



## Tutorial 5

### Copywriting for Marketers



## Getting the most out of the Tutorial

This tutorial, in electronic format, has been designed to help you to learn and then apply different aspects of marketing which could be useful to you in your tourism work for the Borough. It aims to build upon marketing activities that you have already undertaken and to highlight a range of tips and techniques which you can apply to the communication and marketing of your tourism offer.

The tutorial contains background information on each of the marketing topics being reviewed. The material is comprised of case studies taken from the tourism industry; supported further with academic definitions, models and concepts.

After each topic area, '**Review Points**' are given which enable you to draw insights from the material you have just read, overlaid with your own practical experience. Such information encourages you to reflect on what you already know and the additional information you might find helpful in order to fully understand the marketing disciplines.

The tutorial finally concludes with a series of recommended reading extracts which will support your further development. In addition, you will find hypertext links that enable you to navigate directly to important 'third-party' sites for further practical and/or academic information.

In managing your time with this e-learning tutorial, we recommend the following approach:

1. First, read all of the tutorial material – it is important to put all the material in context at the outset, as each section of the tutorial builds upon the previous content.
2. Whilst reading through the tutorial, we recommend that you study the 'Review Points' and begin to consider how you might take this information back into the Borough. At this first reading stage we do not suggest that you complete this thought process – rather, just begin to note down the key points that you may need to follow-up on.

As an approximate guide, to undertake stages 1 and 2 we would suggest you allow around two hours.

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### **Making use of the recommended core text reference**

Each tutorial recommends a key textbook that can be read alongside the electronic tutorial. We particularly recommend that those new to the topic area should have access to the textbook and should read the extra material at your leisure to further develop your learning and education. The text will help with your understanding and appreciation of marketing theory, and its implications for underpinning, '*what I do*', in my daily marketing role.

The copywriting text we recommend that can be read alongside this tutorial is:

**The Copywriter's Handbook: A Step by Step Guide to Writing Copy**  
Bly, R. W  
Henry Holt & Company  
ISBN – 0805011943

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## Background

In the thousands of marketing messages that we are exposed to every day, we are surrounded by copy – the language of anonymous writers encouraging us to look, buy, visit or respond. Yet, as it is always there, we rarely think about it – what it is or how it works.

This tutorial provides a fast and easy-to-understand guide that takes you through the steps of a successful copywriting project. The tutorial is designed for those individuals with a tourism responsibility in their Borough who have a requirement to write or to review copy as part of their job.

## Objectives

*In this tutorial you will:*

- Consider the background to writing effective copy
- Consider the relationship between copy and effective communication
- Review the process and components of copy – in relation to what we should say, when and how we should say it and the pitfalls to avoid in putting messages together.

*By the end of the tutorial you will:*

- Understand the role of copy and its application to increasing visitor numbers in your Borough
- Appreciate how to put a communications message and PR piece together to attract attention
- Understand the process of copy and the importance of effective writing within the communications process.

### **Study Guide:**

This unit will acquaint you with the broad area of copywriting and examine its role within the context of increasing visitor numbers coming to your Borough. The material is designed to be straightforward and easy to use and builds upon the previous e-tutorials that you may have studied.

We would expect you to take approximately 2 hours to work through this tutorial and suggested activities.

## 1. Background to Copywriting

The subject of this tutorial is copywriting in the context of the craft of writing advertisements and other marketing-related communications materials.

As you will discover in this tutorial, copywriting covers a wide range of communications, from advertising copy to brochures to public relations pieces. Whatever the form, almost all copy shares two common characteristics – the author remains anonymous and the language attempts to persuade the audience to do or to believe something.

### 1.1 What is Copywriting?

Copywriting includes all the written communications used to sell, market and promote products and services to prospects and customers. As a category, it is more than ‘advertising writing’ because it also includes activities such as brochures and web sites. However, it does not include non-marketing communications such as interoffice memos, for example.

There are two important aspects to successful copywriting – ‘transcending information’ and ‘generating action’.

*Transcending Information* – copywriting is not only about telling; more importantly, it’s about selling. As Borough Tourism Managers, you need to do much more than just inform. It is therefore useful to define three key differences between telling and selling:

- benefits – by appealing to our prospects’ self interests, *benefits* provide our prospective customers with a motivation – a reason to buy, act or respond
- offers – selling is all about making a deal, the deal you present – do this to get that; in marketing terms, it’s known as an *offer*
- commitment to the customers’ point of view – if you want to engage with your customers and to build rapport, you have to demonstrate a *commitment* that you really understand their views by communicating with them from their point of view.

*Generating Action* – think of every piece of copy you write as a potential change agent amongst its readership ie. copy that will produce additional sales, build leads, stimulate interest, draw more visitors, etc.

When approaching a new copywriting project, always ask yourself:

- what does this do for the Borough? – the copy should help to move the Borough one step closer to your defined marketing goals; and
- what do I want the prospect/visitor to do after reading the copy?

**Review Point:**

Consider copy that you have developed in the past and determine whether the messages were *transcending information* and/or *generating actions* for the Borough's potential visitors.

## 1.2 Recognising the Different Uses of Copy

Most copy in the marketing arena is designed to fulfil one or a combination of primary uses – making sales, attracting customers and/or building relationships.

*Making Sales* – this represents the most immediate outcome of copy – your potential prospect reads the copy and then buys the product (or service). Your words have supported or made the sale.

*Attracting Customers* – you can also use copy to attract customers to your destination where the actual sale is then made. In this case, rather than an outright sale, your copy helps to build the foundation for a sale.

*Building Relationships* – these are copy assignments that help you establish rapport with the Borough's potential customers. Through such copy you can establish rapport and build credibility for the Borough's offer whilst also educating your prospects.

Many advertisements and copy that we see help to create memorable impressions of what is on offer. Copy can also be used as an indirect communication tool eg. through events or tourism shows which establish the Borough's offer in the minds of potential visitors or through media coverage.

## 2. Writing Copy

Let's consider the difference between good writing and good copywriting. You may admire a piece of writing for its rhythm, but if it does not contribute to your business objectives – whether they are sales, leads, awareness – it's not good copywriting.

Good copywriting makes connections with your intended audiences (customers or potential customers) which ultimately result in improved tourism performance for your Borough.

Whether you're writing print ads, brochures or letters, copywriting works with three basic elements – a '*headline*' that sets out the bait, '*body copy*' that hooks in the prospect, and a '*call to action*' that reels them in.

## 2.1 Taking the Lead: Headlines

In newspapers and magazines, the headline tells readers what the subsequent article is about. Marketing headlines provide information too, but, they go a step further; they make a promise that appeals to your prospects' self-interests.

In thinking about a strong headline, a copywriter should appeal to readers' interests by promising a range of features and benefits.

Features are qualities or tangible aspects which a product or service contains. They are characteristics and are almost always nouns or adjectives.

Benefits are what the product or service does for the owner/ user. They are more important than features because they include a 'what's-in-it-for-me' motivation. Benefits describe active qualities and are almost always verbs or adverbs.

In copywriting the main purpose is to transfer features into benefits. Transferring features into benefits is easy - for any given feature, ask, "*What does this do for my customer?*" The answer is the benefit.

**Review Point:**

What does your Borough offer (benefits) for each of its visitors in relation to product/service features?

Once you have identified the benefits, the next step is to work them into your headlines. A verb plus a desirable quality that a visitor might want equals a benefit headline. The stronger the desirability of that 'thing' the visitor wants, then the stronger is the benefit.

People value new information about issues that interest them. Turn this curiosity to your advantage. Your goal is to break through reader apathy with new information and to establish links with something the prospects will value.

You can create suspense by turning a 'news' headline into a question that challenges what the reader/visitor already knows. If the substance of the question is important enough to prospects, they will read the body copy to satisfy their curiosity or to allay their anxiety.

## **2.2 Fulfilling the Promise: The Body**

After you capture visitors' attention with the headline, the body, or the bulk of the copy that follows, substantiates the offer by fulfilling the promise stated or implied in the headline. Build the body with points, evidence and/or ideas which reinforce the case that you've already introduced in the headline:

- If you lead with a benefit, your body copy should articulate the value of the benefit to the customer by clearly explaining what it does for them
- If you lead with an offer, explain the value or worth of your offer – what makes it desirable and special?
- If you lead with news, explain what the news means to visitors by demonstrating the potential impact of your information on their lives.

In understanding what constitutes good 'body' copy, we should put ourselves in the shoes of our visitors – by identifying and understanding what they might want to read about. This should include:

- Satisfying their desires
- Helping them to overcome their fears
- Making their lives easier/ more convenient for them
- Encouraging them to feel good about themselves.

In building credibility into the copy, the golden rule is to emphasise the benefits (what's in it for the customer?) and to build your case with evidence ie. specific, factual material that should include:

- Particular features of your offer which make it unique or distinctive from competing offers
- Sensual characteristics – a description of 'what it is' rather than 'what it does'
- Customer/visitor endorsements – the perceptions of previous customers are often more credible than anything which the Borough might say. Use them when you can!

### 2.3 Inspiring Action: The Close

Your final job as a copywriter is the least complex of your tasks – ‘to tell people what to do and how to do it’.

In a call-to-action you should provide the necessary information to overcome any last remaining objections which the prospect may have.

Once you have made the promise and supported it with evidence, now tell the customer how to fulfil your offer. At this stage, keep the following points in mind:

- Restate the offer – what is available
- How can the visitors access it; and
- Where can further information be found if required.

**Review Point:**

Getting people to listen to you is hard; getting them to take action is even harder. In other words, motivating a prospect to take action is never easy, but strong offers and compelling benefits are your best levers for motivating visitors. You can increase your chance of inspiring action by creating urgency (restricting the offer) and/or considering a safety net against the purchase/visit (guaranteed satisfaction).

### 2.4 Summary

To help you communicate your message and highlight the important points through the copy, you should always consider:

*Ways to make your copy successful:*

- Emphasise an important benefit
- Create a compelling offer
- Put yourself in your customers’ shoes
- Write the way your customers think
- Build your copy with specifics
- Maintain your focus on one key idea
- Repeat the most important information several times.

*Understanding the 3 building blocks of copy:*

- Headlines present offers, benefits and news
- Body copy presents facts, proof and evidence to support your claims, promises or story
- Calls to action motivate responses by promising (or re-promising) a benefit in exchange for taking an action.

### 3. Creating Brochures to Inform

In Tutorial 1 we reviewed the challenges faced by marketers in tourism in relation to intangibility – in particular, that visitors may not be fully aware of the product/service which they will receive.

One way to try and bring tangibility to the tourism product is through an effective brochure. The need for tangibility – bringing the look and feel of the destination/attraction in direct contact with the visitor is vitally important. As a result of the fact that we can't present our offer to visitors before they experience it, we must present our tourism product to them in a virtual world - by stimulating their senses and imagination with words and pictures. The tool? A brochure.

#### 3.1 Putting Brochures to Work

Many brochures are limited to descriptions and to conveying information – but this is not enough to motivate a prospective visitor. As a Borough Tourism Manager, you should expect more from your brochures in order to make them work for you.

Instead of providing information, they should provoke action.

Instead of providing descriptions, they should be selling (pushing benefits).

In summary, a brochure should:

- Focus on benefits
- Include a call-to-action

As a copywriter though, you don't have complete responsibility for the impact of the brochure. Whether you work with a designer or assume this role yourself, remember that the visual impact of the brochure is as important as the words themselves.

All marketing materials communicate with their intended audience twice - first, in a rapid, split-second reaction that conveys an overall impression of the material and, second, through the literal content of the material. Your readers will only receive the second message if the material (brochure) design is arresting, attractive and appealing.

Creating a good first impression of your brochure or marketing material therefore requires strong coordination between design treatment and copy that is interesting and well-researched.

### **3.2 The Right Headline**

Although most copy projects – such as letters, print-ads, etc, pair one headline with one set of body copy, brochures on the other hand, may include one, two, three, or more headlines within its contents. The cover always has a headline, and then you may choose to include headings for the main interior panels.

Your cover headline can be as basic as the name of the destination/attraction or it can involve a number of distinctive lines, for example:

- Name only – plain and simple
- Kicker plus name – placing a line of text above the headline to draw interest to the offer and to establish its context
- Name plus tag line – instead of putting the hook above the name, you put it underneath. The tag is a short phrase or sentence that defines the unique qualities of your offer.

### **3.3 Composing the Body Copy**

In general, brochure content should include three components:

- The What – a compelling summary of what is being offered and its principal benefit(s)
- Variations on ‘the how’ and ‘the why’ – a concrete picture of how the offer works, and why the visitor will benefit from the experience
- Call-to-action – providing visitors with tactical information on matters such as how to get there, opening times, prices, special offers, etc.

At a pragmatic level, the context of your brochure is determined by the nature of your offer and its unique set of features and benefits.

Use ‘subheads’ to tell the story. Subheads are like miniature headlines. Like headlines, they introduce ideas and are placed above blocks of text or body copy. But they tend to use fewer words than headlines, and stand out from the rest of the text, which means people can read them at a glance.

When you are ready to write the interior copy, start with subheads. Why?

- People can read them by skimming – many prospects don’t read all your copy but simply skim its contents. If nothing else, they at least see and read the subheads
- Subheads help you organise and structure the content – begin by putting all your major points into subheads. That done, you know that

all the essentials are in place, and the remaining work is largely a matter of filling in the blanks.

After writing the subheads, use the body copy to fill in the blanks and to complete the picture. Each subhead tells the reader what to expect in the copy that follows; as a copywriter, your job is to fulfil that obligation.

Brochure copy should be easy to read. Use simple sentences, short paragraphs and the everyday language of your audience.

In the brochure you have an opportunity to draw a detailed portrait of your destination's/attraction's offer. Although some issues – such as attentiveness to the audience and a focus on benefits – are true for all brochures, important differences between the displaying of information between products and services deserve your attention.

Unlike products, many services lack a physical offer that lends itself to easy description, and by being abstract, some services may seem remote, Therefore in developing the copy, ensure that you:

- Write about what the service/offer does for the reader
- Establish the provider's authority and credibility – particularly in relation to your ability to deliver on the communicated promises
- Incorporate quotes and testimonials – a favourable word from a happy visitor goes a long way towards establishing your credibility
- Develop a mini-case study – you can combine the true-life quality of the testimonial with the demonstration – a short example of how a satisfied customer actually interfaced with the offer.

Finally, to illustrate the value of your offer and break-up the monotony of long lines of text, you can create bulleted lists of benefits or features led by a subhead that introduces the list.

## 4. Writing Effective Ads for the Borough

Unlike direct marketing methods that carefully place your message in targeted media – like mail or e-mail – advertising casts your message over a larger, less targeted audience. Whilst you may have a general understanding of the kinds of readers, viewers, or listeners you're reaching, you can never predict *exactly* who receives your message.

Your advertising challenge is two-fold; firstly, you need to place your advertising where people amenable to your message are most likely to receive it; secondly, you need to create ads that hold the attention of the people most likely to become your customers.

Print advertising, paid commercial messages run in newspapers, magazines, etc, are all viable media options when you want to cast a wider net over a market that you can define by interest, demographics or geography.

### 4.1 Driving Sales vs. Building a Brand

What's your advertising objective? Most advertising falls into two categories - a direct effort to drive visitors or an attempt to build a brand.

Ads designed to drive sales/visitors usually have the following characteristics:

- They are offer-centric
- They talk about specific products and services – giving details about the features and benefits.

By contrast, advertisements specifically designed to build a brand promote the brand through a set of images, ideas and feelings which consumers associate with the destination.

Brand ads have the following characteristics:

- They are conceptually based
- They address 'identity' – not only do they communicate something about the brand's identity, but they also want to tell the prospect who you are.

**Review Point:**

Consider ads that you have seen or which you have developed that have focused on selling versus building the brand; which was most effective in generating visitor numbers?

## 4.2 Generating Ideas for Print Ads

When you're ready to create your print ad, you may think you need a brilliant idea. Relax, you don't need to be brilliant – you just need to sell/inform.

If you remember the basic principles of salesmanship – highlighting strong offers, compelling benefits, unique or special features – you'll find it easy to come up with ideas that work. Begin your search for good ideas with the following two thoughts in mind:

- Remember your customers – the most important part of your message is not what you want to say about your offer, but what your potential customer (visitor) needs to hear
- Keep it simple – a good ad has just one lead idea, be it an offer, a benefit, or a story.

Because the copy you create is so closely tied to the type of ad you write, it is important that you develop copy that matches the objectives of your advertising campaign – i.e. emphasising an important benefit. Benefits articulate a clear reason why your offer should matter to the prospect and the crucial motivation necessary to turn 'potential' into 'actual' customers.

Overall, the advertisement is a two-part process: the first part is the 'hook' to attract the reader's attention, usually made of a headline alone, or a headline with a graphic image; the second part is the 'line' that reels the reader in with the body copy that completes the sales pitch.

## 5. Creating Effective Press Releases

Organisations and individuals send story ideas to the press because they're looking for favourable attention and free publicity. Such information is typically sent to the media through a process called Public Relations (PR) - a cluster of promotional activities intended to shape public attitudes and opinions and to generate goodwill for the Borough.

Like marketing, PR involves getting your message to the public. But PR has two key characteristics that distinguish it from other marketing techniques such as advertising or direct response mail:

- Instead of selling products or services, PR usually sells attitudes or opinions that reflect favourably on organisations and their activities
- When you market, you pay an explicit fee to get advertising space. However, in PR you try to get the media to serve as the conduit for your message for free.

Whatever your objective, you can deploy PR tactics such as press releases to your advantage. To succeed, you need to understand a few things about the media and how it works. First though, you have to understand your own organisation's needs and to use PR for the following activities:

- Exploiting topical events – promotion of a concert, for example
- Building goodwill – the Borough is supporting a cause, eg a local charity
- Deflecting bad news – to present your case and mitigate the impact of unfavourable news
- Building strong relationships with local community partners

### **5.1 Understanding what the Media Want**

It is important to establish a working relationship between the Borough and the media (both local and national). It's not enough to want attention. The media have to want to give that attention to you.

The secret to successful media relations is to serve your interests by serving the media's interests. The more you can match your story to their needs, the more likely they are to publish. You need to think about what they want:

- They want news
- They want reader relevance
- They want fresh insights.

Often success in PR terms comes from a well-crafted, one-page press release. This press release should be a short fact-filled document that tells editors the 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when', 'how', and sometimes 'why' of your story. Within its handful of paragraphs, the press release makes a compelling case for:

- Newsworthiness
- Reader relevance
- The organisation's credibility

As a Borough Tourism Manager, your role is to write press releases which attract further inquiry and generate publicity around your offer.

### **5.2 Writing a Press Release**

Follow three basic steps when writing your press release:

1. Get a grip on the content – be sure you have clear understanding of your story and all the facts that support it
2. Follow the standard format – press releases have evolved into fast, easily skimmed documents for the media's convenience

3. Turn your content into compelling news – explain ‘why it’s important’ to the editor’s readers. Think of it as the ‘so what’ rule. For every statement you wish to include in the press release, answer, ‘so what?’ What is it adding to the different parties?

### *Preparing Yourself*

If you want to capture the attention of a journalist, think like a journalist! Ask pertinent questions that go to the heart of the story. Collect answers to the following questions:

- Who is your product/service (offer) useful for or meaningful to?
- How and why is this offer used, deployed or valued?
- How or where can the offer be obtained?

In addition to asking the big questions that capture the core idea of your press release, you also have to consider smaller issues such as:

- Who – Who’s involved? Includes both the readers or the audience for whom the story is relevant
- What – The bulk of your press release – the ‘what’ – covers all the specifics of your statement
- How – May include both the offer and ‘how’ the prospects can acquire/use it
- Why – The key question is ‘why is this important?’ Explain the significance of your statement to the editor’s readers.

One of the easiest ways to liven up a press release and to give it added credibility is to include a direct quote from a person connected to the story - preferably someone who is not a member of your organisation.

#### ***Review Point:***

Your job is to make the editor’s job easier. Write your press release so that it clearly meets the publication’s audience – and thereby meets the needs of the publication’s editors and journalists as well. Remember – *‘Think from the point of view of the reader, the journalist and the editor’.*

### ***5.3 Constructing the Elements of the Press Release***

#### *Formatting the top of the release*

The press release begins with:

- Release date – here you have two options; to make the release, ‘for immediate release’, or, to be ‘embargoed’ until a particular publication date (which you can specify)

- Contact information – how can the editor/journalist contact the Borough and to whom should they speak?

### *Creating catch headlines*

In many ways, press release headlines are like any other headlines. They have to communicate the essence of your story right away. However, a press release headline is not a place to make an offer (i.e. selling) – instead it must get right to the point and inform. Your headline must summarise the essence of the release, providing the editor with enough information to provide reassurance that this announcement is both newsworthy and relevant for the publication's readers.

How do you write a good headline? Write about the news plus the benefit the news provides. Think of the news as the actual announcement and the benefit as the reason why the announcement is important to your target audience.

### *The Body*

The press release starts out with the fundamentals of your story. The opening paragraph should cover:

- The facts – establish the fundamental facts of your story – the who, what, when, where, why and how
- The reason – why this announcement is newsworthy – articulate why this news is important to the publication's readers
- Proof points – articulate evidence that validates your claims.

Following the opening paragraph, you now have room to elaborate with the 'middle' of the release. This is your chance to really back-up the promises made in the release with just enough detail to create a watertight case for the value and meaning of your story. Some ways to do this include using:

- Subheads – to help smooth the transition into another element of your story or to highlight another key benefit or newsworthy item
- Quotes – weave the quotes into the story in as seamless and natural a manner as possible.

### *The end of the release*

The purpose of the close of the press release is to signal to the editor that this is the end of the release. You do this by adding a 'boilerplate'.

A 'boilerplate' is a brief paragraph, with no more than two or three sentences, about the organisation represented in the release. This information remains the same in every press release your organisation produces, regardless of its contents, and it simply states 'who you are' and 'what you do'.

**Review Point:**

To earn the editor's respect, obey these conventions:

- use the third person (not I, we and you – but he, she, they, them, it)
- be factual – provocative headlines and catchy phrases can spoil your press release – build your press release on a foundation of facts that seek to inform
- keep it short – 'one page and one page only'.

## 6. Conclusion

Despite your best efforts, your copy can go wrong. However, by putting a few processes in place before the writing begins, you can go a long way either to preventing problems, or to minimise their impact when they do occur.

Many campaigns begin with a vague recognition that the organisation must do something about getting its message out or increasing sales. To succeed, your vague desire must be transformed into a precise plan that answers two crucial questions; what do you want to communicate and what is the best way to achieve this?

Therefore, you should not proceed without clear answers that define your expectations. After clarifying the needs, you can match your goals to the tactics most likely to fulfil them. Although it may be impossible to establish exact targets (guaranteed response rates, for example), it is important that you specify your objectives as precisely as possible. You can't navigate your copy if you don't have a firm goal in mind.

For any given offer, you can probably think of many things to say – in relation to benefits, values, positioning, etc. But to craft an effective piece of copy, you must prioritise these possibilities down to one key message, perhaps with a smaller cluster of subordinate messages.

Keep in mind also that all copy contains two different, yet complimentary, layers of messaging:

- Overall identity – this is my offer and this is what it can offer the prospect, etc. As a copywriter, you must be sure that your work remains consistent with this overall identity
- Offer message – the second layer is the message unique to the offer at hand – what you are actually saying. Here, your job is to maintain focus. Be sure that one and only one message shines, and that the other complimentary messages don't cloud that message.