

How to Write a tagline that sells

The writers behind the online advertising and sales promotions for industry juggernauts show proven ways a tagline can dramatically increase your consumer response rate.

“**T**aglines have taken a lot of abuse in the past twenty years. These three to ten word phrases appearing (for the most part) under a company’s logo used to reinforce to consumers in an instant what made that particular brand unique.

These days, companies change taglines like they change Facebook friends. What were once concise, sales-driven product pushers have since become ineffective, watered-down, and, in many cases, omitted entirely.

Don’t you make this mistake.

Give your tagline teeth, and consumers will be chomping at the bit for your product.

Here’s how.

Why you need a tagline

When written and presented correctly—a short, concise, and specific selling statement within a print ad, as a graphic in a TV commercial, or under the logo on company letterhead—taglines are advertisements in and of themselves, living on in your consumers’ minds long after the impression of your ads have faded.

Because taglines are short and concise, they are easy to include wherever your logo is presented.

Because taglines are specific, they reinforce at a glance what makes your product unique.

Take the tagline test

The first and most important question you need to ask



Second best ... but sticking it out

Unlike Listerine, Mitchum’s brilliant tagline from back in the day still appears under the brand name on *some* of their packaging today. *Clinical performance* and *Powerful protection all day long* are two other taglines that have been added to the fray. Neither can touch the effectiveness of the original in terms of presenting a clear product benefit in a short, concise, and compelling way.

yourself in the tagline concept stage is: **if I took these words and stuck them under any other logo—competitor or not—would these words be true and accurate?**

If the answer is, “Yes,” go back to the drawing board.

In order for a tagline to burrow into a consumer’s heart and mind, where purchase decisions are made, each

word must reinforce the fact your product or service is:

- the *only* solution to a specific need
- the only *necessary* solution to a specific need

The best in the business

5. *The coldest beer on earth* [Coors]

While all the other beer ads focused on carbs and



One of the all time greats

Although today it’s been reduced to *Less Intense Zero Alcohol*, this mis-step doesn’t erase Listerine’s past performance with a tagline that was not only disarming, it’s twice-a-day instructions also lead to quicker consumption (and repeat sales) of the product itself. *Minty fresh!*

taste, Coors decided to own the most used word in a beer drinker’s lingo: “I could use a *cold* beer.” Bingo.

4. *The choice of a new generation* [Pepsi]

In one swoop, Pepsi’s tagline said, “Old people drink Coca-Cola,” taking dead-aim at the number 1 brand in the business and the number 1 demographics in the world—teens and ’tweens.

3. *No. 2 in rent-a-cars* [Avis]

Which advertiser in their right mind would admit their brand wasn’t number one? Advertising pioneer David Ogilvy (*Ogilvy on Advertising*) said, “This diabolical positioning made life miserable for Hertz, who was Number 1.”

2. *So effective you could skip a day* [Mitchum]

Sidestepping the old standby go-to adjectives that are so overused they have lost their meaning—most, best, powerful—Mitchum’s tagline presents a real, believable, desirable benefit for the consumer. Take that Old Spice man.

1. *The taste you hate twice a day* [Listerine]

So disarming and such a flagrant violation of the positive-spin-only advertising gospel that it borders on heresy, Listerine’s “so honest it’s gotta’ be true” tagline is still the one to aspire to.

It’s your turn

Ask yourself: *in what way is my product or service the only necessary solution to a specific need?* Now make it a Listerine-level tagline.

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