

11 Steps To Marketing Materials That Get You Clients NOW!

How to avoid common pitfalls that drive your prospects away and send your business spiraling downwards.

by

Maggie Dennison

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How this book can help you create killer marketing materials

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Now let's get going...

Do you wonder why your marketing materials are not getting the response you want? Are they communicating your unique message in a way that gets clients excited? Are they as persuasive as they could be? Or are you just frustrated because you can't get them to say what you want?

Well then, welcome to **"11 Steps To Marketing Materials That Get You Clients Now!"** In this book you'll learn how to avoid common pitfalls that drive your prospects away and can send your business spiraling downwards.

My name is **Maggie Dennison**. I'm a marketing writer.

What's a marketing writer? Well, it's someone who writes the marketing materials that you use to promote and sell your product or service. Copywriter or promotional writer are other terms used to describe someone who does this type of work.

Let me begin by telling you why I wanted to offer this valuable information to you. In the course of my work, I review and critique a lot of marketing materials: websites, brochures, sales letters and the like. And what I notice is that most people make the same mistakes, and they make them over and over again. Many of these mistakes could be avoided by doing some footwork up front, before you ever pick up a pen and paper or go near your computer keyboard.

It's like building a house. If the foundation isn't solid and stable, the house will not be solid and stable. Eventually it will fall.

My goal in this book is to provide useful information that will help you create that solid foundation. It will set you on the right path to having materials that attract your ideal clients, let them know without a doubt why they need you, and get them excited about hiring you. And it all adds up to a healthy bottom line for your business.

This is not English 101. This is not about “good writing”. It’s about human behavior, sales, and the psychology of sales and persuasion and how you use them to draw your readers into your vision of why they need you. Even if you’re a great writer, this is a different kind of writing. I have written materials for clients who were really good writers in the traditional sense, and they couldn’t believe the difference in effect when someone took their good writing and rewrote it from a sales and marketing perspective.

In these pages we’ll be looking at:

- How to create a solid foundation for your materials
- How to think about your materials – your new mindset
- What to do when you’ve finished writing

This is not empty theory. It’s in-the-trenches practical and proven information that I’ve learned during my career writing marketing materials. There are a ton of things to talk about when it comes to producing effective materials but I’ve chosen eleven points that I think will be of most use to you when you’re just starting out, or if you want to revamp your materials and make them magnets to your potential clients. I can’t teach you copywriting in this short book, but I can point out some of the most common pitfalls and how to avoid them. You’ll get an overview and enough guidelines so that you can compose your own content in a way that appeals to your prospects.

So, let’s jump right into the meat of the program.

1. Identify your audience/target market

Pitfall to avoid: saying, "My target market is everybody."

There's a lot of foundational work to do before you ever put a word on paper but your target market is the place to start.

There are four different ways to choose your target market. It can be:

1. People who live in the same geographic area e.g. Santa Barbara, a particular suburb of New York, or a particular county or state.
2. People with the same demographics e.g. age, income level, value of their home, marital status, number of children, single mothers with one daughter and so on.
3. People with the same psychographics, how they think and what they like to do e.g. liberal, spiritual, like to swim, go horseback riding, play poker, etc.
4. People in the same industry or profession. So your target group might be doctors, coaches, or people who own carpet-cleaning businesses.

Once you decide who your target market is going to be, you can become intimately acquainted with their wants and problems. This leads to several different results, that all make it easier for you to do business.

- **Your materials will be more focused. When prospects read your materials, they'll know exactly why they need you**

When you know who you are writing for, you can customize the content of your materials to that group.

There's a big difference between marketing to just anyone who crosses your path and a target market of, say, seniors over 65 who own their own homes. A senior over 65, who owns her own home, has very specific wants and problems. When you know what these are, you can develop a sharply focused marketing message that makes her feel you're talking directly to her. And guess what? When she feels that you understand what she's up against, she'll be more willing to do business with you.

- **It gives direction to your product or service**

A lesson from “The Apprentice”

In the USA there's a hit TV series called "The Apprentice", hosted by real estate mogul, Donald Trump. Every week two opposing teams are given a real life business project to complete and the team that gets the best results wins.

In the first episode of the second season, their assignment was to develop a new toy for Mattel, the largest toy manufacturer in the world. When the teams were called in to have their projects reviewed by Mattel, one of the Mattel executives said: "In this business you always want the kids to steer you." In the end the losing team was told that their idea showed a lack of understanding of what children want and like. Bingo! They had not paid attention to their target market - children.

And they lost.

When you define your target market and get to know their likes and dislikes, you can direct all your ideas and resources towards this group. Rather than trying to be all things to all people, your business will gain focus.

- **It's easier to plan an effective marketing strategy**

Knowing your target market helps you decide how and where to promote your business. If you're targeting doctors, then you can decide how and where to find doctors to talk to. On the other hand, if you're targeting corporate executives, it's clear that you won't achieve your objectives by hanging out with small business owners. In the end, you save time and money because you know exactly where to find the clients you want to work with.

The result: less time wasted running down marketing cul-de-sacs, more time dedicated to finding and talking to your perfect clients.

Many business owners are reluctant to define their target market because they're afraid of losing business from the rest of the population. Volvo's target market is a 35-year-old woman with two children. Does this mean that no one else buys their cars? Of course not. Just look around at the people driving Volvos. When you don't identify your market closely your materials remain very general and don't speak specifically to the wants and problems of a particular group so no one feels spoken to and they don't respond. You, in turn, may feel discouraged and make false assumptions about why your business is in the doldrums, when all you need is a more clearly focused message.

If your expertise, experience and desire is geared towards, say, attorneys who earn more than \$150,000 per year, and if that's the group who can easily afford what you offer, then why would you be fearful of losing clients who earn \$30,000 and probably don't have a budget to hire you anyway? They're not the group that inspires you to do your best work. Leave them alone. Concentrate all your energies on the group you really want to work with. Not only will you be more successful but you'll also have more fun.

You can have several target markets. But your materials have to be slanted differently for each one.

2. Decide which marketing piece is most likely to reach that target audience effectively

Pitfall to avoid: doing what everyone else is doing, just because they're doing it. Resist the temptation to follow the crowd! It may or may not be the right avenue for *your* business.

Instead, take the time to consider what will work best given your business objectives and target market.

When you know who your target market is and the best way to reach them, you'll have insights into the kind of materials you'll need to best get their attention. For example, if you're targeting corporate executives, a flier may not be the correct piece. They may consider you a fly-by-night operation and may respond more favorably to a glossier, high-quality piece. But there are markets where a flier is perfectly appropriate and a glossy brochure would be out of place.

Many small business owners and solo entrepreneurs jump in with a brochure and it may not be the right place to start. Take the time to decide the best way to reach your audience. It will pay off later to do the groundwork up front. How you market your business will be different for everyone.

Information can be king!

A naturopathic doctor friend of mine opened a new office and was faced with the question "How do I get myself known in the local community?" As is the case with many health care professionals who operate locally, he realized that he was likely to draw his patients from an area about 5-10 miles from his office. He also knew that, as a new kid on the block in a small town, his biggest hurdle was to quickly establish credibility.

So instead of producing traditional types of marketing materials, such as a brochure, flier or website, he created a series of information sheets on health-related topics.

Then he set up free lectures on these topics for interested groups in the community. At every lecture, he handed out the information sheets. The depth of his knowledge quickly created trust with his audiences. As well as useful information, each sheet had his name and contact details on them so many of the attendees contacted him and became patients. He built a thriving practice this way, without every having a brochure or any formal promotional material.

Those came later, once he was established and could afford to produce everything professionally without having to cut corners. At that point his professionally produced brochure served to underscore the excellent reputation he had already established.

3. Know the objective of each piece in your marketing package and how you're going to use it

Pitfall to avoid: believing that one piece can fulfill all functions. Maybe it can, but check carefully to make sure you're still achieving the full effect you intended.

Before you throw your hands up in the air and blast back with "What a stupid statement. Isn't it obvious that I want to use my materials to promote my business?" just bear with me for a moment. It's not as obvious as it sounds. You may have several pieces with different objectives. The purpose of the piece will determine the content and how it is written.

Do you want to:

- Dispense information:
 - This is a fact-based piece. Make sure that it really is full of useful information and not just a disguised sales pitch.
- Generate leads:
 - This piece is more sales-oriented and focused on the benefits of your product or service. It's purpose is to get people interested enough to take the action you request e.g. call for more information, request a free report, sign up for a newsletter.
- Generate sales:
 - A piece with this goal is much more hard hitting in its sales approach because you want people to buy right then, whether it's whipping out their credit card online or calling a phone number to order something. That takes more persuasion than simply asking them to request a free consultation or sign up for an e-mail newsletter (although that's not as easy as it used to be either!)
- Qualify prospects:
 - You may include questions or information that automatically disqualify some of the readers e.g. let it be known that your product or service is specifically tailored to a certain group of people. That will eliminate

everyone not in that group. Or include a price point that cuts out anyone who is not willing to pay that amount.

The most common marketing materials are:

- Brochures
- Websites
- Fliers
- Postcards
- Sales letters
- Follow up letters

Since marketing is about spreading the word, there are many other types of materials that you may not think of as traditional marketing materials, but they underscore your professional presence, let people know that you're an expert, and help build relationships. These include:

- Thank you letters and notes
- Newsletters (email or hard copy)
- Letters of introduction
- Informational booklets
- Electronic books
- Articles
- Audio cassettes
- CD's
- Video clips
- "Elevator speech" (also known as "round robin" or "30-second commercial")

When you produce any materials for your business, keep in mind that they are always presenting you, your service or product to the reader, in addition to any other purpose they may have.

In a piece with a sales intention, there's a certain psychological flow that needs to happen through the piece, otherwise it won't work. Many people use the tried and tested **AIDA** formula to structure the content. **AIDA** is an acronym for **A**ttention, **I**nterest, **D**esire, **A**ction.

On the next page I decipher AIDA for you.

A Attention

Tell them what their problem is.

I Interest

Let them know why they'd want to solve that problem. Let them know what could happen if they don't take action. Build interest by giving them information.

D Desire

Let them know there is a solution. Stress the benefits of your product or service so that they say, "I have to have this."

A Action

What do you want them to do? Tell them very clearly what their next action step should be.

If you're primarily presenting information, you need to focus on making sure it's clear, concise, well written and easy to understand. In this case, there's more room for conventional "good writing" skills.

4. Make the content as important as the design

Pitfall to avoid: going to a designer first and spending a lot of money on design. Then when the designer says, "Now I need the content," you say, "Oh, right....content...yeah, you need content" and you cobble something together on the fly. It's a common mistake to put too much emphasis on the design and leave the copy dangling as an afterthought.

There are two main components to promotional materials

1. Appearance (the design, layout, colors, fonts etc)
2. Content (the words)

(If you're developing a website, there's an additional component, which is the technical aspect that makes it all work).

Marketing and advertising folks will tell you that graphics, images and words have to work together. Graphics make your materials attractive and eye-catching. They support your message and convey credibility and professionalism. But it's the words that sell. Take away the fancy graphics and if you have well written words, they will still do their job. Take away the words and what's left? A pretty picture that does nothing for your business without compelling content.

Don't focus on a beautiful appearance at the expense of the words.

The problem is that we know we can't draw or do design, but we think we can write. After all, everyone learned to write in school, right? However, even people who are "good writers" in the traditional sense of good writing that we learned in school, fall down when it comes to writing effective promotional or marketing materials. As I mentioned earlier, this is not about "good writing." It's about human behavior, sales and the psychology of sales and persuasion. Beware of trying to impress your potential clients with "good writing." It's an easy trap to slide into and it won't work. Or rather, they may be impressed but not persuaded that they need your product or service. There's a big difference!

The worst thing that can happen is if the designer says, “Oh just to speed things along, I’ll help you with the content.”

Beware of well-meaning professionals!

A very talented graphic designer friend of mine was working on a brochure for a health care professional. Let’s call him “Jim.” Jim did not want to hire a writer to help with the content. He was confident he could do it himself.

Then the worst possible scenario occurred: the graphic designer offered to help him write the copy. A designer whose expertise and technical skills are in design and not in copywriting! That’s like asking your dentist to treat your stomachache, or expecting your attorney to fill a cavity! But believe me, it’s a common trap and an easy one to fall into.

When I saw the final result, it was just terrible. The design was stunning, but the words, oh my goodness...it was not persuasive or enticing, it was all about Jim with no focus on the potential client, did not speak to a particular target group and on and on....it was conventional “good writing” which simply ignored all the rules of effective sales writing. What use is a striking design if the words don’t persuade your readers that they need your product or services?

I have only ever come across one designer who can help her clients in this way, and that’s because she was a copywriter before she became a designer. She really does have the skills. Most designers don’t.

Don’t be a “Jim” and become so seduced by a beautiful design that the words come up short.

The information I’m presenting here will help you write your own materials. But if you have any doubts whatsoever about your ability to get your message across in a way that gets clients excited about hiring you, you may want to consider budgeting money for a professional writer, in addition to your designer so that the quality of the words matches the excellence of the design.

5. Make your material about your perfect client

Pitfall to avoid: making yourself the center of attention and putting too little focus on the clients you want to attract.

There's an old saying: "People don't care about you until they know you care about them." Show your potential clients that you care about them. How do you do this?

First you need to know who your perfect client is.

Remember we talked about your target market? That's the large group that you're shooting for. Your ideal client is one person from that group. Take some time to visualize one person from that group: he or she will be a composite of all the people in the group. This is your perfect client. Give him or her a name and write a profile of him or her, which could read something like this:

My perfect client

"My perfect client is Jane Murphy, a 45-year old single woman. She runs a successful financial planning business out of her home and works with clients who have a minimum of \$500,000 to invest. She owns her own home in a gated community, and she shares it with a calico cat called Bear and a standard poodle called Mixty. In her spare time, she likes to play golf, explore the newest, trendiest restaurants or see the latest movies with her two best girlfriends. She dreams of retiring to Palm Springs when she is 62."

Maybe you can even find a picture in a magazine that looks like her or him.

Then, when you sit down to write your materials, have that picture in front of you or have the image in the forefront of your mind and write as if you're speaking to that person. This gives your writing an informal, conversational flavor that is personable and accessible.

Once you have of your perfect client in your mind, you can decide what her problems are and how to get her attention.

Your prospective clients want to know that you understand them and their problems. They're not interested in you, unless they know you can help them. So go for the gold! Write about the person you want to attract. Who's your ideal client, who you want to walk in the door and who you will enjoy working with? What are their problems that they're just dying for someone to solve? Talk about those problems and how your product or service offers a solution. Make them the focus.

Everything you write has to be of some interest to her, even your bio. Don't tell your life story unless it's relevant to what you're doing and you can show how it's of benefit to your clients. It may be cute that you worked as Mickey Mouse at Disneyland or that you spent two years bumming around the world with nothing more than a backpack and a shoestring budget. Unless you can present it in a way that lets people see that it has a benefit to them, it may just look unprofessional and put them off. You have to stay credible. Letting them know that you had a holiday job as the back end of a pantomime horse doesn't cut it! It might be cute. But cute doesn't sell. It's cute. That's all.

I'll give you a good example of one of my clients, whose background was directly relevant to his business.

Personal experience makes the difference

A chiropractor came to me because he needed a new brochure for his business.

When I reviewed the information he sent me, I was fascinated by his personal story. He was competing in Olympic weightlifting and suffered a serious back injury during training. After running to many doctors over a number of months, nothing was helping and he was finding no relief from the excruciating pain. He thought he'd never lift weights again. Finally he was recommended to a chiropractor who got him back on his feet within two weeks. He went on to become two-time collegiate national champion.

His experience inspired him to become a chiropractor and to dedicate his life to helping others heal.

That's a powerful story. I used this story as a lead into his brochure, because it lets potential patients know that he really understands the frustration and desperation of someone who is in pain and can see no end to it, and that he can help them. If you have a story like this, by all means use it. But beware of using stories about yourself just because YOU think they're interesting. Ask yourself: "What part of my story is of benefit to my potential clients. Then milk that for all it's worth!

Now let's move into some practical tips on putting your content together.

6. Use punchy, attention-grabbing headlines

Pitfall to avoid: writing all your content and then throwing a headline together as an afterthought just before you finish.

When you scan the morning paper, how do you decide which articles to read and which to ignore? I bet it's the headlines. A great headline hooks you in and keeps you reading. A ho-hum headline will, at best, get a polite "so what?"

It's the same with the headline in your sales or marketing piece. It has to promise your reader something she needs or wants, and create such excitement and curiosity in her that she just can't avoid reading on. It doesn't matter how punchy or grabby the rest of your copy is, if your headline doesn't get her attention quickly (within 3 seconds) she's gone, maybe forever.

Here are a few ideas to help you craft attention-grabbing headlines:

1. Build your headline around your biggest benefit. Show how your product or service can solve a problem for the reader.
 - Example: How to remove carpet stains in 10 minutes.
2. Create a mystery with the headline so that you arouse curiosity and make the reader want to read on to find the solution.
 - Example: 3 little known secrets to bring out your natural beauty.
3. Use figures or statistics. Odd numbers work better than even. Percentages are also good.
 - Example: Trim 21% off your auto insurance premium.

4. Rephrase a well-known saying, quote or turn of phrase.
 - Example: “Fleas don’t have a biting chance.” (TV ad by Advantage).
5. Ask a question the answer to which points to, guess what? Your product or service.
 - Example: When doctors have headaches, what do they do?

The format you use depends on your product or service and the target market you're writing for. Sink into the mind of your ideal client (you've already identified her in a previous step) and think about which approach is most likely to appeal to her.

An idea I picked up from master copywriter Lorrie Morgan-Ferrero is to set a timer for 20 minutes and brainstorm on paper as many different headlines as you can. Don't stop to edit or evaluate. Use the format suggestions above to light your creative spark. Go all out. Dump all your ideas on the page, no matter how wacky they may seem. When the timer goes off at 20 minutes, stop. You should have between 60 and 100 headlines. (Tip: just changing one word counts as a new headline). Go back and review them. Discard the ones that are irrelevant.

Then take your time to play around with the rest, tweaking and combining until you come up with one that stops you dead. Sometimes I spend several hours on a headline before the perfect one pops up.

To see excellent examples of good headlines that pull you in, you need look no further than the papers and magazines at the supermarket checkout counter. Prevention magazine is particularly good, as is Reader's Digest. And the National Enquirer, whether you like it or not, certainly has a way of coming up with headlines that stop you in your tracks.

7. Point out what makes you different from others in your profession

Pitfall to avoid: thinking there's nothing that sets you apart from everyone else in your profession because you all do the same work.

There's probably a multitude of people offering the same product or service as you, with the same benefits. To give yourself a chance to snag your portion of the market, potential clients need to know:

- What makes you different from everyone else in your profession?
- Why should they choose you over all other options, including doing nothing?

That's your selling point. You may have to search deep to find the difference, but there is one.

Here's a really important clue to digging out your difference.

The difference doesn't have to be something extraordinary or exotic. It can be something that applies equally to all your competitors, but you're the one who talks about it. Once you've talked about it, it's difficult for others in the profession to do the same without looking like copycats.

Probably the best-known example of this is Schlitz beer.

The story of Schlitz beer

One of the most famous copywriters of all times, Claude Hopkins, was asked to create an advertising campaign for Schlitz beer in Milwaukee. When he visited the brewery, he was fascinated by the quality standards of the brewing process that made their beer so pure. The fact was that every brewery had the same high standards for purity. But none of them had ever used this in their advertising. So Hopkins designed an advertising campaign that

explained the brewing process and why their beer was so pure. Since no one else had ever talked about this, the assumption was that Schlitz was the only one doing so and that their beer was purer than anyone else's.

The fact was, every beer brewing company followed exactly the same procedure. Schlitz just happened to be the first to tell the story. They gradually rose from fifth place to a tie for first in the market by basing their advertising around a fact that was commonplace in the industry.

Take the time to dig deep into the nature of your product or service and how you deliver it. There IS something you can emphasize. Find it!

8. Include benefits as well as features

Pitfall to avoid: focusing only on the features of your product or service.

Have you heard of **WIIFM?** It's an acronym for **What's In It For Me?** Consciously or unconsciously, this is the only question in the minds of your prospects as they read your materials.

Of course you need to talk about the features of your product or service, but it's important to include lots of benefits that your service or product offers to the client.

Features: What you or your product or service does.
Benefits: What they get from what you do, the advantage to them, the value they take away. They are the answer to WIIFM.

Let me give you an example for my business as a marketing writer.

Some features

- I put the essence of your message into concise language.
- I analyze your target market and use words they relate to.
- I provide materials that describe what you do.
- I present your message with impact and clarity.

Some benefits

- Your materials let your target market know that you're the best person to do business with, bar none.
- They resonate with you because they feel that you understand them, their wants and problems
- You save time and money because it costs less to delegate to a professional than to waste your precious time trying to do it yourself. How many prospective clients could you call in the time it takes you to put the words together yourself?

And lots more.

Do you see the difference here between features and benefits? If this is the only point that you implement from this program, this one alone will transform your materials, the way you talk about your business and your ability to catch the attention of your potential clients.

Take the time to delve beneath the features of your product or service. An easy way to do this is to list all the features of your product and service and then, for each feature, ask yourself “What does this do for the client?” This will give you the benefits, and it’s the benefits that sell. Of course you include features also, but emphasize the benefits.

9. Use words and a tone that your market can relate to and that affects them emotionally

Pitfall to avoid: writing in a tone that YOU like because it's easy for you.

Remember what we said earlier that this is not English 101? When you write marketing or sales materials, your job is not to impress with the literary quality of your writing. Your job is to get your message across in words and a tone that your ideal client relates to.

Usually a chatty style works best. When you read, you hear the words in your head as you read them. If your writing is conversational, your reader will hear it as if you're speaking to them. However you do it, use short everyday words, the kind of words you'd use if you were actually engaged in a conversation.

Some tips that will help you achieve this:

- Write as if you're sitting with a friend over a cup of coffee and talking about your business. It can help to talk into a tape recorder and then transcribe it. This will give you a great start, because the tone will be informal. It's more accessible and personable and people relate more easily to it than to good literary or academic writing.
- When I write for clients, I always interview with them to gather information. I either record this on tape and have someone transcribe it or I'll take verbatim notes on my computer as we talk (I'm a fast typist!). That way I get a real sense of the person and their audience and, where possible, I'll integrate their language into my writing because it sounds natural and reflects who they are. Then their personality comes through in their materials. Often we're afraid to show who we are. But especially if you're a sole proprietor, **you** are the heart of your business and there's nothing wrong with letting that shine through.

If you are targeting a very specific professional group, you can use the way they think to your advantage.

For example, if you're targeting accountants, they're very detailed, so they'll expect lots of detail; attorneys are logical so make sure there are no holes in the logic of your piece. For doctors, your tone will have to be more professional and serious. But if your market is small children and you're trying to get the attention of their moms, your tone can be much lighter and more playful.

Always consider your target audience. Ask yourself what words they'll relate to? What kind of language do they understand? You don't have to resort to "hype" or high-pressure selling language. There's nothing wrong with an "in your face" style of writing, if that's what your audience responds to. Always make sure that everything you write is solid and backed up by facts. That's what distinguishes it from hype. Hype is often based on using lots of adjectives to disguise a lack of content or substance. You can easily avoid this.

Even if your tone is more serious or sophisticated for a particular market, this does not mean that you use bloated language. You can still use everyday words that people use in daily conversation. Watch TV shows like the News Hour with Jim Lehrer, or listen to news programs on NPR. These are highly respected programs that attract an intelligent, educated audience. Yet their language is very accessible because they don't use long words or sentences that seem to go on forever. They are great models.

A conversational tone taps into the reader's emotions at a deep personal level. Marketing wisdom says that 80% of our buying decisions are made from the emotions, and we use the other 20% to make a rational justification for the emotional decision. So make it personal and tap into those emotions.

It's worth it to take the time up front to get a sense of your audience so that you can hit the right tone with them. Otherwise it will just not resonate with them and they'll leave your material aside or they'll not be interested enough to click further into your website.

10. Less is more: keep it focused and concise.

Pitfall to avoid: becoming so attached to your words that you are unable or unwilling to change them.

Mark Twain is reputed to have said, *“If I’d had more time, I’d have written a shorter letter.”*

A promotional piece is a teaser to get people interested enough to take the action you want them to take: call you up and find out more, make an appointment, or give you their email address.

It’s not telling them everything you know.

For me there are three broad stages to the writing process. You can use these to make sure that you’re not flooding your potential clients with too much information and too many words.

Stage 1

Getting all the information down on paper without worrying about style, tone, grammar or any other details. Just write from your heart and capture the information. All of it. Even if it may not all seem relevant at the time. I find it’s better to start off with too much information, rather than too little. That way there’s more to choose from when you’re boiling it down to the length you want. So don’t be alarmed if you start out with ten times more than you need. When you start working on a piece, it’s more important to focus on collecting information than to worry about the quantity. The editing process will take care of that.

Stage 2

Editing it until the message is succinct, and carefully honed to the tastes of your audience. This is the longest part of the process. When you have everything down and you think you’re finished, then edit, edit, edit. Edit on paper, not on the computer screen. For some reason, we tend to overlook things on the screen that would hit us between the eyes when we read it on paper.

Then leave it a few days or overnight, or even a few hours, and edit it again. Shave off every word that isn't necessary. Revamp sentences to say what you want to say in as few words as possible. However don't do this at the expense of losing the tone you want you convey. Sometimes you may need a few more words to create a rounded or warm feel to a sentence or paragraph if that's what's necessary.

If it's too difficult to cut chunks out of your own baby, ask someone else to edit it for you.

When you think you've finished editing, there's yet another step:

- Read your piece aloud. If it sounds stilted or unnatural, then it's probably too academic. If parts of it are difficult to read, then they may need to be reworked until you can read them easily and smoothly and they sound as if you're just having a chat with someone.
- Better still, have an 11 or 12-year old read it aloud to you. If an 11-year old stumbles over anything, then it's back to the computer to revamp that text into something more accessible.

Stage 3

Editing for grammar, spelling errors etc.

I recommend having someone else do this part. Once you've been wrapped up in your material for a few days or weeks, or even months, it's hard to recognize your own mistakes. Don't let an overlooked typo spoil an otherwise effective piece: it will damage your credibility as a professional.

11. Get feedback

Pitfall to avoid: Don't show it to your best friends or family and hope to get an honest response. You may, but don't depend on it. They may be afraid of offending you, or they may not want to burst your bubble even if they think it's not that great.

Sitting at your desk, you may be convinced that you've produced the masterpiece of a lifetime and if only the right people knew about you, you'd be winning awards right, left and center for your insights and abilities. Right! It's easy to get so wrapped up in your own business and material that you lose perspective and objectivity.

Now it's time to expose your brainchild to the world and ask for feedback.

Choose several professionals whom you trust, and who don't have the same emotional investment in you as friends and family. Or choose someone who is in your target market.

Once you've chosen the people you trust enough to be honest with you, don't ask them "Do you like it?" or "What do you think of it?" Those kinds of questions are likely to get what I call an "editorial response" i.e. comments on grammar, wording etc. It's not that this is not important, it's just not the first type of feedback you need. At first you want to know if your material is effective in getting attention and if it represents you and your business accurately.

So the first question to ask goes something like this: "If you were in the market for my product or service, would this get your attention. And if not, why not?" Let them tell you the effect it has on them.

Their responses will let you know where it needs to be punchier, more effective, more compelling. Let them tell you what really grabs their attention and what makes them yawn. Be willing to listen to some blunt comments. Then start revising.

Sometimes the comments may be more brutal than you expected and it can be difficult for you to really hear them. Allow yourself time to digest the information and

regain your equilibrium before you start revising so that you don't do your revisions from a place of resentment and defensiveness.

Another caveat here. When you ask 5 different people for feedback, you're likely to get 5 different opinions/slants. Don't fall into the trap of making everyone else into experts and believing everything they say. Other people's opinions are just that, their opinions. Take what seems useful and leave the rest. Don't substitute other opinions for your sound judgment.

Summary

As we looked at:

- How to create a solid foundation for your materials
- How to think about your materials – your new mindset, and
- What to do when you've finished writing

you may have noticed a recurring theme and that is “take time.” Punchy materials that get clients excited about hiring you don't just pop out magically overnight. It takes time for them to percolate and mature. Don't rush the process. At every stage, the more time you take to do the research and inquiry, the better the foundation you'll lay and the easier it will be to complete the materials. And the better your chances of creating materials that keep clients streaming to you and increasing your income and cash flow.

If you've enjoyed this information and you'd like more useful tips like this, go to my website www.mymarketingmessage.com and pick up a free report. The current free report is “11 keys to website content that works.”



Maggie Dennison is a published author with a Masters Degree in Applied Psychology (University of Santa Monica) and a fascination with what triggers people to do the things they do. And promotional materials are all about using psychological triggers.

A successful career with multinational corporations gave way to starting her own business as a Business Coach. Working with small business owners and solo entrepreneurs, she realized that her clients were really good at what they did. However they had no notion of how to write marketing materials. Often they turned to her for help. Usually, instead of coaching them to do it themselves, she ended up writing their materials. And so another career evolved. Today she works with small business owners and solo entrepreneurs, particularly in the fields of alternative health and personal development, to make sure that their marketing materials are taking them down the right track.

If you're even beginning to toy with the idea of writing marketing materials, give Maggie a call and talk to her about your brochures, website, sales letters or other material that you need to promote your business.

Make it easy on yourself! Call her today at (805) 865 9173 or (310) 226 7115 (in the USA).

Maggie's Offer To You

A 20 minute consultation – FREE!

If you're inspired to take action after reading this book, but you don't know where to start, give me a call. I will give you 20 minutes of my time to pick my brain. Free. That's a \$75 value.

I have a limited number of spots available for this offer, actually only 3 per week. So go ahead, give me a call at (805) 965 9173 or (310) 226 7115 or email me at Maggie@MyMarketingMessage.com so that we can schedule time to get you going.

With warm wishes for your success!

Maggie Dennison