

The



Brochure Bible

your alpha to omega guide to creating killer collateral brochures

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The Brochure Bible is dedicated to small
business Davids facing Goliath competitors.

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Print Collateral? In A Digital Age?

For at least a decade digital marketers have predicted print media's demise. Yet print survives.

And not just survives. Print ads, direct mail and collateral tools—including brochures—thrive as part of an integrated sales strategy. Collateral still packs marketing mojo to hook, engage and persuade your customers.

But as a small business owner or marketer, that's probably not news to you.

Your Customers Want And Need Print Collateral

With customers' attention increasingly distracted by posts, pokes and tweets, you witness a marketing mystery: significant customer segments respond to—even demand—print.

Brochures, Slim Jims and sales sheets remain messaging media of choice for [a surprising number of clients and customers](#).

When thoughtfully planned, well-written and attractively produced collateral works. Hard.

Good brochures enhance image, support sales, drive traffic, generate leads and boost referrals and donations.

Trouble is, most brochures aren't good. Most brochures are bad. Very bad.

Why Most Brochures Fail

Collaterals' failure can't be chalked up entirely to digital media dominance. The painful truth? Collateral has a bad rap because it's usually ill-conceived and poorly produced.

It promises to build brand and boost your bottom line. But it doesn't deliver.

Why? Chiefly because collateral creators fall into a handful of marketing missteps—the Seven Deadly Sins of Collateral Marketing.

As a mindful marketer, you must identify these selling sins—and avoid them like the plague.

The Brochure Bible shows you how.

In addition to helping you sidestep common marketing snares, *The Brochure Bible* guides you from start-to-finish through collateral content creation.

You'll learn to identify your collateral's place in your selling cycle—and pinpoint the type of brochure that works best for your brand's long-term strategy.

You'll find practical tips on design, copy structure and formatting. And you'll discover persuasion pointers that help you get inside your customer's head and heart.

THE BROCHURE BIBLE

To pull it all together, *The Brochure Bible* provides detailed copywriting how-tos that make content creation easy.

As a round-up, we include important Brochure Dos and Don'ts and a handy Brochure Project Checklist that keeps your work on track.

So if you're ready to create your own killer collateral brochures, why not download and print a copy of *The Brochure Bible* right now? Pour a cup of coffee, find a comfortable seat and settle in for a good read.

And please feel free to [contact me at lorraine@marketcopywriter.com](mailto:lorraine@marketcopywriter.com) or twitter.com/WritersKitchen with any questions about *The Brochure Bible* or your collateral project.





Avoid The 7 Deadly Sins Of Collateral Marketing.

As a business owner, marketer or copywriter, you want to create the most effective collateral materials possible.

To produce successful brochures, you need to recognize—and avoid—the Seven Deadly Sins of Collateral Marketing.

Each Deadly Sin stems from failure to follow a simple Golden Rule: Do unto your customer as you would have her do unto you.

Failure to *love thy customer as thyself* may lead to the pitfalls of...

Deadly Sin #1: Pride. Of course you're proud of your company. You've worked hard and your company has a lot to show for it: Industry awards, state-of-the-art services, mega-deals and maybe a shiny mid-century corporate HQ.

Naturally you want to show off your laurels—along with your logo and tag line—on your brochure cover. Please don't.

Guess what? Your customer couldn't care less about your accomplishments. The truth: She doesn't care about you. She cares about herself—and by extension, her family, friends and community.

So shift your collateral's focus *away from you* and *toward her*.

Your brochure's copy begins a conversation. With your customer. About your customer. For your customer.

So you need to think first about *her* wants. *Her* needs. *Her* pain points. Your product's value lies in providing unique solutions that make your customer's life easier, happier, less stressed and more convenient.

Deadly Sin #2: Envy. Envy or jealousy can lead to negative tone in your marketing materials. Don't fall into the trap of trashing your competitors' products or making overt comparisons. Keep copy positive with features and benefits relevant to your customer.

Deadly Sin# 3: Gluttony. Your products, your capabilities, your company history, your stellar staff: Now that you are finally producing a brochure you want to cram all that company-focused information onto your collateral's pages.

But a brochure is a tasty snack—not a stuff-all-you-want Smorgasbord. Keep your message and conversion goals simple and digestible.

Deadly Sin #4: Lust. When it comes to creating a brochure, some marketers look for love in all the wrong places. They mistakenly expect a single, slim brochure to satisfy all their marketing lusts.

Sorry, but a humble piece of collateral won't make up for an undifferentiated product, lousy customer service and absent long-term marketing strategy.

Get real about your brochure's potential to serve you: A brochure may be the first word on your company or product, but it shouldn't be the last.

Fact: All by itself, a brochure is worthless. But as part of a thoughtful strategic plan, partnered with a

remarkable product and supported by trained, friendly customer service, collateral goes a long way to satisfy your marketing fantasies.

Deadly Sin #5: Anger. Bad marketing materials express anger indirectly: Organization-centric content reveals an impatience with customers. A “look at me, forget about you” attitude borders on hostility.

Deadly Sin # 6: Greed. You catch yourself being greedy with collateral when you demand that one brochure be all things to all people. Cast a wide net and you catch very little: Successful marketing targets tightly. Effective collateral uses warm, personal and *relevant* copy to speak conversationally to one person—not a demographic swath.

To better reach collateral readers, choose your brochure type early on. Brochures fall into a handful of categories determined by your collateral's conversion goal. Do you want your brochure to support presentations? Generate leads? Drive immediate direct sales? A good brochure includes a limited number of actionable objectives. Don't greedily try to make it do everything for you—or it will do nothing.

Deadly Sin #7: Sloth. Copy should never lie around flabbily on your brochure pages. It has to do more than attract attention and crack clever jokes. Copy must drive action.

“Action” may not always mean a sale. Action may translate into a phone call, donation, visit to your website or any other conversion goal you choose.

Sometimes a client asks you to write collateral that “informs” or “educates.” The direct mail maxim, after all, declares, “the letter sells, the brochure tells.”

Beware. “To tell,” “to educate” and “to inform” are weak objectives. They're indirect and sloth-like.

Your brochure may indeed “tell,” but it does so to motivate conversion.

So choose strong, actionable conversion goals. Then comb your copy looking for arch, do-nothing phrases. If your content doesn't motivate movement, you need to rewrite—and very likely rethink—your goals.



Will Your Business Benefit From Brochure Marketing?

Are brochures integral to your marketing?

Some businesses may not need print collateral at all —100% eCommerce vendors come to mind. But other marketers rely heavily on brochures and other print media.

Who Needs Brochures?

Among the enterprises that benefit from collateral marketing:

Start-ups and new businesses: Collateral makes a cost-efficient, low risk tool for new marketers. Start-up businesses benefit as much from the *process* of creating a brochure as from the brochure itself.

Why? Planning a good piece of collateral forces your company to take a hard look at itself—often for the first time. Rumination helps you identify mission and marketing goals. Self examination lets your team

more easily define a business plan, percolate marketing tactics and create a workable long-term strategy.

Companies with complex or long-sales-cycle products. In some industries—B2B software and cars, to name two—purchases take months or even years to come to fruition. Even the most talented sales staff has difficulty moving customers through a slow sales funnel without collateral support.

KEY CUSTOMERS WHO RESPOND TO COLLATERAL

1. **B2B tech customers:** According to a [recent industry survey \(PDF\)](#), 60% of B2B tech customers found brochures influential in their buying decision.
2. **B2B customers of complex products** or products with long sales cycles.
3. **Seniors and older Boomer consumers** uncomfortable with the Internet.

Quality collateral keeps your product in front of eyeballs when you can't be there in person. Collateral is by definition interactive—and it's highly viral: 64% of B2B tech customers reported sharing collateral with colleagues, according to a [recent industry survey](#): Brochures can be passed along to the multiple decision makers needed to okay purchases. Well-planned brochures provide at-a-glance features, benefits, specs and statistics that can be perused at leisure and easily shared.

Service vendors with products that require customer education to differentiate themselves. Even when you're selling to educated consumers or business clients, some products—from cancer surgery services to software systems—require support materials. Why? Because many makers tout the same claims, your product remains undifferentiated in your customer's mind. In addition to providing useful information, your collateral must delineate genuine benefits, credibly prove claims—and drive action.

Non-profit organizations often benefit tremendously from both capabilities and fundraising

collateral. Co-branded with web presence—a simple website, blog or social media nexus—collateral confers credibility. Brochures that tightly target donor bases—particularly philanthropic and foundational givers—prove especially useful as leave-behinds after meetings and conferences.

Professional individuals. Collateral is a quick, inexpensive way for professionals and other sole-proprietors to enhance image. Be sure to include any online branding you've established—it can be as simple as your company Squidoo lens, Facebook page or LinkedIn profile URL.

Professionals who benefit from point-of-sale collateral:

- Physicians, dentists and other healthcare professionals
- Consultants
- Lawyers
- Small business owners



Pick The Brochure Type That Works Best For You.

Trying to be all things to all people is a sure-fire formula for marketing failure.

As you plan your brochure, narrow its purpose and conversion goals. Ideally, you'll decide the type of brochure you need at the beginning of your planning process. You define your brochure type by identifying where in your sales—or fundraising or referral—cycle the brochure fits.

5 Popular Brochure Types

Point-of-sale brochures

Brochures offered at your dentist's office, bank or gym are examples of point-of-sale collateral. These brochures are helpful at the beginning of a sales cycle. They create awareness, enhance image and introduce a beneficial product or service. Your goal is to get your customer to pick up and open your

BROCHURE PRINTING FORMATS

- **Slim Jims.** Simple trifold brochures—called Slim Jims—are among the most popular collateral formats. No wonder. Slim Jims are cheap and easy to produce: With a quality copier, you can even print your own. Frugal small business owners may find they can create several Slim Jims that tightly target different customer segments. And for uber-savings, you can turn a Slim Jim into a self-mailer.
- **Multipage brochures.** For more complex offers, a multipage brochure provides flexible solutions. Extended brochures can be conveniently organized with mini-chapters and a table of contents. Format may range from minimalist to elaborate: Expansive brochures can include fold-outs, inserts or even brochure-within-a brochure booklets. And extended brochures allow for additional white space, graphics and copy elements that make brochures easier to skim and scan.

brochure—or stash it for reading later. Customer-relevant photos/graphics, quality stock and curiosity-piquing headlines strengthen point-of-sale brochures.

Leave-behind brochures

Your sales staff just gave a great presentation and created buzz at a trade show. Don't lose that momentum: Solidify relationships—and move customers toward conversion—with good leave-behind brochures. You'll want collateral to include visuals and branding consistent with your presentation materials. Your brochures can summarize your message and, when appropriate, include detailed product information, features and specs.

Response-to-request brochures

This prized collateral is sent to qualified leads—people who have taken time to contact you about your product, service, organization or event. These self-selected customers are your strongest prospects—the most likely of all people to take the next step toward conversion. To write effective response-to-request collateral, you need to know your customer's pain and pleasure points inside out. Pack your copy

with an emotional hook, lots of benefits and complete features—the latter are crucial for B2B customers. And don't forget a strong call-to-action and complete contact information.

Sales support brochures

Support brochures make sales calls easier and more productive. More tactile than a PowerPoint presentation, sales support brochures simplify concepts while literally giving your prospect “something to hold onto.” Well-designed brochures allow your customer to relax and give her full attention to you—not your laptop—during a meeting. If you want sales support brochures to double as leave-behinds, make sure your collateral echoes elements stressed in your pitch.

Direct mail/lead generating brochures

Direct mail brochures can accompany a sales letter or stand on their own. In either case, your brochure is typically mailed to customers unfamiliar with you, your product and services. Engagement and value are crucial. The cover and head must grab attention with a customer-focused—rather than organization-centric—message. Value-added content—tips, checklists, maps—

can keep direct mail brochures from a quick trip to the trash—and encourage a closer read later.



Do Your Homework Before You Touch That Keyboard.

There's a lot more to writing great brochures than writing.

In order to create the most focused, customer-centric, action-driving brochures possible, you need to...

- Get inside your customer's head and heart.
- Understand your product's value proposition.
- Study your competition.

Dig Deep With Questions That Deliver Copy Gold

Existing collateral, press materials and a company website may provide useful information. But for insights into the following questions, you'll probably want to include online research and interviews with

company sales reps, the marketing director, CEO or business owner.

"Who is my customer?"

Ask yourself who will read your brochure. Who are your customers, donors or patients? What are their fears, insecurities, vanities and pain points? What do they hope for, dream about, desire most? What's most important to them—what are their values, what will they fight for? Is your customer familiar with your product? How is it relevant to them? Is your service hard to explain? Will your copy need to educate before it differentiates and positions? Are your customers business clients? End-consumers? (For an at-a-glance comparison of B2B and B2C customers, see next page.)

Your answers to these questions determine the content you choose—or exclude. This solid gold information helps you craft a great headline, develop copy angle and choose content's voice and tone.

"How does my product help my customers?"

What exactly do your customers know about your product? How can you position your products as unique solutions to their pain points? How will your products

fulfill their aspirations? How urgently does your customer need your product? Is your product a service? Is it complex? Does it require customer education?

"Which competitors elbow me out of the market?"

Who are your product's key competitors? How much market share do they hold? How does your branding compare with theirs? Does your competitor have a compelling story? What is it—in one sentence? What do your customers hear about your competitors—through ads, online marketing, social media, word-of-mouth? Do your customers believe what they hear? How does your product better serve customers than your competitors'?

"What's my sales cycle timing?"

Where does your brochure fit into your sales cycle? Will the brochure introduce your customer to your company or product? Is it a direct mail piece? Will it generate leads or referrals? Is it for sales/presentation support? Is it a leave-behind?

Tailoring Your Brochure To B2B And B2C Customers

While overlap sometimes occurs in business-to-business and business-to-consumer sales, significant differences exist. To help you create the most tightly targeted collateral, use this at-a-glance guide.

PRODUCT AND MARKET CHARACTERISTICS	B2B	B2C
PRODUCT PRICING	PRICING TENDS TO BE HIGHER	PRICING VARIES WIDELY FROM VERY LOW TO HIGH
SALES CYCLE	MAY BE A MULTISTEP PURCHASE: CAN STRETCH TO MONTHS OR YEARS FOR COMPLEX, TECH AND INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS.	OFTEN SINGLE-STEP PURCHASE WITH SHORT BUYING CYCLE
SALES METHODOLOGY	SALES OFTEN RELY ON LEAD GENERATION, TRAINED SALES FORCE, PRESENTATIONS, FOLLOW-UP	USUALLY DIRECT SALE-DRIVEN BY ADVERTISING, DIRECT MAIL, WORD-OF-MOUTH, SOCIAL MEDIA
PURCHASING DECISION MAKER	OFTEN REQUIRES APPROVAL OF SEVERAL DECISION MAKERS	SALES DECISION USUALLY MADE BY ONE PERSON
COLLATERAL FOCUS	STRAIGHTFORWARD WITH EMPHASIS ON FACTS, FEATURES AND EDUCATION	EMOTIONAL HOOK WITH FOCUS ON BENEFITS
RELATIONSHIP MARKETING FOCUS	GOAL IS LEAD GENERATION THAT STRENGTHENS RELATIONSHIP WITH SALES REPS.	GOAL IS RELATIONSHIP WITH PRODUCT AS PROBLEM SOLVER—I.E., IMMEDIATE PURCHASE.
COLLATERAL QUANTITY: HOW MUCH COLLATERAL IS NEEDED?	STRONG NEED FOR ALL KINDS OF PRINT CONTENT—WHITE PAPERS, NEWSLETTERS AND OTHER COLLATERAL IN ADDITION TO BROCHURES—TO MOVE CUSTOMER TOWARD SALE	LESS SUPPORT COLLATERAL NEEDED FOR IMPULSE AND DIRECT PURCHASES.
COLLATERAL QUALITY: WHAT DO CUSTOMERS VALUE IN COLLATERAL?	CUSTOMER IS SOPHISTICATED, EDUCATED AND REQUIRES EXPERT, WELL-RESEARCHED INFORMATION, FACTS AND FEATURES.	CUSTOMER IS INFLUENCED BY TOOLS THAT RAISE PROFILE AND BRAND AWARENESS.
CUSTOMERS' BUYING MOTIVATION	BASED ON REASON AND BUSINESS VALUE	BASED ON EMOTIONAL MOTIVES
POINT OF PURCHASE	THROUGH REP	RETAIL STORE, DIRECT MAIL, INTERNET
SIZE OF MARKET	RELATIVELY SMALL, FOCUSED	OFTEN VERY LARGE, LESS TIGHTLY TARGETED

"Can I name my brochure's conversion goals?"

What's your brochure's purpose? Can you identify your brochure's conversion goals in one sentence? Please don't say "to educate" or "to inform"—see Deadly Sin #7, page 10. Collateral must always drive action. Your copy needn't be cheesy, sleazy or even particularly salesy: Remember, your conversion goal isn't always a sale—it could be a phone call or website visit. But you *do* need to identify the specific actions you want customers to take after reading your collateral.



Talk To Me: Find Your Brochure's Voice And Tone.

In today's busy over-messaged marketplace, customers have a hard time hearing you. Don't make it harder for them by using complex, stuffy language.

Collateral creators often adopt a particular copy tone because it's "business as usual"—the way your organization has always addressed its audience.

Choosing The Right Tone For Your Readers

When you write brochure copy, approach it like a real-life conversation. As always, let your customer guide you. Know her needs, vanities and vulnerabilities—and speak to her in language and tone that makes her feel most comfortable.

Some possibilities...

A conversational tone engages most readers.

Before you start writing your copy, imagine yourself sitting across a kitchen or cafe table with—not all consumers—one particular person. You know this person. You understand her issues. You feel her pain. And if your product is a fit, you know how to help her. So reach out with your copy and lend a hand. Your content can be warm, funny, inspirational, understanding, motivational, or for-your-own-good commanding. Use this conversational tone to speak to your customer in the second person, using the powerful “you” pronoun often. And don't feel limited to using a conversational tone for only a B2C audience. It works just as effectively with B2B and most other audiences as well.

Use an academic tone when appropriate.

Some readers—certain institutional donors, scientists, doctors, professional school alumnae—prefer an academic tone. These readers want you to speak to them in the specialized language of institutional learning. A more formal, academic voice helps them

relax and feel confident in your authority to advise and share.

A collegial tone strikes a friendly balance.

When you're marketing to specialized audiences—physician-to-physician, to-scientists, B2B banking—a collegial tone is ideal. This friendly-yet-expert tone is also the most difficult to credibly pull off. In order to effectively use a collegial tone, you must feel very comfortable with a given industry or specialty—say financial tools or cancer services. And you need to understand the pain points of your reader—a private banker or oncological surgeon, for instance. Warning: If you can't confidently manage a collegial tone for specialized audiences, don't try. The last thing you want to do is fall flat on your face in front of these educated, discerning and valuable customers. Instead, consider partnering with a copywriter experienced in your special niche.

When to get formal

Just as conservative clothing best suits certain occasions, a formal voice occasionally serves your copy. Generational and cultural sensitivity informs your choice of this voice. But remember, formal

doesn't mean stiff. Your tone can maintain decorum while expressing warmth and empathy.

Always Speak With An Active Voice.

Your reader is tired and distracted. Help her listen to you by using clear, simple language. Unless you're delivering negative information—as with damage-control communications—always use an active voice.

Passive voice: Why was the road being crossed by the chicken?

Active voice: Why did the chicken cross the road?

Passive voice: Isabel was speaking while the sales sheets were being passed out by Josh.

Active voice: While Isabel spoke, Josh passed out the sales sheets.



“Don't Make Me Read!” Structuring Your Brochure

Don't expect customers to eagerly dive into a vast ocean of text.

Your busy customer balks at wading through waves of words to reach the your message.

Let Readers Scan And Skim Your Copy

Break up your content. Build white space into your brochure. And structure your text for easier scanning and skimming.

Use formatting elements that give readers a birds-eye overview.

Subheads signal “copy gold ahead.” If you're a talented writer you're probably tempted to write clever subheads that play with words and witty double entendres. Please don't. Glib subheads often confuse more than amuse. And when customers

don't "get" something, they feel stupid. You want them to feel smart and empowered. Keep in mind that good brochure subheads serve a dual purpose: They capture attention while telegraphing irresistible, relevant copy to follow. A hard-working, scannable subhead motivates customers to continue reading your brochure—or tuck the booklet away for future reference. While subheads needn't always summarize proceeding content, they should signal its salient points. After that, if your subhead can add a benefit, alliteration or cool analogy, so much the better. Just don't cram every single brochure subhead full of copy tricks. Multiple jangly subheads shout your message, making it sound forced and salesy.

Let outstanding copy stand out.

Bold font throws a lifejacket to readers drowning in a sea of words: Use bold font for heads, subheads, section titles, and—**judiciously**—to emphasize key words in body copy.

Sidebars let readers take a visual pause. For visual and contextual appeal, vary content by using sidebars. This cordoned text can highlight complementary

information and include lists, tips, summaries, case studies or testimonials.

BULLETS AND NUMBERED LISTS RIVET CUSTOMERS' ATTENTION.

Why do copywriters rely on bullets and lists? Because they work.

Readers respond to bulleted and numbered lists because these organizational elements...

- ✓ Offer nibbles of digestible content.
- ✓ Promise finite information with a beginning and an end.
- ✓ Provide an aggregated format that signals authority.
- ✓ Promise dual benefits of authoritative knowledge and time-savings.

Callouts playfully perform subhead duty: Using larger contrasting font, call-outs also add variety and support content with text from your body copy, a quote or a testimonial.

Keep It Short And Sweet

Every element of your collateral copy should be as tightly written as possible. You'll spare yourself hours of hair-pulling revisions if you embrace a handful of copy truisms:

Short words keep readers clipping along. You don't need to use long, complex words to sound authoritative. If you really know what you want to say, you can say it eloquently with short words—as Papa Hemingway proved in fiction writing.

So, instead of saying "One should attempt to apply per-word size limitations," I say, "So keep words short."

Instead of "acquire," I say "get."

Instead of "eliminate," I say "cut."

Instead of "inquire," I say "ask."

For a long list of lean words that handily replace fancy, flabby terms, [see Garbi's Writing Center](#).

Short heads and subheads pull readers into body copy. Maybe forty-word headlines draw readers into long-copy sales letters. Maybe. But short heads and subheads work best for collateral. How short? Very. Many copy editors recommend heads of seven words or less. I think you can stretch it to 10-15 words in some instances—especially with B2B and to-physician copy.

Short sentences lead customers from one phrase to the next. Try to keep collateral sentences down to 10-20 words. Often your first draft will be jammed with run-on sentences. In your second draft, take time to break down long phrases into two or even three shorter sentences. Exceptions? Sentences that include parenthetical text within

dashes—like this—or phrases that follow colons: Like this.

Short paragraphs ease eye- and brain-strain. A Slim Jim's paragraphs should run no longer than three sentences. Don't fear the one sentence paragraph.

Sometimes it punctuates perfectly.

While longer brochures may use longer paragraphs, proceed with caution. You're always better off breaking down word walls.



Support Your Brochure's Substance With Style.

Copywriters and designers sometimes play tug-of-war over copy and visuals. Call a truce.

Ideally you will work closely with a designer from the beginning of your project. A strong relationship with your project's graphic designer strengthens—rather than detracts from—your copy.

Good Design “Packages” Your Copy To Persuade.

Copy may be king, but packaging is emperor, notes Sean D'Souza, marketer and creator of [Brain Audit](#). Design creates the package for your copy. Clean well-designed layout drives stronger response. Easy-on-the-eye formatting, attractive fonts, sidebars, text boxes and call-outs improve readability and conversion rates.

Save time and hassle: Rough-outline content first.

Even if you don't know exactly where you're headed with content, rough-outline a draft. If you're making a trifold or Slim Jim, set your word processing program to 3-column landscape view. You'll get a visual sense of flow from panel to panel or page to page. You'll also see clearly where to position subheads. It's always shocking to find out how little copy fits comfortably onto brochure pages. Don't wait until you've churned out a first draft to get a sense of word-count or you'll be pushed against the wall with revisions.

Bolster copy with photos, images, charts and graphs.

When chosen thoughtfully, graphics enhance your copy. They should never be used as filler. How can you avoid the trap of passive-pretty graphics? Ask yourself if the image supports or illustrates the copy. Does it clarify figures or facts? Does it demonstrate a benefit better than words? If you answer yes, use it. If no, cut mercilessly.



Killer Collateral Content In 7 Steps

I f you've dug deep with research and planned thoughtfully, likely you're itching to hit the keyboard.

The following pages walk you step-by-step through content creation. But before we get going, a quick note on the writing process...

Why you need to write a bad first draft

Many writers find it helpful to churn out a first draft of their project as soon as humanly possibly.

This first draft is rarely good. In fact sometimes it's horrible. Yet it's extremely valuable. A "dirty" first draft:

Gives you confidence: You know you can produce content on demand—and you'll meet your deadline.

Saves you time: A complete first draft—no matter how ugly—lets you make crucial, early decisions about content parameters, word-count and more.

Provides peace of mind: Once that draft is in the cooker, you know you won't suffer writer's block.

Encourages discipline: To knock out the draft you have to set goals and keep a daily writing routine.

With a no-judgments first draft as your goal, let's start at the beginning.

I. Grab Attention With Your Cover And Head.

Your brochure's cover and headline have one purpose—to grab attention and compel readers to open your brochure. Once the brochure is open, your lede, subheads and body copy do their jobs. These copy elements delineate features and benefits, provide credibility, and deliver readers to a call-to-action.

So no need to burden your cover and headline with these tasks.

Treat your cover like prime real estate.

Try not to elbow into your cover's choice selling space with company logos, tag lines, photos of your building or staff. Your cover should focus on your customer. Create graphics and head that serve her self-interest.

Hook with the headline.

To get attention, your head can pique curiosity, amuse, cajole, sympathize, imply direct or indirect benefits or ask an emotionally-laden question, as in the classic "Do you make these mistakes in English?" Or..

Let your head select customers.

A targeted headline can get your brochure into the right hands and generate qualified leads. "How to choose prostate cancer care that's right for you" selects one audience. "Finally. An eco-friendly detergent that powers your clothes clean" selects another audience.

Don't force yourself to reinvent the wheel.

"How tos" and list heads may not be original, but they work. Sharpen headline writing skills by dissecting best-pulling heads. Start with this [list of the 100 Greatest Headlines Ever Written](#).

Build your own headline swipe file.

A "swipe file" of sure-fire headlines jump starts your creative battery. My inspirations include the above list, [Copyblogger's Magnetic Headline series](#) and Robert Bly's section on headlines in his [Copywriters' Handbook](#).

Don't craft cookie cutter heads.

Copying is the sincerest form of flattery, but, of course, you should never plagiarize another writer's work. Besides being unethical, copying a headline backfires. Why? The most effective headline speaks to *your* customer's yearnings, heart's desire and pain points. Don't choose a headline formula because it worked for someone else. Craft a head using elements of that formula tweaked to work for you.

Set aside ample time to create headlines.

The late, great ad man, David Ogilvy, noted that **readers peruse headlines five times more than**

any other part of advertising. No wonder good copywriters spend hours crafting and testing multiple headlines before honing in on one. So don't hurry to choose your head. Draft as many as you can, let them sit—for a full day, if possible—then look at them with fresh eyes.

2. Reel Readers In With A Strong Lede.

Your head compels customers to open your brochure. Your lede—your first paragraph—draws them into your body copy. Some of the best-pulling ledes are emotional—remember, people make decisions based on emotional triggers, not cold reason. You draw prospects into your brochure with copy that tells stories in sensorial detail. Or that empathizes and acknowledges—directly or indirectly—your prospect's needs, concerns, fears, vanities and core desires. Use copy to establish rapport. Craft content to build relationship before you introduce your product as emotional balm and ultimate solution.

3. Pack Copy With Benefits.

Okay, you got your customer's attention. She's interested—or more accurately—she feels you're interested in *her*. Now you can finally talk about you. A little. The body copy positions you—your products or services—as the solution to your customer's needs, hopes, desires, etc.

Stress real not “fake” benefits.

Stay honed in on benefits. The trick here is to uncover real benefits, not “fake” benefits, as copywriter Clayton Makepeace calls them. Fake benefits are the brain children of creative copywriters. These phony superlatives represent the benefits marketers *wish* their customers craved. Like “state of the art” medical equipment when your customer really wants a cure for cancer. Or “cutting edge” time-management software when she actually just wants her husband to remember the grocery list.

Whatever you say about yourself, say it in as few words as possible. On a Slim Jim you have to squeeze your “solution” onto skinny panels that generally allow no more than 200 words each. Punch up copy with

subheads, bold font, bullet points and lists, call-out and sidebars.

Anticipate obstacles—and overcome them.

Is your product expensive? Is parking a problem at your salon? Is your service unknown to your customer? These obstacles keep your customer from taking action. Anticipating your customer's objections is part of relationship building. Once you know her objections, find ways to move past them—using customer-centric, emotionally-focused copy. Or you can...

4. Back Up Promises With Proof.

As a marketer, you know people make buying decisions for emotional reasons. But they move forward and take action—pick up the phone, go to your website, come to your store—when you follow an emotional hook with reasonable, rational proof. Proof helps your customer feel comfortable about choosing to buy. And it short-circuits buyer's remorse.

EMOTIONAL HOOK + RATIONAL PROOF = SALES

Let's say your copy moves a customer to buy your subscription to *Vogue* magazine. How did that happen? Let's break it down.

First your persuasive collateral honed in on her desires—to be thin, rich, beautiful and chic. Your copy convinced her she could be an insider, a member of your fashion tribe. You promised escapism and fun.

All irrational, emotion-based motivators.

But then you offered discounted pricing, home delivery and subscriber testimonials. These features provided sound, sensible reason that solidified her buying decision. Rational proof moves her to finalize the sale by calling an 800 number or posting a subscription card.

Proof can include:

- Facts, figures, statistics
- Pricing discounts
- Customer stories
- Testimonials and quotes
- Case studies

5. Always Include A Call-To-Action.

It's surprising how often copy grabs customers' attention, engages imagination and supports buying decisions—then leaves customers high and dry with no call-to-action (CTA).

Perhaps copywriters skip a call-to-action because they define a CTA as a sales request. If their copy's goal is not direct sales, maybe they feel no need to move customers to action. But remember a call-to-action is just that—asking your customer to take the *next step in the conversion process*. **Very often the next step is not a sale.** More typically a collateral call-to-action includes a telephone call, email,

website visit, trip to the store or attendance at an event.

Your copy needs to delineate the next action, ask the customer to take it and **make it easy for them to do so now**.

If you can legitimately include scarcity or urgency in your call-to-action, do; i.e., “Only 100 tickets will be released” or “Just \$99 if you act before December 31.”

Make sure you include all necessary next-step information: 800 number, email address, contact name, acceptable forms of payment, etc.

6. Put Your Brochure's Back Panel To Work.

A brochure's brief format doesn't allow for “filler space.” Every millimeter counts.

Include complete contact information.

In addition to making it easier for customers to get in touch with you, your address, phone number, email address and website URL lends credibility to your

business. While response cards are used less and less these days, you may want to consider a discount code to track response.

Use consistent branding.

Make sure your branding—your logo, tag line, design and website information—are consistent across media platforms. If you're sending customers to a landing page, see that graphical elements and content of your brochure mirror those of the landing page. Online customers want to know immediately that they are in the right place.

7. Use Added-Value Elements To Make Your Brochure A Keeper.

You add value to your brochure—and keep it from getting trashed—by including useful, customer-focused extras. A map and directions are great for brick and mortar businesses. Lists, tips, a mini-questionnaire with thoughtful queries, a survey, fields for appointment dates and times, a recipe or even a blank area for note-taking, all add value to your collateral.

APPENDICES



Case Study: Pharmaceutical Brochure

Created for [Novartis/Footsteps Group Advertising](#), NYC.

Marketing challenge: **Novartis needed a brochure to introduce a breakthrough hypertension medication.**

The product targeted African American patients who face some of the highest risks of death and disability from hypertension.

To effectively reach this patient segment, Novartis' brochure needed to address several cultural challenges:

- Hypertension can be a generational illness and may be perceived as a "rite of passage," something patients must stoically accept.
- Traditionally, many African American consumers distrust the medical establishment and instead rely on family, community and spiritual beliefs to manage illness.

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- As with all to-consumer pharmaceutical marketing materials, medical language and complex biological processes required “translation” into easy-to-understand copy.

Copywriting solution:
**A 19-page brochure
helped overcome
patient obstacles and
positioned Novartis' new
product as the unique
solution for an often
intractable and life-
threatening disease.**

For the brochure cover, lede and call-outs, we used warm, conversational copy to connect emotionally with readers and highlight culturally sensitive “Hypertension Myths and Facts.” We brainstormed a “burning candle” analogy to explain hypertension’s biological action.

Graphics supported the analogy to illustrate product efficacy.

The brochure's checklist of “Questions to Ask your Doctor, ” blank pages for note-taking and handy “Take

charge cards”—tips on a healthy food plan, lifestyle changes and realistic exercise—added tremendous value.

Content suggested that readers “widen your circle of support,” encouraging them to re-envision physicians as trusted community members. Copy closed with a strong call-to-action assuring patients would ask their physicians about the product.

[Read full brochure text \(PDF\).](#)



Brochure Dos And Don'ts

Whew! Thirty-eight pages of information is a lot to take in. To make sure you cover all your collateral bases, check out our at-a-glance brochure dos and don'ts.

Do...focus your content on customer's needs and wants.

Don't...make your brochure a puffery piece that spotlights your company, its innovation and glorious achievements.

Do...take research seriously and wrap your head around your customer, competitors, product and its Unique Selling Proposition.

Don't...get carried away with a concept, clever head or image that has little to do with your customer or your value proposition.

Do...tightly target your brochure with copy that addresses your customer's pain points, hopes and dreams.

Don't...cast a wide net and try to cover wide ranging customer bases, i.e.: both B2B *and* B2C, or both to-physician *and* to-patient audiences.

Do...decide what brochure type you're creating early in your planning.

Don't...try to be all things to all people by producing, say, a lead-generating brochure that doubles as a sales support tool.

Do...give readers hard data, numbers and statistics in digestible bites.

Don't...overwhelm with data-stuffed text. Whenever possible, present figures in pie and bar charts, graphs, lists or bullets.

Do...include attractive design elements and images that support copy.

Don't...let pretty design elements take the place of solid, hard-working copy.

Do...include a call-to-action (CTA).

Don't...mistake a CTA for a sales-pitch. Your call-to-action may be to urge a phone call, a visit to a website or a donation.



Brochure Project Checklist

Let this handy to-do list keep your brochure project on track.

As you move through content creation, make sure you:

- Identify the brochure's place in your sales cycle, see page 18.
- Decide on brochure type, see page 14.
- Name the brochure's conversion goals, see page 20.
- Learn about your customers, see page 18.
- Decide on your brochure's voice and tone—and use it consistently as you draft, see page 21.
- Rough-outline or mind map your brochure to get a sense of word-count and subhead placement, see page 29.

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- Create a killer attention-grabbing cover headline, page 31.
- Draft a lede that pulls readers into copy with story-telling elements, a compelling question or emotional hook, see page 32.
- Keep words, sentences and paragraphs short, see page 26.
- Pack content with benefits, see page 33.
- Break up heavy text with white space, subheads, bullets, lists and bold font, see page 24.
- Write a strong call-to-action, see page 34.
- Keep logo, tag line and graphical elements consistent with other media branding, see page 35.
- Include complete contact information, see page 35.

ABOUT LORRAINE THOMPSON



Lorraine is the principal and senior copywriter at MarketCopywriter.com. She creates a variety of digital and print marketing materials for corporate, non-profit and small business customers.

Lorraine writes for a range of industries with special expertise in healthcare and pharmaceuticals.

With a first career in the theatre, she understands the special branding and fundraising needs of arts and non-profit organizations.

Lorraine's clients include American Express, Novartis, Montefiore Medical Center and New York Presbyterian Medical Center.

Like to share thoughts and suggestions on *The Brochure Bible*? Have questions about your collateral or digital copy project?

Lorraine looks forward to hearing from you. Please [contact her at lorraine@marketcopywriter.com](mailto:lorraine@marketcopywriter.com) or twitter.com/WritersKitchen.



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