

How Good Headline Can Build Your Business

By Jay Abraham

The headline is unquestionably the most important element in most advertising.

Likewise-it is also the most singularly important element of any selling message "live or recorded, in person or by phone, audio or video" your company ever uses.

It is the opening sentence or paragraph you use in any sales letter or written communication you ever send out to customers, prospects, suppliers, or staff. It's the first words you or your sales people (including in-store clerks, order department or telephone marketers) utter, when they engage anyone in a sales presentation or one-on-one discussion.

Likewise, the "headline," or its "equivalent," is the first phrases you begin your conversation with when a customer or prospect comes in or calls in. It is also the first paragraph you state when recording a commercial or when meeting people at your trade show booth display.

The purpose of a headline is to grab your prospect's ATTENTION. When I say your prospect, I mean that your headline should zero in on precisely whom you want to reach your target market. For example, if you want to reach homeowners, put the word "homeowners" in the headline.

The headline should serve as an ad for your ad. It should tell the reader immediately and clearly the essence of what you're trying to say in the body copy. The headline should give the reader a Big Benefit or Big Promise. So, create a headline that tells the right people precisely the benefit you're offering them.

When you write or decide upon your headline-or it's opening equivalent-you have spent at least 80 cents out of your dollar. Stated differently, 80% of your outcome-four fifths of your result... all but 20% of the success of your selling effort is effected positively or negatively by how and what you communicate in the beginning. A change of headline can make a 20 times improvement in response or acceptance by your customer or prospect of your proposition. Every headline or opening statement should appeal to the prospect's or reader's or listener's self-interest. It should promise him or her a desirable, powerful and appealing benefit.

If possible, try to inject "news" value or "educational" value into the headline also.

How Many Words Should a Headline Contain?

You may have read about the desirability of having no more than a certain number of words in your headlines. Yet, I want to point out here that many of the headlines quoted here are, by ordinary standards, quite long. Yet, despite their length, they were successful.

Obviously, it is not wise to make a headline any lengthier than its primary function actually requires. However, you should not worry if your headlines are longer than usual-provided the headline's high spots of interest are physically well broken up and clearly displayed-and provided the personal advantages promised to the reader are presented so positively that it is almost as though his own name appeared in the headline.

Worth recounting is the story of Max Hart (of Hart, Schaffner & Marx) and his advertising manager, the late George L. Dyer. They were arguing about long copy. To clinch the argument, Mr. Dyer said, "I'll bet you \$10, I can write a newspaper page of solid type and you'll read every word of it."

Mr. Hart scoffed at the idea. "I don't have to write a line of it to prove my point." Mr. Dyer responded. "I'll only tell you the headline. That would be..." This page is all about Max Hart!"

Power Words Produce-Powerful Results

The two most valuable words you can ever use in the headline are "free" and "new." You cannot always use "free," but you can always use "new"-If you try hard enough.

Other words that work wonders are: "how to," "now," "announcing," "introducing," "its here," "just arrived," "an important announcement," "improvement," "amazing," "sensation," "remarkable", "revolutionary," "startling," "miracle or miraculous," "magic," "offer," "quick," "easy," "simple," "powerful," "wanted," "challenge," "advise to," "the truth about," "compare," "bargain," "hurry," and... "last chance."

Don't turn up your nose at these clichés they may seem trite and shop-worn-but they work!

Always incorporate your selling promise into your headline. And make that promise as specific and desirable and advantageous to the prospect as you possibly can. This requires longer or detailed news, educational and information-worthy statements. Research shows that most negative headlines don't work-unless you use negativity to underscore any undesirable results the prospect can expect to eliminate or avoid. (See the box on page 3.)

People are looking to gain more advantage, result, benefit, pleasure, or value, from their lives ... from their actions ... from their jobs or their businesses and definitely from their relationships. And they want to avoid more or continual pain, dissatisfaction, frustration, mediocrity, and unpleasantness from their lives.

Avoid blind headlines-the kind which mean nothing unless you read or listen to the whole proposition: because-if you don't gain your prospect's attention and desire immediately with your headline, that prospect won't listen, read or pay attention to the rest of what you, your ad, letter, or sales message says.

Attraction of the Specific

Let us stop here to impress upon your mind how significant a part the "specific" plays in so many good headlines. It appears in many of our initial headlines. You will visualize how magnetically it helps to draw the reader into the body of an advertisement.

So observe, as you continue your reading, how many of these headlines contain specific words or phrases that make the ad promise to tell you: How, Which, Which of These, Who, Who Else, Where, When, What, Why. Also note how frequently exact numbers are used: number of days, evenings, hours, minutes, dollars, ways, types of something. This "attraction of the specific" is worth your special attention-not only as relating to words and phrases, but also concerning headline ideas themselves. For example, compare the appeal of "We'll Help You Make More Money" with "We'll Help You Pay the Rent"

What Kind of Rewards Do Good Headlines Promise?

The answer is that good headlines explain how the reader, listener or viewer or live sales prospect can save, gain, or accomplish something beneficial through the use of your product-how it will increase this: his or her mental, physical, financial, social, emotional or spiritual stimulation, satisfaction, well-being, or security. In short, good headlines spotlight the greatest "benefit" you are offering a sales prospect.

Or, if you take a deliberately negative tack, they point out how the reader can avoid "reduce," or "eliminate" risks, worries, losses, mistakes, embarrassments, drudgery, or some other undesirable condition for the use of your product or service.

Or how it will decrease this: your prospect or customer's fear of poverty, illness, or accident, discomfort, boredom, and/or loss of business or social prestige or advantage, success, prosperity, richness or wealth.

Whatever product or service you may think you are setting, always, when constructing your headline or opening statement, remember this:

Your customer is not buying a product or a service. They are buying a result or benefit or advantage or protection or increased pleasure or etc., etc. your product or service or company can offer or provide them. Always, always focus your headlines on the benefit or specific result your prospect will be receiving.

More Tips About A "Negative" Approach

This short subject interjection is about negative headlines. "Accentuate the positive; eliminate the negative," said an old song. For years that has also been the refrain of the advice often given to copywriters. Discussion about negative headlines has sometimes sparked more fire than enlightenment.

Yet our 37 headlines include a number that are completely negative and several others that start with a negative approach and become positive. So the negative approach must have some good reason for existence. It has. What is it?

One of the primary objectives of a headline is to strike as directly as possible right at a situation confronting the reader. Sometimes you can do this with greater accuracy if you use a negative headline which pinpoints the reader's ailment, rather than alleviation of it. (For example, "Is YOUR Home Picture-Poor?"-"Have YOU a 'Worry Stock?"-"Little Leaks That Keep Men Poor.")

So when you face that kind of situation, you can "accentuate the negative" Let's move on to more headlines and guidelines to effective headline writing.

Putting Headlines To Work

You can multiply the effectiveness of any ad you run, letter you send out, sales call your people make, retail sale your store does, or size of transaction your practice generates merely by changing and improving the power and effectiveness of your headline.

Here are 33 critical ways to make your headlines or selling proposition great. They're the result of research into the work of the greatest copywriters of all time.

Notice the highly effective job each of the following great headlines does:

17,000 Blooms from a single plant!

Measures the size of the claim

In two seconds, Bayer Aspirin begins to dissolve in your glass

Measures the speed of the claim

Six times whiter washes

Compares the claim

Melts away ugly fat

Metaphorizes the claim

Tastes like you just picked it

Sensitizes the claim by making the prospect feel, smell, touch, see or hear it

At 60 miles per an hour, the loudest noise in the Rolls Royce is the electric clock

Demonstrates the claim by showing a prime example

They laughed when I sat down at the piano-but when I started to play...

Dramatizes the claim or its result

How a bald-headed barber saved my hair

States the claim as a paradox

Shrinks hemorrhoids without surgery

Removes limitations from the claim

9 of our 10 decorators use Wundaweave Carpets for long life at low cost

Associates the claim with values or people with whom the prospect wishes to be identified

Relieves congestion in all 7 nasal passages Instantly

Shows how much work, in detail, the claim does

Here's what you do to get rid of pimples fast

Offers information about how to accomplish the claim

Here's what doctors do when they feel rotten

Ties authority to the claim

Before Wheezo hay fever medication made you drowsy-with Wheezo you can have relief and be alert

Before-and-after the claim

Announcing: Guided missile spark plugs

Stresses the newness of the claim

Ours Alone! Persian Lamb originals \$289.75

Stresses the exclusivity of the claim

Does she or doesn't she-only her hair dresser knows for sure

Turns the claim into a challenge for the reader

Would you believe It? I have a cold!

States the claim as a case history question

Pour yourself a new engine

Condenses the claim-interchange your product and the product it replaces

Starting July 5th-the Atlantic Ocean becomes only one-fifth as wide.

Symbolizes the claim-replace the direct statement or measurement of the claim with a parallel reality

Floats fat right out of your body

Connects the mechanism to the claim in the headline

What everybody ought to know about the stock and bond business

Offers information in the ad itself

Aunt Mary, who never married...

Turns the claim or the need into a case history

When you're weary with daytime fatigue, take Alka Seltzer

Gives name to the problem or need

Don't Invest one cent of your hard-earned money until you check this guide

Warns the reader about possible pitfalls if he doesn't use your product

A man you can lean on! That's Abraham
or: Nobody, but nobody teaches like Abraham

Emphasizes the claim by its phraseology-break it down into two sentences, or repeat all or part of it

If you can count to eleven, you can increase your speed and skill at numbers

Shows how easy the claim is to accomplish by imposing a universally overcome limitation

The difference In premium gasoline is in the additives

States the difference in the headline

See what happens when you crush our Executive luggage-nothing!

Surprises the reader into realizing that former limitations have now been overcome

If you've already taken your vacation, don't read this. It will break your heart

Addresses the people who can't buy your product, but by limiting its target, it entices all to Learn the secret.

It took 24 years and genetic engineering to make this product possible

Dramatizes how hard it was to produce the claim

It should be immoral to make money this easily

Accuses the claim of being too good to be true

You are twice as smart as you think

Challenges the prospect's present limiting beliefs

"You" A Vital Word in Power Headlines

The most obvious mistake most people make when writing or creating headlines is they forget to adopt the "YOU" attitude.

To create a powerful headline, your message must telegraph benefits the prospect himself or herself can expect to receive. Your headline or message never should talk about "we or "our" product, service, or company. Each and every possible benefit or result must be written or expressed with the individual reader or prospect's selfish, direct interests in mind.

Here are some other formulas for formulating writing or creating great headlines or opening statements.

- * Begin your headline with the word, "Announcing".
- * Use words that have an announcement quality to them.
- * Begin your headline with the word, "New".
- * Begin your headline with the word, "Now".
- * Begin your headline with the words "at last".
- * Put date into your headline; i.e., January 18th.
- * Feature the price in your headline.
- * Feature the price reduction or a reduced price.
- * Feature a special offer.
- * Feature easy or more attractive payment terms.
- * Feature a free offer.
- * Offer information of value.
- * Tell a story.
- * Begin with the words, "How to".

- * Begin with the word "How".
- * Begin your headline with the words "Why" or "Which".
- * Begin with the words "Who else".
- * Advise to offer the reader a test. Use a two-word headline that refers to a need or situation.
- * Warn the reader to delay buying until they compare benefits and performance.

To give you an idea of how important the headline is, and to help you to write good ones, I'll present some of the best headlines I, as well as other great headline writers, have written. Now, let's start our tour of the 37 Million-Dollar Headlines and try to discover why they were so effective.

1. You Don't Know Me, I Realize ... But I Want You To Have This Before It's Too Late

- * This headline stresses the need for quick action.

2. To the Men and Women Who Want to Quit Work Someday

- * Selects its readers without wasting a word

3. How to Develop a Silver Tongue, a Golden Touch and a Mind Like a Steel Trap

- * Highlights the large audience of those looking for improvement

4. New Diet Burns Off More Fat Than If You Ran 98 Miles a Week

- * A headline that anticipates incredulity in order to overcome it

5. What's Your Best Chance to Make Money in Real Estate? The Answer Below May Surprise You

- * A stopper ad that will challenge the reader to read

The headlines presented here advertise many different kinds of products and services. Some are sold in retail stores, some by sales representatives, some by direct mail to the customer. But regardless of what the product is, or how it is sold, the principles discussed here apply. We are about to learn by real-life example, instead of through a long and less exciting discussion of general concepts.

Remember, Rule Number One for high impact headlines is "State the Benefit."

Failure to use a powerful benefit-or result-based headline can cost an advertiser 80% to 90% of the potential effectiveness of that ad because the prospect will pass over it.

Headlines must make a promise of a highly desirable result the person will receive in exchange for reading the ad or listening to the message. The headline is the ad for the overall ad. It must incorporate your company's Unique Selling Proposition or USP. If your USP is "broad selection," here are some headlines you could use:

6. We Always Have 200 Different Widgets in No Less than 15 Different Sizes and 10 Desirable Colors and With a Selection of 20 Optional Features in Prices Ranging From \$6 to \$600.

or..

Times the Selection, 4 Times the Color and Size Choice, 3 Times the Number of Convenient Locations, 2 Times the Guarantees and Warranties, and Half the Markup of Any Other Dealer!

If "discount price" is your USP, or corporate advantage, these headlines could skyrocket your sales:

7. We Sell the Same Brands of Hardware as Company A or Company B at 25% to 50% Less.

8. Top-Quality Widgets Usually Sell for \$250 to \$1,000. We Sell Them for \$95 to \$395. Which Would You Rather Pay?

9. Most Professionals Start Billing You the Moment You Walk in Their Door. That Can Add Up to Thousands of Dollars. At PDQ Services, Our Fee Is Always a Modest \$99. No Exceptions. No Tricks.

Here are some very useful and effective headlines for a "service-oriented" USP approach:

10. When You Buy a Compact Disc From The Warehouse or Sam Goody, You Own That Disc, Whether You Like It or Not

When you buy a compact disc from us, you get a 90-day, 100% money-back guarantee, just in case it's not what the critics made it out to be. And you get bonus credits toward any other album, cassette or compact disc we sell for every disc you buy and keep.

11. If Your Car Breaks Down, We'll Tow IT-FREE! (Always use that word "free" as much as you can.)

An added benefit of placing your car's insurance policy with XYZ Agency.

12. Most Locksmiths Work From 9 to 5 But Those Aren't the Hours When You Can't Get Into Your House or Car.

ABC Locksmith Company will send a locksmith whenever you need one. We have 20 service people on 24-hour call, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year-including holidays. No extra charge.

How about the "Snob Appeal" USP?

Here's an interesting possibility of a headline that offers snob appeal:

13. Only 1,200 XYZ Deluxe Midas Sedans Are Produced Annually.

The rest stay in Europe where they originate. Of the remaining 300, 50 go to Japan. Of the remaining 250, 100 go to Canada and Australia. Each year, only 150 come into the United States. Of that 150, only 20 are sent to New York-and WE'VE GOT 15 OF THEM. We'll offer them at very fair prices to our best customers, as long as the sedans last.

Use your best headline (as determined by testing) in every ad and in every letter to your prospects, customers and past customers.

You should also use a headline, or "mini-pitch," in every commercial.

What kind of headline works best?

One that promises the reader a large and attractive benefit.

A headline that offers topical "news" is often very successful. If your product or service is newsworthy, put that special news announcement right at the top of your ad.

If you are promoting a product to one particular group, include a "red flag" in your headline that will single out these prospects.

And remember this: Specifics out-pull generalities. Personalize a headline by singling out the city, state or group to which it's directed.

Avoid humor and double meanings in headlines; they waste space and are nonproductive 95% of the time.

The key point is: The simple failure to test headlines against each other could cost you more than half of your profit potential.

Don't ever run an ad without a headline. And test to see which headline pulls best.

The Primary Viewpoint-The "Point Of You"

This is a short break in the action because it is a lesson that you already know well. But to stress its importance, let me point this out to you: Over 1/3 of these 37 headlines contain one of these actual words- "you" "your" or "yourself." Even when the pronoun is first person singular (for example, "How I improved My Memory in One Evening"), the reward promised is so universally desired that it is, in effect, really saying, "You can do it too!"

Thousands of words have been written about the "point of you"-but let me remind you that, given a fountain pen, 96 percent of 500 college women wrote their own names; shown a map of the USA, 447 men out of 500 looked first for the location of their home towns! Howard Barnes, of the American Newspaper Publishers' Association, really was on target when he said: "To call up an image of the reader, all you need to do is pin up a target. Then, starting at the outside, you can label his interests in this order: the world, the United States, his home state, his home town, and we'll lump together in the center his family and himself.. me. Myself I come first. I am the bulls-eye."

Here are several more of the most successful headlines I've used over the past 24 years of helping companies improve their marketing leverage:

14. Almost Everyone Has a \$10,000 Idea. Here's How to Make It Pay.

15. Heart Attacks Can Be Foreseen From Minutes to Months in Advance-And Prevented.

16. An Easy Way to Change Jobs

17. How to Increase Your Standard of Living Without Changing Jobs

18. Send Me to Any City In the United States. Take Away My Wallet. Give Me \$100 for Living Expenses. And in 72 Hours I'll Buy an Excellent Piece of Real Estate Using None of My Own Money.

(The latter headline made a great deal of money and created a media blitz for Robert Allen, a skilled marketer and author who made the term "No Money Down Real Estate" famous.)

19. Three Powerful Reasons Why Diamond Prices Are Soaring

20. To a \$15,000 Man Who Would Like to Be Making \$25,000

21. I'd Like to Give This to My Fellow Man ... While I Am Still Able to Help!

Power Headlines Produce-Powerful Results

You may find it incredible how the use of a headline can alter the results of the entire ad or letter. I have tracked and compared hundreds of headlines and been amazed at the vast improvement in results that one headline can produce over another headline. Let me illustrate this principle here with a few real-life examples:

An insurance company tested these two headlines against each other:

22. What would Become of Your Wife If Something Happened to You? and Retirement Income Plan

Believe it or not, the second ad pulled 500 percent more response than the first. It's a simple yet effective headline.

A famous correspondence school tested these two headlines:

23. Announcing a New Course for Men Seeking Independence in the Next Three Years

(An Up-to-the-Minute Course to Meet Today's Problems)

The first headline (which started with that magic word "Announcing") trounced the second headline by about 370%.

An insurance company compared these two headlines:

24. Auto Insurance at Lower Rates if You Are a Careful Driver

How to Turn Your Careful Driving Into Money

The first headline was 1,200% better in testing.

I could go on ... and on! In all these cases, you would not have known that the vast difference in results would occur without testing first. The results are often quite surprising.

Now, let me get back to providing you with more of my 37 Million-Dollar Headlines, and some explanation of what makes these headlines effective. Now we must pause and examine one of the techniques of writing a headline. It is called VERBALIZATION. And it is the art of increasing the impact of a headline by the way in which it is stated.

In the previous sections, we have looked at what we want to say in a headline. And now we have to determine how to say it.

The most obvious way, of course, is simply to state the claim in its barest form. "Lose Weight," or "Stop Corns," for example. And if you are the first in your field, there is no better way.

But where you are competitive, or where the thought is too complicated to be stated simply and directly, then you must reinforce that claim by binding other images to it with the words in which you express it. This is verbalization. And it can accomplish several different purposes:

A. It can strengthen the claim-by enlarging upon it, by measuring it, by making it more vivid.

B. It can make the claim new and fresh again-by twisting it, changing it, presenting it from a different angle, turning it into a narration, challenging the reader with an example.

C. It can help the claim pull the prospect into the body of the ad-by promising him information about it, by questioning him, by partially revealing information.

All of these goals are accomplished by adding variations, enlargements or embellishments to the main headline claim of the ad. These additional images are bound into the main claim by the sentence structure of the headline. They alter the main claim, to make it more effective.

There are, of course, an infinite number of these variations (every good copywriter invents a few himself. But there are general patterns that most copywriters follow. Here are some of these guideposts, for your own consideration:

Measure the size of the claim

25. I am 61 Pounds Lighter by Using XYZ Product

State the difference in the headline

26. The Difference in Premium Gasoline is Right In the Additives

Stress the newness of the claim

27. Now! Chrome Plate Without Heat, Electricity, Machinery!

State the claim as a question

28. Who Else Wants a Whiter Wash With No Hard Work?

Turn the claim into a challenge for the reader

29. Which Twin Has the Toni? And Which Has the \$15 Permanent?

Challenge the prospect's present limiting beliefs

30. You Are Twice as Smart as You Think

Address your prospect directly

31. To the Man Who Will Settle for Nothing Less Than the Presidency of His Firm

Address the people who can't buy your product:

32. If You've Already Taken Your Vacation, Don't Read This. It'll Break Your Heart

Accuse the claim of being too good

33. Is It Immoral to Make Money This Easily?

Warn the reader about possible pitfalls if he doesn't use the product.

34. Don't invest one cent of your hard-earned money until you read this guide!

State the claim as a case story quotation

35. Would You Believe It-I Have a Cold!

Metaphorize the claim

36. Melts Away Ugly Fat!

Measure the speed of the claim

37. In Two Seconds, Bayer Aspirin Begins Relieving Pain!

Is It New And Improved? The Headline Should Tell!

This tutorial is meant to remind you that in a great number of effective headlines you will find the word "new"-or a connotation of it, such as "new kind of," "new discovery," "new way to," etc. Americans are quite partial to the new or novel; they do not suffer from neophobia. To the average American, the mere factor of newness seems to be prima facie evidence of "betterness."

Undeviating affection for the old and tried may be strong in other countries; in ours, the desire to try the new is stronger. The great achievements of our inventors and enterprising manufacturers have trained us to believe that if it's new it is likely to be better. However, the word "new" in a headline should be backed up by copy pointing out the merits of something really new and advantageous, not some transparently trivial difference.

Testing Leads to Success

Test! Test! Test! You can have far more sales, inquiries and store traffic for the same money just by cross testing alternative headlines, format and copy:

- * By testing different ways to say the same thing
- * By trying different copy
- * By testing the pull of one magazine against another
- * By testing one mailing list against another
- * By testing one radio time slot against another

- * By testing one offer against an other..
- * One price against another
- * One guarantee against another
- * One sales pitch against another
- * One direct-mail package against another

If you use a headline, or offer, or price, or guarantee, or medium, or mailing list or sales pitch without testing it against another version, you are denying yourself and your company the potential of increased sales and profits that cost no more than you are currently spending. Remember, ads or sales letters cost the same to produce, whether you get a 1% response or a 35% response. Now that is leverage!

It's relatively easy to test and track ad results and to ruthlessly leverage every marketing dollar.

Failure to test, retest and test again is tantamount to admitting that you aren't the businessperson you should be.

One of my first clients, a silver and gold broker, ran a headline to announce a new and very appealing marketing breakthrough. Unfortunately, he never tested his headline (and, unluckily, the headline was boring).

When I entered the picture, I first came up with 10 different headlines to test. One of them out pulled his headline by more than 500%.

Instead of spending \$30,000 a month to produce \$1 million in sales, that same \$30,000 started producing \$5 million in sales per month and more!

The simple act of testing one headline against another made an annualized difference of something like \$50 million in gross sales-and at the very least, \$2.5 million in additional profits. Testing your headlines can pay handsome rewards.

So, assuming we see eye to eye on objectives, let's now learn how to test.

How to Test

Let's talk once again about basic aspects of your marketing that you should constantly be testing.

If you run display ads, first and foremost test your headlines against each other with the exact same body copy.

Identify the best possible headline and start testing body copy.

Test only one variable at a time. This is the scientific principle of control: It means isolating the variable, so that you are sure of the source of different results. If you're

testing a guarantee, don't change the headline. If you're comparing one price against another, don't change any other variable.

Keyed Response-The Key to Testing

If you have two different approaches that you're testing, you must design your test to give you specific results keyed to each approach. You must know which ad each and every prospect is responding to.

You can do this in different ways:

- * Use a coupon-a differently coded coupon for each version of your ad.
- * Tell the prospects to specify a department number when they call or write-(there doesn't have to be an actual department).
- * Ask the prospect to tell you he/she heard it on radio station in order to qualify for a discount or special offer.
- * Include a code on the mailing label returned with the order-the code identifies the source of the label, or the version of the ad you mailed.
- * Use different telephone numbers for respondents each offer is accompanied by a similar, but distinct phone number.
- * Make different package tests and note that bonuses or prices people ask for.
- * Have the caller ask for a specific person-(the name can be fictitious).

You must be able to attribute each response to one of the approaches you are testing.

You should also make a point of keeping meticulous track of each response and its results: simple inquiry, sale, amount of sale, previous customer. Keep track of every piece of information that you need in your marketing. And be sure to differentiate in your record keeping between responses and actual sales. Prospects are fine, but sales are what you are after.

Then, when you have all the results tabulated by method "K" or method "B" compare the two approaches and select the better one. Then test again, using your winner in competition with a new contestant. Always compare the new effort against your proven winner, and look to beat the current winner.

Direct-Mail Testing

So far, we've talked mostly about display advertising, but if direct mail is your preferred method, read on.

You probably use direct mail to inspire people to:

- * Come immediately into your store,
- * OR call your order desk,
- * OR send a coupon so that you can call back or send a sales representative,
- * OR send a check or charge card order.

Using the same principle as in testing display advertising, does an "Nth-name" A/B test. An "Nth-name" sample is a theoretically perfect cross section of the quality of the list you're testing.

Before you mail to 100,000 untested people and spend \$25,000 or \$40,000 in postage and printing, do a 5,000 "Nth-name" test sample of one version of your mailing piece against another.

Test the same mailing pieces with two different headlines. Repeat the headline on the outside of the carrier envelope. Try different body copy with the same headlines. Try different orders.

Try different physical components, along with the basic sales letter: such as a folded "read me" note-or an accompanying brochure or a reply device with a postage-paid reply number-or a coupon, etc.

Test as many things as possible in the smallest possible arena before you risk a big part of your advertising budget on one expensive marketing approach to a large audience.

Why guess what the market will welcome, or what price they're willing to pay, when the marketplace is willing and even eager to tell you the answer?

The same fundamental approach applies to TV, radio commercials, field sales, in-store ads and telephone sales as well. Why, for example, run five 60-second TV commercials each day saying something only one way, when another presentation of the same message might pull in many times the customers? If you use TV, wouldn't you want to know whether showing your product or service in use makes a difference?

Since the cost is the same, whether those 60-second commercial produces 10 customers, or 110, aren't it worth your while to find out answers to questions like these?

Now, Let's Write a Headline for Your business

It's easy. Get out some paper and a pencil and start by doing the following. First, ask yourself this question. "What are the key or primary reasons why ("reason why" is a key recurring theme in everything I'll share with you) your customers acquire, desire or seek your product or service? In other words, what is the primary benefit or advantage or value or performance, result or improvement or reduction or avoidance or advantage they end up receiving or getting when they use your product service or business?"

You should have multiple answers to this question. When you get them, rank them by the most valuable and specific and the most frequently desired.

How many ways can you specifically measure or compare or denominate the effect or benefit your product or service for a customer? Write as many as you can down on a sheet of paper.

Now go through each one of the elements I just shared with you and apply it by modifying it to your situation. For example, pick out a few of the words that work wonders, and try adding them to the result or benefit or advantage your product or service produces. Example, how to rid yourself of stress overnight ... announcing a way to get twice the productivity out of every hour you drive to work. "Amazing discovery, get the job of three people done for the cost of just one," etc.

Take each one of these "wonder words" and try your hand at writing a powerful headline.

Do the same thing with the tested "key word," making sure you write each statement or cluster of thoughts down separately.

Don't stop now-the fun has just begun.

An important word about your return on investment.

Great copywriters and legendary sales trainers spend days... sometimes weeks... laboring over the details of a headline or opening statement for an ad, letter or sales presentation.

Why?

Because, those "pros" know how much of pay-off this process produces.

Don't limit yourself to creating just one single headline.

The great masters I've learned from would write no less than 100 different approaches before they kicked out the three to five best, most powerful selections they would test out.

You should not settle for anything less.

The more headlines and opening propositions you write, the more this mind-set will become your own.

If it's a little uncomfortable at first, that's perfectly normal.

Try this simple exercise if you get stuck: Ask yourself to fill in the blank describing the most powerful result or benefit your product produces. If you were talking to a prospect about this result you'd be telling them how to what? Once you fill in that blank with the answer to the result your product or service produces, you've written your first really good headline-so keep going!

Stale News to the Advertiser May Be Fresh News to the Reader

This is the last tutorial on headlines presented here. Don't think because it is the last one it is of least importance. In fact, its value becomes apparent when you realize how many of the most effective headlines employ it. "Get news (or new value) into your headline" is probably the best way to define it.

Since you can't pack everything into a headline, stick to your principal appeal-but gives it news value if you can. And remember that what may be stale news to the advertiser may be fresh news to the reader. The advertiser is, of course, thoroughly familiar with his manufacturing methods, the ingredients he uses, the function of the product.

These topics may have no news value for him. They may even be similar to those of his competitors. But that is not true of the readers of his advertisements. Something about the product or the service it renders may be entirely new and sensationally persuasive to the public. And the advertiser who features it first captures its appeal for himself, regardless of the "me too" efforts of competitors who may have heretofore failed to capitalize upon it.

Many companies have found an element of their product or manufacturing process, even if it was commonplace in their industry, and produced huge advertising results by highlighting the feature or process.

The Power of Emulation

In the beginning, you don't have to recreate the wheel. Merely go through each reference area, like the headline multipliers, and the formula for creating headlines and modify each one to your situation.

You're ready to begin development of your first successful headline. Read other headlines, consider your benefits, uniqueness, and advantage, draft dozens of headline ideas, formulate and eliminate less valuable ideas and test your best headlines.

After you've written 25 to 50 good headlines or opening statements, organize them the way you did the results you wrote down in the beginning-picking out the best five that make the advantage/result apparent to the customer.

I guarantee you this: If you only do this with me and create 50 to 100 trial headlines and choose the best five-one of those five will out-produce your current headline or sales opening by 35% to 1,000% or more.

Much luck and headline success!