupon or discount of some sort, fine. If not, the customer will appreciate still the gesture.

Also, send special information or discounts only to those in your database. I do this periodically and it goes over with a bang every time! I email articles I see on the 'Net that I know would be of interest to my database. Occasionally, I email a discount "coupon" for dollars off on my services. Be sure to let the customer know these specials are ONLY for loyal customers.

(3) **Get creative**. One company (named Dove Communications) would leave little Dove Chocolates on their contact's desk each time they were on-site to perform work. Everyone loved the candy and remembered Dove Communications because of the innovative way they left their "calling card".

Appreciation is the best mortar when it comes to building customer loyalty.

Building a small business on a shoestring budget is not an easy task. Often times the Fast, Good, Cheap equation takes its toll. But time is on your side and with consistency, and a little creativity, you will succeed!

Chapter III: Successful Copywriting

- [Headlines - Life or Death of Your Advertising](#)
- [Discover THE Most Important Element of Your Web Site](#)
- [Long Copy or Short Copy](#)
- [Should I Say Me or We?](#)
- [Light a Fire Under Your Customers](#)

Headlines – The Life or Death of Your Advertising

© 2000 Karon Thackston

<http://www.ktamarketing.com>

I'll bet *that* headline got your attention! That's the whole point of headlines... to get the attention of your reader and cause them to want to read what's below the headline.

Headlines should make such an impact that the reader will be intrigued enough to read the article, advertisement or story that follows. This is *the* most vital part of your advertisement. If the headline isn't interesting, you have a poor chance to get your point across in the copy because the copy will most likely not be read.

So what goes into a power-packed headline? Well, here are a few suggestions:

1. **Solve a problem** – I read a great headline on a web site for custom written poetry (www.peoplepoems.com). It said, 'We can solve your gift problem in 1 day for just \$15.00'. Wow! If I were in the market for a gift, and didn't know what to buy, I would definitely read the copy that followed *that* headline. It offered to solve my problem and *that* caught my attention.
2. **Use a statistic** – One customer service page I saw stated, 'It costs 30 to 40 times more to gain a new customer than keep an existing one.' I know as a small business owner that statistic really hits home. Every small business owner is looking to save money in every area possible. Most are very interested to read what needs to be done to keep their existing customers.
3. **State a quote** – Did someone famous say something that applies to your advertising? Can you put a new twist on an old saying? Use it! A weight loss center might try something like, 'If it's not over 'til the fat lady sings then this is going to take awhile!'
4. **Ask a question** – Perhaps our same weight loss center might ask, 'What does it take to lose 20 pounds by summer?' One word of caution with asking questions... never ask a question that can be answered with, 'No'. For example, our weight loss center would not want to ask, 'Do you know how to lose 20 pounds by summer?' The reader might very well answer, 'No' and skip the ad. If they knew how, they wouldn't be reading your ad!
5. **Create a mystery** – A consumer's watchdog group once began an ad with 'Who's responsible for this!?' That would definitely make me want to find out what the heck was going on.

Above all, make your headline applicable to your target audience. Just as the question, 'Do you know how to lose 20 pounds by summer' doesn't apply because it can be answered with no, it also alienates the target group.

Headlines should be thought out carefully and given a great deal of attention. They are, after all, the life or death of your ad. Creating effective headlines will go a long way toward building more powerful advertising. And powerful advertising makes more sales!

Discover THE Most Important Element of Your Web Site

© 2000 Karon Thackston

www.ktmarketing.com

There are so many ingredients that go into making a successful Web site. Layout, design, colors, graphics, photos, links and copy (text) are all included in the mix. Do you know which of these is the most important element? Believe it or not, copy!

That's right. Copy is where your attention should fall first when designing a site. There are several reasons why this component requires special consideration. Let's look at three areas copy impacts and discover the true bearing it has on your site and your visitors.

Gets Your Message Across

First and foremost, the copy on your Web site must get your message across to the visitor. Its function is to provide information and/or sell a product or service, depending on the purpose of your site. Photos can show products, but they can't make the sale by themselves. Stop and think for a moment. Have you ever purchased anything based solely on a photo? The majority of customers will require details about a product or service before buying. Copy is the bridge between indecision and purchase.

Draws Attention

The headlines on your Web site draw more attention than the graphics or photos. Stanford University, in conjunction with The Poynter Institute, recently completed a four-year study that proved the importance of text over graphics on Web sites. (See www.poynter.org/eyetrack2000/body.htm) According to this research 'readers of print newspapers looked first at the lead art element on a newspaper page and then moved their eyes to the biggest headline.' However, the study continues with, 'Web site readers tend to look first and most intently at plain text, passing lightly over photos and images'. Contrary to popular belief, the copy on your site gets attention from the visitor before the other elements.

Increases Chances of Good Search Engine Positioning

Robin Nobles, of the Academy of Web Specialists

(<http://www.academywebspecialists.com/>), recently wrote an article discussing doorway pages. In it Robin made the following comment, 'Since every page is essentially a doorway into your site anyway, concentrate on building content. Now you're giving the engines just what they want to see these days: content'.

Unfortunately, many Web designers and do-it-yourselfers are not aware of the importance of copy in the overall workings of search engines. Without solid content it is almost impossible to get positioned well by search engines. The copy on the site must be a delicate balance of repeated keywords and promotional information in order to make sense to the reader and meet engine criteria. The more times your keywords are presented within the copy, the greater your chance to receive a position in the coveted Top 20. However, overload your copy with keywords and key phrases and you'll find yourself labeled as a spammer and be banned from the engine – permanently!

There are also other factors involved with copy and engine position. The site title and site description must be just as delicately created as the body copy in order to obtain high rankings.

Considering these three facts brings a whole new light to the importance of excellent, well created Web site copy. Before you decide on colors or graphics or photos or design, stop and give due thought to the copy first. It will pay off in the long run!

Long Copy Works Better – Or Is It Short Copy?

© 2000 Karon Thackston

www.ktmarketing.com

Ahhh! The never-ending battle. I'm sure you've heard both statements made with passion. Those that believe you must walk your customer through each and every benefit preach, "Long copy sells better!" Proponents of this copywriting method say customers need to be "lead" or "teased" into reading the next paragraph and the next. Finally, when you have them drooling, you reveal the punch line.

On the other hand, advocates of short copy state that consumers today have extremely short attention spans. Copy that's "to-the-point" is a necessity in order to make a sale at all. According to these experts, the long, drawn-out copy gets tossed right out the window by busy, impatient readers. Feed it to them fast or you'll lose them to the competition. So exactly who's right? They both are!

No, I'm not being politically correct and I'm not avoiding the issue. The honest truth is that all people in the world do not communicate in the same way. Due to this fact, no one copywriting approach will work with every single product or service. As with every other aspect of advertising, you must look to your target audience for the answer.

I've used this analogy for years... when you begin to write a letter you do not sit down and write then decide who you will mail the letter to. Before you put pen to paper you know who the recipient of the message will be. You know their communication style and how to best phrase the information so it will be well received. The same applies to copywriting.

Let's say, just as an example, that your target audience consists of small business owners. These business owners happen to all be Certified Public Accountants. Just from this tiny bit of information I can tell you the target group is extremely busy, is very detail oriented and has a bottom line mentality. These people are generally analytical thinkers. Based on these facts, I would not dare write copy to this target audience in long form. Why? It would most likely not be read.

The group above communicates in short, precise bursts. They are looking for the bottom line first and an explanation afterwards. The most effective way to get the attention of this group (in writing) is to keep it short, sweet and to the point. Otherwise you will lose them in what they consider to be a "bunch of fluff". These folks are definitely members of the short copy group.

So who belongs to the long copy group? People making an investment. I don't mean an investment in the stock market (so to speak). I'm talking about people who are going to make a large investment of time or money in anything. People who are thinking of joining an affiliate program or multilevel marketing program would be receptive to long form copy. Those who are going to invest many hours in a self-help process would appreciate long copy. Let me explain.

When people are going to invest time or money (or both) in something they get nervous. Customers need to be reassured that they are making the right decision. They need to be reminded of why they need to purchase this product or service. A wealth of information makes these prospective clients more secure about their decision.

Yes, there are other target groups that would benefit from both long form and short form copy. There are a multitude of them to say the least. As the advertiser, your job is to discover which type of communication style will be received well by your prospects. (A company named Myers Briggs offers an excellent course on defining communication styles. I've participated in their training and found it to be highly beneficial.)

So what about the writers who swear their copywriting approach will cause major increases in response rates? What about the writers who say their method works for any product or service?

"But this guy said his copywriting style caused a 50% increase in the direct mail response rate of a jewelry store." I've heard this at least a hundred times. Maybe it did. However, I've never been a real fan of statistics when used to prove a point such as this.

There are two items in the above statement that cause me concern. The first is the percentage. We don't know how many direct mail pieces were originally mailed. Perhaps on the first campaign 50 envelopes were sent. Direct mail normally provides a 1-3% response rate. If we allow the 3% in our example, that would mean the original campaign received 1.5 responses. A 50% increase means the mailing using the new copywriting style received 2.25 responses. Technically, that is a 50% increase.

The second alarm that goes off is the phrase "response rate". Most advertisers don't understand this statement. Response rate does not equal sales. Response rate equals responses. Literally, if a person calls to ask a question in relation to the mailing it is considered a response - even if that person never purchases. I caution you to beware of those with "one size fits all" copy.

Yes, there are big names out there that will tell you that one particular style of copy works to sell each and every product and service. Again, technically, I suppose they are right. However, it does not sell to each and every target audience. If you don't get through to the target audience, the copy - regardless of who's style it is - is a waste of time and effort.

Should I Say Me or We?

© 2000 Karon Thackston

<http://www.ktamarketing.com>

Many of my clients are small businesses or home-based businesses. When we begin writing copy for a web site, brochure, etc. one question never fails to surface.

"Should I say 'Me' or 'We' in my copy?"

One customer typifies the dilemma. She stated, "Karon, I am the business. It's just me. But I don't want to *seem* small. I don't know if people will trust me if they know I'm the only person involved. However, it would be untruthful for me to have you write the copy using 'we' because there is no 'we'."

So what's the answer?

It's Only Me

Let me tell you right up front – there is no shame in being a small or home-based business. There is no reason to believe you have less to offer if you are the sole employee of that business. As a matter of fact, being small has some very distinct advantages.

If your quandary is whether your potential clients will snub you because you're working solo... don't worry. Small and home-based businesses are extremely common these days. From personal experience I will tell you that your clients will ask questions about your years of experience, your successes, your references and your ability to complete the job on time. I doubt they will blink an eye if you mention you work alone. In which case, "me" is extremely appropriate.

The Whole Group

With that said, let's now look at the other side of the coin. Do you plan to grow? With that growth, do you plan to hire others to work for the business? Do you have partners, advisors or some type of council/board that you work with to gain information and direction? Are you a MLM or affiliate member with a down line?

If you answered "yes" to these questions you would be more likely to include "we" in your advertising copy. You may be the entire make-up of the company at this point, but if you have plans to add employees in the future you can save some time and money by including "we" now.

This will eliminate the need to edit your web site copy, re-print your brochures or change your sales letters in the future.

If you work alone but have advisors or associates who you consult, including we is also the way to go. (Visit <http://www.ktamarketing.com/aboutus.html>) On this page, you'll notice that I provide information about myself and also explained who the "associates" are. This helps your customers get a firm grasp on who you are and how you do business.

None of the Above

There is one last option. Say neither. Your copy could be written in a way so that only the business name is mentioned. For example, "ABC Company offers 14K gold and diamond bracelets at 50% off suggested retail. Shop around. You will not find a more extensive collection of fine jewelry at such reasonable prices. However, ABC is

more than willing to beat the competition on cost – even on sale items. Visit www.abccompany.com today.”

By writing using only the company’s name, the dilemma of me or we is eliminated all together.

Whichever you choose, be consistent. Using “me” on your web site, “we” in your brochure and only the company name in your sales letters will cause some confusion. Choose one and stick with it throughout all your copy. Doing so will help create a flow in all the elements of your campaign.

Light A Fire Under Your Customers

© 2000 Karon Thackston

<http://www.ktamarketing.com>

Developing an effective ad takes a lot of steps. Most of them are pretty well known. Develop an interesting headline, support your headline with benefit-filled copy, close with an offer they can't refuse, etc. Rarely, however, do I see mention of a very important item. The call for action statement.

Call for action statements are those quirky little phrases that most of us make fun of. You've heard them a thousand times before – "Sale ends Saturday" and "Call now, this offer won't last"! What is so special about these statements? Why do we need to include them in our ads? What happens if we don't?

An Inspiration to Move

Call for action statements give our ads urgency. They are the inspiration for customers to get a move on and purchase now, before they get sidetracked. By telling the customer when a promotion ends, or that they will save by acting now rather than later, we encourage an immediate response.

How many times have you laid an ad down and walked away to take care of other priorities? You meant to call the company in "just a minute" but it didn't happen. What causes us to make the call or visit the business right away? The fact that if we don't we'll lose out on something.

Give Your Ad Priority

When you include a call for action statement, your ad becomes time sensitive. Your ad takes priority over others the customer might encounter. To tell a prospect who is looking for a dishwasher that your appliance sale ends Tuesday will cause that customer to visit your store prior to another who might advertise "Everyday Low Prices". They'll want to see your selection and pricing before they see the competition's. They know if they don't visit you first, they might lose out on a deal.

Don't Position Yourself As Last

So what happens if we choose not to include call for action statements in our advertising? I'll give you a prime example. Many years ago Sears (a United States department store) decided it was tired of the Ad Game. They decided they would no longer run specials or have sale pricing. Sears announced it would offer everyday low prices. It told its customers they could visit at any time and receive its best cost on any item Sears sold.

Almost immediately, Sears suffered a severe loss in business. Why? They still advertised. Customers still knew they existed. They still carried quality merchandise. What happened?

Sears discovered that, by removing the time sensitivity associated with call for action statements, they had – in effect – positioned themselves last. When a customer decided to make a purchase, they began looking for those who had both the selection and price they wanted. Of course, sales and promotions played a big role in the purchasing decision.

Customer would visit those who had time sensitive offers before going to Sears. Most often, the customer would purchase from a retailer who they visited first or second.

They would never make it to Sears. Because there was no rush to get to Sears, that store was pushed to the bottom of the shopping list and the retailer with the time sensitive advertisement got the business.

Do Call For Action Statements Equal A Sale or Special

No. These phrases should be included in all advertisements. Even if you don't offer a discount, you can include call for action phrases.

A seminar leader might announce, "Call today. Seating is limited." A consultant could state, "Free 30 minute consultation is you schedule before June 5th." A hairdresser could say, "Clairol's new line of hair coloring-only available through July."

Here are some other call for action phrases to entice your customers:

Call while space is still available

Call today

Click Here

You can't afford to wait

___% discount if purchased before Jan. 31st

You'll notice changes as soon as you make the call

No interest until 2001

You'll see immediate results if you act now

Limited time offer

Don't Delay, offer ends May 1st

When you think you've completed the perfect ad, go back and read it again. Find a way to make customers act now by including a call for action in your copy. You'll create a sense of urgency and position yourself at the top of their priority list.

Chapter IV: Offline Marketing With Online Results

- [Free Offline Methods To Promote Your Internet Business](#)
- [Do It Like A Pro ~ How to Create A Brochure](#)

Free Offline Methods To Promote Your Internet Business

© 2000 Karon Thackston

www.ktmarketing.com

All the talk these days seems to focus around ways to promote your Internet business. Most of them center around online methods such as Ezine advertising and banner ads. But there are some excellent, offline methods you can use to promote your business, too. And they're FREE!

Radio Talk Shows

There is practically an unlimited number of radio stations that bring experts in various fields into their studios. I'm sure you have heard some of these shows on your local radio stations. The guest expert answers calls from listeners who phone into the radio station. You can be that expert! During the show, you have ample opportunities to announce your Web address so listeners can visit your site. You don't pay anything to be a guest. It's a win-win situation. The radio station needs qualified guests to fill its airtime and you need the exposure. Everyone benefits.

Local Television Segments

Pay particular attention to the content offered on your local television stations. Do you notice shows, or segments of shows, where guests speak about various topics? If so, contact that station and offer to be a guest on their segment.

Chamber of Commerce Guest Speaker

Almost every city in the United States has a Chamber of Commerce. Although I don't have first-hand knowledge of such in other countries, I'll bet most have a similar organization.

Chambers of Commerce look for guest speakers. Most of them host weekly or monthly breakfasts or lunches to allow the business people who are members to network with one another. During this time, they book guest speakers to offer a presentation to the Chamber members. You have a captive audience that you can speak to, network with and direct to your Web site.

Local Business Magazines

Many towns have locally published business-oriented magazines. These deal with local interests as well as more broad topics relative to all businesses. Contact your local magazine and offer to write a monthly or weekly guest column for them. Your credits will be provided with your article... including your domain name.

Newspapers

The same idea used above for local magazines can be used to approach your local newspaper. While papers do have staff writers, they are also looking for experts who can provide excellent insight into specific areas. You might consider contacting the Business Editor to get more information. Of course, include your Web address with your bio.

Association Newsletters

Most local chapters of associations offer printed newsletters that are mailed to their membership. Open your telephone book and look through the listings to find associations that fit with your target audience. Approach these publications about contributing an article on a regular basis, provided your credits (with domain name) are included.

Create A Promotion

If your business has a product or service that can benefit the listeners or viewers of a TV or radio station, create an idea for a promotion and bring it to the Promotion Director's attention. You might tie it in with a holiday or event. Perhaps during National Small Business Week, you can offer to give away products or services in a drawing. The exposure you receive will far outweigh the cost of your freebie.

These are just a few ways you can promote your online business offline for free. If you look around your community, you're sure to find many others. Keep your eyes open and watch for other outlets that can bring promotional opportunities to your company and more visitors to your Web site.

Do It Like A Pro ~ How to Create A Brochure

© 2000 Karon Thackston

<http://www.ktamarketing.com>

One of the most effective and long-standing methods of advertising is the use of a brochure. This miniature corporate profile is an excellent way to convey a good deal of information and bring in sales... IF done properly.

I must say, I've seen hundreds of brochures over my 16 years in the advertising business. The good ones have many of the same things in common ~ and so do the bad ones. Let's take a look at what the pros do, and don't do, in order to create a brochure that brings in sales.

What Not To Do

Several things usually give away the fact that a brochure was written by an amateur. Let me point out several "don'ts" and then we'll discuss how to correct them.

The most common mistake made in brochures (in copywriting in general) is focusing on your company. I know ~ it sounds strange. The point of a brochure, and of every other advertising piece, is to convince the customer that they need your product or service, right? Simply listing all the things YOU consider important about your company will not convince anyone but you.

The inclusion of over-used clip art is probably the second most popular mistake. MicroSoft puts the exact same clip art in every version of Word. If you have it on your computer, chances are almost everyone else with Word software has it, too. It's a dead giveaway that you've used freebie photos and graphics. That does not display a professional image.

The third clue that a brochure is homemade is lack of focus on the target audience. I can't say it enough... KNOW YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE. My famous example is to remember your mental process when you sit down to write a letter.

You don't write a letter and then think, "Gee, I wonder who I can mail this to". Instead, you first decide who you'd like to write and then you compose the letter. Even if you give the exact same facts when you write several people, the letters will all be different. Why? Because you've altered your writing style to fit the recipient. A letter about your new car written to your mom would sound completely different than a letter written to your girlfriend. The same applies to copywriting.

Correcting the Mistakes & Looking Professional

First and foremost, take the focus off how wonderful your company is. And put it where? No how your customer will benefit from buying from you. Let me give you an example.

One brochure I recently edited read this way: "We offer the most innovative methods of _____ to date. We are known for our dedication and long-standing commitment to quality. We create strategies and policies that stand the test of time". Well, are YOU convinced to buy from this company? Me either.

The entire focus is on the company. Nowhere does it states how the customer will benefit or why they should do business with this firm. Let's re-write it and put the focus where it belongs.

"You will benefit from using our most innovative methods of _____. Our dedication and long-standing commitment to quality ensure you that a long-term project will be completed on time and to your full satisfaction. Because we work with you to create strategies and policies that stand the test of time, the future of your firm is secure." Better? I think so, too! Now onto the next challenge.

When it comes to using photos and graphics for professional work, stay away from any clip art that is included within a software program.

Rather, go to sources like www.yahoo.com who offer a "photo gallery". While these are not free, they certainly are cheap. I believe only \$3.00 per photo. The assortment is enormous. You can also borrow a friend's digital camera and shoot your own photos if you need to save as much as possible.

As far as graphics... visit places like www.arttoday.com who offer a free subscription to their graphics section. You may also get a paid subscription (which allows an even greater assortment). Problem number two is solved. Let's move onto our last – and most important – challenge.

If you have a multifaceted target audience (say professionals in the medical field) you will need to accommodate each of them in one way or another. If the brochure seems generic, and doesn't meet their needs, it will not hold much persuasive power.

In order to "segment" a portion of that audience (say dentists) I recommend saving your money from reprinting the entire brochure and just inserting 1 separate panel.

It's easy really, just print a short piece (1 panel) that's the same size and same stock as your regular brochure. Since it's 1 panel, you'll have 2 sides to print on. Insert the appropriate panel in with your regular brochure before you give it out or mail it. Viola! Instant segmentation at a fraction of printing 5 or 6 different, whole brochures.

To summarize, take the focus off you and put it onto your customers where it belongs. Avoid clip art that comes with software programs. It is sorely overused. And lastly, speak your customer's language. Target (or segment) your audience by being specific to them and their needs.

Keeping these tips in mind when you create or edit your brochure will allow you to present a professional piece of advertising and remain within your budget.

Chapter V: Publicity - It's FREE & It Works

- [Getting Free Publicity – How to Write A Press Release](#)

Getting Free Publicity – How to Write A Press Release

© 2000 Karon Thackston

www.ktamarketing.com

There is a nasty rumor that press releases don't work. Not true! Press releases can be a fabulous tool for business promotion... IF they are properly written and presented. A problem occurs because most people are not aware of the special requirements of press releases.

A press release is not a page-long advertisement. A press release is not a novel. A press release is not a tell-all promotional piece that is full of detail. So what IS a press release and how do you write one that will actually get placed? Let's go over a few basics that will help you in your press campaign.

A Change In Target Audience

The first mistake commonly made is writing a press release with your business target audience in mind. Unlike advertising copy, which is written to appeal to your customer, a press release is written to appeal to a journalist.

The journalist is not someone who is seeking to buy your product or service. A journalist is looking to fill a news need. When writing a press release, you must meet that need by filling the reporter's requirements.

Rather than answering the question, "What's in it for me", answer the question, "Why would ABC magazine's readers care"?

The headline also takes on a new focus. Rather than using a headline proclaiming the benefits of your product, use a headline that proclaims its newsworthiness.

Do Your Homework

One common error is submitting a press release without first reading the publication. It is virtually impossible to provide timely, news-oriented information to a site or magazine if you have no idea what interests their readers have.

Do a little homework before submitting. Visit the Web and look at the stories the site offers. Buy a copy of the magazine or newspaper and review the common interests of its readers. By understanding what the publication is looking for, you will be able to fulfill the need and thus get a much better response from your press release.

Don't Call Us, We'll Call You

The biggest irritant reporters have is receiving calls from writers asking if the press release was received. Worse yet, asking if it was read. Journalists are very busy people. They get hundreds of press releases a day. I have actually heard reporters say that they throw away the releases of those people who call them.

Resist the urge to phone. Once you submit your press release, rest assured you will be contacted if there is an interest.

Put It In the Right Hands

Just like advertisements, press releases must be placed in strategic areas. Search the Web for outlets to run your release. A few I have gotten good response from are:

<http://www.businesswire.com>

<http://www.internet.com>

<http://www.prnewswire.com>

Also, email your release to the appropriate person at individual magazines, newspapers and Web sites. Target those that would be read by your customers. Be sure to find the correct name and email address for the reporter who handles stories related to your business. Releases that are sent to incorrect contacts are most likely thrown away... not forwarded on to someone else.

KISS

Keep it short silly! Press releases are not meant to tell the whole story. They are meant to give the reporter an idea of what's happening in your business that their readers need to know about. If the journalist would like additional information or would like to arrange for an interview, he/she will call.

Press releases should be approximately 400 words – 500 maximum.

I know, all this sounds like a list of nit-picky rules. Not really. Just like with advertising copy, you must give your reader what he needs. Write a newsworthy release that meets the criteria of the reporter and his/her subscribers. The time you take to do so will pay off. As you know - when you fill a need, you get results!

Chapter VI : Don't Waste Your Time - Track Your Advertising Results

- [Which Ads Work and Which Ones Don't](#)

Which Ads Work and Which Ones Don't

© 2000 Karon Thackston

www.ktamarketing.com

Someone (I really wish I could remember who) once said, "Half of all advertising money is wasted. The only problem is we can't figure out which half!"

It's often true. Tracking is an excellent way to discover which ads work and which ones don't. There are ways of tracking your advertising and marketing efforts that allow you some feedback on their performance. Below is a list of ideas that will help you receive information to determine if an ad or line of marketing is working.

1. **Ask!** It's that simple. When a customer comes into your store, or emails you with a question, ask how they heard about your business. Take notes. After a month, tally up the totals to determine which of your marketing programs is paying off.
2. **Offer A Discount.** I'm sure you've heard radio advertisements that announce, "Tell us you heard it on KNBC radio and we'll give you \$5.00 off!" That discount is not just due to the kindness of the business owner – it's an effort to get customers to let them know their advertising is working.
3. **Mark Your Coupons.** Whether you print them in the newspaper, distribute them via direct mail or provide them on your Web site, marking your coupons is a super way to track the results. Simply put some sort of "key" in one of the bottom corners... one key for each newspaper, mailing, etc. The key could be a number (which you've corresponded to that paper.) When the coupon is returned, tally up the totals for each paper and find out quickly which ones work better for you.
4. **Separate Email Addresses.** If I have people responding to several offerings posted on various sites, I assign them each their own email address. For example, I have a newsletter that customers can subscribe to. If I post an announcement about my newsletter on a Web site, I'll ask the visitors to subscribe by sending an email to karon301@domainname.com. If I print an article in the local paper and mention my newsletter, I'll ask those subscribers to email me at kt304@domainname.com. That way I know, based on which email address they used, where they found out about my newsletter. (By the way, I love to use the freebie email accounts for this. It doesn't cost anything and I don't tie up my other addresses.)

These are just a few ways of tracking. I'm sure by now the juices are flowing and you can email me with many more ideas of your own! If you'd like to do that, contact me at karon@ktamarketing.com. Happy Tracking!