

**Printing.com Bradford**  
**Guide to Good Copy**  
**Call 01274 718 360 NOW for FREE advice**

You have between 2 and 8 seconds for a prospect to decide if they're interested in your stuff. In that time they'll be able to read about 50 words. You have to make it simple for them to know what to do or think about, at a glance. This means:

- Start by thinking about what you want your prospects to think about
- Create a design that makes these things plain
- Use language that is to the point: "Shoe fits: Cinders Queen"
- Craft artwork that enhances and dramatises the design: if it can be removed without impact, don't use it at all
- Test: can a "newbie" get it in 2 seconds?

The average prospect gets 254 commercial messages a day: over 90,000 a year. Is it any wonder you've only a few seconds to 'make your case'? Make it easy for them to act. This means:

- Be pragmatic: create complete, actual size mock ups of your marketing (include packaging) so that you can see things work
- Design the reply device first: make sure it summarises the offer, benefits, guarantee, conditions etc.
- Say "This is the reply device"
- Think incentives – how will you make them bother to read your stuff?

Your copy will be read by one person at a time. The average prospect has a reading age of 11. 60% of the population needs glasses. 90% of errors in thinking are in fact errors in perception. Make sure your marketing copy is clear to read and sells to the right person in the right way. This means:

- Use conversational language, pitched at Mr A, your average customer
- Use two "you's" for every "we": it makes for a more engaging style. And it makes you think of benefits rather than features
- Keep wording simple: "great buy" is better than "excellent purchase"
- Eradicate jargon – unless it's relevant to your market
- Don't be ruled by grammar: write it as you would say it!?
- Get rid of full stops, especially from headlines. They make you. Stop.
- Use hyphens to create an easy to read effect, or is that easy-to-read?
- Speak with pictures – but make sure they're not at odds with the text
- Avoid exaggeration, cliché, platitudes, plays on words and riddles – these things can put people off

**Printing.com Bradford**  
**Guide to Good Copy**  
**Call 01274 718 360 NOW for FREE advice**

- Limit yourself to one thought per paragraph and three sentences per paragraph. Use brackets for interjections, Saxon wording and edit out the word "that(s)" (makes things more readable)
- Avoid designeritis. Since we read by looking at word shapes, don't let designers mess with the shapes of the words or their spacing
- Try to:
  - Put headlines below main images: +readership
  - Not set text over pictures: -20% readership
  - Use a large initial drop capital to start text: +13% readership
  - Not put red and blue text together: they are a strain on the eye
  - Use 11 point minimum, in columns 40-50 characters wide, for body copy
  - Not set body copy in reversed out type. Short headlines, OK
  - Put a caption underneath a main image: it will be read by twice as many people as the body copy
  - Not put logos in headlines or body copy
  - Use normal typeface for brand names
  - DO NOT WRITE IN CAPITALS

Getting attention is easy – all you need is space on a flyer or in a magazine. But how long before your flyer is in the bin or the reader has turned the page? Real attention is about being seriously considered. Only then will serendipity come into play. This means:

- Having the best 'location'. To do this think about:
  - Size: Larger ads attract more attention
  - Colour: red attracts, people are 84% more likely to purchase a product promoted in full-colour
  - Intensity: consider bright colours that say "Hey You!"
  - Contrast: Break up visual harmony
  - Directionality: Arrows, pointing fingers, a person glancing
  - Isolation: Have lots of white space around your copy/ad
  - Celebrity: Link with the famous
  - Conditioning: What do people think when they see certain colours i.e. Pink or Green
  - Sex: Use with care and never gratuitously
- Go after profitable attention:
  - Create headlines that contain benefits – they'll be read by 4x as many people
  - Complement words with pictures that together generate a vivid first mental image
  - Make you ad newsworthy: it helps you say something meaningful – use the word "New"
  - Emphasise how "quick and easy" you are

**Printing.com Bradford**  
**Guide to Good Copy**  
**Call 01274 718 360 NOW for FREE advice**

- Combat adaption: say the same thing in different ways through different campaigns/media
- Use metaphor – The Inch War, Put a Tiger in your Tank
- When you think you've got it right, test it

Every product is bought by an entrenched minority (80/20 rule) and if you go to the market you take on the entrenched majority: the apparent mass of waving wallets that is actually an impregnable, hard-nosed, thick-skinned and blinkered audience. Admit it: most people don't want what you're selling so resist a blanket approach and go for those who will and those who may. This means:

- Identify interest groups and appeal to them
- Use offers (incentives): they double response rates
- Let the offer dominate and completely lead the whole design: headline, copy, art and format
- Most products are 'distress' purchases. Learn how your customers behave when they are confronted with the need to purchase!
- Fish when the salmon run i.e. market chocolates at Christmas
- Fill memory gaps: print/stick your name on your products
- For mailings, add details of product name and function on the envelope (+32% uplift). Putting on an incentive can add another 27%
- For blank envelopes, add "Private & Confidential" to the address
- For email marketing, the "subject" is critical, otherwise it'll be considered spam
- Only ever consider a Newsletter if you have the resources and the news to make it relevant to customers, each and every month

You can't make customers need your product, but you can help them realise they may. Worldwide, marketers spend billions on promotions yet people will ignore messages they don't agree with. This means:

- Content over form: facts sell – they bring benefits to life
- Let your customer try your product/service: towels are touched 6 times before being purchased; 23% of shoppers open packaging to test products
- Free sample can create up to 40% more trial though beware cost effectiveness
- Layer communications: make it easy for different people to read what they need. Layer 1 = headline, layer 2 = sub heads on paras, layer 3 = detail

**Printing.com Bradford**  
**Guide to Good Copy**  
**Call 01274 718 360 NOW for FREE advice**

- Long copy is fine, but don't abuse the investment by the reader
- Use a "chip-box" to present complex information
- In the absence of facts use testimonial and endorsements
- Use two sided messages – the pro's and the con's: it increases customer perception of truthfulness and believability
- Emotion outpulls rational every time. Use pictures
- Don't use unconnected examples to illustrate concepts, and don't use analogy either

We seemed conditioned to say "No". This can drive behaviour to buy the cheapest. Post purchase dissonance is very real and people hate it. Showmanship will aggravate the situation. Salesmanship is what's required. This means:

- Cultivate browsers: let people come in and shop around. Tell them how wise they are to browse: tell them about special offers to new customers
- Show your skill. Knowledge creates dialogue. Dialogue eases objections. Soon, saying "No" becomes undesirable
- Shopper conversion increases 50% if the conversation is initiated by staff
- Market to your customers (remember 80/20?). Communicate with them to reassure – ask if you can take a photo, mail them procedures for maintaining their PC's
- Use coupons. People keep items of value and like to use them
- Make real offers: people have to think what is on offer is worth having and believe they can win. "Guaranteed" works best, if 'by chance' the odds need to look good. Real offers counter post purchase dissonance
- Deadlines spur action (and limit liability). But don't be afraid to extend them (proactive mopping up can achieve 50-100% of the original response)