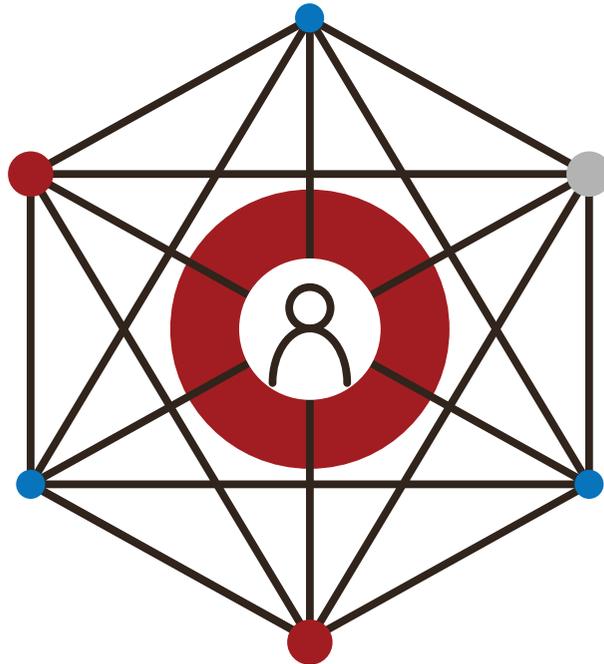




Internet Marketing for Smart People

How to Get More Traffic, Better
Customers, and More Profit
Using Content Marketing

copyblogger



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Introduction

By Sonia Simone

Something tells me you're just ... well ... smarter than most people looking to market online.

You're not interested in lame "get rich quick" schemes. You're not looking for a magical silver bullet that involves no work, no time, and no sense.

In other words, you don't have to be Einstein to get this stuff. But you'd have to be an idiot to believe some of the stuff peddled by traditional Internet marketing "gurus."

Introducing Internet Marketing for *Smart People*

Before we get started, let's talk a little about what "Internet Marketing for Smart People" is (and isn't).

The idea for these lessons was born from a bunch of conversations Brian and I had as we were trying to teach Copyblogger readers exactly how to create the kinds of enjoyable, profitable business that we've built.

The blogging world had a lot of the pieces, but they didn't have the whole thing.

We saw too many bloggers who had huge, loyal audiences — but were still broke. The “blogosphere” isn’t as rabidly anti-commercial as it used to be, but the huge majority of bloggers still aren’t using the best techniques to turn fans into customers.

We experimented a little with letting readers know about some products from the more traditional Internet Marketing (IM) world. But while the IM gurus had a great collection of tactics, they missed the mark on some of the most important components that make a 21st century business work online.

I wrote a post about this dilemma ([you can read it here](#)) that got people talking.

The funny thing was, . . . it got *us* talking.

Brian and I spent a lot of time talking strategy for Copyblogger (the publication), and for Rainmaker Digital (the business).

And we found ourselves talking about what went into creating an ethical, effective business.

We talked about the coolest, most remarkable ways to combine great content with smart marketing. And how to put together direct response copywriting that also respected our relationship with our amazing community of readers and customers alike.

We decided to do more than talk. We decided to create a free course just for Copyblogger readers — and those lessons became the “Internet Marketing for Smart People” e-course.

What you’ll get out of this ebook

When we looked closely at what was working best at Copyblogger, we found that success rested on four pillars:

- Relationships
- Direct response copywriting
- Content marketing
- High quality products

Each pillar enhances the others. Together, they’re much stronger than they would be if any of the pillars were missing.

That’s not theory, by the way. We’ve tested and proven these concepts by launching profitable businesses in all kinds of niches and topics, and by teaching others to do the same.

This ebook contains 20 core lessons on the nuts and bolts of what goes into creating your own remarkable, content-based “Copyblogger-style” marketing system.

We return to each pillar several times, building on what's gone before, so that as you go, you're creating a solid structure that gives you the best earning potential.

We can't and wouldn't promise any kind of specific financial return from the course. How much money you can make depends on your focus, your drive, your market, your knowledge of your topic, and a bunch of other things we don't have any control over.

We'll give you some of the best, most effective tools available today. What you build with them is up to you. Fair enough?

What happens next

This ebook is intended to give you a real grounding in the way that we do business and marketing on Copyblogger, and in our related businesses.

Each lesson will be illustrated with articles from around the Web. Many of those will be from Copyblogger, but we'll also include others who we think "get it."

Ready to dive in? Cool ... let's get it started ...

CHAPTER 1

The First Pillar: Relationships

You know that old cliché, right? “Content is king?”

Well, it’s wrong.

Content matters, and content is a pillar of the “Internet Marketing for Smart People” method. But content isn’t king.

Relationships are king.

Clever online marketers figured out a long time ago that “the money is in the list.” In other words, if you can get a big list together of folks who had some interest in your topic, you could give those people a chance to buy stuff, and make a pretty nice living doing it.

The reality is, the direct mail (known to most of us as junk mail) folks had this figured out decades before there was such a thing as the Internet.

And because it costs money to send direct mail, they also figured out another very important piece:

Not every list is created equal.

When you're spending even a few cents to send a piece of mail (and sending them by the millions), you need to get very clear on what works and what doesn't.

Taking good care of your village

There are a lot of names for a group of prospects and customers you communicate with regularly.

Dan Kennedy calls them a herd (which is a bit condescending, I think). Traditional internet marketers call it a list. Seth Godin calls it a tribe.

Here on Copyblogger, we call them a village. In some ways, we've gone back to the Middle Ages, when nearly everyone's "work" was inextricably tied with their community.

The village baker was your neighbor. If he baked terrible bread, you walked over and gave him a piece of your mind. It was a messy, complicated system. Sometimes it was a real pain. But it also brought a comforting reliability and predictability that business today usually can't match.

In other words, it was a relationship.

Your village asks more from you, but they're also more loyal to you. This isn't a new way of doing business, but it's new to most of us.

Take a look at this post with [more thoughts on the village of customers](#).

In IMfSP (that's Internet Marketing for Smart People) marketing, you treat your village as your greatest asset.

That means the combined total of all the people who read (or watch, or listen to) your content regularly. Your blog community, your email list, your customer list, your Twitter followers — all of it.

Every time you have a business decision to make, you make it with this in mind: How does this decision affect my relationship with my village?

It's how you decide what products to offer. It's how you decide how often to post. It's how you decide whether or not to run an article by a guest writer. It's how you choose your affiliates.

Now there's an important flip side to this, too.

Relationships go both ways

Sometimes we justify our fear of selling with the excuse that we don't want to damage our relationship with the village.

Keep in mind that a one-way relationship isn't really a relationship at all. It's exploitation.

In exchange for everything you do for your village, you must also conduct yourself in a businesslike way.

That means setting appropriate boundaries, making it clear from the beginning that you'll be offering products for sale, and taking from the village as well as giving to it.

This is where many bloggers and other social media types stumble, and we're going to give you much more specific advice on how you'll do that with your own village. To get you started, take a look at this post, aimed at what I call ["Kumbaya" bloggers](#).

Just remember: If you give and give to your village, and never get anything in return, what would that make you?

The village idiot, of course.

Next up, we'll be talking about the second IMfSP pillar, which is copywriting. Specifically, we'll go in-depth on the one element that can make or break your content.

CHAPTER 2

How to Get More People to Consume and Share Your Content ...

Now we're going to jump into the second pillar of Internet Marketing for Smart People, which is copywriting. More specifically, direct response copywriting, which is used by direct marketers to trigger very specific responses from readers.

The first thing you should know is that copywriting and content are two different critters. Related, but different. We'll talk more about that as we go forward.

One thing they do have in common, though, is that they both need fantastic headlines. Improving your headlines is the single fastest way you can make your writing more effective.

Believe it or not, a quick way to find some killer headlines is to start checking out the supermarket tabloids. You know the kind — the ones with headlines that read like "Man's Head Explodes in Barber's Chair."

We might glance at the tabloids when we're in line at the supermarket and figure they're written for (and by) morons. But smart copywriters study them carefully, because cheesy tabloids employ some of the greatest headline

writers in the business. If you think about it, those headlines need to grab the potential reader by the throat and make that newspaper a must-read.

How can you get some of this mojo into your own copy and content? Take a look at these three Copyblogger lessons on how to adapt an existing successful headline (like one on a tabloid or a popular magazine) for your own writing:

[The Cosmo Headline Technique](#)

[The Hidden Key to Cosmo Headlines: Sex and the City?](#)

[Magazine Headline Remix: Details Edition](#)

This is also a great technique if you're a bit stumped for a post topic. Mentally translating a tabloid headline to your own topic can spur all kinds of creative ideas.

If your headline fails, you might as well go home

If your headline is boring, or wimpy, or doesn't capture anyone's attention, the game is over.

Your headline has one job, and one job only:

The job of the headline is to get the first line of your copy read.

“Your copy” in this case might be a blog post, a sales letter, a landing page, or even a lesson in a free e-course.

If the headline does that job, it worked.

If it doesn't do that job, it failed.

Great headlines can also do tricky things like make people want to Plus, Share, retweet, and otherwise get the word out about your work.

What headlines don't do, and don't need to do, is to “sell” anything. They don't have to deliver your biggest promise, or communicate a customer benefit, or some of the other stuff you may have read about.

We're not saying it's bad to put a promise or a benefit into a headline. In fact, it's a really smart strategy most of the time. But you do it because it works to get the post or email opened, and that first line of copy read.

And because headlines do fail sometimes (happens to the best of us!), here's a Copyblogger lesson on one that didn't do well for us ... and how we tweaked it to work better:

[One Big Way to Avoid a Headline Fail](#)

Why you want to write great headlines

More people will read your headline than anything else you write.

They read it in your Twitter stream, they see it fly by in their RSS reader, and it shows up in their email inbox.

Mastering headlines doesn't automatically make you a great copywriter, but it is a skill you'll need if you want to effectively market anything.

If you haven't yet read the Copyblogger ebook "[How to Write Magnetic Headlines](#)," you can go pick it up in your free member library

What else gets read?

The other places you want to have great, compelling content are your first paragraph, [your image captions](#), any P.S. you might have, and your subheads.

Subheads are the second-level headlines you see in a post like this one that break up the copy, like "What else gets read?" above.

Those are the most-read elements of any kind of copy, whether you're sending out a 28-page physical sales letter or a Twitter tweet.

The same skills that will make you a great headline writer will also serve you well when you're putting these elements together.

For more ideas on subheads, check out [The Deceptively Simple Steps to Persuasive Writing that Works](#).

Content vs. copywriting

Remember at the beginning of this article, we mentioned that content and copy are two different critters?

The main purpose of copy is to persuade a reader to take a certain action. The main purpose of content is to create trust, familiarity, and warm fuzzy feelings in your audience. A smart 21st-century strategy uses both, and [here's a quick guide to how they work together in tandem](#).

Used together, direct response copywriting and social media-style content are much more powerful than either one used independently.

In the next chapter, we're going to talk about what makes for great content and why it's so important to your business.

CHAPTER 3

The Secret to Creating an “Unfair” Competitive Advantage

Have you ever had a customer warmly thank you for your advertising? Or ask you to help them make sure they’ll never miss one of your ads?

Is your advertising changing people’s lives for the better? Does it make you look like a hero with your prospects and customers, instead of just interrupting and annoying them?

That’s the promise, obviously, of using content to market your business. But it’s easy to get intimidated by content marketing. There are hundreds of different ways to use content to attract more leads, convert those leads into customers, create repeat and referral business, and create positive PR (in this case we mean public relations, not Google PageRank, although it can create that as well).

Let’s get one thing out of the way. You don’t have to be a genius copywriter to create a content marketing program that makes your customers love you (and your competitors weep).

Copywriting talent is plentiful. Effective copywriting strategy is much less plentiful.

In other words, there are a lot of writers who can give you beautiful words. But deploying those words in a strategic way is a different thing altogether.

Let's look at one of the most popular ways to use content: to attract attention in the marketplace and get potential customers to find you.

Create something worthy of attention

I see a lot of bogus marketing "gurus" try to tell you that you can slap together any old mish-mash and market it as content.

So let me be very clear:

Garbage content will get you garbage results.

Tempted by one of those "auto blogging" programs that promises a keyword-focused blog without any work? Keep in mind that if it's easy for you to automatically generate, it's just as easy for your competitors.

Also remember that this is the sort of content that Google likes to devalue and even ban outright. Recent Google updates destroyed traffic and rankings for thousands of sites using these kinds of tactics – and Google just keeps getting better at detecting weak content.

The truth is, playing games is harder than just making something of value. And if you aren't a terrific writer yourself, it's not too difficult to find someone who is.

It's a net, not a harpoon

Why does content marketing work so well?

Because instead of trying to take a single shot at your prospect and "harpoon" him into buying, you create a nice, comfortable content net that supports him and keeps him happy.

Great content creates a high level of trust and rapport, and educates your potential client about all the benefits of doing business with you.

You might hold onto that prospect for three days or three years before he decides to buy. It doesn't really matter. As long as you keep delivering value, that person will stick with you and stay tuned in to your message. And when he's ready to buy, he's yours.

To make sure your readers aren't tuning you out, you want to shape your content so that it rewards the reader for taking time to consume it. We call this cookie content ([read this post to find out why](#)), and it's a cornerstone of what makes content marketing work.

And for more details on the concept of the harpoon vs. the net, take a look at this post:

[The Harpoon or the Net: What's the Right Copy Approach for Your Prospects?](#)

Finding customers, not just readers

If creating great content automatically led to a strong business, every blogger would be rich.

Of course we know that there's more to it than that. Your content needs to be put into a system so that it pulls potential customers closer and closer to you, and delivers a marketing message in a way that's inviting, not creepy.

You need more than great content: you need a content marketing system.

This doesn't have to be an intimidating process. We wrote about all of the steps here: [How to Use Content to Find Customers](#). Anyone can use the same incredibly effective content strategies that we use here on Copyblogger to build a profitable (and fun) business.

In the next chapter, we're going to give you some specifics about the kinds of strategies that work well to make money online using your great content (and one very popular strategy that doesn't).

CHAPTER 4

Why Advertising Doesn't Work for Bloggers

You might have heard that you can't make money as a blogger.

A few bloggers can manage if they generate superhuman levels of traffic, like Perez Hilton or ICanHasCheezburger (the LOLCat blog).

For ordinary mortals like us? You'll be lucky to pay your Chipotle bill via advertising. You need a model that works in the real world.

First, take a look at a post I wrote on exactly this topic, called [Why You Can't Make Money Blogging](#).

One of the things I talk about in that post is that, for those who aren't seeing stratospheric traffic, we need to solve real problems in order to make a decent living.

Copyblogger, even though it's one of the most popular blogs on the web, takes this approach. We don't go the "blog celebrity" route, because that's subject to fads and fashion, and we like to build our business on something more enduring than that.

Instead, we provide lots of solutions to real-world problems with our free content, and we offer additional solutions involving paid products of our own and formerly other people's.

A lot of people associate affiliate marketing with sleaze, scams, and high-pressure sales techniques. But there's no reason in the world to leave affiliate marketing to the bottom-feeders.

Affiliate marketing is one of the smartest ways to start monetizing your high-quality content. But you have to do it right.

5 keys to better affiliate marketing

As you probably already know, affiliate marketing is the practice of finding new customers for an existing product or service that you didn't create.

Even if you're a product-creating rock star and you've got a fat catalog of great stuff for your readers to buy, none of us can keep up with our most passionate customers. They're always going to want more than we can provide. This is where a smart, thoughtful affiliate program can fill the bill.

And if you don't yet have a great product of your own to offer, you can still give your audience the information, physical products, and services they're looking for, and make some money for yourself while you're at it. It's just cool all the way around.

Generally, the vendor does all of the "selling" for you — you're just providing a lead. In reality, though, a little judicious pre-selling on your part can make affiliate marketing work better for you.

When you're looking for an affiliate product to review or promote on your site, here are some of the guidelines that have worked well for us on Copyblogger:

- **Only promote products that are so good, you would promote them whether or not you were paid to.** Many “gurus” will tell you to find a Clickbank product in your niche that’s doing well and promote that. While that’s a useful way to tell if a particular topic is viable, it’s also a great way to destroy your relationship with your audience unless the Clickbank product is terrific. Only promote great quality, whether it’s a \$17 product or a \$17,000 one.
- **Make sure you’re selling something your audience wants.** This seems obvious, but it’s where a lot of marketers fail. You can’t just offer something people need or could benefit from. They also have to want it. Don’t be afraid to promote products that are already popular in your topic. They’re popular because there’s a strong desire. You’ll use your own relationship and content to make people want to buy with your link.
- **Look for high-dollar-value products.** This is especially important if you don’t have tons of traffic. It might seem counterintuitive, but it’s true — you won’t necessarily sell more of a cheaper product. It’s not uncommon to find that a \$197 product sells as many copies as a \$19 one.
- **Give some background.** Reviews tend to do very well for affiliate offers, because they give the buyer some additional background on the product’s strong and weak points. Never be afraid to honestly address

flaws in a product you review. You won't hurt sales, and you will build your trust and credibility with your audience.

- **Always disclose your affiliate relationship.** Not only is it a good relationship-building practice to be honest with your readers, but the FTC in the U.S. also requires bloggers to disclose that you're receiving financial compensation for your endorsement. This can get you into some very ugly hot water if you ignore it, so don't. And yes, you can still get in trouble even if your business isn't based in the U.S.

More killer strategies for affiliate marketing

Brian Clark wrote a terrific series on Copyblogger about how you can make more money with affiliate offers and improve your relationship with your audience while you're at it.

Remember, [relationships are the first pillar](#). Make them your priority, or the rest of your business won't be able to grow and thrive.

The headlines speak for themselves. If affiliate marketing will be part of your income mix, each of these is a must-read.

- [Three Killer Content Strategies for Affiliate Marketing](#)
- [Five Effective Copywriting Tactics for Affiliate Marketing](#)
- [How to Turn Affiliate Disclosure into a Selling Point](#)

Can you still make this work if you aren't writing about online marketing?

A lot of people believe that this affiliate marketing stuff is only for people writing about online marketing.

That's actually one of the worst niches you could get into, so don't go there unless you have a huge passion for it (and something new to add to the topic).

If you write a food blog, then review kitchen gadgets, gourmet ingredients, and cookbooks. You can link to all of these with affiliate links from both [Amazon Associates](#) and [Commission Junction](#).

Remember to talk about the bad as well as the good. If the \$2400 espresso machine sucks and the \$89 one is fabulous, tell the truth. And use an affiliate link for both. If someone's going to saddle themselves with the crummy one after you've given all the information, there's no reason for you to short yourself on the commission.

If you write a humor blog, take your best material and put it on t-shirts, hats, or bags with [CafePress](#).

If you're a parenting blogger, you can review toys, clothes, diaper bags, or even online parenting courses.

Blog about relationships? Find a great online course or ebook about becoming a better husband, wife, parent, adult child, friend, or just a happier, more fulfilled human being. There's some great stuff out there just waiting for you to help get the word out.

Jennifer Michelle has [a blog for pole dancers](#). She sells her own workout gear designed just for pole dancing (called "Pole Skivvies," how cute is that?), and also offers dance poles on an affiliate basis. See? We told you anyone could apply this.

What's the best way to score review copies?

Physical stuff you'll probably have to actually buy. If your blog gets decent traffic, you can always ask for a freebie. But your credibility goes up a little if you pay for it.

For ebooks and online courses, you can nearly always get your money refunded if you decide the product isn't worth a review, and you should definitely get in the habit of getting a refund if it isn't any good (check the fine print before you pay to make sure, of course).

Of course, if the product is good and useful, don't ask for a refund. Karma tends to be very real in the online world.

Why you're going to be better at this than most people

Remember, you have some gigantic advantages in this business over the typical "make money now" system guys.

- You've got a unique voice and point of view.
- You care more about your relationship with your audience than you do about some affiliate commission (even a really sweet one on that expensive espresso machine).
- You're building tons of high-quality content (not auto-generated or scraped junk) on your blog, creating a content net to support buyers over the long run and keep them coming back. If this offer isn't a good fit for them, the next one may be.

This means your "ads" for these products don't look like ads. They look like honest recommendations from a friend. Which is exactly the way you should think about them.

Will there ever be affiliate offers in Copyblogger material?

We don't make affiliate offers for other company's products in our content any more. If that ever changes, of course we'll let you know.

Why don't we use this strategy? Very simply, because over time, we've built our own suite of content marketing tools and education that cover most of what you'll need to build a great content marketing platform. When we run across a useful book or tool that isn't our own, we let you know about it without getting a commission, because our core business model is built around our own offerings.

We certainly let our audience know from time to time about products, tools, or services that we create. Sometimes, when we're frustrated at not finding exactly the right tool to support our businesses, we make one or partner with something superb that already exists (the [Genesis theme framework for WordPress](#) being a great example).

Would we ever let you know about something we didn't believe in? Of course not — because this is Internet Marketing for Smart People, not Internet Marketing for Clueless Idiots. The dumbest thing we (or you) could do is to promote garbage.

Your assignment for the week

Do some serious thinking about where you're going to find really high-quality affiliate products that you could discuss and, when appropriate, recommend to your audience.

[Clickbank](#) is the biggest marketplace for information products — just be aware that there's a lot of junk mixed in with the gold. [Commission Junction](#)

is where to go for physical stuff — you'll find everything from collectible movie posters to gardening equipment to great coffee. And if you're in the information and advice business, see if the better bloggers in your topic have anything you might promote.

Next up, we're going to circle back to relationships, and talk about how to develop a persona that lets your readers and customers create a stronger connection.

CHAPTER 5

The Key to Creating More Remarkable Connections

So the first pillar for IMfSP is relationships, right? You've got to create rock-solid relationships with your audience if you want to build a solid, sustainable business.

We've got good news and bad news. The good news is, this can be one of the most fun parts of running your business.

The bad news is ... you're probably gonna have to get naked.

No, no, not literally naked. If that's your business model, I'm not sure how much advice we'll be able to give you.

But for most village businesses (remember, those are the kind of small-niche, profitable, enjoyable businesses that create fanatically loyal customer followings), the audience wants someone to relate to. Conversations have two sides, and you've got to bring something authentic to your end of the equation. Which can get scary.

Authenticity, blah, blah, blah

How many times have we heard “be more authentic in your content and all riches/fame/success will be yours?”

There are a few problems with this.

First, it tends to lead dangerously to a lot of blathering about yourself that no one wants to hear.

Trust me, I’d love to waffle on about my favorite techniques for dyeing my hair, or share Flickr pictures of my kid’s most recent watercolor paintings.

That’s what interests me. But it probably holds very minimal interest to you.

The second problem is that it’s scary to put your “real self” out there. Not only will your mother-in-law, your ex, and your fifth-grade English teacher get to see what you’ve got to say, but so will any number of random strangers (some of whom we can only characterize as “loons”).

You don’t have to share it all

Decide now what you will and won’t share. Some bloggers share stories about their personal lives (particularly in media like Twitter, which are essentially pure conversation), and some don’t. If you do, make sure you’ve set reasonable boundaries for yourself.

“Authenticity” doesn’t mean you don’t have boundaries.

For more guidelines and suggestions on this, check out this post I wrote for Copyblogger in 2008:

[Feel Great Naked: Confidence Boosters for Getting Personal](#)

You want to share personal details consciously and with care, not just spew out whatever comes to mind.

They don’t want to read it all

Putting your own personality into your marketing is a great idea. It creates an environment in which your readers will get to know, trust and like you. And even the most hardcore salesman can tell you that that’s the most important key to persuasion.

But becoming a self-centered bore is not a great idea. Make sure you’ve got plenty of solid content that your readers care about.

Everyone’s mix is going to be a little different, but you want to aim for a mix that looks roughly like this one:

The content mix

- 10-15% entertainment and/or “personality” content that forms an emotional connection with your reader (if you’re shy about revealing personal details, this will probably lean more toward the “entertainment” side)
- 50-60% valuable tips and immediately usable information
- 10-15% weighty reference and higher-value content your readers will want to bookmark and return to (as time goes on, you may find you create less of this, preferring to send readers back to your classic content)
- 5-15% content that builds relationships with other bloggers, including news and links to other content
- 5% “selling” content that leads to an affiliate promotion or to a sales sequence for your own product

Don’t get too hung up on precise numbers, but do try to keep your content profile in this general neighborhood.

Your audience will tell you the best mix for you. Some markets want lots of entertainment, some like plenty of news, and others want to form a strong bond with you as a person.

Also, remember that in some cases these categories can overlap. For example, a meaty reference post can also be entertaining and show your personality.

It's still not about you

When you share your personality on your blog, it's not for therapy or to make yourself feel good.

Internet Marketing for Smart People is a marketing ebook, after all, so we assume you've got something to sell — even if that something is simply an idea, awareness of an issue, or a point of view.

The most enduring way to maximize those “sales” is this: Keep your attention focused obsessively on your customer.

The two secret ingredients for the most effective marketing persona

If you're going to create relationships online, there's got to be someone for your readers to have a relationship with.

Even for the most “authentic” blogger, there's a difference between the complicated human being called you and the persona that you use on the blog.

Your persona is still you, but a selected version of you.

Your persona has boundaries and limits. Your persona has a consistent message to share. Your persona is a “subset” of who you are offline.

The first key to a persuasive persona is authority.

You may have heard that “authority is dead,” but nothing could be further from the truth. Authority will never die, because it’s hard-wired into our DNA. (For much more about authority, I strongly suggest that you [check out our content marketing and training community called Authority](#)).

The second key to a persuasive persona is warmth and nurturing. When you genuinely care about your audience, it’s much easier to get the word out about what you have to offer.

In my opinion, this can’t really be faked — you actually do have to give a damn.

That’s one reason the traditional “yellow highlighter” squeeze-and-sleaze Internet marketers will always be limited in their success:

- They see numbers.
- You need to see people.

When you combine these two factors, you end up with the marketing persona that works in every market, every topic, with every audience.

Your persona needs to consistently reflect two core messages:

- You know what you're talking about.
- You care about your audience as human beings.

This is what I call the "nurturing parent" archetype. The nurturing parent always steers the audience toward the right thing. The nurturing parent knows right from wrong. The nurturing parent puts the audience's needs above her own, always. The nurturing parent sets healthy boundaries and knows when to be gentle and when to be firm.

Some nurturing parent archetypes are very "touchy-feely," others are more cool and distant. You can put this together in the way that works best for you and feels natural.

Just remember: nurturing parents aren't wishy-washy. It's perfectly fine (and smart) to admit what you don't know, but be firm and clear about what you do.

Your homework assignment

Put together 10-15 ideas for content that would illustrate the “nurturing parent” concept.

They could be great pieces of how-to advice, philosophical lessons, expressions of affection, or warnings about pitfalls to avoid.

Get some good headlines together for them and get them into your “ideas for content” folder. If you don’t have one of those, start one now. It can be physical or virtual, whatever works for you.

In the next chapter, we’re going to take a typical “hard sell” sales letter, pull out an element, and show you how it might look with the “Internet Marketing for Smart People” approach.

CHAPTER 6

How to Write a Smarter Sales Letter

This lesson takes a traditional marketing guru's sales letter and gives it a makeover by translating it into a more content-rich, relationship-based style.

In other words, we'll take the same persuasion techniques that the high-pressure guys use, but we'll creatively adapt them to a social media audience that hates hype and hates salespeople — or at least they think they do.

Ready to roll?

First things first

Please don't misunderstand me. This is not a bad sales letter. In fact, this is a very skilled sales letter. It does what it sets out to do (and we'll look more closely at the goals in a later lesson).

In certain business cases, it's possible you would want to run a letter very much like this one. As long as your product is good and you're always being 100% honest with your audience, there's nothing inherently bad about it.

But right now, with the audience and community you have today, if you spring a letter like this on them, they're going to run screaming for the exits.

When you use social media to build a village of customers, you can't then run up with a "harpoon" style sales letter and try to shoot them in the head with it. It just isn't going to work.

If you haven't read the article on [The Harpoon or the Net: What's the Right Copy Approach for Your Prospects?](#), go do that now and then come back. The whole thing will make much more sense to you if you do.

The headline

Here's the original headline from the sales page. I changed the actual product type to "Widget Creation" because it doesn't actually matter what you're selling. This is about the underlying architecture of a more typical "harpoon" piece versus creating a content net.

"Here's **YOUR CHANCE** To **INSTANTLY** Tap
Into The Greatest Minds Of Widget-Creating
History And Swipe Their Most Powerful,
Game-Changing **WIDGET-HACKING SECRETS**
To Experience Your Own Monumental Widget-
Creation **BREAKTHROUGH!**"

So, what's the headline doing?

First and foremost, it's grabbing our attention. If we're into making widgets, this headline will probably at least slow us down and catch our interest.

If, that is, we don't instantly click away because it's so clearly and obviously an ad. Because remember, both in and outside of social media, no one likes to be sold, no matter how much they may love to buy.

This style works decently for prospects who are in a hurry and who are looking for something to immediately solve a pressing problem — in this case, that they're not happy with how they're creating their widgets.

It doesn't work well for those who are in more of a "browsing" mood, and who are looking for information.

A relationship-based attention strategy

So how do we do this in a more audience-focused way?

Attention in social media comes as a result of knowing your stuff and having something valuable to contribute. You do not need to be the most towering expert in your field. But you do have to know enough to make yourself consistently useful to your readers.

Assuming you've got something valuable to say, you then need to say it in a way that will command attention.

Strong headlines are just as important to your blog post or special report as they are to a sales letter like this one. But they can't — as this one does — look like an ad.

So when you're looking to capture attention with your content:

- Take some serious care and time with your headline. Remember, the work of the headline is to get that first line of your content read.
- If you use an image, make it a good one that creates some emotional resonance for your reader.
- Then follow up with a digestible and insanely useful bit of content (what I've called cookie content) to keep the reader interested in what you have to say next.

Virtually any social media tool can be used to capture and hold attention. Whether it's a blog post, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube — make sure those elements (headline, image, cookie content value) are firing on all cylinders.

Promises, promises

This headline also makes a couple of promises.

First, this solution is going to be quick. This is conveyed, of course, by the use of the word INSTANTLY, but also with the use of the verb “swipe,” suggesting that instead of painstakingly building your own widget-creation system, you’re just going to steal one that already works well. The word BREAKTHROUGH also suggests immediate massive improvement, not just a modest incremental change.

Second, this solution is going to create something of an “insider’s club.” There’s a sense of a secret confederation here, a group who have the inside dope.

You get that from “Tap into the greatest minds” (suggesting a sort of Vulcan mind-meld with the legends of widget creation) and the use of the word “secrets” (traditionally one of the most powerful words in copywriting).

It’s also hinted at with the words YOUR CHANCE (note how prominently they’re highlighted), suggesting that you’re finally going to get a chance to crack into this elite club.

Because this is all being taken in by the prospect in about a second, there’s no subtlety. Anything important is called out visually so you don’t miss it. That’s why they’re using red to call out certain words, as well as all caps and the unnecessary quotation marks.

Harpoon copywriters can’t afford to be fussy about design. Their message has to be understood in the blink of an eye.

The content-driven version

In a more content-driven sales system, you don't use a single letter like this one to deliver your entire sales message.

Instead, you'd figure out the most important promises you're making, and you create content which addresses each one.

One of the best tools for this is an email autoresponder sequence. You could also do a series of blog posts.

All of the content that delivers these "sales promises" also has to keep delivering solid "cookie content" value. If it smells like advertising, people won't consume it.

So you've got to stay under the radar. But you can easily create valuable content that also communicates big promises like:

- Yes, there is an answer to the problem that's been bothering you
- You're not alone

- It's not as hard as you think
- You're one of a select group/village/tribe
- The success you've been looking for is finally about to be yours
- It's not your fault
- People worse off than you have conquered this problem

Great persuasive content tells stories or uses metaphors to show (not just tell) these promises.

Your homework

The first thing you need to think about is what kind of “big promise” you can make to your audience.

- What pressing problem do you solve?
- What pain do you remove?
- What value do you add?
- What pleasure do you create?
- What freedom do you permit?
- What connection do you allow?

You might have one answer or several. It's fine to have several "big promises," but you need at least one juicy one.

Then, think about how that might be translated into content. You might tell stories about people who have attained this promise. Or maybe you'll give away some simple tools that allow the person to experience some of that promise immediately, today.

For example, if your big promise is being able to become a master auto mechanic, your content might have quick ideas about small tweaks a beginning mechanic can make to immediately produce much better results.

Also think about the best way to present that content. It could be a blog series, an email autoresponder sequence, or a PDF special report. Use whatever tool you think will work best for your particular audience.

So that's a single element of a traditional sales letter – the headline. We spent quite a bit of time on it, because it's incredibly important to hooking your prospect's attention and getting your message read.

Now we're ready to dive into the body of our traditional sales letter.

CHAPTER 7

The Smarter Sales Letter (The Body Copy)

In the last chapter, we started to dissect a traditional “yellow highlighter” sales letter — the kind used by traditional high-pressure Internet marketers.

Their kind of sales letter is designed to work like a [harpoon](#). You get one shot at your prospect, and you either make the sale or the prospect swims away forever.

We spent a lot of time just on the headline (which was fair enough, since it’s about 5 lines long). Now we’re going to get into the body of the ad.

The first mention of the offer

This kind of ad is called “direct response,” because you make an offer and then watch (and measure) to see how well prospects respond to that offer.

Jargon watch: An “offer” is what you’ve got to sell and how much you’re going to charge for it.

For higher-priced products, most copywriters are coy about the price until they’ve had a chance to sell you on how fantastic the product is. But because the price for this particular product is under \$100, this sales page introduces the price early on.

Get It All For **Just \$47 Right Now**

That “Just \$47” is hyperlinked to an order form, giving the prospect the ability to buy the product right away.

“You had me at hello”

I call this the “you had me at hello” offer. Sometimes people don’t need a lot of “selling” or trust-building to order from you. They may already know you by reputation, they may have been referred by someone they trust, or your opening headline and first few lines may have communicated everything they need to know.

For a big-dollar item, this technique can scare this reader off permanently by going too fast, too soon.

But for something less expensive, you can bring price up fairly early in your relationship.

If your main communication vehicle is a blog, you might have a banner ad for a product at the bottom of each post.

(As part of your marketing education, see how we handle this on Copyblogger – it does change over time as we test and learn more about our audience and what they need.)

If you're using an [email autoresponder](#) (you should be, if you aren't already), you can put a low-key offer into one of the early messages. Or you might promote a smaller product, like an ebook, in each message you send.

Let them know what you're there for

I love the expression "Begin as you mean to go on."

This isn't just about making a small sale. It's about communicating to your audience that you are going to provide fantastic value with content and you're going to give them opportunities to buy from you.

Let them know early on that your relationship has a commercial side.

You might think that going for years without "pitching" anything would endear you to your audience. But in fact, it tends to just make them cranky when you finally get around to asking for the sale.

(If that's where you are, you should still do it. Just realize that you'll make a few people cranky.)

If you don't have a product of your own to offer for sale, and you don't have the free time to create one now, find an excellent product in your topic and see if you can represent it on an affiliate basis. Review the chapter on affiliate marketing (Chapter 4 - Why Advertising Doesn't Work for Bloggers) to get ideas for how to do that.

Ask for a small investment early on, making sure buyers get fantastic value for their money. This lays a foundation that will pay off handsomely later.

Jumping into features and benefits

Directly under that initial offer, the sales letter starts to introduce the benefits of buying the product.

Transform Your Widget-Creation Instantly with
Lessons from the Widget-Hacking *LEGENDS!* The
Most *POWERFUL, PROVEN AND PROFITABLE*
Lessons in Widget Creation From the Past 100 Years.

This could, frankly, be a little stronger. This is the section of the sales letter that we'd test some variations on, if we were running it.

The words the copywriter chose to highlight (in all capital letters, a technique you should probably avoid in social media) are legends, powerful, proven, and profitable.

"Legends" is, of course, about establishing the advice in the product as something that's stood the test of time. This is echoed by the word "proven," and by "from the past 100 years."

In the word “profitable” we move to what this particular customer wants, which is to make money. “Powerful” is a little bit of a junk word here, but it creates nice alliteration with proven and profitable, which we assume is why it’s there.

The audience-focused way to talk about benefits and features

Persuasion for a more content-driven marketer looks pretty different. But we still want, fairly early in our communication, to start hinting at the fantastic benefits of doing business with us.

It doesn’t matter what you sell or how you’re selling it; people need to know what they’ll get out of doing business with you.

The most compelling way to do this is often with a story. Talk about how someone (someone, in fact, who looks a lot like your reader) was able to realize her dreams of widget-building bliss by using certain techniques, tools, and methods.

You’re not pitching yourself as the solution at this point. Instead, just start to paint a picture of what success looks like for your reader.

Autoresponders are a great tool for something like this. You can also use interviews (text, podcasts, or video) and special reports.

Remember that stories are inherently “shareable.” Get interesting success stories on YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, or anywhere else people are sharing content. At the end of each one, include a low-key [call to action](#) to check out something interesting on your website or blog.

Getting them to say yes

Yes! I want to transform my widgets with the most POWERFUL, PROVEN and PROFITABLE widget-hacking lessons from the last 100 years!

This is an old school sales method. As the theory goes, you get the prospect to say yes to a lot of little things, and they’ll say yes to the big stuff because of our [innate psychological habit of consistency](#).

In other words, people are hard-wired to want to behave consistently with how they’ve behaved in the past.

In practice, most prospects over the age of 7 have seen this technique used, and it tends to make them squirm away. It feels like they’re being sold to, which is an unpleasant feeling.

Instead of getting a prospect to check an artificial box or trying to “make” them say the word yes, your task as a content-driven marketer is to invite discussion and interaction.

Give potential customers a place to ask questions, enter a conversation with you (and with other customers), and respond to your work.

You’re using the same principle (consistency), but in a way that doesn’t feel “salesy.” You’re enticing them to behave in a way that shows they trust and like you, and that trust and like can become habit-forming.

The details of the offer

It’s probably obvious that if you want to sell something, you have to provide a clear description of exactly what the customer is going to get.

Obvious, but surprisingly easy to forget if you’re not an experienced salesperson.

You’ve got to let people know about the features of the product, as well as all of the logical and emotional benefits they’ll enjoy after they get it.

Here’s a spot where we content marketers can benefit from studying the yellow highlighter brigade more carefully. Notice how clearly the features and benefits of the product are explained.

I understand . . . I get access to the entire Live 2-Hour Training with Sonia Simone, where she'll hand me the MOST EFFECTIVE WIDGET HACKS OF ALL TIME.

I understand . . . I also get access to the Video and Audio Recordings of the entire training, as well as the Word-for-Word PDF transcript so I can go through the training materials as often as I like.

I understand . . . I also get a FREE 30-Day Trial Membership to the FOUNDERS CLUB which gives me INSTANT ACCESS to 5 of your top widget-creation and widget-hacking programs. And, if I want to continue with my Founders Club membership it's only \$47 a month.

Everything is spelled out — exactly what you get, and a few benefits like “so I can go through the training materials as often as I like.”

There are also a few good verbs used. So we're not just going to give you the widget hacks, we're going to *hand* them to you. The implication there is that you're not going to have to do any work at all to get them and this transition will be effortless.

For this particular market, "easy payoff with no work" is an important sales point. Rather than making a claim (which might attract a bit too much FTC attention), the verb hints at the point without directly making a promise of results.

If you're going to model anything from this sales letter, this section is decent.

This is perfectly good copy (though a little heavy on the hype) for [a landing page](#) or anywhere else you're spelling out an offer.

In the next chapter, we'll take a look at what this sales letter is really selling. Hint: It's not the relatively inexpensive Widget Hacks product.

We'll also look at the the sales letter's close. Just like with face-to-face selling, that "close" is one of the most important parts of the sale. It moves the prospect over the threshold to becoming a buyer. And no matter what color highlighter we're using, that's the goal.

CHAPTER 8

The Smarter Sales Letter (The Close)

This is the third installment of the content-driven sales letter, taking a more traditional high-pressure internet marketing sales page and showing how we can rework it for an audience-focused, relationship-based approach.

In this chapter we'll talk about what they're really selling (always a good thing for any marketer to figure out), the call to action, and the P.S.

And we'll talk about how you can do this exercise for yourself, taking any "high-pressure" sales material and translating it for your own audience.

What they're really selling

I understand . . . I also get a **FREE 30-Day Trial Membership** to the FOUNDERS CLUB which gives me **INSTANT ACCESS** to 5 of your top widget-creation and widget-hacking programs. And, if I want to continue with my Founders Club membership it's only \$47 a month.

Notice that Free 30-day trial? That's what the marketer actually wants you to buy.

Although most of the sales letter is pitching a \$47 standalone information product, that's just bait for the hook. What they're really after is getting you to sign up to a monthly program (called a "continuity" program in Internet marketing jargon), which turns your \$47 sale into one that could be ten times as high if you enjoy the content in their program.

Usually marketers in this space assume that a customer will stay between three and five months before quitting.

This is where a relationship-focused business has a huge advantage. Because you build a stronger relationship before the sale, and because you're often much more committed to delivering an amazing product, you'll naturally tend to see customers stick around longer. Don't underestimate this advantage.

We're okay with this strategy, as long as you're absolutely crystal clear about the fact that they're signing up for an ongoing relationship. The most ethical way to do this is to make sure that the buyer can opt *out of the monthly program if she* likes. Set up your shopping cart to allow the buyer to "unclick" the monthly membership option.

Don't try to push anyone into "forced" continuity, insisting that they try your membership offer. Let them choose for themselves, and you'll make more sales.

Interestingly enough, even testing from the traditional internet marketing “gurus” shows that letting people opt out actually results in more sign-ups.

People don’t like to feel forced into buying, so it reduces conversions and turns people off. Go figure.

Why buy now?

If you’re new to selling and marketing, you might wonder why so many marketers limit their offers. Why push people to buy today, when they might not be ready? Wouldn’t you make more sales by leaving your shopping cart open for buyers to buy whenever they feel like it?

In a word – no.

Even if your audience is passionately in love with what you’ve got, procrastination is your enemy. For all but the most absolutely urgent problems, if they can get around to dealing with it tomorrow, the chances are good that they won’t ever deal with it at all.

Two of the most critical tools for your sales process are the call to action and urgency. Here's the birds-eye view.

The call to action is a simple, explicit instruction to buy your stuff.

[CLICK HERE TO GET IT NOW »](#)

As silly as it might sound, if you don't tell people "Buy this right now," many of them won't.

This is one of the most frequently overlooked elements when people are just getting started with marketing, and it's also one of the easiest to fix. Read the article below for a more complete discussion of how to put together a call to action for your own offers.

[How to be a Copywriting Genius: The Brilliantly Sneaky Trick You Must Learn](#)

Incidentally, yes, you do want to use the words "Click here" in your call to action, despite what web design or SEO pundits might tell you. [Here's why.](#)

Urgency is your customer's reason for acting right now, not tomorrow or the next day.

Act now! This offer will expire in just 4 days.

Take advantage of it now, while it's still available!

Offers within a limited time frame will nearly always sell more than offers that are open-ended. Without some kind of time or scarcity pressure, inertia will tend to keep your customer doing more of what she's doing already . . . nothing.

We'll talk more in an upcoming chapter about how to use urgency and scarcity without being a thug.

The obligatory P.S.

Virtually all sales letters have a "P.S."

Why? Because it's one of the most-read elements of any page.

Marketers use the P.S. to re-state the most important benefit, to stress an urgency element, to reiterate the call to action, or to pull a key emotional lever for their market.

A P.S. can be used for any important copywriting function. The only "wrong" way to use it would be to skip it altogether.

On Copyblogger's sales pages, we sometimes use the P.S. in a tongue-in-cheek way. Because our audience is so familiar with more traditional sales pages, we've sometimes been a little bit "meta" in how we approach it.

For example, here's the P.S. for a product we called Freelance X Factor, an online course which taught freelance writers how to make more money and create a more enjoyable business with fewer hassles ...

- **P.S.** Is there a copywriter alive who can resist checking out the P.S.? OK, here's the quick summary: Freelance "X" Factor is a steal at only \$87 for over 4 hours of audio modules, edited and searchable transcripts, practical worksheets that guide you through the processes, tactics, and strategies we reveal, supplemental reference material that ties it all together, and 3 live Q&A calls. Go ahead and buy now or scroll back up to get the full story.
- **P.P.S.** Oh yeah . . . it's fully guaranteed for 30 days or your money back, no questions asked. Let's get started.

Notice that, although we start with a bit of a wink about the nature of the P.S., we still used it! In this P.S., we restated the offer, included two calls to action, and let the buyer know about a strong guarantee. If the reader scrolled down the sales page and read nothing but the P.S., she'd have enough information to feel confident about buying this product.

Make it your own

The most important thing for you to take away from these three chapters is that you don't have to throw away any effective copywriting technique just because it's usually used in a clumsy, "hypey" way. You can always translate a "high pressure" technique and make it your own.

Your homework for the weeks ahead: keep an eye on the sales letters you see, and figure out how you would translate their techniques for your own audience, incorporating your own personality, language, and style.

If you don't subscribe to promotional email newsletters because you're afraid of being sold to, you're making a real mistake. Get a dedicated email address for them if you like. But do study what the more aggressive guys are doing. You can learn a lot if you translate it to your own market without trying to use it "as-is."

CHAPTER 9

How to Build a Business Using Paid and Free Content

You may remember that content is the third pillar of the Internet Marketing for Smart People model.

And we forgive you if you roll your eyes a little at that, since “content” has become one of the most overused buzzwords of 21st-century business.

As is so often the case with buzzwords, a lot of people who use it don’t quite know what they mean by it.

What do you mean when you say “content marketing”?

Some people think “content marketing” describes the use of valuable content to attract attention and build a solid reputation with prospects.

Others think it’s the use of content and high-quality information to actually market the product, in what’s been called a “content conveyor belt” that takes the place of the usual sales pitch.

And still others think it’s about creating a business around paid content, like ebooks, home study courses, and membership sites.

Actually, just like those multiple choice tests from sixth grade, the correct answer is D, all of the above.

Content marketing is about taking your knowledge and expertise (or borrowing someone else's) and using it to support business goals.

There are probably a thousand ways you could do that, but let's look at the three most significant.

Build your reputation

If you have a product or service that people actually want, the single biggest factor that keeps them from buying is lack of trust.

We live in a low-trust environment, especially online. Everywhere we look, someone is trying to infect us with a virus, phish the password to our checking account, or sell us pictures we probably shouldn't be looking at in the first place.

Given the general environment of slime, it's surprising how quickly you can create a solid reputation by providing useful content.

People actually want someone to trust. They want reliable answers to their questions, and good solutions for their problems.

Creating solid content that benefits the reader doesn't just tell your prospects you're trustworthy, it shows them. And that's always more powerful.

The content conveyor belt

Content is also a terrific way to deliver a sales message.

The long-form sales letter (the kind we talked about in the earlier chapters) isn't dead, and it never will be. The work of enticing a prospect and overcoming her objections takes some time.

But attention spans are short these days, and only the most desperate buyer is willing to read the traditional long (often tacky and heavy-handed) sales letters you often associate with Internet marketing.

Enter the content conveyor belt. We aren't the first to use this technique – in fact, it's being used by some of the smartest marketers in the business to capture and hold prospect attention.

A content conveyor belt uses strong, interesting content and storytelling to deliver each step of your sales sequence over time, without ever feeling "salesy."

You can attract attention, demonstrate features and benefits, elicit desire for the product, show the product in action, overcome objections, deliver a stirring call to action, and every other copywriting function just as effectively in content as you can in a traditional sales message.

In fact, it's much more effective, because the content is — to use master copywriter [Gary Bencivenga's](#) phrase — “advertising that's too valuable to throw away.”

Paid content

Not every business can benefit from producing paid content, but most can.

Once you become a content ninja, there's nearly always a way to create a “platinum” version of your content that's worth paying for.

The simplest version is the [ebook](#).

The upside to ebooks is that they're relatively quick to produce. The downside is that most readers won't pay much for them. Ebooks can be a great way to quickly test a market and make sure there's an interest in paying for information in your topic. They can also be published on public platforms like Amazon to dramatically increase your audience's awareness of your business.

Digitally-delivered courses (sometimes called home study courses) are the ebook's more valuable cousin. These typically include audio, transcripts, and worksheets or a workbook. If you've got a good ebook but you'd like to do more with it, consider using a free program like Audacity to re-create and expand the content in audio format, then package it as a course. Courses command more money, more respect, and gain you a greater reputation. They're a little more work to produce, but they're generally worth it.

The granddaddy of the family is the Interactive Learning Environment, or ILE. Some people refer to these simply as “membership sites,” but a true ILE adds solid instructional design to present the information in an exceptionally powerful and effective way.

More ideas

Content marketing is a huge topic and there are hundreds of ways to use it. I came up with 49 of them recently.

[49 Creative Ways You Can Profit from Content Marketing](#)

I think you’ll get a lot out of that list. Pick one or two methods from it that you haven’t employed before, and start making more of this powerful tool.

CHAPTER 10

How to Sell (Without Losing Your Audience)

A lot of people have built amazing followings with social media.

And by “amazing,” I don’t necessarily mean huge numbers. I mean huge love. People who are interested in what you have to say, who make a point of tuning in to find out your particular take on your topic.

One of the things I get asked again and again is, “How do I translate that loyalty into a little bit of income? Maybe even a decent living?”

So today I’m going to share my best secret for that with you. Start doing this and you’ll be amazed at the results you get. You’ll find a subtle clue to this skazillion-dollar secret in the headline of this post.

That’s right, my secret underground mastermind money-getting platinum secret of the Internet ninja billionaires is: Have something to sell.

Pretty earth-shattering, huh?

But the biggest monetizing problem people face if they have a great relationship with their readers is not knowing how to sell them something without turning them off.

So that's what we'll talk about in this section.

Make 'em an offer

If you'd like your audience to give you money, you're going to want to make them an offer.

An offer is just [a chance for you and your reader to exchange something of value.](#)

You give them an ebook, they give you some money. You give them a cool tutorial video, they give you their email address and permission to talk with them from time to time.

We talked earlier about the easiest way to have something to sell, which is to [recommend an affiliate product](#) that you truly believe is terrific.

But you can also make your own stuff, which is our favorite model at Rainmaker Digital. We spend a lot of time watching and listening to our community, then making software, education, or other resources that we think you'll get a lot out of.

There's a shift that happens when you make something for your audience.

You start to look different in their eyes. You're not just someone who has interesting things to say, you're someone who actually comes up with solutions to the problems that are bugging them.

You are now someone who's in the business of helping them out.

Start small

People get stuck with this one because it seems overwhelming. There are so many ebooks and online courses and membership sites. How can we possibly make something good enough to compete with all of that?

A small, starter product is not going to make you millions of dollars. However, it does something that might be even more valuable than that: it gets you started.

That's important, because it's a lot easier to move when you're already in motion.

Make a few small products, sell them, get experience. Watch what does well and what doesn't. Listen for what your folks would like to see next. Tweak and test. Change the title of your product. Change the focus. Add an audio bonus.

Just play with it.

When you keep things small, you develop the right attitude, which is one of curiosity and flexibility. A small product that bombs isn't a failure; it's a market test.

Solve a problem

People who claim that you can't make money with a blog have usually omitted a key step in their business.

They don't have a business.

Instead, they have entertainment with advertising.

It's getting hard for the billion-dollar TV networks to make money with this model, and it's really hard for you. It can work if you have tons of traffic, but you can usually do better (and faster) by going a little oldschool and solving a market problem.

Great businesses solve some pressing problem for their customers. It might be a vanity problem, a health problem, a relationship problem, a practical problem. It might even be a combination of problems.

When you know your customer's most pressing problems and you have a solid solution for fixing them, you have the basis for a strong, healthy business.

Create the right rhythm

Now we get to the part where you're selling stuff but your readers don't hate you.

Everything you've been doing to contribute value, to nurture your relationships with readers, to give them something worth reading (or hearing, or watching) in your content?

Keep doing that. Keep giving away excellent stuff for free. Keep surprising them with quality. Keep raising the bar on what you give away.

This sounds hard, but actually it becomes a habit. When you challenge yourself to create better and better content, you'll find that your creativity rises to that challenge. And it's just more fun than grinding out junk.

If great content isn't your strong suit, look around for a partner. There are tons of talented people who love to write, but have no idea how to do the business side.

There's always something amazing you can bring to the table.

All you need to do is find the partners who can complement you.

How are you using your ad space?

If you are running ads now, take a long look at that space.

Could it be better used with one compelling, nicely designed ad for your own product? Even if you're selling one or two \$17 ebooks a month, that's a lot more cash in your pocket than a few pennies from traditional advertising.

We're not saying that ads are bad — some bloggers make very nice money with them.

But it's a good idea to look closely at the ads you're running and make sure they're pulling their weight. When you run too many ads, the reader has a hard time knowing what to focus on. She should be focusing on your great content, and on a terrific product that's bringing you revenue.

It's never going to be perfect

Whatever it is you want to offer, trust me, it won't be perfect. It might not even be pretty.

But it will be something, and you'll learn from it.

So get out your calendar, give yourself a deadline (a real one, not something so aggressive that you know you'll never make it), and offer something small to your audience. If you've got 10 readers today, that's great, you're creating a terrific foundation for when you have 100 readers. And 500. And 1000.

Start now, while you're excited about it. We can't wait to see what you come up with.

Now, let's take a look at your copy and figure out why it may not be converting as well as you might want it to — and what you can do to improve it.

CHAPTER 11

Why Your Copy Isn't Converting

You can go a long way with relationships and great content, but if you're trying to build a business, at some point you need to actually ask your audience to buy something.

Some people believe there's such a thing as a "natural salesperson." They think that selling is in the genes. Many people who think this also believe that they don't have that innate ability.

But selling is just education and communication. Like most things in life, it's a skill that can be learned and improved. Wherever you are on the selling spectrum, you can learn to get much better at it than you are now.

We need to discuss that fascinating, tricky moment: conversion. That's the point when your reader either buys or doesn't buy, based on your communication to that point.

Let's talk about the five most common reasons that your readers aren't turning into buyers. There are any number of places this can go off the rails, but these are by far the most prevalent.

1. They don't want what you've got

This is the painful one. But if this is what's wrong with your marketing, there's no ninja copywriting technique in the world that will help you out.

Sometimes we just get really passionate about an idea that our customers aren't nearly as passionate about.

Inventors are particularly plagued by this. You've spent so much time with your unique and fascinating widget that you're essentially married to it, but no one else thinks it's all that interesting.

"Unique," in fact, is often a red flag. If no one else is offering what you've got, it might very well be that no one *wants* what you've got. Competition is a wonderful thing, because it's a sign that you're in a market of buyers.

You might have something you're convinced your customers need, but it's not something they want.

(We call this the "broccoli ice cream" problem.)

When in doubt, know that "want" beats out "need" every time. If this is your problem, you have essentially two choices. One, you can offer something that more people want.

Or two (also known as the hard way), you can think about how you can build a bridge between something they want and something you offer. There's often a way to translate your market's desires into the benefits that your product provides.

2. They're confused

If you're sure your market actually wants what you offer (because you have successful competitors) but those darned prospects still aren't biting, the odds are very good that they're too confused to complete the purchase.

The confused mind does not buy.

Actually, the confused mind doesn't do much of anything. When we're faced with too many choices, too many decisions, too much extraneous information, or even a visual design with too much clutter, we freeze.

(If you want to know what this feels like, think about selecting a 401K plan or new health insurance. Not very appealing, is it?)

You may have too many different options for them to choose from. If they have to make a choice that's more complex than "Silver, Gold, Platinum," you run the very real risk of losing them.

3. They can't see the pretty picture

Another thing that kills conversion is that the prospect just doesn't imagine herself as a customer.

She might not be able to visualize what your product's going to do for her. (So paint a picture in her mind of what that will look like — and use lots of concrete sensory detail like color, touch, smell, and sound so she can make it real in her mind's eye.)

She also might not get how your product makes her life better. (So spell out the product's benefits in clear, simple language.)

Remember what we said at the beginning of this lesson — selling is communication and education. Be sure you're getting your message across clearly.

You need to be absolutely certain your sales copy contains at least these three things (and these might be enough to make the sale for you):

- This is what I've got.
- This is what it will do for you.
- This is what you should do next.

4. You didn't ask

This one is our favorite, because it's the easiest to fix.

We realize it seems bizarre, but if you explicitly ask your reader to click the link, dial the 800-number, or whatever other means you use to get that sale, she's much more likely to do it.

So links that say "click here" actually get clicked more often. Weird, but true.

It's called the "call to action," and every persuasive bit of copy needs a very explicit one. If you're not familiar with the call to action, or you think yours might need some sprucing up, here's an article I wrote on it:

[How to Be a Copywriting Genius: The Brilliantly Sneaky Trick You Must Learn](#)

5. They don't believe you

After #1, this is the most important one.

They might want what you've got. They might have a great mental picture of it. They might know just what to do next.

But they hesitate.

Why? Here's a hint: [The #1 Conversion Killer in Your Copy — And How to Beat It](#)

Because they're second-guessing their own decision, and they're scared of feeling like an idiot.

Don't take it personally — we're living in an age of betrayal. Enron was lying, Bernie Madoff was lying. Scam artists and phishers are sneaking into every email inbox.

So how are they going to find any trust in you?

You know the answer to this one by now — you can build up that trust by [creating great business relationships with killer content](#).

It turns out that if your relationships are solid enough, you can be a pretty lame salesperson and still do very well.

And if you get a little bit better than lame, by getting these few essential copywriting techniques under your belt, you'll do even better.

CHAPTER 12

A Remarkably Simple Marketing Plan

I don't know about you, but when I started trying to figure out how to work for myself, the idea of a business or marketing plan sort of made me gag.

The traditional books for small business (the best one, in my opinion, is *Small Time Operator*), painted a picture that wasn't really relevant to me, with things like lines of credit and office space and business licenses.

Those weren't the problems I needed to figure out. My problems were more like, "How am I going to find people who want my services? How do I convince them I'm good at what I do? And what the heck should I be selling, anyway?"

So I put together something I called the Remarkably Simple Marketing Plan, which answered those questions for me in the early days, and for my consulting clients as I moved forward.

In the spirit of the whole "Remarkably Simple" thing, just cut and paste what's below into the word processor of your choice and get rolling. Replace the "blah blah blah" sections with your own answers.

I don't care if you use Google Docs or Notepad or send an email to yourself. You can copy it out longhand in copperplate handwriting if that turns you on.

The main thing is, get some answers down today.

I promise, if you do, you'll be amazed at what this can do to get you moving toward your business goals.

(By the way, this is also an important exercise if you're doing the marketing for someone else's business, either as an employee or as a freelance writer.)

Who's the right customer?

Answer this question in as much detail as you can. You may want to read this article for some pointers first.

Relationship Marketing: Connect with One Person

Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah.

How will these customers find us?

Customer will find us by Blah blah blah and Blah blah blah. Alternately, I will go find them by Blah blah blah.

What will the project look like when it's done?

By "project," we mean the service, the membership site, the consulting package, the ebook. What form does the thing take that you give your customer?

Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah.

What problem does this product/project solve for the customer? Is it a real problem? Does anyone care about getting this problem solved?

Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah.

What tools or materials we will need to get this built?

Will you use blog software? An [awesome WordPress theme](#)? Other technology tools? Do you need a copywriter, graphic designer, WordPress developer?

If it's an information product, do you need to do additional research on the topic? Could you interview some experts for additional material?

Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah.

Is there any way to create a really fast prototype?

How could you do a “good enough” beta version to test that this is actually a marketable concept?

Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah.

What partners will we involve in this project? Why?

Marketing partners? Content creation partners? Business partners?

Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah.

How will we share revenue between partners?

This can be different for different monetization items. Advertising could be split differently than fees for services, for example.

Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah.

How can I get moral support outside of the partnership?

Starting a business is hard. It’s easy to give up. Can you join a really great entrepreneur’s group? Work with a coach? Put together a small mastermind or accountability group?

Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah.

Some things this product will need to do

- 1.
2. Blah blah blah.
3. Blah blah blah.
4. Blah blah blah.
5. Blah blah blah.
6. Blah blah blah.

How we make money

- 1.
2. Blah blah blah.
3. Blah blah blah.
4. Blah blah blah.
5. Blah blah blah.
6. Blah blah blah.

What other stuff could we sell these customers later?

- 1.
2. Blah blah blah.
3. Blah blah blah.
4. Blah blah blah.
5. Blah blah blah.
6. Blah blah blah.

Expenses

If there are partners, who pays these expenses in the launch process before we have revenue coming in? Are these one-time or recurring?

- 1.
2. Blah blah blah.
3. Blah blah blah.
4. Blah blah blah.
5. Blah blah blah.
6. Blah blah blah.

Execution

Who will do the work? Who's going to manage the project and make sure the tasks get done? How long will it take?

Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah.

How will we know it's working?

If the project is a magnificent success, what will that look like? (Answer this one in as much detail as you can.)

Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah.

What do we need to worry about? What's going to bite us in the ass if we don't address it now? What do we need to worry about down the line?

- 1.
2. Blah blah blah.
3. Blah blah blah.
4. Blah blah blah.
5. Blah blah blah.
6. Blah blah blah.

Next actions

What do you need to do next to get yourself moving forward?

- 1.
2. Blah blah blah.
3. Blah blah blah.
4. Blah blah blah.
5. Blah blah blah.
6. Blah blah blah.

Get these on your calendar today and start moving.

Having trouble putting it all together? Feeling a little overwhelmed, or like maybe you'll never be able to make it happen?

That's a sure sign you're on the right track.

Or at least, it's a sign that you're exactly like the rest of us. A certain amount of overwhelm just goes with the territory. The good news is, you truly can manage that. Here is my favorite method for creating and keeping your momentum: [The 3 Secrets to Massive Online Marketing Success](#)

CHAPTER 13

Do You Include These 5 Relationship Builders in Your Content?

As you probably remember, relationships form the first pillar of Internet Marketing for Smart People.

After all: no relationship, no market, right? We need to have some kind of connection with folks before they'll pull out their wallets.

Sometimes people think that great relationships “just happen.” It's your mom's theory of marketing — “just be yourself and everyone will love you.”

But you might have figured out by now: no one loves you like your mom does. And “just being yourself” sometimes needs a little help.

Here are five strategic ways you can think about building the kinds of relationships that lead to sales, as well as to retweets, recommendations, and referrals for the great stuff you sell.

1. Generosity

We human beings are rather simple at heart. If you do nice things for us, we tend to like you more.

Fancy marketing types who have read their [Robert Cialdini](#) (and you should join them, by the way) call it reciprocity, even though Cialdini himself actually calls it reciprocation.

[Much Obligated: The Power of Reciprocity](#)

The concept is too much a part of our DNA to need a fancy term. Basically, it's:

“Do nice stuff for me and I will want to do nice stuff for you in return.”

[The Millionaire's Secret Trait that Attracts Success Like Crazy](#)

In particular, there's a type of content that will repay your generosity many, many times over. It's what's been called “results in advance” content — a tip, trick, or tutorial that lets your reader get a desirable result in her life before she gives you any money.

So if you've got a wonderful home study course on how to raise naked mole rats for fun and profit, your “results in advance” content might be “5 Things to Look Out For When Choosing a Naked Mole Rat at the Pet Store.” That content

would tell people how to take home a chubby, healthy, happy naked mole rat rather than a weak, sickly one that's just going to have problems.

If your reader can put your advice into practice and get a great result, you've given her a delicious "free sample." It greatly increases the chances that she's going to want more, now that she's experienced for herself how good it is.

[How Tasty Are Your Chips and Salsa?](#)

2. Relatability

One of the most powerful marketing messages you can send is "I'm a lot like you."

Why?

We'll give you an example. We don't have a lot of faith that weight loss tips from the latest hot supermodel are going to do us any good. But weight loss tips from [Janeane Garofalo](#)? We're a lot more interested. Because when she starts out looking more like we do, we have more confidence that her advice will be something we can use.

One of the most overlooked sales objections is:

"Probably everyone else can make that work, but it won't work for me."

Most of us have such lousy self-esteem that we're willing to concede that the diet, the money-making strategy, the stock tip, the parenting advice will work for most humans on the planet — but not us.

The more you can get your reader to relate to you, to feel like he's basically like you, the better chance you have of communicating, "Hey, if it worked for me, it will totally work for you."

That's why, even though you don't want to undermine your authority (we'll talk about that in a few minutes), you also don't want to puff yourself up to be some kind of superhero.

Or if you are a superhero, be one with a really dorky alter ego, like Peter Parker, not a billionaire playboy like Bruce Wayne.

[Unleash Your Inner Dork to Become a Better Copywriter](#)

3. Liking

There are two primary ways to get attention.

You can do tons of great stuff for people, make yourself useful, be incredibly nice and friendly, and maybe crack a joke from time to time.

- You can make a belligerent, loud, annoying pain in the ass of yourself.
 - They both work — if your goal is to get attention.
-

If your goal is to convert attention into customers, #1 has a lot of advantages.

Some people have a gift for drawing attention to themselves by being spectacular jackasses. And that can work, actually — if you're a likeable jackass.

It tends not to work too well (commercially, anyway) if you're just an ass.

4. Frequency

Do you have one of those cousins who only calls when he needs money?

What's your emotional reaction when that deadbeat cousin calls? You roll your eyes and let it go straight to voice mail, right?

If you're building relationships by providing valuable content, the best way to do it is to keep it slow and steady.

Show up day in and day out.

Create a steady, predictable rhythm with your content, whether it's your blog, your email newsletter, your podcast, whatever. Keep giving that high-quality free content, delivering those results in advance, and letting everyone know you're a good egg.

A nice, predictable frequency also demonstrates that you're reliable. If you show up every day (or every week, or every other week) on your blog,

predictable as clockwork, your audience gets the sense that you probably won't skip to Costa Rica as soon as they've sent you PayPal funds for your new consulting package.

5. Authority

Bloggers are often excellent at letting their audiences know they care, that they're good people, that they share the same problems as their readers.

Sometimes they're not so good at actually demonstrating that they know what they're talking about.

Worse, they often think that the call to be "transparent and authentic" is an open invitation to show off as much dirty laundry as possible.

You need to become an authority in your field.

Good: A blog post about how you went from design klutz to design wizard.

Bad: An endless stream of Twitter tweets about how badly you're blowing your clients' deadlines because you're just not in the mood to fire up Photoshop today.

Transparency is not the same thing as oversharing.

A certain amount of talking about your cat or your kid or your funky apartment can be good for bonding. And selectively talking about your insecurities can do great things; no one likes someone who's too perfect.

But blathering about your bad habits and body fluids is just ... well ... off-putting.

I hope it goes without saying that bashing other bloggers for the sake of getting attention is a "success limiting maneuver."

Constructive, legitimate criticism is fine. But being a professional hater is just lame.

It can work (a little) in the short-term, because negativity attracts attention. But bashing someone just to have someone to bash turns you into a jerk and a whiner. And anyway, there are too many nasty people on the web — it doesn't actually make you stand out.

Your homework for this chapter

Take a look at the content you're producing (email, blog, twitter, Facebook, special report, whatever) and see how many of these relationship builders you can include. Could you squeeze in all five?

Which of these do you think you're strongest at? Do more of it — build on that strength.

And if there's one of these relationship builders that's a little out of your comfort zone, schedule some time to create a message around it before the end of this week. Your customer relationships will thank you for it.

What's next

Want a simple formula for persuasive copy? Read on to grab a tried-and-true formula that works every time you need to persuade someone to do something.

CHAPTER 14

The 1-2-3-4 Formula for Persuasive Copy

I originally heard this formula from John Carlton, but the end of the copywriting swipe chain is usually [John Caples](#), who stole all of it from [Claude Hopkins](#).

And Hopkins probably stole it from some 19th-century salesman of buggy whips or patent medicines.

What is it? A handy little checklist for any copy you write that tries to get someone to do something.

The best part is, it's so simple you won't have to look it up, or write it down 500 times to make it second nature.

Whether you want to get an opt-in for your email list, a new blog subscriber, make a sale, or just inspire readers to support your favorite cause, start with the 1-2-3-4 method. You can add all of your [favorite copywriting tricks](#) to make it work even better, but with the 1-2-3-4 elements in place, you'll have the most important bases covered.

Here's the formula in a nutshell:

- What I've got for you
- What it's going to do for you
- Who am I?
- What you need to do next

1. What I've got for you

If you want to persuade, you've got to let folks know what they're in for.

What's your product? What does it do? Who is it for?

Start with a simple overview, a birds-eye look at what you've got to offer.
Here's an example:

"A step-by-step home study course that teaches struggling entrepreneurs how to bring in more customers."

Before you elaborate on that, go immediately into #2.

2. What it's going to do for you

Here's where we talk about the great benefits of taking the action you want your reader to take.

Now Featuring Benefits!

For some reason, the distinction between benefits and features is hard to remember. But "what it's going to do for you" is much easier to keep in mind – and it's the same thing.

What's better about life with your product?

Describe the end result, the "after" picture once your customer has bought your product and used it as you recommend. Let the reader know how your product helps her reach the goals that matter most to her.

For example:

"You'll have more confidence, less stress, and you'll have a simple, proven plan for smoothing out those awful cash flow gaps in your business."

Now circle back to #1 for a bit — What I've got for you

Now we unpack the rest of #1: what's in the product.

What's in the box?

These are the “features” of your product or service. They're important, although they're not as important as the benefits. But if you gloss over the details of what your product or service actually contains, people will be nervous about putting their money down. And as we know, nervous people don't buy.

The best way to list features is usually a series of fascinating bullet points. Include enough specifics to make the product feel valuable:

More than 30 hours of action-oriented MP3 lessons, with complete optimized transcripts.

Also include compelling teasers that are vague enough to create a curiosity “itch.”

The three most damaging and expensive mistakes new businesses make, and the easy way to fix them.

When you can, attach a benefit to each feature.

Okay:

Next-action worksheets come with every module.

Better:

Next-action worksheets come with every module, so you can take what you're learning and immediately put it into action.

Bullet points are a “secret weapon” for copywriters because they let you make your point in a powerful, skimmable way, and they pull the eye in. For more ideas about how to write great bullet points, take a look at Brian's article:

[Little-Known Ways to Write Fascinating Bullet Points](#)

3. Who are you?

Whether or not you need this step depends on where you are with this particular reader. If she's been reading your blog for a year, she knows you very well, so you may be able to skip it.

But most of the time, you need to establish that you're a trustworthy and worthwhile person, and that you know what you're talking about.

This is why good sales letters often include a photo near the top of the page. The photo can include some element that helps the reader like and trust the author. Babies and dogs are always winners here.

If your topic is gardening, a photo of you in front of your own great garden is a credibility-builder. And you've probably noticed that in weight loss, we always seem get a good look at the fitness guru's terrific abs.

In the last section, we talked about the relationship-building power of the statement "I'm a lot like you."

That's what this element is pointing to — not just who you are, but how you're similar to your customer, and what you offer that will benefit her. So it's not actually about you after all — it's about how you help *her*.

4. What you should do next

This is our old friend the [call to action](#).

The reader needs to know specifically what to do next. Don't just put a link in; [tell her to click here](#).

Tell (don't ask) the reader what to do right this minute to move forward with the sale. Be specific and painstakingly clear.

And of course, if you have a good [scarcity element](#) (like your terrific offer is going away in 6 days), you make that very clear here.

Every step of your persuasion sequence, whether it's a short opt-in page or a months-long "sideways sales letter," needs a clear and specific call to action.

Yes, you still need 1-2-3-4 for "free"

Once upon a time, you could offer any old junk for free and people would take it. The very word "free" seemed like it had magic powers.

But now, especially online, "free" still takes some selling.

You're competing for attention and time rather than money — and those are in very short supply.

So if you have a free special report to build your email list, or you're offering a valuable free e-class or video, you still need to sell it.

1-2-3-4 isn't just about exchanging dollars. It's about motivating a specific, well-defined behavior.

The next time you see a really masterful sales pitch, try to identify the 1-2-3-4 elements. Look for it in infomercials, catalog copy, sales letters, and good product reviews.

Start spotting these persuasion elements “in the wild” and you’ll be on your way to becoming a more effective copywriter — a copywriter who *sells*.

Yes, you still need 1-2-3-4 for “free”

Next we’ll be talking about the “secret” of getting social media marketing to really work for you. Don’t believe there’s really a secret? Read on to discover what we mean.

CHAPTER 15

Are You Talking to the Right People?

Everyone wants to know “the secret” of social media marketing.

Some people think there’s a magic trick for automating Twitter or Facebook, or a special way to buy lists of social media users.

You’re too smart to believe that, but you might be surprised to know that there is a secret — a factor that you need to understand to make social media marketing work for you.

Those who fail to understand this can’t ever really make social media work. They’re the ones who say it’s a waste of time, that there’s no ROI, that social media is a fad for teenagers, not a real way to do business.

It’s not a secret or special way to talk to more customers. It’s not even a technique for listening to more customers.

The secret is who you need to ignore.

Content marketing has two customers

First, there’s something you need to understand about content marketing, especially when you use social media to get the word out.

Content marketing has two customers.

The first customer is the one you already know and love. It's that very special person who buys from you.

The second customer is the person who shares your content.

The second customer might never buy your consulting package or your ebook or your collection of aromatherapy oils.

But if he has the attention of lots of readers, he can put your great content in front of those readers. And that makes him more valuable than any one individual buyer can ever be.

Every piece of content has to work for one of your two customers

This ebook is about content marketing, not content self-expression.

Self-expression is a fantastic and worthy goal, and sometimes it can make your marketing work better, but only if it's held in check by a strategic framework.

“Strategic framework” is just fancy talk for this: Your content marketing has to make a connection with one of two customers.

- The person who buys your stuff
- The person who gets lots of other people to read your content

Any given piece of content has to work for at least one of those two readers.

Beware the peanut gallery

If you have a blog or participate in any kind of community online, you’ve probably noticed that not every reader falls into one of those two categories.

- You’ve got the perennial devil’s advocate, who makes a point of painstakingly pointing out every way your content might not be correct in every single circumstance for all people everywhere.
- You’ve got the professional crank who just hates everything.
- You’ve got the outright troll who likes to stir up trouble and make everyone crazy.
- And you’ve got a bunch of nice people who just aren’t that into what you have to offer.

Collectively, we can call them the peanut gallery.

They have a lot of advice for you about what you should do differently.

You should write different content. You should publish in a different format. You should write on different topics. And, by the way, they don't like your blog theme. Or your color scheme. And while you're at it, lose 10 pounds.

Here's how you handle the peanut gallery:

Ignore them.

That's all the advice you need.

You can reply to their blog comments, but keep it short and sweet.

If you choose to reply to their email, again, keep it brief. "Thanks for your feedback" is plenty.

Don't engage people who aren't your right customer.

Yes, every human being has something to offer — even the troll (although that's hard to remember sometimes).

But they may have nothing constructive to offer to you.

You don't have to engage every human being who crosses your path. You don't have to respond to every critic or troll who complains about you on their site, or on Twitter, or Facebook.

And as soon as your content starts to find some readers, you won't be able to. Save your energy for your two customers: those who buy, and those who spread the word.

“But shouldn't I at least try to respond to everyone?”

There's just one problem with trying to engage each and every soul who wants to talk to you.

It will exhaust you. And your focus will waver.

If you're creating content that's intended to persuade, you need to focus on the person you've chosen to be your customer. That means the person who wants what you have to offer, who benefits from your solution, who enjoys your approach, and who has the means (money, time, etc.) to take advantage of your offer.

When you spend a lot of time engaging your critics, you start to hedge. Your content begins to waffle a little. You “sell from your heels.”

In other words, you wimp out.

You're trying to keep your critics from getting mad at you, when in fact, the people you need to take care of are those two customers:

1. The person who buys your stuff
2. The person who gets lots of other people to read your content

Your homework for this chapter:

You can't really make a connection with those two customers if you don't know who they are.

So take about 10 minutes (today) to brainstorm everything you know about your perfect customer — the one who buys your stuff. Do some freewriting to uncover who she is, what she values, why she loves you, what problems you solve for her.

Then do another 10 minutes of freewriting to brainstorm your perfect "second customer," the one who shares your content. What kind of platform does he have? What's his topic? What's his approach to that topic? What's his relationship with your perfect customer?

Finally, think about where these two customers hang out. Twitter? Pinterest? Facebook? LinkedIn? What's the best place to make a connection?

Extra credit

How does your current content look? Does all of your content marketing speak to one of your two customers? Does the balance feel right, based on where you are today?

When you start out, you focus a bit more on your second customer, so you can get the links and recommendations that build a wider audience. As your content starts to find more readers, you'll shift, providing more for those all-important first customers — the ones who buy.

What to Do Next

Now that you understand how to reach out to your customers (and who you can completely ignore) let's talk a little bit about one of the most-misunderstood topics in Internet marketing today – search engine optimization.

CHAPTER 16

Demystifying SEO

Are you one of those people who think SEO is some kind of black magic?

Lots of people do. SEO practitioners use all kinds of arcane language. They like to sit around and talk about algorithms and Florida updates and “noindex meta tag in the non-canonical copies.”

I don’t know about you, but as soon as you start talking “non-canonical copies,” my eyes glaze over and my brain leaves the room.

It’s true that serious SEO can get pretty technical. But here’s the thing.

You know the 80/20 rule, right? Which usually ends up being the 95/5 rule?

95% of your results will often come from 5% of your effort. Your job is to know what 5% to focus on.

Effective SEO is all about that 5%

And it’s not as mysterious as you think it is, because SEO isn’t about code or bots or latent semantic indexing at all.

It's about people.

Yes, of course code and bots and latent semantic indexing are a part of SEO. But they're tools that search engines use to better serve the people who make searches.

There are (of course) ninjas of SEO. It's a deep, complex, and always-evolving practice. If you want to make page 1 of Google for "weight loss," you're going to need some serious SEO mojo.

This lesson isn't about that. This lesson is about doing the simple stuff that, for many of us, is all we need to rank for the terms that will send us traffic and business.

And if you do ever want to hire an SEO ninja, it's helpful to have a strong grounding in the basics. There are a lot of phony ninjas out there, and a little SEO knowledge will help you avoid getting scammed by one of the snake oil salesmen.

Make sure the search engines understand what you're trying to do

Remember when we said SEO was about people?

The tricky part is that people use a complex computer-driven system (Google, or the search engine of your choice) to find the information we want.

And that system is complex. Mostly because there are thousands of weirdos and spammers out there trying to game the system and send people garbage.

Google's rules get ever more complicated because they're trying to do something very simple: send searchers to valuable content that gives those searchers what they need.

As an official Smart Internet Marketer (we'll be preparing those merit badges soon), that kind of content is exactly what you create.

So you and Google are already starting off on the same page — even if it doesn't feel that way.

Now you just need to convince their computer code that you're one of the good guys. And because computer code is inherently very stupid, you have to do that in a certain narrowly-defined way.

SEO is people!

(Extra credit to anyone who gets the [reference](#).)

Most SEO guides will tell you a lot about how to arrange your web page. And that matters quite a bit, because it tells the very stupid computer code what your page is about.

But the hard, cold truth is that you've also got to get some links.

Links, that is, from someone other than your Aunt Mary and a mob-run link farm in northwest Romania.

Everything we've been teaching on the blog and in this book:

- About building relationships first and foremost,
- About the second customer who'll help share your content,
- About terrific content that serves a real purpose,
- About great headlines

... all of it will help you with SEO because it will get other people to "say" great stuff about you in the form of links.

That's why you're already a long way toward being an SEO ninja, even if you don't realize it yet.

The website code is the easy part

Creating a website with SEO-friendly code and page layout is no longer difficult. If you use WordPress, all you need is a well-designed theme that creates search-engine-friendly code.

Great content is the thing that's tough to create. It takes dedication and care.

Once that great content is created, however, tweaking it so search engines love it as much as people do is not that difficult. Sure, you need to know what you're doing — and you need to do it regularly and efficiently — but it's not hard.

To help you out with that, Brian Clark wrote a short book on *How to Create Compelling Content that Ranks Well in Search Engines*.

In it, he covers:

- Why SEO copywriting still matters
- How search engines work, and why you need to “spoon feed” them
- The 5 essential elements of keyword research
- How to create cornerstone content that Google loves
- Five link building strategies that still work
- Why writing for people works for search engines
- How to make SEO copywriting simple

[Grab your copy right here.](#)

Read it and you'll have that 5% of SEO knowledge that will give you 95% of your desired results.

CHAPTER 17

The Most Important Question for Your Business

You may not realize that there are two main ways to run an online business. And no, it's not the scuzzy way and [the smart way](#).

There really are two kinds of entrepreneur, with two styles of working. Neither one is good or bad. Either one can be successful, and either one can go down in flames.

Choose the working style (and the tools and techniques) that match your personality and everything in your business will work better. But pick the wrong style, one that doesn't match who you are, and your business is going to make you miserable.

What kind of race are you running?

The two types of entrepreneurs are sprinters and marathoners. And you've got to figure out which kind you are.

A lot of the traditional Internet Marketing types are sprinters. They like to work in focused bursts. They might kill themselves pulling all-nighters for 4 or 6 weeks, create a process that works, deploy it, then go lie on the beach for a few months or until they run out of cash.

Buzz marketer Dean Hunt once said that an internet marketer was someone who “works 18 hours a day so he can make money while he sleeps.”

That’s the best picture of a sprinter that I’ve found yet.

Sprinting is a lot of work, because your systems have to be able to work without you — to make money while you sleep. Tim Ferriss is a sprinter, and his best-selling *The Four-Hour Work Week* is all about effective sprinting techniques.

Marathoners, of course, take a more slow and steady pace. They show up every day. They tend to be excellent at [producing quality content](#) in small, bite-sized pieces. They often fall prey to doing everything themselves, because they can.

Bloggers are the consummate marathoners. In fact, bloggers often just keep running year after year and forget there’s such thing as a finish line.

You’ve got to pick the right tools for your business and your working style.

You probably think we’re going to tell you that the marathon style is the right way to go.

But we're not, because we don't get to decide. You do. The rhythm of your business is something you need to understand, and there's not a right or wrong answer.

We do, though, have some ideas about which tools work best for each kind of race.

Tools for marathoners

As I said, blogging is a marathon technique. A traditional blog needs to be fed high-quality content on a regular basis. It doesn't need to be every day, but predictable schedules are great, and most successful blogs need at least one new post a week.

Newsletters (paper, email, or otherwise) are also a marathon technique. No matter how much blood, sweat, and tears you pour into this month's newsletter, tomorrow you've got to start a new issue.

Marathon businesses get to capture the customer when she's ready to buy. They can hold a prospect's attention for a long time, because they've always got something new to say. They don't mind customers who take a long time to make up their minds, because they can keep that customer engaged until she's ready.

If you're a marathoner, learn from your sprinting brothers and sisters.

Put some systems in place so you get a break every now and then. Even a natural marathoner will benefit from taking time away from your business to recharge your thinking and renew your enthusiasm.

That's why a smart marathoner looks for a sprinter as a partner. Sprinters can add excitement to a marathon business. And they have the energy and enthusiasm to push a marathon business to a higher level.

Tools for sprinters

Product launches are the quintessential sprinter's technique. Launches are, by their nature, intense. Lots of activity confined within a short window, and lots of moving pieces that you need to respond to.

They reward the sprinter's need for novelty, excitement, and intensity. The days may be long, but you know in advance how many days you'll put into it. And they allow for plenty of rest afterward.

Advertising is a great tool for sprinters (especially something like pay-per-click), because it acts as a faucet that can turn the traffic on or off. A smart automated marketing sequence can work with a proven pay-per-click ad and make money on autopilot for at least long enough to fit in a really good vacation to Thailand.

Lots of social media techniques are lousy for sprinters. Unless you're willing to check in a couple of times a day, Twitter isn't the tool for you to find and

connect with customers. Neither is Google+, Facebook, LinkedIn, or a forum. They all need the steady presence that belongs to the marathoner.

If you're a sprinter, learn from your marathoning brothers and sisters.

In the long run, it's awfully hard to keep building and rebuilding from scratch. Momentum is a beautiful thing.

That's why a smart sprinter looks for a marathoner as a partner. Marathoners build the kinds of businesses that command deep loyalty. And marathoners can keep a watchful eye over all of those sprinter systems, so they always work their best.

Why I love email autoresponders

Most of us aren't pure marathoners or pure sprinters. We're hybrids.

That's how we are. We have periods of time when we're working our tails off, and periods when we're kinda lazy. But we also tend to maintain a pretty steady presence over time. We tend to our forums and our Twitter streams and create a steady stream of content for the blogs.

Every once in awhile, we have the temerity to take some time off. And "kinda lazy" turns into "resembles a form of plant life." That's when it's nice to have a tool that will bridge the gap for us.

An autoresponder (and its cousin, the paid membership site with a “drip” model for releasing content) lets us do a sprint, put together several weeks (or even months) of great content, and then schedule that content to take care of our prospects and customers over some period of time.

Autoresponders take great care of new prospects when you’re out of town. Or when you’re busting your tail with a new project. Or when you have a baby, or a new puppy, or a garden to plant.

[What Is an Autoresponder and Do I Need One?](#)

Know thyself

One of the best things about running a business is the fact that you can set it up any way you please. So this week, think about the kinds of rhythms you want to create in your business.

Make sure the tools and models you’re choosing are suitable to your goals.

If you’re a sprinter by nature, are you using the marketing tools that will naturally give you the breaks you need? Too many people think they can maintain a constant sprint. If your name is not Gary Vaynerchuk, you can’t.

If you’re a marathoner, are you getting the most out of your “slow and steady” nature by producing plenty of great content in easy-to-manage bites?

Are you building rock-solid relationships with customers, and leveraging them over time with plenty of terrific offers?

Your homework for this chapter:

Take a look at the tools and techniques you're using to build a list of prospects, interest those prospects in your product, and close the sale.

Are you working with the rhythm and style that work best for you? If not, what tools can you add to make that work better?

If your business rhythms don't suit you yet, pick a new tool today and make a commitment to learn more about it. It takes time to build the business that suits you — and your style — perfectly.

CHAPTER 18

Essential Marketing Tools: Blogs

We're going to wrap up Internet Marketing for Smart People by talking about some of the essential tools of the trade for marketers in the 21st century.

These aren't fads, trends, or quick fixes. They're the tried-and-true tools that worked yesterday and are going to keep working tomorrow. These are the cornerstones of your marketing, whether you're a solo shop (maybe a consultant or a coach), or are handling the marketing for a multi-million-dollar business empire.

Build an authoritative hub

Your website lives at the center of your internet marketing plan. That website needs to have a ton of [great content](#). It needs to be valuable enough to attract lots of links, and to be intelligently optimized for SEO. That means you need to be able to update it quickly and easily, and the back-end code has to be state of the art.

So what's the right tool to build that website? Whether or not you call it a blog, you'll want to use blogging software to build your site. Even so-called "static sites" are faster and smarter to build with good content management software like WordPress.

Chris Brogan calls this your [home base](#). It's the core site where you'll build your reputation online and establish yourself as a [credible online authority](#).

Most people call this a blog, but if your customers don't think they read blogs, by all means call it something else. It can be an information directory, a client resource center, a [your topic] library. Use the language that works for your customers.

Why should anyone read your blog?

Here's the thing. There are hundreds of millions of blogs. Many of them are quite good. In order to get people to read yours, you have to give them a compelling reason.

Without a great answer to the question [Why Should Anyone Read Your Blog?](#) you're dead before you begin. But don't worry, creating a good answer to that question is within your grasp. It just takes commitment.

Also check out the article below for some of the "deadly sins" you need to avoid on your blog.

[The 7 Deadly Sins of Blogging](#)

Build authority on your own domain

There have been some great blogs built on proprietary blogging platforms, rather than their own domains.

And the owners of those great blogs, almost without exception, wish they had started the right way — with self-hosted WordPress on their own domain.

Because it's hard to take the hit and transfer over when you've attracted thousands (or even millions) of links. You always lose something in the translation. It's also hard to give up what you've already built.

That's why, if you're not blogging on your own domain right now (in other words, people type in something involving the words WordPress, Blogspot, Typepad, Tumblr, or any other site you don't control to get to your blog), you need to switch.

Not later. Not when you make a little bigger name for yourself. Not when you can afford a killer developer to build a kickass site. Right now.

If you're intimidated at the thought of migrating your site yourself, get help from a qualified WordPress developer who has experience with site migration.

Also, despite what some alleged "gurus" teach, please don't try to make a third-party site like Facebook or LinkedIn into your authority hub. The cornerstone of your business must always be a site you personally control.

Those other sites are terrific, but they're not your hub.

Use the right tools for the job

While you're creating or improving your site, you might as well go with a WordPress theme that makes the most of your site, with the best possible SEO, great-looking design, and excellent security.

Naturally, we're biased — but we think [Genesis is the best theme framework out there](#) to satisfy those requirements.

But whatever theme you use, get yourself on WordPress and use a domain you control. One of the many beauties of WordPress is you can easily update the theme at any time in order to take advantage of what's best for your current situation.

Take a good blog and make it better

There's one painful thing about blogs — you can kill yourself creating the best content in the world, write a post that draws hundreds of comments and thousands of readers, and make yourself a total hero — and in two weeks everyone's forgotten it already. The structure of a typical blog makes it difficult for readers to dig back in and find your very best stuff.

That's why you're going to make it easy for them — and give yourself an SEO boost while you're at it. Instead of just passively writing content and letting it slip out of sight, you can take 20 minutes to pull your best posts together into a powerful asset.

Derek Halpern wrote up some detailed instructions for you here:

[How Cornerstone Content Gets you Traffic and Subscribers](#)

How to sell from your blog

Believe it or not, a lot of otherwise smart people used to think you couldn't sell from a blog. That blogs were somehow inherently “not commercial” and all blog readers would be turned off of any attempt to promote.

We're proud to say that Copyblogger played a key role in showing that idea was totally wrong.

But we're not recommending you turn your blog into a pitchfest. The fact is, there are better tools (we're going to talk about one of the best in the next chapter) for pure promotion, but that doesn't mean you should never pitch from your blog.

Here are three keys to getting the most out of promotions on your blog:

1. Make sure you're promoting strategically.

As you [develop more friends in social media](#), you'll find that sometimes there are more affiliate products to promote than you have days on the calendar. And product launches tend to "bunch up," with lots of marketers within one topic all launching good products at the same time.

Think carefully about which products are truly in line with your message, and with the needs of your readers. If you know someone with a launch coming up, try to schedule them for a few guest posts in the month or so before their launch. Let your readers get to know, like, and trust the person you're promoting, so the launch doesn't feel like it comes out of nowhere.

Your readers' trust is on the line with every promotion you make. Make sure everything you promote adds to your reputation.

2. Think twice about running ads for other people.

A lot of bloggers want to offset their hosting and other expenses by putting a few ads up. That's fine, but remember — be strategic.

Avoid ads that are cheap-looking, ugly, or that don't allow you to be highly selective about what's being advertised. Your readers see ads on your site as

a personal recommendation. Ad programs that don't allow you to pick and choose can tarnish your credibility, as you send your readers to products and services that may be decidedly sub-par.

Nine times out of ten, ad space on your blog is better put to use with an ad for something of your own — either a product, an email newsletter, or a killer free report. Ads can also be used to demonstrate your alliances, either to a prestige product or to another online businessperson you admire.

3. Move 'em off the blog.

We've tried lots of different ways to do promotions on Copyblogger, and so far we've found that the most effective strategy is to develop your case over time on the blog.

Do this by writing posts that:

- Set up the need for the product
- Vividly describe the problem your customer is facing
- Suggest some of the features that would solve that problem

In other words, you're building a case for the product you'll be offering.

Once that work of “preparing for the sale” is done, you’re then ready to move readers off the blog for the final sales communication. You can either direct them to a [strong landing page](#), or you can move them to email.

Most serious online businesspeople will tell you they’ve seen the same result — nothing can substitute for the engagement and response that you can get with email. And that’s why email marketing is going to be our next chapter in the Internet Marketing for Smart People ebook. Read on for our best email marketing tips.

CHAPTER 19

Essential Marketing Tools: Email Marketing

You've heard it.

You might have even bought into it.

You know, that persistent little whisper from the shiny, sexy, new and powerful world of social media.

"Email is dead. It's so boring and old-fashioned. Everyone knows we're supposed to use [insert trendy social media platform of your choice] now."

The irony of this is thick. Truth is, email marketing was, is, and will be (for the foreseeable future) the most powerful social media platform around. Rumors of its death are greatly exaggerated.

Every successful online marketer we've talked with agrees — email readers are more responsive, they have a tighter connection with you, and they buy more stuff.

Most email marketing is terrible. But yours won't be — because you're going to follow these guidelines.

Build your email list

It's hard to create a strong business around a list of 8 people. Okay, this may seem a bit obvious, but bear with me.

It's easy to get intimidated by the prospect of building your list, but it's not rocket science when you break it down into two key areas of focus:

To build your list, you need to drive traffic and capture opt-ins.

Simple, though not always easy. But let's dive into it.

Grow your traffic

If you've been around Copyblogger for any length of time (and if you haven't, don't worry), you'll know that our philosophy of driving traffic centers around [content marketing](#).

As we've talked about throughout this book, content marketing is just creating and freely sharing informative, valuable and relevant content in a public way.

This can take all kinds of forms; blogging, guest posting, video tutorials, free PDF reports. Here are [a bunch more ideas](#) if you want to go nuts with this, which, of course, we highly recommend.

The idea is to create irresistible content, delivered over time, that works its way into your reader's heart and mind, culminating in ...

Building your opt-ins

Capturing the opt-in (that's just a jargon way of saying the reader gives you her email address and says it's okay to email her in the future) is the beginning of a profoundly important conversation.

This is point when a reader has been so knocked out by your free content that they give you permission to contact them on a regular basis with further, valuable content, as well as offers for products they'll want.

Long gone (thankfully) are the days of copying and pasting hundreds thousands, or millions of email addresses into your system with the intention of spamming everyone's lights out.

There is no good way to buy addresses to add to your email list. It's unethical, usually illegal, and terrible for your business. Don't do it.

(There are various ways to “borrow” someone else’s list, but that’s another topic.)

On the practical side, you’ll need to set up a way to capture the email addresses of interested readers.

No, you cannot just mail people using Outlook. Trust us.

There are a couple of companies we unofficially recommend for this (AWeber and Mailchimp both do a reasonable job). These services automate the opt-in process through the use of links, web forms, and robust backend software. More important, they manage relationships with the companies that deliver your email, so you end up getting caught in far fewer spam filters.

Focus on your Cookie Content

You knew we’d get back to this one, right?

Cookie content is the answer to “How can I get people to read my email marketing?”

It’s also the answer to “How can I get more subscribers,” “How can I sell more stuff,” “How do I convince readers to complete the opt-in,” “How do I stay out of spam filters,” and “How can I get more referrals and repeat business.”

Just because someone signed up to your email list does not mean they will open all (or any) of the content you send them. Cookie Content is all about training your readers to understand that, if you've sent them something, it's gonna be worth reading. It teaches them to create a wonderful association every time they see your name in the "from" field in their inbox.

Cookie Content can take many forms depending on what you're trying to achieve in your business. Most often, it takes the form of useful tips, funny or touching stories, case studies, or interviews you've conducted with experts.

Be warned: if you think non-stop ads, promotions or irrelevant offers make for great Cookie Content, you're on your way to the dustbin of email marketing history. There's no faster path to unsubscribes and spam complaints.

This drip, drip, drip of delivering interesting and/or relevant content over time will fan the desire of your readers, preparing them for amazing offers of related products down the road.

The magnificent autoresponder

The [email autoresponder](#) is my favorite marketing and communication tool.

(As you may know, [marketing and communication aren't two different things](#) for us — and they probably shouldn't be for you either.)

The autoresponder is a mighty tool that efficiently reaches out to your readers for you, whether you're around or not.

In fact, it's so powerful that we recommend you avoid any email provider — and there's at least one popular one out there — that doesn't give you an unlimited autoresponder.

Maybe you want every one of your subscribers to receive a 20-part instructional course. The autoresponder has your back; it keeps sending that course out when you're on vacation, or have the flu, or just feel like doing something else for awhile. The autoresponder never gets burned out or bored. Every reader gets the same great experience.

Maybe you'd like to send a single, special note to each of your readers 72 hours after they sign up to your list. The autoresponder will obey your command.

Maybe you have a tailor-made digital gift for each of your readers on the first, second and third anniversary of their subscription with you. Again, the autoresponder will faithfully deliver it, on time, to each reader, on the individually correct date.

Are you starting to see how cool this is?

Once you've got one, five, or twenty autoresponders set up with your provider, you're done. And that faithful sucker will keep working on your behalf day in and day out.

An autoresponder lets you get the most use out of your very best material.

As you probably know, I'm a fan of [creating the best damned content you possibly can](#).

Which can, frankly, be a lot of work.

The fabulous thing about an autoresponder is that you continue to get value out of that hard work. You can write the world's most brilliant blog post, and the odds are that in a month or two it will be forgotten. But you can copy that post to your autoresponder sequence and keep sending it to every new person who connects with you — for as long as you choose to stay in business.

I love tools that let me work smarter, not harder.

CHAPTER 20

Essential Marketing Tools: Social Networks

If you've been reading the news headlines about social networking for the last few years, you may be tempted to think:

- Merely opening a Twitter account will triple your revenue this year
- You're only one blog post away from a guest spot on Oprah
- If you build it (a Facebook/LinkedIn/Google+ page), they will come (in hordes)

Then you look around at the real world and realize that, sadly, none of this is true.

The truth is, social media — when used strategically over time — is the most powerful form of marketing and market research the world has ever seen. But it's not a magic bean that grows overnight into business success. It's a platform for real work.

The art is knowing the best places to put that work so you get results and not just a lot of annoying people who think they're your friends. That's what we're going to talk about in this section.

First, a definition

The term social media has always been somewhat lame and redundant.

Why? Because the internet has always been social. The tools are new, but communication and interaction are as old as humanity itself. That's why so many essential principles of web communication haven't changed much from the old days of face-to-face selling.

What the internet does change is the pace, scale, and cost of communication. You can send more messages to more people, more quickly and more cheaply, than ever in history. But what you're going to say doesn't change just because you're using more efficient technology.

Social media: what is it good for?

It's probably obvious that social media (i.e. talking to people) is a great tool for the first pillar of Internet Marketing for Smart People — building relationships with fans and customers.

You might be a big company, a little company, or an individual. No matter which you are, you can use social media platforms to show your customers that you aren't a creep. That you can be trusted. That you know your stuff.

The biggest factor that kills your conversions is lack of trust. Social media gives you an awesomely efficient, cheap, and effective way to build that trust —

provided, of course, that you're a good egg to begin with. Social media also does a fantastic job of exposing lousy service, nasty business practices, and crappy products.

[The #1 Conversion Killer in Your Copy \(And How to Beat It\)](#)

The second and third pillars are direct response copywriting and content marketing. Those are two separate skills, but they work incredibly well when you blend them together, then use social media tools to widely share the result of that work. This article talks about how they're different and how they work together:

[What's the Difference Between Content Marketing and Copywriting?](#)

And the final pillar of Internet Marketing for Smart People is to have something worthwhile to sell.

Social media actually works brilliantly for this as well, because of something most people forget too easily:

Social media is a tool for listening, not just talking.

Want ideas for products that are a surefire success? For the language your prospects use to describe their problems? For the most common objections people have to buying something like your product or service?

Just “grow bigger ears” (to use Chris Brogan’s phrase) and listen on Twitter, Facebook, Google+, blog comments (your own or someone else’s), forums, and anywhere else people congregate to talk.

If you never wrote a word on social media platforms, but used it purely for market intelligence and listening, social media could still make you a millionaire.

Don’t forget to listen.

Which social media platform is best?

The one your customers hang out on. There are millions of people still using “dead” social media platforms like MySpace, AOL, and Friendster.

Go fishing where the fish are. More specifically, where your fish are.

Where’s the ROI on social media?

Social media demands a huge investment — not of money, typically, but in time, which of course is worth much more than money.

To get the best return on that investment, here's where you need to put your social media focus:

Gaining the attention of new potential customers. The best way to do this is to encourage sharing of your very best [cookie content](#).

Building your lists by bringing those new prospects to a "home base" asset. This must be something you control, like your blog (on your own domain name) and your email list. Don't be a [digital sharecropper](#) — instead, use external media like Facebook and Twitter to bring traffic back to you.

Using social media to put a likable human face on your brand. This is optional, but can be highly effective. Remember, you don't have to be perfect, but you do need to preserve your authority by acting with a reasonable degree of dignity. Be someone we can respect.

Constantly working on conversion — on taking those fans and readers and turning them into customers. Steps 1-3 do you no good until you master step 4.

Watch out for this big, scary, dangerous pitfall

The first thing we all realize when we start playing around with social media is that it can be a brutal, ugly time suck. And too many bloggers never get past that point. They lose hours every day "being social" without anything to show for it.

That's not what smart people do.

If you start with these foundational principles of using and thriving in social media, there's a good chance you won't need Oprah.

So that's Internet Marketing for Smart People ... now what?

Thanks for your time and attention reading this ebook! Hopefully you've learned lots about how to attract traffic, engage an audience, and convert fans into customers.

Keep in mind that this is just one book in a library of 15. For the complete set, head on over to the [Ebooks section of MyCopyblogger](#). You'll find in-depth materials on SEO, email marketing, landing pages, content marketing strategy ... and lots more. And all of it is free with your MyCopyblogger membership. (How cool is that?)

Hey, why don't you swing by and leave your thoughts and comments on [Copyblogger.com](#)? We look forward to seeing you there.

TAKE THE NEXT STEP:

Let Us Show You How to Build Your Online Authority

We've put together the most comprehensive content marketing training Copyblogger has ever produced, and we call it Authority ...

[Click Here to Find Out More](#)

The ebook you've just read has covered the very basics of building Authority online as a writer and content producer ... but that's only the beginning.

We've been building the software and marketing training business known as Rainmaker Digital since 2006. We've been fortunate to enjoy a lot of success in that time, but it took hard work ... and we've made our share of mistakes along the way.

What if you could directly benefit from those years of experience — and avoid those mistakes?

What if you could easily keep up with state-of-the-art content marketing tools and trends?

What if you could effortlessly build a powerful network of entrepreneurs and writers, all working toward the same goals you are?

Authority opens to new members periodically throughout the year. Interested?

[See What Authority Can Do for You](#)