

FIVE GOLDEN RULES TO GET THE MOST FROM YOUR COPY

If a job's worth doing, it's worth doing well. This is never truer than creating the copy for promotional material such as brochures, websites and newsletters. Copy is simply the words or the text your target audience will read. Too often, the copywriting is secondary to the design and not enough thought goes into the process. You can spend a fortune on an innovative design but it's money down the drain if the copy isn't right.

While there are specific pointers to remember for writing different kinds of promotional material, there are five golden rules which apply to all. Follow these rules and you can be sure that your copywriting budget is well spent.

1. KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Before deciding on the content of any promotional material, it's vital that you know your target audience. For example, a house-builder's website will be written very differently if it is aimed at consumers rather than the construction industry. As a business, you know who your customers are. Keep this in mind and your copy will always be focused and relevant to their needs.

2. IDENTIFY WHAT YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE

There should always be a specific reason for creating new promotional material. Do you want to raise awareness of a new product? Are you aiming to increase sales? Do you want to generate more leads? Once you've identified what you want to achieve from the copy, remember to build in relevant calls to action such as a dedicated telephone number or encouraging customers to sign up for a newsletter or complete a questionnaire.

3. MAKE EVERY WORD COUNT

The copy in your promotional material is a golden opportunity to really 'sell' your company. Use the copy to emphasise how you can help your customers and fulfil their needs. When faced with a blank page, it's tempting to try to fill it but don't waffle or add words simply to pad out the text. Make every word meaningful and relevant. In this case, less really is more.

4. USE PLAIN ENGLISH

Depending on your target audience, avoid using jargon, technical language or meaningless 'marketing speak' in the copy. Remember who your target audience is. For general consumers, plain English is always best. If your audience is more technically minded, you could probably get away with using more technical language.

5. KEEP TO A CORPORATE STYLE

As a business, it's likely you will already have a corporate style or identity. It's important that new promotional material matches this style. For example, the corporate style of a firm of solicitors will have a very different tone to that of a party planning company. Always keep your corporate style in mind when writing new copy.