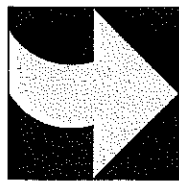


DIRECT RESPONSE ADVERTISING



**made
easy**

Entrepreneur Press and
Roscoe Barnes III

EP Entrepreneur Press

Editorial Director: Jere Calmes
Cover Design: Beth Hansen-Winter
Editorial and Production Services: CWL Publishing Enterprises, Inc., Madison,
Wisconsin, www.cwlpub.com

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ISBN 1-59918-046-4

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Barnes, Roscoe, 1961-

Direct response advertising made easy / by Entrepreneur Press
and Roscoe Barnes III.

p. cm.

ISBN 1-59918-046-4 (alk. paper)

1. Advertising. I. Entrepreneur Press. II. Title.

HF5823.B259 2006

659.1—dc22

Printed in Canada

2006021041

10 09 08 07 06

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



Chapter 7

5 Tips for Making Your Prospects Hungry: The Rules for Enticing Your Prospects, Clients, and Customers by Turning Your Sales Message into Mouth-Watering Prose

HAVE YOU READ ANYTHING RECENTLY BY ERNEST HEMINGWAY? If not, then perhaps you should. I say this because his unique style of writing provides some good lessons for writing strong sales copy.

You see, Hemingway was not a copywriter (although he reportedly tried it at one time). Yet, when he wrote about food, he had a way of making you hungry. His “prose, shorn of the stylistically convoluted Victorian filigrees of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century writing, evoked an intense appreciation of life’s perils—and pleasures,” wrote Neil A. Grauer in *Cigar Aficionado* (August 1999). “Few have ever equaled his skill at writing about war’s horrors—or the wonders of food and drink.”

He “actually makes you hungry and thirsty for the fare he describes,” observed Kenneth S. Lynn in the biography, *Hemingway*. In the movie, “City of Angels,” Nicolas Cage’s character makes a similar observation about Hemingway.

Hemingway’s penchant for creating desires and strong appetites in readers offers a lesson for anyone wanting to nab prospects or catch customers.

In a moment, I'm going to show you what can be gained from his style. But first, I want to show you an excerpt from his short story, "Big Two-hearted River: Part I":

Nick put the frying pan on the grill over the flames. He was hungrier. The beans and spaghetti warmed. Nick stirred them and mixed them together. They began to bubble, making little bubbles that rose with difficulty to the surface. There was a good smell. Nick got out a bottle of tomato catchup and cut four slices of bread. The little bubbles were coming faster now. Nick sat down beside the fire and lifted the frying pan off. He poured about half the contents out into the tin plate. It spread slowly on the plate.

Can you see the picture here? Can't you almost taste the beans and spaghetti? Does it make you hungry? Making people "hungry" is the job of any piece of sales literature. Whether you're selling cars or snow cones, real estate or health care, the aim is to entice your prospects and lure them in for the sale. To do that, you need mouth-watering words that excite; words that tickle and tease. You need words that create an insatiable hunger for the product or service you're offering.

Here are some ways you can make that happen.

1. Paint a picture

If you have a good photo of your product, use it. Good pictures are always useful. But without a photo, you must rely on words—colorful words—to paint the picture you need. It's been said that one picture is worth a thousand words. Yet, says one writer, a few well-chosen words are worth a thousand pictures! I agree.

When writing sales copy, you can paint a vivid picture by using words that appeal to two or more of the five senses. An example of this was found recently on a box of popcorn:

"When you want popcorn, you gotta have Butter-Licious. When you dream of munching that fluffy, buttery-rich snack ... long for that irresistible aroma ... crave that luscious, savory butter sensation ... it's gotta be JOLLY TIME-Butter-Licious Microwave Popcorn!"

2. Use precise details

Hemingway had an eye for details. Using a terse, lean, and understated style, he told his stories with detailed descriptions. Because of the specific and precise manner in which he wrote, readers could identify with his characters.

It's been said that one picture is worth a thousand words. Yet, says one writer, a few well-chosen words are worth a thousand pictures!

They felt what the characters felt. The same is true in advertising. Copy laced with specifics is much more believable than bland copy filled with generalities.

Ross von Hoelscher observed that years ago, you could write a headline that simply stated, "New book shows you how to make big money!"

"Those days are gone," he said. "Today's potential responder wants specifics, and is more than a little skeptical."

A good example of an ad using specific copy is being used by Laurie Kaye to sell a real estate program. Her headline reads: "How I made \$382,733 in 1997." Now, if you're in real estate, you'll find this ad to be irresistible.

3. Use repetition

Although Hemingway is known for his mastery of the simple and strong declarative sentence, he also made full use of repetition to engage readers. In the aforementioned short story, he told us several times that Nick Adams was hungry.

Repetition in an academic paper may be frowned upon. But in an ad or direct-mail package, repetition is magic. Generally, prospects are lazy and reluctant in responding to sales messages. To get their attention, you must hit them over the head several times with your offer. The more you stress your key points, the more likely your prospects will remember them and respond.

In a TV commercial, your key point may be mentioned at the top and bottom of your script. Follow the same procedure in your sales letter. If you're using a full direct-mail package, your offer may be highlighted in the letter, brochure, lift note, and response card.

As I write this, I'm looking at a direct-mail package from *Writer's Digest*. A teaser on the front of the outside envelope screams:

"We're giving away \$25,000.00 Blockbuster Writing Grant."

This message is repeated on the back of the envelope. It is mentioned throughout a four-page letter. It is noted on a colorful brochure as well as on the response card. In this package, repetition is king—and quite effective.

4. Show reactions

Benefits are the end result of what people get when they use your product or service. Will they be richer? Then stress that in your writing. Will they gain

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friends and influence people? Stress that. Whatever you can picture them doing as a result of your offer, use that to whet their appetites.

When Hemingway wrote about people eating, he often showed their reaction. If they enjoyed a slice of ham, he showed it. And that, I remind you, is what we must do with sales copy. When people react positively to our products or services, we must show that in our sales message. Their enjoyment is one of the benefits that is worth stressing.

Here's what Hemingway wrote about Nick Adams:

He was very hungry.... He took a full spoonful from the plate (of beans and spaghetti). "Chrise," Nick said, "Geezus Chrise," he said happily. He ate the whole plateful before he remembered the bread. Nick finished the second plateful with the bread, mopping the plate shiny.

When you show people enjoying a good meal—or using a good product—you create desire in the people you're trying to reach. *You make them hungry!*

5. Tell a story

If you want to invigorate your sales literature, then use a story as the greater portion of your sales message or as an anecdote

People everywhere love stories. They remember them and they share them. If you want to invigorate your sales literature, then use a story as the greater portion of your sales message or as an anecdote—a mini-story within your message. One of the most successful ads of all time was written as a story. It began with the famous words, "They laughed when I sat down at the piano, but when I started to play ..." John Caples, who wrote the ad, used a compelling narrative to sell a home-study course for the U.S. School of Music.

Stories in the form of anecdotes are equally useful. "Anecdotes are great reader pleasers," wrote Gary Provost in *100 Ways to Improve Your Writing*. "They are written like fiction, often contain dialogue, and reduce a large issue to a comprehensible size by making it personal."

Provost went on to say that writing a short, colorful anecdote is "one of the most compelling ways to begin an article, query letter, or business proposal."

The five points I offer here have a proven track record. Try them and see if they don't work for you. Think of Hemingway and make your prospects hungry!