Writing effective copy

Writing copy for print, audio, video and web projects takes some skill. Most people looking at things like posters, advertisements, newsletters and blogs don't have the time or the interest to read a lot of copy. Rather, your intended audience will likely glance and skim the content before committing, so your writing needs to be clear, compelling and to the point if you hope to capture their interest. In order to do this, copy often uses short snippets of information organized by a combination of headlines, subheads, captions and bullet points. As David Ogilvy, a world-renowned advertiser and copywriter once said, *"A good advertisement is one which sells the product without drawing attention to itself." To help you do that here are some* tips for writing effective copy:

1. Know your purpose

Why are you writing this copy? What is the purpose? What is the goal? What do you hope to achieve? What angle will you take to achieve your goals? Whatever the purpose and goal, you need to make sure the content is interesting to your readers. Create an initial outline of the content that states the overall mission, the goals, and specific topics to be covered.

2. Know your audience

Who is the "you" you are writing for. You need to research your audience to learn what they want and what language they speak. As you write for your audience you need to convey a natural voice so your readers trust you.

3. Concluding the presentation

Once you know the purpose and audience you need to fully understand the topic you are writing about. This usually means you have to research, research, and research. Only when you confidently know the topic can you begin to write your copy. *Take your original outline and create several more versions refining it each time. As you revise begin to chunk the information into, small digestible parts using subheads and bullet points. By breaking down the information you will help your audience be attentive and stay focused on the content.*

4. Be clear and concise

Make every word count! Now that you have your purpose and goals solidified, you know your audience, and are an expert on the topic it's time to write the copy. *Good copy gets straight to the point. Use verbs and nouns, often adverbs and adjectives are just fillers and distractions. Don't try to use fancy sounding words when a simple word would work better.*

5. Use effective titles and headlines

The main message should be in the title or headline. You can then reinforce your message throughout the rest of the copy. The title or headline is your one shot at capturing the attention of your audience. Some questions to ask of your title or headline are:

- Is it unique?
- Is it specific?
- Is it clear?
- Is it impactful?
- Does it capture attention?
- Does it convey purpose?
- Does it speak to the correct audience?

6. Use visuals

Match what you write to what people are seeing, especially in advertisements, posters, and videos. Make sure the any visual elements closely match the written copy. When this is done effectively it can be a very powerful way of catching your audience's interest.

7. Edit, edit, edit

Make sure your copy is free of spelling and grammatical errors. Don't use colloquial words, slang words, or shorthand like you would in a tweets or text messages. Constantly review and revise, but also take some breaks. You should do some editing, put it aside, and come back and edit again later. Do this cycle a few times to ensure you are looking at your copy with a fresh set of eyes and a new perspective.

8. Use a call to action

Make it clear what you want from your audience. Do you want them to buy something, learn something, and so on. For example, when blogging, encourage them to be apart of the conversation. Use clear and concise writing to tell your readers what you want them to do. Asking your audience to take action will go a long way to reaching your goals for the copy.

9. Maintain interest

Especially when writing longer pieces, continue to keep your audience interested by using call to actions, asking questions, engaging them and challenging them. Make sure you are not repeating yourself, rather introducing new and relevant content throughout your copy.

10. Test it out

Show it to friends, family, clients, focus groups, and so on. See how people react to your copy and rewrite and revise as needed.

If you use the above tips you should be able to produce good copy and as you write more and more the better it will get. And continue to challenge yourself and learn more about types of copy (http://www.copyblogger.com/good-copywriting/) and words of wisdom from David Olgilvy (http://blog.kissmetrics.com/david-ogilvy/).