

The Easy Step by Step Guide

Writing Advertising Copy

**How to write winning copy
that boosts response rates
and gets results**

Pamela Brooks

ROWMARK

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About the author

Following a degree in English, Pamela Brooks spent ten years as a communications specialist for a blue-chip financial services company. She completed the Chartered Institute of Marketing diploma with distinction in the communications paper, then switched to working as a freelance writer following the birth of her first child in 1997.

Her clients have been drawn from a variety of sectors, including manufacturing, foods, leisure and financial services; she has also written extensively for the parenting and health press.

Introduction

Copywriting. Easy, isn't it? Just bung a few words together and stick it in the local rag ...

Well, if you want to chuck money down the drain, go ahead. Anyone can put a mediocre advert together and get a small response.

But if you plan properly and use the right techniques, it will make your advert more effective and increase your results.

Copywriting is the art of knowing what you want to say, who you want to say it to, where to say it and how to say it so your audience listens to you.

That means:

- grabbing their attention (the headline)
- giving them the information they need to act on (body copy)
- telling them what to do next (response details)

The good news is that yes, you can do it yourself. Though if you're planning a TV campaign or a long-running four-colour ad campaign in large-circulation magazines you'll be better off spending some of your budget on a specialist agency's services. Similarly, with radio, if you're planning a national campaign, you're better off using a specialist agency than going it alone; if it's a small local campaign your local radio station can help you put the advert together.

How to use this guide

Whether you're a small business, a charity or a society, you're likely to produce press advertising, brochures or direct mail at some point. This book will show you how to produce clear, precise and targeted advertising and write copy effectively.

I recommend that you read it through from beginning to end and then dip into it to refresh your memory. At the end of each chapter there is a summary of the points covered.

There are also examples throughout from fictitious case studies to help show you how to structure an advert, from preparing a brief through to finished copy.

What you will learn from this guide

This guide looks at how to write press adverts, advertorials, brochures, flyers and direct mail letters. It will help you to understand the processes involved in producing advertising and how to tailor your copy to suit your audience.

This guide will show you:

- how to identify your audience, what you want to communicate and what you want them to do
- the advertising process
- how to write:
 - ads (press ads and advertorials)
 - brochures and flyers
 - corporate brochures
 - direct mail
- how to check that it's working (and what to do if it's not)

1

Communication basics

Good communication is ...

Good communication is relevant, focused, timely and readable.

Which means ...

- **Relevant** – what's in it for the audience? If the answer is 'nothing' they won't read it.
- **Focused** – always have your audience in mind while you're writing. Imagine that you're speaking directly to one particular person.
- **Timely** – if you're running a special offer, give the audience a chance to take advantage of it by telling them in advance.

- **Readable** – if it's long-winded your audience will lose interest. Keep it short and lively. Avoid jargon, unless you're talking to the trade and using terms standard to that industry.

Identifying your target audience

Who are you talking to? You can talk to more than one audience at a time (depending on your message). The following checklist will help you to identify your target customers (and therefore how to reach them):

- **inter-company** (staff, management, investors and potential investors)
- **trade** (suppliers, distributors, retailers, competitors)
- **customers** (current, past and potential – plus your competitors' customers!)
- **special interest groups** (local councils, educational bodies, pressure groups)

Once you have identified your broad target, go for specifics. Look at:

- Where they live – are you talking local or national? City or village?
- Age and lifestyle – for example, 20-year-old singles with no children have different interests to 35-year-olds with children under 10 or 50-year-old 'empty nesters'. Think about their homes, their jobs, their income and their interests. What's important to your audience: quality, price or service?

- For business-to-business: type of business, size (sole trader, small, medium, large, multi-national), business sector, who makes the buying decisions

What do you want to communicate?

What do you want to tell your audience? Try to stick to one message per advert – if you need to tell them more than one thing at a time, you may be better off using an advertorial (an advert designed to look like an article in the magazine or paper in which it appears) or a brochure.

The most common types of message are:

news

such as ...

- **launch** of new company
- **change** in market share – particularly if you've just become number one or launched from a standing start to become a close rival to an established company
- **number** of product sold – usually significant if a 'big' number such as the thousandth or millionth
- **changed or new** product – information about the product's USPs (unique selling propositions), or the use of new technology or a new material
- **anniversary** – for example your company's celebrating 25 years or 100 years in business
- **special offer** or sale

Information

which can include:

- **reminder of benefits the audience may have forgotten** – particularly useful if your product or service has been around for a long time
- **damage limitation** – if you've recently had a problem reported in the press, an ad campaign reminding your audience of positive benefits can help underpin a strong PR campaign

What do you want your audience to do?

This is the point of the advert – you've told them the news or information, so what do you want them to do?

The following checklist can help you decide on your call to action:

- buy your new product/service
- switch brand/supplier
- stay loyal to your firm (maintain customer/staff confidence)
- attend a function
- volunteer help
- develop interest in your company
- build relationships

Accountability

You need to have some kind of measure in place or you won't know if you've succeeded in your aims. For example, you might want your campaign to produce a 10 per cent increase in sales in the first six weeks, or to sell 80 tickets for a function, or to bring in 50 extra leads a week. Make sure it's easy to measure (for example, using a keycode on a direct response advert). See Chapter 8 for more detail of this.

Kipling's honest serving men

Kipling had a rhyme about his six honest serving men – they're the ones you need to think about while you're writing.

- **Who** – are you talking to? (Audience)
- **What** – do you want them to do? (Point of the ad)
- **When** – do you want them to do it? (Timing)
- **Where** – do you want them to do it? (Distribution)
- **Why** – should they do it? (What's in it for the audience?)
- **How** – should they do it? (Call to action)

And always support your claims with facts, even if it's not in your final copy. If you're claiming to be the country's largest supplier of widgets, you need to make sure you know your market share.

Language

In advertising, you need to keep things simple. That doesn't mean dumbed-down – it means being clear and to the point. That's important for copy, particularly in direct mail. If you ramble on or the audience isn't quite sure what you're talking about, your mail will go straight in the bin.

The rules to remember are:

Do

- **Use simple words** – write as you'd speak (though avoid swearing or colloquialisms!)
- **Use short sentences** – stick to 15–20 words per sentence
- **Use short paragraphs** – up to 5 sentences per paragraph
- **Use the active voice, not passive** – so it's 'the chicken crossed the road' rather than 'the road was crossed by the chicken'

Don't

- **Use adjectives and flowery language** – they don't add any value to your reader so they're a waste of space (and therefore money)
- **Use jargon and abbreviations** – unless you're talking to a trade audience and they understand the jargon
- **Be ambiguous** – say what you mean

- **Repeat yourself** – ‘tell them what you’re going to tell them, tell them, and tell them what you’ve told them’ is great for public speaking but you don’t have room for it in advertising (it’ll bore the audience and cost you money!)
 - **Be sexist, racist or ageist**
-

In summary

- Good communication is relevant, focused, timely and readable
- Identify your target audience as a broad group (inter-company, trade, customers and special interest groups), then narrow the focus to your particular set of customers. For consumers, look at their age, lifestyle (including home, job, income) and interests, and what’s important to them. For business-to-business customers, look at the type of business, its size, the business sector and who makes the buying decisions.
- Look at what you want to communicate – news or information?
- Look at what you want your audience to do
- Put a measure in place so you can see how successful your advert is
- Remember Kipling’s honest serving men – who, what, when, where, why and how

- Keep your words simple and active, and your sentences and paragraphs short
 - Avoid flowery language, jargon, abbreviations, ambiguity, repetition and the 'isms'
-

2

Advertising processes

Print advertising

There are several different types of print advertising.

Display ads are the ones you'll see while leafing through magazines and newspapers – usually at least a quarter of a page and sometimes even a four-page centrefold.

They are measured (and charged for) in single column centimetres (sometimes abbreviated to scc) or pages (e.g. a 2x10 advert is two columns wide and 10 cm deep; a half-page is half a page – you'll need to specify if that's portrait or landscape – and a DPS is a double-page spread). You can take as much space as you need and they can be used for any product or service. You can also ask it to appear in a specific position (such as inside front cover or opposite editorial – you'll pay extra for the best positions).

A specialist form of display ad is the **advertorial** or advertising feature, where the page looks as if it's editorial in the magazine but all the stories are about your product.

There are some limitations:

- The audience might be too wide – you could be paying to reach a large number of people who aren't potential customers
- Your layout's restricted
- Magazines have long lead times, often 3 months, so you need to produce the advert a long time in advance.

Classified ads are those found in the 'small print' at the back of a magazine or newspaper – usually short, measured (and charged for) by the line. They're grouped together under a 'classification' heading such as property, leisure, sport or gardening.

As with display ads, you can use it for just about any product or service, but there are some limitations (in addition to those for display ads):

- Your advert could be lost among competitors' – without pictures or logos, you can't get your company identity across
- You're restricted in your layout

Direct response ads are sometimes called 'off-the-page' ads because they ask people to buy a product or service and give them a phone number to ring, a web site to look up or a coupon to fill in (or sometimes all three!).

They're good for generating leads and cross-selling, and it's easier to measure their success (see Chapter 3 for more information about using keycodes).

However, direct response ads have the same limitations as press adverts regarding audience and production time, and some readers see cutting out coupons as spoiling the magazine.

Brochures are also known as inserts or flyers. They can be anything from a one-page notice through to a catalogue: the space and format is up to you. You can insert it in a magazine (though this can be an expensive way of reaching a wide audience, and you can't control where it appears in the magazine) or you can deliver by hand or post to a mailing list (meaning you can target your audience more precisely). They can also be picked up from the point of sale (e.g. from dispensers in a reception area or at a desk).

Direct mail is what it sounds like – a letter or pack sent straight to a potential customer. They're cheap to produce and can be personalised easily, particularly if you use a computer to produce them.

The process of an advert

When you produce an advert you'll need to go through the following process:

- **media buying** – that means buying the space in the media. For example, with a display or classified advert you'll buy space on a certain page in a publication; for an insert, you'll ask it to go in a publication or to be delivered to houses in a certain postcode area; and with direct mail you'll buy a mailing list (or use your own database, perhaps using addresses from a previous – and relevant – sales promotion) and post the mailshot direct to those addresses

- **visual** – this is a rough drawing that shows what your advert will look like, with the headline and body text shown as ‘gobbledegook’ to give you an idea of how many words you need
- **copy** – the right number of words to fit the space allocated for it (headline and body text)
- **illustration** – either a drawing or a photograph to accompany the copy
- **typesetting** – the production company handling your advert will design it, putting your copy into the correct typeface and size (you’ll need to ‘proof’ it – that is, check it for accuracy)
- **artwork** – the endproduct, ready for the printer. Generally supplied as a computer file on disk or CD with a hardcopy proof in black and white or colour, or as separated film for colour printing.
- **printing** – a printer will produce the printed copies of your brochure for you, or the magazine/newspaper will be printed. You may receive a final proof to check before printing.

The advertising brief

Even if you’re writing the copy yourself, it helps to work with a proper brief. This needs to include:

1 The company

- **who you are** – company name
- **what you do** – keep it general, e.g. sells cosmetics

- **background detail** – your position in the market-place
- **your company image** – caring, serious, casual, friendly

2 The advert

- **what kind of advert you want to produce and its format** – display ad or direct mailshot, length/size (including whether portrait or landscape), colour or black and white, illustrations etc.
- **the media you want to use** – national press, regional press, specialist/trade press, directories, direct mail
- **what you want to achieve from the advert** – be precise, e.g. 150 leads in 6 weeks, 10 per cent increase in sales over the quarter (and be realistic!)
- **when it needs to appear** – and when the publication needs to have the finished copy
- **how long it will run for** – number of insertions and last appearance date
- **how you're going to measure the advert** – e.g. keycodes

3 The product/service

- **product/service description** – what it is, how it works, how it's used

- **product/service benefits** – why customers should buy your product (list them in order of importance to the customer)
- **unique selling proposition or USP** – this is what you offer but your competitors don't

4 Your target market

- **Consumers:** who they are, where they live, age, sex, socio-economic grouping, what attracts them (price, service, quality), lifestyle and interests
- **Business sector:** size of business, where they are, who makes the buying decisions

5 Your competitors

What's the difference between their product/service and yours? Look at:

- cost
- quality
- procedures
- benefits you offer that they don't
- benefits they offer that you don't

6 special offers

including discounts, vouchers and free gifts:

- what it is

- its value
- what the customer has to do to get it

7 your budget

8 legal restrictions

wordings that must be included (e.g. credit examples, membership of regulatory bodies etc.)

Example brief

Golden Hours Theme Park

1 The company

- **who we are** – Golden Hours Theme Park
- **what we do** – family amusement park
- **background detail** – been established for 10 years. Opening hours 10 a.m.–5 p.m., closed Mondays
- **your company image** – family-oriented – offers something for everyone; good old-fashioned fun how it used to be (no slot machines or computer games; café has home-made cakes and snacks and gift-shop has old-fashioned sweets and toys). Logo is a red-and-gold helter-skelter.

2 The advert

- **format** – display ad, colour, 5cmx2 columns
- **media** – regional press (special half-term supplement in Anytown News)
- **aim to achieve from the advert** – increase visitors by 10 per cent in half term week
- **when it needs to appear** – 20 October
- **how long it will run for** – 1 issue
- **measurement** – visitors need to hand in voucher - keycode AN01

3 The product/service

- **product/service description** – theme park offering old-fashioned fairground (helter-skelter, gondola swings, Victorian merry-go-round, light and water extravaganza), crazy golf, boating lake, science ‘exploratorium’, craft barn (painting, pottery), pony rides, ‘jungle’ climbing area, restaurant and café, babychanging facilities, Victorian replica playroom (doll’s house, jack-in-the-box etc.), Punch and Judy show
- **product/service benefits** – admission fee gives one day’s unlimited use of all rides; small charge for extra activities at the craft barn and pony rides. Lots to do so kids won’t be bored – indoor activities too in case it rains. Something for everyone – gentle rides for small children, craft activities for older ones, physical activities for kids to let off steam, café for when parents/grandparents need a break, gift shop
- **unique selling proposition or USP** – old-fashioned entertainment; pay once at the door so you don’t have to pay per ride.

4 The target market

- families with children (majority will be aged 4–10 years)

5 Competitors

Other local children's amusement areas – Seaside World Amusement Park, hands-on activity museums, zoos and leisure centres.

We have a wider range of activities than many plus the attraction of parents/grandparents remembering their own childhood outings to the funfair etc.

6 Special offers

- 50p off per person with coupon
- customer simply has to present the coupon at time of paying

7 Budget

£200

8 Legal restrictions

Coupon is only valid until the middle of November

Legal matters

When you're writing your adverts, you need to bear in mind the following legal information:

- **Trade Descriptions Act** – goods advertised must correspond to their description
- **Sale of Goods Act** – goods advertised must be fit for the purpose for which they'd normally be used
- With **price reductions**, the goods must have been offered at full price for a period of 28 days in the previous 6 months
- **Consumer Credit Act** – if you offer goods on credit you must have a licence from the Office of Fair Trading (see your local Trading Standards Department for full details)
- **Data Protection Act** – even if you just keep a list of names and addresses on computer, you need to register with the Data Protection Registrar

British Code of Advertising Practice

The tenth edition of the British Codes of Advertising and Sales Promotion came into force on 1 October 1999. It is a code of practice agreed by the advertising industry and the media and you must comply with it. It's administered by the Advertising Standards Authority. The main principles of BCAP are that advertisements should:

- Be legal, decent, honest and truthful

- Be prepared with a sense of responsibility to consumers and society
- Respect the principles of fair competition generally accepted in business – any comparisons must be clear and fair
- Not bring advertising into disrepute
- Conform with the Codes

That means your adverts should:

- comply with the law and not encourage people to break the law (e.g. drink and drive)
- contain nothing that's likely to cause offence, including on the grounds of race, religion, sex, sexual orientation or disability. If in doubt, check with the newspaper or magazine or the ASA
- not exploit consumer's inexperience or the lack of knowledge of consumers
- not mislead by inaccuracy, ambiguity, exaggeration, omission or otherwise
- not cause fear and distress without good reason (e.g. to discourage dangerous actions) and it must not be disproportionate to the risk
- not show or encourage unsafe practices
- not condone or provoke violent or antisocial behaviour

- not unfairly portray or refer to people in an adverse or offensive way

You must be able to prove any claims you make (such as being 'the biggest' or 'the only' provider of your product or service) and provide documentary evidence if the ASA requests it.

Prices must be clear and include VAT and other taxes. If it's a business-to-business advert where the customer can recover VAT, you can quote the price exclusive of VAT but you must show the amount or rate of other costs. If you refer to prices 'from' or 'up to', you must not exaggerate the benefits the consumer's likely to have.

Offers can only be described as **free** if the customer pays only for the cost of public postage, the actual cost of freight and delivery, or the cost of travel if the customer collects the offer. You must not charge for package or handling.

You must make it clear if **stocks are limited** and must show the ASA why you think you could satisfy demand. If the product becomes unavailable, you must withdraw adverts and show the ASA evidence that you've monitored stock.

Testimonials must refer to the product or service you're advertising (if you change it, the testimonial is no longer valid) and be truthful; any opinions must be substantiated. You need the person's written permission before you use the testimonial. You also need signed and dated proof, including a contact address, for any testimonial you use.

Adverts should not mislead by inaccuracy, ambiguity, exaggeration, omission or otherwise.

Media buying

Which media you use depends on your target audience.

<i>Audience</i>	<i>Media</i>
National, very general	National press and directories
National, specialist	Specialist/trade
Local	Regional press, local directories

If your message is very time-important, daily media means you can target a specific day, but remember that the daily newspaper is likely to be thrown out at the end of the day; a weekly, monthly or bi-monthly publication will be 'current' for longer.

Also think about the difference between 'free' newspapers (distributed to all homes in an area, so has a wide audience – but they may be discarded without a second glance) and ones that have been paid for (which have a narrower audience but the reader has chosen to buy the newspaper/magazine, so will read it).

The cost of an advert will be listed in the media's 'rate card'. This can be found in BRAD (British Rates & Data), a directory which is updated monthly and gives details of all the audited publications in circulation, including the costs and sizes of advertising and the readership profile.

Or you can ask the advertising sales department for a

media pack – this contains the latest copy of the magazine, their circulation details (how many copies they sell), readership profile (who reads it), production details (how they wish the artwork to be supplied and in what format), plus the rate card for advertisements.

You may be able to buy **distress space** at a cheaper rate. This is space that the magazine needs to fill at very short notice – perhaps a planned advertisement has fallen through at the last minute. However, you'll need to have film ready to that precise specification at very short notice – and it might not be available exactly where and when you want it.

Mailing lists

If you have a long message, one that needs a lot of illustration, or you can define your target audience very tightly in terms of where they are (e.g. telling local people about the launch of a new business), direct mail could work well for you.

You can obtain a mailing list from several sources:

- Your own customer files (if you want repeat business)
- Professional directories or the Yellow Pages (if you want to target people in a particular line of business)
- A list broker (for a list in a particular area or social group) – contact The Direct Marketing Association (UK) Ltd, Haymarket House, 1 Oxendon Street, London SW1Y 4EE, tel. 020 7321 2525, web site www.dma.org.uk

- Other organisations – some organisations such as professional institutions, mail order companies and book clubs may rent their list, but if you rent a list you can only use it once.

Briefing the designer

Unless you are a talented illustrator, it's best to get a professional's help for the illustration. The designer needs a copy of your brief for background information about the product and your target audience.

The type of illustration you use varies according to what you want to achieve and where it will be placed.

Think about what you want your illustration to do:

- Show the product (pack shot)
- Convey atmosphere
- Show the product being used
- Interest the audience enough to make them read the text
- Break up the text

Line illustrations

These are simple drawings using only lines, not shading and can be either black and white or colour. They're good for:

- Directories or other publications where the quality is poor so photographs would not print clearly

- Showing detail
- Technical illustrations

Photographs

These are good for showing the product and conveying atmosphere.

Other information

Tell your designer if he needs to include your company's logo or use your company's 'corporate style' (i.e. the colours, typefaces and type of illustration used on all your communications).

Give the designer the production details for each publication (they may differ in size).

Brief the designer to use plenty of white space – too many illustrations will make your advert look crowded. Try to stick to one or two typefaces – if you use lots of different typefaces, bold and italic indiscriminately, your advert will look messy.

In summary

- Print advertising includes display ads, classified ads, direct response ads, brochures and direct mail
- When you produce an advert the steps include media buying, visual, copy, illustration, typesetting, artwork and finally printing
- Write a brief about: the company (who you are, what you do, background detail); the advert (format, media, what you want it to achieve, when it appears, how long it will run for, measurement); product/service (description, benefits, USP); target market (consumer, business); competitors; special offers; your budget; legal restrictions
- When you write copy, bear in mind the Trade Descriptions Act, Sale of Goods Act, Consumer Credit Act and Data Protection Act
- You must comply with the main areas of the British Code of Advertising Practice. This means the adverts must: be legal, decent, honest and truthful; show a sense of responsibility to consumers and society; adhere to the principles of fair competition
- Choose your media according to your target audience and ask the advertising sales department for a media pack or check in BRAD
- Distress space is cheap but you have less control over it
- For mailing lists, use your own customer files, compile one from local/specialist directories, or rent

one from a list broker or other organisation

- Give the designer a full brief
-

3

Writing press adverts

The AIDA principle

AIDA is a principle that is used for selling and in adverts. It stands for Attention, Interest, Desire, Action. This is what your advert has to do:

- grab the audience's **attention** (headline)
- arouse their **interest** and make them want to know more (the illustration and opening sentence)
- make them **desire** the product (main body copy)
- give them a call to **action** (tell them how they can buy your product/service)

Look at your advert from your audience's point of view

Focus on what's most important for them – that's your product or service, not your company name or logo.

Headlines

The headline is the most important part of the advert. It's there to grab attention. It tells the audience what's on offer – so look at the *immediate* benefit to the customer (this will be the one at the top of your product benefit list). It also has to give the audience as much information as possible! So be specific – '50% off all widgets' rather than 'amazing widget offer'.

Words that attract interest (which could also be used as a 'flash' – see below) include:

- Free
- Now
- Unique
- Latest
- Sale
- Bargain
- Limited offer
- Exclusive

Types of headlines include:

Statement

This is a simple, effective announcement of what you're offering. If it's something your audience is interested in they'll want to read on.

Examples:

- 3 for 2 on all pens
(stationery company)
- Old-fashioned fun at old-fashioned prices
(Golden Hours Theme Park)

Question

This provokes a response from your audience. There are three ways of doing this:

- 1 Ask a question and put a response in the form of a subhead.
- 2 Ask 'who', 'why' or 'how' questions and let your copy give the answer.
- 3 Make a sales message from a statement by using 'why', 'where', and 'how'.

Examples:

- Forgot your anniversary last year? Let us remember for you.
(From a gift shop offering a 'reminder' service)
- Why do mums like our pens so much?
(Teamed with visual of a toddler holding a chunky felt-tip pen, with scribbles on the wall and her face – from a stationery manufacturer offering washable pens)
- How do you juggle your shopping and your kids?
(Answer: leave the kids with us while you shop –

from a crèche)

- Why we hand-wax all our furniture
(Explanation in body copy showing the benefits to the customer – from a specialist furniture-maker)
- How to make your car safe this winter
(Body copy lists the checks for a 'prepare your car for winter' service from Anytown Garage)

Command

Tell your audience to do something. This works best for direct response adverts – 'call us now'. Don't be too aggressive or try to shock or you'll turn people off.

Example:

- Throw your remotes away
(Visual of three or four remote controls in a wastebin; body copy explains that the Whizzo Remote Control works on your TV, video, DVD, satellite TV and stereo)

Comparison

This works in two ways.

- 1 Compare 'before and after using our product' (though you *must* be able to give documentary proof of your claims).
- 2 Compare your products with competitors – but be careful not to denigrate them or you'll be breaching the code of advertising practice and laying yourself open to a lawsuit.

Example:

- What did you do before Shiny-sheen? (Visual of a lino floor with a vertical line through the centre, one half faintly grubby and one half sparkling; strapline (message to take away) is 'Shiny-sheen gets your floors clean' – from a floor-cleaner manufacturer)

Challenge

This is where you challenge your customers to try your product or service. It works in three ways:

- 1 Bet them that they won't change back to their old brand once they've tried yours. (They'll have to try it to prove you wrong.)
- 2 Offer them their money back if they don't like it within a set period (obviously with proof of purchase!).
- 3 'Blindfold testing', where your product is tested by consumers alongside a rival –though you must be able to substantiate this.

Example:

- If it's not the best coffee you've ever tried, we'll give you your money back.
(From a specialist coffee shop)

Invitation

This involves the audience, suggesting they might want to do something, such as treating themselves to a

break at your hotel. It's particularly good for launches and product demonstrations.

Example:

- Treat yourself to a break at the Spa Hotel
- Come and test-drive the new Whizzo-car

Then start to think how you can make it *more* inviting.

Take the Spa Hotel – what is the audience looking for? (Answer: a chance to relax.) How will the Spa Hotel give them what they want? (It's on the sea-front so they can listen to the relaxing sounds of the sea instead of the usual frantic ringing of phones or demands of children or ...)

So bring out the point. The headline could be *Ring, ring? Waah-waah! Shhh, shhh. Ahhh ...*

The headline makes the audience sit up and take interest – what's it talking about? Sounds? Note the repetition at the beginning (demands on the audience) and the internal rhyme.

And then the subhead explains it.

Come and relax at the Spa Hotel, soothed by the sounds of the sea.

Body copy

This identifies the service/product or gives information to back up the headline.

The opening sentence

The opening sentence gives the first impression. You need to take up from where the headline ends. Don't simply repeat or go off at a tangent.

Logical flow

Then continue the copy in a logical flow. Group product or service benefits together and write about them in order of importance. Question yourself as you list them – what will the audience think? Will they want to argue against your points or will they have any concerns? Address these before they come up.

Links

As part of a logical flow, you may need to link your paragraphs together. Phrases which help include:

- and of course
- not only
- and in addition
- but
- because

Collectables

If you're writing an off-the-page sales advert about something collectable (such as dolls, plates, books or CDs), include as many details as you can. Think about the way the product looks, feels, smells, sounds or tastes (as appropriate). Remember your audience –

what are they looking for? A CD collector wants rare tracks so list as many of the tracks as you can; a plate collector will want to know the size, how many are in the set (and the pictures, if possible), whether there's any gold plating, whether it's a numbered edition etc.

One at a time

When you're writing body copy, stick to one idea per sentence – and one sentence per idea. For example, a company making essential oils might want to say that their products can be used for massage, in burners or added to baths. That's one idea and one sentence, not three. And use one paragraph per theme or group of ideas.

Make it easy

Short words + short sentences =
easy to read

Keep the words short and the copy punchy. Try to vary the length of sentences to keep the copy interesting, for example using a long one for explanation. And then a short one for emphasis.

If you have lots of very short sentences, use bullet points – they're good at helping you put important information across quickly. Remember that they're just short points, not an alternative presentation of long copy, so keep them short and use them to complement body copy – don't just repeat the copy!

Be enthusiastic, but don't oversell or you'll put your customers off.

Closing

In your closing sentence, be positive. There are several ways you can end your copy:

- tell your customer how to get your product or service
- point out a 'big' benefit (your second-best – the first should be in the headline)
- summarise the copy
- add a link with the headline

Things to include in your copy

- Facts
- Prices
- 'You' – involve your audience as much as you can
- Rhyme and alliteration – don't overdo it and keep it as 'natural' as possible (e.g. 'Don't delay, join today' – cheesy, but effective)

Things to avoid

- Waffle
- Superlatives (no one believes them any more!)

- Puns
- 'We' or 'I' – distances you from your audience
- Overuse of repetition (e.g. the company or product name) – it'll bore the audience

Putting it all together

Example:

Golden Hours Theme Park

From the brief, we know it's a double-sided advert and has to act as a coupon. The advertising department of Anytown News tells us that the space is equivalent to 9cm wide by 5cm deep.

The headline is 'Old-fashioned fun at old-fashioned prices'. We also need to tell our audience what we're offering (benefits), the special offer (50p off per person with this voucher) – see the section on page 43 about flashes – and where to find us.

So the front has a picture of children enjoying themselves on one of our top attractions – the Victorian merry-go-round. (Illustrates the 'fun' and 'old-fashioned'.) It also has a flash saying '50p off per person until November 15 with this voucher' (and a keycode of AN01 on the voucher). At the bottom of the ad, give the opening times (Tuesday–Sunday 10 a.m.–5 p.m.) and the prices (£6 per adult and £4 per child) plus the contact details (Golden Hours

Theme Park, Seaview Road, Anytown AA1 2BB, tel 01234 567890, www.goldenhours.co.uk).

The back is where we tell our audience more about what we offer. From the measurements, we know we've got around 150 words to play with plus another visual.

Our target audience is families with children under 10 years. The advert is going in a half-term 'special' pullout from the regional press – so we know it's all about keeping the children amused but without costing a fortune.

We're trying to make the audience nostalgic for their own childhood (USP – it's family entertainment like it used to be) and we're talking directly to them. So the visual's going to be the helter-skelter with an adult and small child going down it. (This will tie in with the copy.)

Remember how half-terms used to be? The excitement of the fair. Messing about on the lake. Climbing trees. Playing endless games ...

Now the 'invitation' (for the whole family).

Come to Golden Hours and show your kids what it was like.

Or you could take a slightly different approach, so instead of the kids sharing the parents' memories, the parents help the children make some new memories:

Come to Golden Hours and give your kids their own special memories.

What are we offering? (And throw them a challenge.)

Thrills and spills in our old-fashioned fairground

(the helter-skelter's big enough for Dad, too), challenge Gran to crazy golf, climb Jungle Mountain, take a turn round the boating lake, explore the toyboxes in the Victorian Playroom. take a photo of your shadow in the Exploratorium, get messy in the Potter's Barn, take a ride on Dapple Grey, watch the Punch and Judy show ... and more!

There's so much to do, you won't fit it all in in a day.

OK, so there's lots to do. Now remind them of our other USP. (And if you can use rhyme or alliteration, it's a nice touch.)

Once you've paid, you can play all day. (Small additional fee for pony rides and pottery.)

Now the call to action. Make it easy for them.

Just five miles from Anytown centre, Golden Hours Theme Park offers you fun like it used to be. Join us this holiday, and get a half-term special of 50p off per person with this voucher.

We've broken one of the copywriting rules by having a very long sentence the middle, but read it out – it's a huge, exciting list of all the things you can do (and more because we've run out of breath).

To sum up, we've used 149 words to fit the space exactly. We've talked directly to our target audience, grabbed their interest, invited them to visit us, told them our main benefits and the USP, and given them a call to action with a special offer.

Flashes

Flashes are usually a bar across the corner of the advert or another 'shape' (such as a star, oval or square) in the ad. Use it for a very short message, such as:

- 'stop press' (new launch, new formula, extension to offer)
- a major benefit not already included in the headline
- prices/savings

If you overdo it, you'll make the advert look cheap and may undermine its objectives – though if you're advertising a discount shop using lots of flashes to show the savings on the RRP of your goods can be very effective.

Incentives

An incentive in an advert is used to persuade the customer to respond. It usually works as a sales aid. Common incentives include:

- reward for prompt action (e.g. 'reply within 7 days and you get an extra 5% off', or entry into a draw for a holiday, or an extra e.g. '13 bottles for the price of 12')
- a time limit (offer only available until a specific date, limited stocks/limited edition)
- a coupon giving money off

- a coupon giving a special addition (e.g. a free gift of some type)

For money-off or free gift coupons, make sure the retailer knows about it and has sufficient stock. You'll also need to mention that the offer is subject to availability, and whether there's a closing date.

Straplines/slogans

This is the last thing the audience sees and the first thing they remember, so it needs to be warm and leave a lasting impression. Slogans act as memory-joggers when your customer is at the point of sale – it may make the difference between choosing you or another supplier.

Slogans and straplines are also good for making promises: 'nothing lasts longer than Extracell' (from a battery manufacturer) or giving a call to action.

Keep the slogan short and memorable, so it's easy to remember – aim for three to five words (but definitely no more than seven).

Rhymes or alliteration can help – for example, 'Powerwax polishes perfectly' from a car polish manufacturer, or 'Shiny-sheen gets your floors clean' from a cleaning manufacturer.

Use 'you' if you can, so the audience identifies with it. 'It' is also a useful word to include – use it, choose it, live it, love it, it's the best, it's ...

The Golden Hours Theme Park example headline we used earlier could work just as well as a strapline – the repetition of the word 'old-fashioned' makes it easy to remember.

Reply coupons

A reply coupon is used in direct response adverts. It either invites the customer to send off for more details, or it asks the customer to buy something directly.

Keep the reply coupon as simple and short as you can, particularly for 'contact us for more information' type adverts. If it takes a lot of time or effort to fill it in, your audience won't bother. Tickboxes are good – they're easy for your customer to fill in and also for the response clerk to track.

If you want the customer to write in their name and address, give them enough space to fill in the coupon clearly and legibly (ask them to use capital letters) or your response team won't be able to read it and reply.

Put the coupon at the edge of the page so it's easy to cut out (you'll need to specify the position when you buy the space, or if you buy the space first tell the designer where the coupon needs to be).

You need to include:

- Name
- Contact details (address, phone, email)
- Cross-selling permission (i.e. permission to contact that person about other products/services your company can offer – ask them to tick the box if they *don't* want you to contact them, because it's easier to ignore a box than tick it)
- Keycode, so you can tell where the lead or sale came from – for example, if the advert appears in Anytown News on three separate occasions, code

the first one AN01, the second AN02 and the third AN03. Then you'll be able to see which advert performed best.

- Payment details (if cheque, who it's payable to; if credit card, type, number, name and expiry date)
- Where to send the coupon (a freepost address is a good idea – the customer only pays for the envelope and confidential details such as credit card numbers are safe in the envelope)

You also need to give your company's name and address, say how long it will take to process the order and when the customer can expect to receive the goods (e.g. 'allow 28 days for delivery').

Telephone response

Instead of asking the customer to fill in a coupon, you could ask them to ring a hotline instead. Your call to action is literally, 'call now', 'call our hotline', 'call our advice line' etc.

If you're using a local rate (0845) or free (0800) line, that's an extra benefit – for example, 'call us free' as a flash, or 'for just the price of a local call' in the body copy.

If you're using a premium rate number, you need to tell the customer how much the call costs per minute and how long the call is likely to last.

You also need to tell the customer when the lines are open – don't promote it as 24-hour if you're only going to answer it from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. – and include your name and contact details.

In summary

- Use the AIDA principle – attention, interest, desire, action
- Look at your advert from your audience's point of view
- Headlines grab attention and sell immediate benefits
- Types of headlines include: statement, question, command, comparison, challenge, invitation
- Body copy identifies the service/product or gives information to back up the headline
- Work in a logical flow, grouping benefits together in order of importance and addressing concerns before they arise
- Include details for collectables
- Use one idea per sentence, one sentence per idea, one paragraph per theme/group of ideas
- Use short words and vary the length of sentences.

Bullet points help put lots of information across quickly

- End positively – call to action, talk about another big benefit, summarise the copy, link with the headline
 - Flashes are for short messages
 - Give incentives to respond – reward prompt action, give a time limit, consider coupons for money off or free gift
 - Keep straplines short, memorable and about 'you' (the customer)
 - Keep reply coupons simple and short and at the edge of the page. Use tickboxes where possible and give enough space to write name and address legibly.
 - Use phone lines as a greater 'call to urgency'. Consider local-call or 0800 numbers and tell the customer when the lines are open
-

4

Brochures and flyers

Brochures and flyers are specific types of advertising which give customers more detailed information about your service and product. The big danger here is trying to cram in too much information at once – don't be afraid of using white space and illustrations.

Formats

Try to stick to a standard size, such as A4 (standard-size copying paper), one-third A4 or A5. Unusual sizes or shapes may look good, but they'll be expensive to produce. If you mail them to your customers you may need custom-made envelopes for them, which are expensive; and if they're displayed at a retail outlet, you may need a special leaflet dispenser.

The usual formats are:

- **single sheet** – printed 1 or 2 sides
- **fly** – 4 sides, i.e. a piece of paper twice the size of

the brochure folded in half, so a piece of A4 folded in half to form 4 sides would be called 'A5 fly'

- **roll-fold** – 6 sides, i.e. a piece of paper folded into thirds
- **gate-fold** – 8 sides, i.e. folded into half and then folded again
- **stitched** – for more than 8 sides, the paper will usually be folded in half and stapled (sometimes known as 'wire-stitched') through the middle. The number of pages will therefore be a multiple of four

Get the brief right!

The brief for a brochure or flyer is very similar to that of an advert, detailed on pages 16–19. The one difference is in section 2, i.e. the technical details of the brochure. Look at:

- **what you want to produce and its format** – size (e.g. A4, A5, one-third A4), how many pages, colour or black and white, type of illustrations (line drawings, photographs, charts)
- **how it will be distributed** – as an insert (national press, regional press, specialist/trade press, leaflet drop), posted direct to customers on a mailing list, picked up from a dispenser at a retail outlet
- **the purpose of the brochure** – is it to display your range of products/services, to act as a sales catalogue, or to encourage customers to ring you or visit?

- **what you want to achieve from the brochure**
– be precise, e.g. number of leads or number of sales (and be realistic!)
- **when it needs to be ready** – either the date you wish to start distributing it or, if you're using the brochure as an insert, when your chosen media needs to have the finished brochure
- **how you're going to measure its success** – i.e. are you going to pay for awareness tracking or use a keycode if it's a direct response brochure?

Example brochure brief

Anytown Stationery Company

1 The company

- **who we are** – Anytown Stationery Company
- **what we do** – sell office stationery
- **background detail** – been established for 3 years. Opening hours 8 a.m.–6 p.m. but can also take orders by fax or email out of hours
- **your company image** – value for money stationery – good quality, low cost

2 The brochure

- **format** – A5, 24 pages, colour, photographic illustrations
- **how it will be distributed** – posted direct to customers on a mailing list
- **purpose of the brochure** – to display range of products and act as a sales catalogue
- **aim to achieve from the brochure** – 50 new enquiries
- **when it needs to be ready** – 1 August
- **measurement** – keycode

3 The product/service

- **product/service description** – office stationery – paper (copier, fax, labels, envelopes); pens; pencils; diaries, calendars; folders and wallets; storage (boxes, filing cabinets); bulk photocopying and printing of business cards also available
- **product/service benefits** – direct delivery; 30 days' credit; phone, fax, email or postal orders accepted
- **unique selling proposition or USP** – same-day delivery within 10-mile radius if ordered before 10 a.m.

4 The target market

- Offices and small businesses within a 20-mile radius

5 Competitors

Stationery World – nationwide chain operating from Anycity – cheaper than us on some lines but don't offer same-day delivery

6 Special offers

None

7 Budget

£500 + mailing costs

8 Legal restrictions

credit arrangements

Example flyer brief

Mario's Carpet Cleaning Service

1 The company

- **who we are** – Mario's Carpet Cleaning Service
- **what we do** – clean carpets and upholstery
- **background detail** – been established for 1 year but worked for major cleaning service in London for 10 years before that
- **your company image** – personal service from an experienced carpet cleaner

2 The flyer

- A5, 1 side, mono, line illustrations
- **how it will be distributed** – delivered by hand in postcode area AA1 3BB to AA1 3BJ (large residential estate of 1000 homes on the edge of Anytown)
- **purpose of the brochure** – to bring in new customers
- **aim to achieve from the brochure** – 100 new enquiries
- **when it needs to be ready** – 15 January
- **measurement** – this is the only advertising I'm doing at the moment so I know where referrals have come from

3 The product/service

- **product/service description** – cleaning carpets and upholstery
- **product/service benefits** – personal service, insurance-backed in case of problems
- **unique selling proposition or USP** – only one in area to use Skweezy-clean environmentally friendly product

4 The target market

- Homes in Anytown area

5 Competitors

Main one is Carpets Plus – been going for longer than we have but doesn't use the same products

6 Special offers

Clean three rooms and we'll do your sofa free

7 Budget

£50 + mailing costs

8 Legal restrictions

None

Headlines

The type of headlines used in advertising (see pages 32–36) also work for brochures:

Statement

Simply what you're offering!

Example:

- Summer's here at Anytown Garden Centre
(From a garden centre offering a range of plants)

Question

To provoke a response – asking a question and putting a response in a subhead; asking why, when, where, who, what or how questions and giving the answer in your opening copy; or making a question from a sales statement

Examples:

- Stuck for stocking-fillers? Ellie's Gift Shop has the answers
(Brochure concentrating on small gifts from a shop)
- How to get the body you want
(Health club offering a range of exercise classes, spa, sauna and beauty treatments)

Command

Telling your audience to do something.

Example:

- Tell our bears to get stuffed!
(Specialist toy shop offering a made-to-measure service)

Comparison

As before, either 'before and after' using your product, or comparing your product with a competitor's, but you must have proof.

Challenge

As before, challenging your customers not to switch back to their old brand/service provider once they've tried your product/service; or offering money back.

Example:

- Want the best? Try ATS! Best for service, best for price, best for quality.
(Anytown Stationery Company, from the brief above)

Invitation

Again, best for launches and product demonstrations – the same kind of headlines as used for an advert but you can go into much more detail in the brochure.

Example:

- Discover heaven on earth
(From a sandwich delivery company offering a wide range of sandwiches, cakes and other snacks, one of which is 'heaven on earth')

There's also a special type of headline known as a **leading teaser**, which is often used on brochures. The front page says something to whet the reader's curiosity, and the inside explains it.

For example, a ten-pin bowling alley might have the front page saying nothing but 'knock them for ten' – and then the inside page would explain about the new facilities, opening times, special rates for parties etc.

Body copy

As with advertising copy, brochure copy needs to be simple and direct.

Give the information in order of importance and use a glossary if you need one.

Use the format

If it's a roll-fold or gate-fold, use the format to help you reveal the benefits of your product – this is commonly used by food retailers.

Subheads

Subheads are also good for drawing attention to specific benefits, especially if you're talking about a wide product range.

Questions and answers

If you're dealing with technical subjects, the 'question and answer' format is also useful.

Catalogues

If it's a catalogue, you'll use lots of illustrations and the copy will act as captions to the illustrations. Keep the captions very direct and benefits-led. Use all the senses and explain how the product looks, feels, smells, tastes and sounds as appropriate; then explain what that will do for the customer.

One way is to act as if you're going shopping with the customer and point things out to them – 'look at this', 'notice that' etc.

Make it easy for the customer. Use colour coding to differentiate between types of goods and make sure any item codes (used on an order form) are very clear.

Use shaded boxes and panels to highlight extra information.

Ordering processes

If you're asking customers to order from the catalogue, keep the ordering process as simple as possible. Tell the customer exactly how to order and include an order form for postal orders or as a reminder for telephone orders.

Use graphics such as a telephone next to your phone number or a computer next to your website (if customers can order over the internet).

Remember the Consumer Credit Act if you're allowing people to buy your goods or services on credit –

you need to show how much the customer pays over how long, and the total.

Illustrations

With a brochure, you have enough room to use all sorts of illustrations. Photographs, line drawings and charts can all help to illustrate product benefits, but remember to use a lot of white space – if it's too cluttered you'll lose the message.

Illustrations need to be:

- **Relevant** – the picture needs to fit what you're saying
- **Clear** – if you don't have enough space for the audience to understand the drawing without squinting to read tiny type, don't use it.
- **Easy to read** – be careful about graphs and line charts – your audience needs to be able to read them and distinguish between the different parts of the chart (e.g. use a blue line and a red line rather than a light blue and a medium blue line, or a dotted line and a full line rather than small dashes and dot-dash-dot). Graphs and charts should always have a legible key.

Example flyer

Mario's Carpet Cleaning Service

From the brief on pages 54–55, we know the flyer's going to be delivered as a door-drop. The aim is to increase the number of customers; and we assume Mario's already done his homework in targeting this particular housing estate.

First, we need a headline. We're looking at a personal service from the only company in the area offering an environmentally friendly cleaning product. It may sound cheesy (then again, a lot of advertising does!) but ...

Want a new carpet that doesn't cost the earth?

Now we need the explanation.

Then call Mario's Carpet Cleaning Service.

We can make your carpet as clean as new. It won't cost you a fortune – and it won't cost the earth, either.

Because we use Skwecky-clean, a new type of cleaning product that's friendly to the environment as well as your carpet. We're the only carpet cleaners in Anytownshire to use this fabulous new product, developed by scientists in the United States.

Note that makes us exclusive – 'the only' ones in the area to use a 'fabulous new' product. How good is it? Well, it has credentials: 'developed by scientists in the

United States'. Mario might also like to include a testimonial here, if he has one.

Now give some ideas about prices.

Cleaning an average-sized living room carpet costs from just £25.

Now some bullet points to tell the customer about other benefits.

- *Personal service with 10 years' experience*
- *Insurance-backed guarantee*
- *Carpets dry to walk on within two hours*
- *Sofas and upholstery cleaned, too*

Call to action with contact details:

Call us now for a free, no-obligation quote on 01000 123456 or mobile 07777 123456.

And just in case they're wavering ... it's special offer time! A flash on the corner or across the bottom:

SPECIAL OFFER: book us to clean three carpets in November and we'll clean your sofa free!

In summary

- Brochures and flyers give customers more detailed information but don't cram in too much at once
 - Standard sizes are cheaper to produce and distribute
 - Remember its purpose
 - Headlines include statement, questions, commands, comparison, challenge, invitation and teaser
 - Body copy needs to be simple and direct, in order of importance
 - For catalogues, keep the captions direct and benefits-led – what will it do for the customer?
 - Make it easy for the customer to find their way round the information and order
 - Keep illustrations clear, not cluttered, and use a clear key for graphs and charts; make sure colours and types of line are contrasting to help the reader understand the charts or graphs
-

5

Corporate brochures

Corporate brochures are often mailed as part of the end-of-year financial statements. They're used to encourage investors – current, past and potential – and also to motivate staff and give them a sense of pride in being part of such a wonderful company.

As well as being mailed, corporate brochures are often left in reception areas (again, to encourage potential investors or employees).

They're often used for service organisations to highlight what the organisation can offer and why the consumer or business should choose it.

Get the brief right

The brief is similar to that for an advert or other brochure, though the structure of the contents is slightly different.

1 The company

- **who you are** – company name
- **what you do** – keep it general, e.g. sells cosmetics
- **background detail** – your position in the marketplace
- **your company image** – caring, serious, casual, friendly

2 The brochure format

- **what you want to produce and its format** – size (e.g. A4, A5, one-third A4), how many pages, colour or black and white, type of illustrations (line drawings, photographs, charts)
- **how it will be distributed** – mailing or picked up from a dispenser at a retail outlet
- **the purpose of the brochure** – encourage investors, encourage staff, encourage future customers
- **what you want to achieve from the brochure**
- **when it needs to be ready** – the date you wish to start distributing it
- **how you're going to measure its success**

3 Your target market

- **Consumers:** who they are, where they live, age, sex, socio-economic grouping what attracts them, (price, service, quality), lifestyle and interests
- **Business sector:** size of business, where they are, who makes the buying decisions

4 Brochure structure

- introduction (about the company, background and strengths); recent events; future plans; audited accounts (if appropriate); contact points

5 Your budget

Example brief

Anytown Nursery School

1 The company

- **who we are** – Anytown Nursery School
- **what we do** – private nursery education for 2–5-year-olds
- **background detail** – private nursery; other providers in the area are a playgroup in Anytown and Anyvillage
- **our company image** – caring, friendly, professional

2 The brochure format

- **format** – A4, 12 pages, colour
- **how it will be distributed** – mailed to parents on request (phone) or picked up by parents visiting the school
- **purpose of the brochure** – encourage future customers; motivate staff
- **aim to achieve from the brochure** – increase number of children at the school by 10 per cent
- **when it needs to be ready** – 1 July
- **measurement** – feedback from parents and staff

3 Target market

- Parents in Anytown and surrounding villages with children aged 2–5 year. The parents are likely to be working and unable to fit in with shorter playgroup sessions

4 The brochure structure

- **introduction** – about the nursery: established five years, purpose-built, uses mix of formal activities and free play, caters for full-time and part-time children
- **activities available** – illustrated if possible – craft, story time, toys and games, imaginative play, outdoor play, computer, water play, cookery, school TV sessions
- **staff** – ratio of staff to children (1:4), all teachers are qualified and approved by Social Services, OFSTED performance

- **recent events** – extended building; new wild-flower garden
- **future plans** – special music sessions start next term; introducing special PE session
- **food, drink, snacks** – sample menus, who to contact if your child has special dietary needs, packed lunches
- **regulations** – holidays, sickness, clothing, collecting your child
- **audited accounts** – not applicable
- **admission procedures** – what to do and when
- **contact points** – Manager, Deputy Manager

5 Budget

£500

The brochure structure

Depending on the type of company, the corporate brochure is either formal or personal. In both cases, try to keep the language simple and steer clear of jargon.

Introduction

This may be ‘written’ by the chair or managing director of the company, in which case you’ll need a photograph and a signature.

If it’s a formal business, choose a head-and-shoulders shot.

If it's a more personal business (e.g. Anytown Nursery School), you might choose a more candid shot to illustrate the caring nature of the company.

For signatures, always use black ink (preferably fountain pen rather than biro) as it's easier for the printer to scan in.

The introduction will cover:

- what the company does
- how long it's been established
- company strengths

Recent events

This is a look back at the previous year. What has your company achieved? Can you illustrate the successes? 'Case studies' of staff can be important here – someone who has obtained a particularly important qualification, for example. (It need not be related to the business, if you can use it as an example of how your company supports its staff in working within the community.)

Future plans

These should be detailed enough to persuade investors that your company's worth investing in – but not so detailed that your competitors can steal a march!

Audited accounts

Include if appropriate

Contact points

Phone, fax and address, plus web site if you have one.

Illustrations

Illustrations can help to emphasise points within the brochure. These include photographs, line drawings and charts/graphs.

As with a brochure, they need to be relevant, clear and easy to read – use lots of white space and make sure any charts have a legible key.

Example introduction

Anytown Nursery School

From the brief on pages 67–69, we know that it's aimed at parents who might want their child to attend the nursery in the next year or so. The tone needs to be professional yet caring, with the emphasis on the importance of people.

It needs therefore to start off by welcoming the parents and child, giving a warm and friendly tone.

Welcome to Anytown Nursery School.

Now they need to know about the school – that it's been established for five years and what its aims are.

We aim to offer your child a happy and secure pre-school experience. For the past five years, we've worked with children aged 2 to 5 on a full or part-time basis.

'Worked with' hints that teamwork is involved. What about the children?

The ages between 2 and 5 are crucial for your child – it's when he's most receptive to learning new skills. But he can only do this when he's happy and relaxed with his surroundings.

So it's important for the child to be happy as well as learn. What about the surroundings?

The school is purpose-built and also has equipment and facilities for children with special needs.

We offer a wide range of activities and experiences to help your child develop to the best of his ability. There's a mixture of free play and formal educational activities – which we introduce only when we feel he's ready for more structured learning. We encourage him to do things for himself and help others, and we talk to him while he plays, reinforcing what he's learning.

Is anything else important?

But learning is only part of life at Anytown Nursery School. We hope your child will enjoy his time here, make friends, become more confident and

have lots of fun too.

Signature

Susan Reilly, B. Ed. (Hons.)

Nursery Manager

A good illustration here would be the nursery manager doing some kind of activity with a child, to give the feel of the personal touch.

In summary

- Corporate brochures are used to give more details about your company and often include end-of-year accounts
 - Standard sizes are cheaper to produce and distribute
 - Remember its purpose
 - The contents will include an introduction about the company, its background and strengths (signed by a company director or chair); recent events; future plans; audited accounts (if appropriate) and contact points
 - Keep illustrations clear, not cluttered, and use a key for graphs
-

6

Advertorials

An advertorial is a special type of display ad, also known as an 'advertisement feature'. It's designed to look like the editorial (or a feature article) in the media you're using, but you've paid for it.

You'll pay a premium on top of the usual advertising rate for an advertorial, and there will always be a line at the top of the advert saying 'advertisement feature' so the reader knows it's an advert.

Get the brief right

The brief for an advertorial is almost exactly the same as that for an ordinary advert (see the checklist on pages 16–19), with the addition of information about the editorial style of the media you're using – the typeface, the type of words they use, sentence and paragraph length etc. Reading a few recent back copies of the newspaper or magazine will help you craft the features accordingly.

Headlines

You need to follow the style of the media you're using. For example, if you're placing an advertorial in upmarket media, you're more likely to talk about service and quality in the headline; if you're placing one in a tabloid-style media, you're more likely to have a heading saying, 'Joe's quids in!'

As with an advert, the headline is there to grab attention. It tells the audience about the story (i.e. a main product/service benefit) and it will be a statement, a question, a command, an invitation or challenge.

Body copy

As with the headline, the body copy needs to follow the style of the media you're using. Look at your chosen media and note whether it uses long or short sentences or paragraphs, the type of words it uses and the tone. Try comparing the approach of a glossy women's monthly magazine with that of a cheap-and-cheerful weekly magazine – you'll find the latter's more 'chatty' and informal.

You can use the feature in different media, but you'll need to rewrite it accordingly. Even if you run the advertorial in similar magazines (e.g. trade or specialist publications), you'll need to have it set in the typeface and style of the magazine – and remember that they might have different sizes or production criteria.

Constructing the feature

Many features pages have a lead story, a minor story, and a box containing short points, so your advertorial could feature:

- a case study on a major product/service benefit (your lead story)
- a case study on a second product/service benefit (minor story); and
- a box containing bite-size pieces of information about other product or service benefits, in order of importance. This could be '5 things you didn't know about Widgets' (make them quirky and interesting), or a mock horoscope, or a mini-quiz, depending on the style of the media you're using
- illustrations to suit your story

First paragraphs

Your first paragraph of the body copy should give information to back up the headline. So 'Joe's quids in' will tell you that 45-year-old Joe Bloggs saved enough money on his car insurance to buy a ticket for himself and his son to a cup match. (And yes, the accompanying picture will have him in a football outfit or holding a winner's cup and a wad of money. The story's price-led.)

For quality service, you might use the headline 'We got her to the church on time' – bride's mother flies in, is stuck at the airport because Uncle Bob's car broke down on the way, but your company (who supplied the wedding cars) picked her up from the airport and got the wedding back on track.

Response mechanism

You also need to tell customers how they can get your product/service – phone line, coupon response etc.

Case studies/testimonials

Testimonials are where customers talk about your product or service and how well it met their expectations – for example, someone who booked a special holiday through you and the little extra touches they weren't expecting.

The person giving the testimonial is sometimes referred to as a 'case study'. Many magazines use case studies in features to highlight the points made, so using a customer testimonial in your advertorial can help it seem more like a feature.

A good case study can highlight your product/service benefit and make your potential customers identify with him/her.

Legal matters

Remember that the code of advertising practice says that any testimonial must refer to the product you're advertising. If you change the product, the testimonial is no longer valid and you'll need to talk to a new case study. The testimonial must also be truthful and you must be able to substantiate your case study's opinion.

You need the case study's written permission before you use the testimonial. You also need signed and dated proof, including a contact address, for any testimonial you use. Buying your case study a small gift (such as flowers, wine or a gift voucher) to thank them for their time is acceptable, but giving them cash can be construed as paying someone to say something nice about your product.

If you refer to tests, trials, professional endorsements,

research facilities or professional journals, they must have been directly supervised by an appropriately qualified person and you must have their written permission before you can use them.

Choosing a case study

You're looking for a customer who:

- has been pleased with your product or service (particularly if their story highlights a benefit such as fast service, wide product range, flexibility of service, saving money etc)
- fits your average customer profile (i.e. the sort of customers you want to attract)
- fits the readership profile for the media you're using (for example, if you're advertising in a magazine aimed at over-30s, a teenage case study isn't appropriate and vice versa)

It's a good idea to have a number of case studies available – if you only have one or two and they change their mind about appearing in the media, your advertorial can't run.

Good sources of case studies include:

- People who write complimentary letters or tell your staff personally how pleased they are with your product or service
- Your own customer database – this depends on the benefits you want to highlight. For example, if you want to show how quickly you respond to customer

needs, choose someone for whom you've sorted out a problem quickly; to show your flexibility and wide product range, choose someone who's ordered something unusual for a special occasion.

- Your staff – ask them to keep a note of anyone who fits your case study profile and use it as part of an employee reward scheme, i.e. a small gift for every case study you can use

Writing up the case study

When you talk to your prospective case study, ask if they would be prepared to help with your advertising. Explain where the adverts will appear and that you will need a photo of them (highlighting the particular product/service benefit in their story).

If they're prepared to go ahead, interview them about the story. The information you'll need for your story (even though you might not use all of it) includes:

- Their name
- Where they live (don't be too specific – London or Kent is fine, street or village name isn't)
- Age
- Occupation
- Why they bought your product rather than a competitor's (price, service, quality?)
- What actually happened (you fixed their car so they could go to a wedding in time, you saved them a fortune on their insurance, you're the financial

adviser who helped the young couple when the mortgage they sorted out on their own fell through at the last minute and they risked losing their dream house)

- Would they recommend you to friends/family?

When you've written up the story, ask them to sign a declaration saying that it's a true and accurate story, and they have your permission to use it (and a photo of them – taken by a professional photographer) as part of your advertising.

In summary

- Advertorials or 'advertisement features' are advertising designed to look like editorial
- Write yourself a brief about: the company (who you are, what you do, background detail); the advert (format, media, what you want it to achieve, when it appears, how long it will run for, measurement); product/service (description, benefits, USP); target market (consumer, business); competitors; special offers; your budget; legal restrictions; which case studies you're using, which short pieces of information you're using
- Headlines need to follow the style of the media you're using
- With body copy, follow the style of the media you're using and craft the page to look like editorial, using a main story (lead case story), minor

story (second case story or product benefit) and some shorter pieces of information.

- A good case study can highlight your product/service benefit and make your potential customers identify with him/her.
 - Testimonials must refer to the product you're advertising, be truthful, be substantiated and have written permission to use them.
 - Choose the case study to illustrate particular benefits and fit both your average customer profile and the readership profile of your chosen magazine.
 - Have a bank of case studies available – from personal compliments, your customer database and your staff
 - When you talk to a prospective case study, you need their name, age, occupation, where they live, why they bought your product rather than a competitor's, what actually happened and why they'd recommend you
-

7

Direct mail

Mailshots are targeted messages to specific audiences. They can be anything from a simple letter to a more complex brochure, and can also include incentives.

More in control

With direct mail you have more control over:

- **Targeting** – it's directly to a specific audience
- **Personalising** – you know exactly who you're talking to
- **Timing** – you can deliver your message on a specific day or week, and promote revised prices quickly
- **Explanation** – you can enclose brochures and leaflets

- **Confidentiality** – for sensitive messages
- **Sales leads** – you can follow up by phone or post; and you can get even more leads by a ‘member get member’ or recommend a friend scheme (i.e. your potential customer recommends your product/service to someone else, and if the friend takes up the offer the customer and the friend will both get a free gift)
- **Stimulating customer interest** in future offers – by newsletters giving information about company developments

Get the brief right!

As with our previous forms of advertising, you need a brief. The difference here is in the format.

- **format** – size of paper and envelope (or you may choose to use a postcard), colour or black and white, illustrations etc.
- **the media you want to use** – whether it’s a bought list or from your own database (and therefore how you’re going to address the recipient)
- **what you want to achieve from the mailshot** – be precise, e.g. 150 leads in 6 weeks, 10 per cent increase in sales over the quarter (and be realistic!)
- **when it needs to go out** – and when the mailing house needs to have the finished mailshot packs
- **how long it will run for** – date of last mailing

- **how you're going to measure the mailshot response** – e.g. keycodes

The envelope

This is what your potential customer sees first. It's competing with the rest of his mail – personal letters, bills, and other direct mailshots. So it needs to grab his interest and make him want to open the envelope. Ways of doing this include:

- **Enticing copy** – including 'free', 'bargain' or similar, or teaser lines (a question – to get the answer open the envelope)
- Using **transparent windows** on the envelope to show part of the enclosures

Remember to use the back of the envelope, too – you can give further details about the product benefits or highlight an incentive.

The letter

Basics

Write the letter as if you're writing to someone you know well. Make it sincere and credible. If it helps you write, imagine that you're talking to a particular person and write to that person.

The letter must be written on good quality paper and in an easy-to-read typeface. If it feels cheap it implies that your company cuts corners (remember there's a difference between value for money and cheapness); and if it's hard to read the potential customer won't bother trying.

Entry points

If you have a long message, it's a good idea to have several 'points of entry' – so if your reader skim-reads your message, the points of entry can draw him back in.

Good ways of doing this include:

- **headlines** – making an important point
- **subheads** – giving him a clue as to what's in the next paragraph
- **captions** – particularly useful for illustrations
- **bullet points** – a quick way of getting lots of information into a small space – keep them short and punchy and don't make them full sentences!
- **emphasised words** – used within the body text; make them relevant to your reader
- **box copy** – good for calls to action (such as how to respond to the offer) or listing important benefits

Structure

Structure the letter as follows:

- **personal salutation** – if possible, write to your prospect by name ('Dear Mr Brown') and check you've spelled it correctly (are you sure it's not 'Mr Browne'?) If you don't know his name, use his job title ('Dear Director'), or finally his category ('Dear plumber', 'Dear accountant' etc.)

- **strong headline** – this is your main proposition. Involve the customer or get him to act
- **opening paragraph** – this should grab the reader's attention and show the relevance of your message. Make sure you use 'you' to involve him right from the start
- **body copy** – go through what you're offering.
 - Use short paragraphs and put them in a logical order
 - End a paragraph with a question and answer it in the next, or introduce a new idea at the end of each paragraph to keep them linked and keep your customer reading
 - Stress the benefits, explain what the product or service is and what it can do for the reader
 - Save the best benefit until last as a closing shot
- give an **incentive for a quick reply** – money off, extra benefits, free gift, extended guarantee
- make the **reply device** simple – a tick box, if possible. You already know the customer's name and address so don't ask him to fill it in again. Make it a 'yes' or 'no' if you want him to take up one offer; or if he has a choice of things (such as quantity or colour), use tick boxes if you can, and make sure there's enough room to write in extra details (including credit card details – or tell him who the cheque is payable to)
- if you're using a coupon, print a keycode on it (or if you want him to call a telephone response team tell him to 'quote reference AB1') so you can track where the sale comes from). Make sure the keycode differs from any keycodes used in other advertising promotions.

- remember to include a tick box for cross-selling permission – ask the customer to tick it if he *doesn't* want you to contact him with more information/further offers
- enclose an **envelope** for returning the coupon – freepost is good because the customer doesn't have to pay
- if it's direct response (i.e. the customer buys off the page), remember to give your company's name and address, say how long it will take to process the order and when the customer can expect to receive the goods (e.g. 'allow 28 days for delivery').
- **close** with yours sincerely, either signed personally or printed in blue ink
- **PS** – this reinforces your argument (another benefit, reminder of a key point or special offer) – keep it short
- and you can add a **PPS** too
- use the information given by the customer for generating future sales or for cross selling purposes, notifying them of future products and offers

Incentives

Just two things to remember, here:

- It must tie in with your offer (e.g. if you're offering a book about herbs, a packet of parsley seed is good – you already know your customers are interested in herbs)

- It must be secure in the envelope, either in its own right or 'glued' to one spot on the letter. (Use low-tack glue – your printer should be able to sort this out for you.)

Incentives to avoid

Avoid incentives that are:

- squashable (hints that you haven't thought it through and your company is therefore careless)
- perishable (what happens if your prospect's on holiday? He'll return to something mouldy and revolting)
- meltable (revolting and careless)
- bulky (won't go through the letterbox easily, which means either it'll be damaged or your customer will have to pick it up from the post office)
- heavy (will increase your postage costs too much)

Example mailshot

Anytown Mobile Phones

The aim of the mailshot is to sell hands-free mobile phone adaptors to customers who've bought a mobile phone from Anytown Mobile Phones in the last year.

So ...

Envelope

Never miss another call again ...

The aim is to intrigue the audience.

Letter

Dear Mrs Brown

That's the personal salutation.

Just when you're in the middle of a traffic queue, your mobile rings ...

Headline (and emphasise it in bold or italics). Mrs Brown is nodding – yes, it's happened to her

Well, now you don't have to miss that call.

The first line of the copy gives the benefit and, most importantly, uses 'you' to involve her. But how are you going to fulfil that promise? She'll have to read on to find out!

Our hands-free car adaptor kit is all you need. And because you bought your phone from us last June, you can take advantage of our special offer – a saving of 50% on the manufacturer's list price.

Reminding her that she bought the phone from you in the first place (so she knows you're a reputable supplier) and giving the offer of a big saving.

We'll fit it while you wait.

Overcomes one potential objection.

And if you call us in the next ten days we'll give you a free mobile phone cover!

Incentive for a quick reply.

Simply call us today on 01000 123456, quoting reference HFO1, and we'll do the rest.

Makes everything easy for her (and for you, when it comes to tracking response).

Yours sincerely

James Green

Customer Services Manager

Personally signed close.

In summary

- Mailshots are targeted messages to specific audiences.
 - The envelope needs to grab interest with enticing copy, flashes or transparent windows – and remember to use the back too!
 - The letter must be sincere and credible. Break up long copy with headlines, subheads, bullet points and the like.
 - A good structure to use is a personal salutation, with a strong headline (your proposition), an opening paragraph to grab attention and show relevance, benefits in a logical order (save the best until last), incentive for a quick reply, yours sincerely, PS (reinforcement), PPS
 - Incentives need to tie in to the copy, be secure – but if it's bulky, heavy, melts, can be squashed or is perishable, forget it
-

8

Accountability

Measuring the success of your campaign

Whenever you run a campaign, you need to know how it performed. Your brief should tell you the aim of the advert – to help you maintain your current market share, to give you a percentage increase in sales, to bring in a certain amount of enquiries or sales.

Did your advert achieve its aims? If not, where did you go wrong?

The two main measures are cost per enquiry (or lead) and cost per sale.

Cost per enquiry

This is the total cost of your advert (design, photography, print, postage, advertising space or list rent) divided by the number of enquiries received.

For ease of measuring – if your advert cost £1,000 and you had 1000 enquiries, that's £1 per enquiry; if you had only 500 enquiries, that's £2 per enquiry.

Cost per sale

This is the total cost of your advert (design, photography, print, postage, advertising space or list rent) divided by number of actual sales.

Again, for ease of measuring – if your advert cost £1,000 and you made 100 sales, that's £10 per sale. If you made 200 sales, that's £5 per sale.

Need for both measures

You need both measures to evaluate your campaign; for example, you may receive 1000 enquiries but only make 3 sales, so there's obviously a problem in converting enquiries to sales – either there's a problem with the product/service, or maybe in the way you followed up the enquiry. (Or maybe the audience liked your incentive, if you offered a free gift per enquiry, but didn't like your product!)

Once you have your measures, you can look at the campaign as a whole.

Evaluation between media

If you ran the same adverts in different media, you can see at a glance how they performed. For example, if you ran the same advert (with different keycodes!) in Anytown News, Anytown Evening Press and Anytown Weekly Press, you can see:

- Which provided the best cost per enquiry
- Which provided the best cost per sale

You may find that one media provides more leads but the conversion rate into sales is poor because they're not quite your target market. Or another may bring in fewer leads (so it's an expensive cost per lead) but the conversion rate is much higher because the people who reply are your precise target market.

From this you'll be able to work out which media suits you best for future campaigns.

Evaluation between adverts

If you ran different adverts in the same media (for example, using different incentives in a direct response ad) you'll be able to evaluate the differences between the adverts – if it attracted lots of customers but not the right sort (good cost per enquiry but poor cost per sale), or if it attracted fewer customers but a higher percentage were converted into sales (high cost per enquiry but good cost per sale).

If your aim was to build a database for cross-selling various products, you might need a very low cost per enquiry but be less concerned about the cost per sale – for now!

Or you may be affected by seasonality – if you run the same advert at different times of year, you can see how effective it is at different times. You may find that you need to bring out different benefits or buying stimuli at different times of year.

When things go wrong

Sometimes, you're unlucky and your advert just bombs – in other words, the response is poor.

The first thing to look at is the brief. Did you get it right? If you know who you want to talk to, what you want to say to them and where you want to say it, there shouldn't be a problem.

If the brief's right and the advert didn't work, look at the advert.

Did it meet the brief?

Be honest!

If not, where did it fall short? That's what you need to work on next time. Look at whether your advert is attention-grabbing, believable and persuasive.

Did you choose the right publication?

If the brief was right and the advert met the brief, could the problem lie with the publication?

Bear in mind:

- whether it's daily, weekly, or monthly (and how time-sensitive your message is)
- whether it's 'free' or paid for (complimentary media often has poorer response rates)
- the circulation (and whether it's ABC or VFD certified – for 'paid-for' media, it means the Audit Bureau of Circulations has made an independent audit of the circulation figures and therefore

they're correct, or for free media the audit is made by Verified Free Distribution)

- cost per thousand circulation – if you know the circulation figures and the advertising rates, you can see how much it costs to reach 1,000 circulation and this can help you see which is the better deal
- whether it's targeted at the audience you want to reach (socio-economically as well as in their interests)
- the number of readers per copy

If you ran the same advert in the same publication, there could be a problem with timing – simply that your message was seasonal – or it could be the position of your advert in the publication. If you were opposite the crossword and did well, remember that for the future; if you were opposite another advert, yours might simply have been missed as the reader flicked through.

In summary

- Whenever you run a campaign, check how it performed against the brief
 - Look at cost per enquiry (or lead) and cost per sale – compare the two to check if there's a problem in converting enquiries to sales
 - Check performance between media to work out which publications suit you best for future campaigns
 - Check performance between adverts, especially if you used different incentives
 - Are you affected by seasonality?
 - If it performed badly, did you get the brief right and did the advert conform to it? Where did it fall short? Did you choose the right publications?
-

Glossary

advertorial – an advert designed to look like an article in the magazine or paper in which it appears

artwork – the finished advert (picture and copy together)

classified ad – also known as a ‘small ad’, usually found in the back of a newspaper under a classification heading such as sport, leisure, gardening

display ad – advert in the general pages of a magazine or newspaper – measured by the column centimetre

distress space – space the publication needs to fill at short notice

DPS – double-page spread

fly – piece of paper folded in half to give four sides for a brochure

gate-fold – piece of paper folded to give 8 sides

keycode – a code you ask a customer to quote (or a

code on a coupon) that helps you track the response to that media

landscape – rectangular shape, wide and shallow

lead time – the length of time between delivering your artwork and film/bromide to the publisher and the advert actually appearing

line illustrations – simple drawings using only lines

mono – black and white

off-the-page – direct response ad

portrait – rectangular shape, narrow and long

rate card – the cost of advertising in a particular magazine, newspaper or directory

roll-fold - piece of paper folded into 3 to give 6 pages

single column centimetre (scc) – measure used for display ads

stitched – a brochure that's stapled through the middle (i.e. 8 pages plus)

typesetting – process of putting your copy into the correct typeface and size for the ad

USP – unique selling proposition, i.e. what you offer that your competitors don't

visual – rough drawing of how your advert will look

wire-stitched – another term for 'stitched' (see above)

Useful addresses

Advertising Standards Authority
2 Torrington Place
London WC1E 7HW
telephone: 020 7580 5555
web site: www.asa.org.uk

The Direct Marketing Association (UK) Ltd
Haymarket House
1 Oxendon Street
London SW1Y 4EE
telephone: 020 7321 2525
web site: www.dma.org.uk

**Other Easy Step by Step Guides
in the series include:**

*Telemarketing, Cold Calling & Appointment Making
Marketing*

Successful Selling

Stress & Time Management

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Recruiting the Right Staff

Better Budgeting for your Business

Building a Positive Media Profile

All the above guides are available direct from:

Rowmark Limited
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Broadmarsh Business & Innovation Centre
Harts Farm Way
Havant
Hampshire PO9 1HS

Telephone: 023 9244 9665

Fax: 023 9244 9601

Email: enquiries@rowmark.co.uk

Or via our web site www.rowmark.co.uk