



## How to write a chart-topping sales letter

### **STOP! Before you do anything ...**

Know your target market. Who are they? Draw up a profile. This is critical, not just to the content of the letter, but to its success! Then consider how the following techniques could work in your letter ...

### **Start me up!**

Hook the reader with a great headline e.g. a question, an outrageous statement, a promise of great benefits, etc. You could start your headline with 'How to...' or 'Discover how to...'. Numbers can also work well in heading and subheadings. The headline is CRITICAL! It must make the reader 'thirsty' enough to read on.

Address the letter to a named person and personalise it as much as possible.

Consider forms of address and sign-off that are appropriate. Consider the whole 'package', too – envelope, enclosures, response mechanism, colour, paper, texture, layout, font, etc.

Get into the benefits early on. Introduce the actual features of your products and services later on. Focus on the critical issues. Features add detail, but it's the benefits that sell. Make every word count.

Outline the 'pain'. What is the essence of the problem you can overcome for the reader? Strike at the heart.

Consider bullet points, spacing, and use of italic, bold and underline options. (But don't overdo it! Avoid too much italic – it's harder to read.)

### **Keep on movin'!**

Keep prompting the reader to continue reading, by highlighting the payoff for them. Consider using enticing subheadings to capture the most important benefits. Speak directly to the reader.

Imagine the reader is scanning the letter, as opposed to reading it word for word. Will they pick up enough of the message through the headlines, subheadings, bullet points and bold font?

Draw the reader into the process step by step. Take the reader on a journey in their mind, so they can imagine using your product or service.

Use brief anecdotes, mini case studies and real-world examples, with statistics if possible, as proof points.

Use client testimonials and other external endorsements to support your claims with proof points.

Show how easy life is when you are the supplier! Outline how you're different – but talk about the reader – not yourself. Explain the 'how's and 'why's, i.e. how do you really help, and why should they choose you.

Highlight the bleak alternative (i.e. the consequences of not using your services) and reflect on how life was before your services were available. Pretty grim, no doubt...!

Show how the results you promise are feasible – right here, right now.

Instill confidence, trust and credibility in your expertise and support it with a guarantee of your service.

Show you understand the reader's position by acknowledging their (often subconscious or at least unarticulated) concerns and doubts.

Speak from the heart – as if talking to someone next to you. Try not to wrap up the words in formality.

Use powerful words like 'results', 'you', 'success', 'opportunity', 'guarantee', 'discover', 'learn', 'offer', 'proven', 'now' etc.

Use the words 'you' and 'your' a lot. Minimise the use of 'I', 'we' and 'our'.

### **Come back and finish what you started!**

Reinforce how you represent extraordinary value. Consider making this even stronger with a date-limited special offer or other incentive. Show your reader that he/she has no time to lose.

At the end, remind readers again of the 'pain' and 'payoff', and why your services represent the answer to the problem. Vie for position amongst the cluster of priorities in the reader's mind.

Add a 'P.S.' (hand-written is good!) to reinforce the most important benefit or offer, to reiterate the headline, to add an important piece of information or to consolidate the recipient's confidence in you – depending on what's most important. Most people will read a P.S.

Make the reader an offer and enclose an order form, reply/feedback slip or other response tool, as appropriate. Encourage communication. Make the offer expiry date short.

Consider how your envelope will look and whether it would benefit from overprinting i.e. having a headline or message printed on the outside.

It's the final countdown:

Double check: show benefits, catch interest, develop the key idea, create trust and show honesty, offer something special, reinforce benefits, create urgency, enthuse and follow up.

Test the letter with different headlines and measure the response with each one.

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