

# How to Write a headline that sells

*The writers behind over \$10,000,000 worth of advertising and sales promotions show proven ways a headline can dramatically increase your bottom line.*

**“O**n the average, five times as many people read the headline as read the body copy ... unless your headline sells your product, you have wasted 90 percent of your money.”

Those are the tried-and true words of advertising juggernaut David Ogilvy. Don't tread on them. Your headline is in direct proportion to your bottom line.

Let's get to the bottom of this.

## Three types of headlines

1. Self-interest: people are always on the lookout for new *products* that make them appear smarter, more popular, and better looking
2. News: people are always on the lookout for new *information* that makes them appear smarter, more popular, and better looking
3. Curiosity: people are always on the lookout for new *stories* that they appear smarter, more popular, and better looking.

As you can see, although there are three main categories of headlines—self interest, news, curiosity—they all serve one purpose in the end.

The legendary ad wizard John Caples said it best: “As long as human beings inhabit this earth, they will be looking for something new, something different, something better.”

## Advertising is about vanity

It's not a bad thing. We humans have a need for



**Self-interest sells**  
This postcard ad, one in a series of three, helped a boutique medical spa break national sales records for new appointments in their first six months of business.

affection, attention, and recognition built into our DNA.

This is good news for advertisers, because you can never give people exactly what they want—consumer interests are a moving target.

But, when you appeal to their vanity, you can give consumers what they *need*.

## Headlines in every ad

Your headline is 50-75 percent of your ad. Not 50-75 percent of your print ads. 50-75 percent of *all* your ads.

In a print ad, the headline is obvious. It is worth noting, however, that a headline *below* your image or illustration

is read by 10-percent *more* people that a headline *above* your image or illustration.

- In a TV ad, your headline is your first frame.
- In a radio ad, your headline is the first sentence.
- On a Webpage, your headline is the first sentence of copy or your first frame.

Regardless of the medium, the audience is yours for one involuntary instant.

*Shake them up. Wake them up. Stir them to action with your headline.*

## Creating an ad without a headline

Don't.

## Words that sell

Using the word “free” in your advertising is effective in getting *a* response, but primarily from the “anything

**If it's free, it's worthless**  
Make your free offer sound expensive. This ad did, and the competition finally threw in the towel and bought the company, making the owners a mint.



for free” consumer. Instead, attach value to your free offer and the repeat consumer—the kind that stays loyal to your brand—is more likely to respond.

Words like “new,” “announcing,” “at last,” and “how to” still sell, because they appeal to people's self-interest, their desire for news, and their curiosity.

Short, crisp sentences sell.

Headlines aimed at a specific audience—Busy Mom's sell.

## Your headline is your lifeline

Back to Caples: “**No far fetched or obscure statement will stop them. You have to hit them where they live—in the heart or in the head. You have to catch their eyes and ears with something simple, something direct, something they want.**”

Make your headline top priority; consumers will respond in kind. Give it a try. Or contact us.

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