IS YOUR COPYWRITING HUMBLE ENOUGH?

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Simple, humble.

If I could choose two words to sum up the best marketing campaigns in the world, those might do it.

Every little helps. Just do it. The world's local bank. Think different.

These are some of the world's most powerful slogans. And there's nothing about them you could call flashy.

Why is that?

Simple writing reaches more people. The idea isn't to dumb things down. It's more about using the plainest word, the clearest image, or the most straight talking argument.

The more people can understand your writing, the more people will receive your message. Claude Hopkins and David Ogilvy both believed that. It brought them huge success.

Humble writing makes stronger connections. If you want to reach ordinary people, show that you're one of them.

Really, there's no need to show off. If you have a good product, the everyday benefits of buying it should be your focus. So don't keep going on about how great your company and products are. Show people what's in it for them.

These two lessons are worth remembering. Evidence to prove they work is all around us. Try visiting the web's most popular blogs, for example. Read the [most successful sales letters in history](#). Watch [ads for the world's biggest selling products](#).

What do you find? Simple language. The voice of an ordinary person, just like you or me.

The desire to be clever

So we know that simple and humble writing works. And as I mentioned earlier, copywriting legends Claude Hopkins and David Ogily were banging on about this kind of thing years ago.

So by now the world should be full of simple and effective writing, right?

Oh. Hmm.

There are two reasons why that hasn't happened.

Firstly, people have this very strong desire to be clever.

We want to show how great we are. That we're a little bit above the average person, even.

Naturally, this kills off any humility that might have graced our writing.

As a copywriter myself, I often fall into this trap. You only have to look at some of my [previous posts](#) here on Think Tank to see that!

I think a lot of copywriters have the same problem. We want to be 'creative' and to explore language to the full. We want to show clients we can do something really smart.

And there goes the simplicity.

Simple does not equal easy

There's a second reason we fail at producing simple writing.

It's to do with how we perceive 'simplicity'. And it's a huge mistake to make.

What many of us do is confuse *simple* writing with easy writing. Or *bland* writing. Or even *dumb* writing.

Actually, nothing could be further from the truth.

The fact is, if you can communicate an interesting concept in words that are (A) simple enough for millions of people to understand and (B) humble enough to connect with that audience, you'll be on your way to being a great copywriter.

Because writing simple, humble copy is difficult. It's not about treating your readers like idiots. It's not about over-simplifying ideas. It's (usually) not a case of writing down the first thing that comes to mind.

It's about crafting words that can deliver a powerful message to lots of different people.

And that's why people say good marketing is fiendishly clever – even though the words bringing it to life are really simple.

A few tips for simple and effective writing

Now that I've blathered on, here's the useful part of this post. My five practical tips for keeping your copy simple, humble and successful are as follows.

1. Write for your audience, not your own glory. This is really important. You aren't writing about yourself. You aren't writing about your business. What you're really writing about is your audience. So think about who they are. Think about what they want. Think about how you can help them. Then write about that.

2. Be yourself. You want to be interesting? You want your writing to stand out? Try just being yourself. Relax that proud, business-like persona you've built up over the years. Write copy as though it were a letter to a friend. You'll discover a style that's unique and humble. You'll connect better with your readers.

3. Write freely, edit carefully. If you want your writing to be simple and clear, never settle on your first draft. You've got to add polish. Think about how to make your key points clearer. Conjure up an image that puts your readers right there in the picture. Structure your argument so it flows from problem to solution. The best copywriters write and rewrite. It's not that hard. Give it a try!

4. Chop up those sentences. Long sentences are harder to understand. Especially those with [multiple clauses](#). Try breaking them up into shorter, simpler sentences. Say one thing at a time. Say it in the simplest way possible. More readers will make it to the end of the page, I promise!

5. Use shorter words. Go through every word of your copy. If there's a shorter or easier word than the one you've used, change it. For example, in the second paragraph of this post I changed "most successful marketing campaigns" to "best marketing campaigns". I edited lots of other bits too. It just makes things easier to read.

Just be careful not to leave out important meaning for the sake of simplicity. That's where simple writing becomes dumbed down writing.