

# Salesmanship-in-Print

## How to build your business with the perfect sales letter - Part 3

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In this final installment of “Salesmanship-in-Print”, it’s time to pull it all together in your sales or marketing letter campaign. In the previous two installments, we reviewed how a sales letter is, in effect, a model of salesmanship-in-print, and how you can apply such a letter in your own business with great impact. We also took a closer look at the specific elements of any effective sales letter.

Now, let’s look at the remaining pieces of the puzzle: why it’s worth the effort to create a sales letter, and how you can either write it yourself *or* find a copywriter with the right experience to do the job for you.

### **Your competitive advantage**

If you think a marketing letter can’t work for *your* business or industry, you’re wrong. It can work for anybody in any business or professional practice, and in a multitude of ways. People tell me “I’m a retailer – this won’t work for me” or that it’s just not for them; but I don’t buy it. If you don’t think you can use a sales letter, then chances are *your competitors* are not using it either. And if *you* use it, you’ll have an automatic competitive advantage.

Because many businesses don’t recognize the power and value of a sales letter, or because some people are intimidated by the idea of writing one, they will never bother to try it. YOU have the advantage, because you now know that all you are doing is taking your existing salesmanship know-how and putting it in print, and you have the formula and key components that go into creating a masterful sales letter.

By this time, you might be thinking, “Sounds great, but how do I actually DO this?” There are two ways: you can write it yourself, or hire someone to do it for you.

## **Writing your own letter**

So, are you ready to give it a try? First, sit down with someone you trust. Working one-on-one with your partner, take the elements we talked about and use some or all of them to make the most compelling presentation and offer for your product or service, and be sure to tape record the conversation. Challenge the listener to ask questions and make objections. Challenge yourself to answer every question and objection and talk through every compelling point. And when you're done with this one-on-one sales presentation, transcribe the recording. Once it's transcribed, take the A.I.D.A. formula and those key sales letter elements, and start organizing your letter. Of course, you should proofread it, smooth it out, and show it to someone you trust to get feedback. Before you know it, you will have created a selling tool better than anyone else could have done for you.

## **Quick Tips for doing it yourself:**

1. **Good copy is conversational.** Write as if you were speaking with your reader in person. If you can sell someone face-to-face across a table or over the phone, you can sell them in a sales letter. Effectively written copy is really just the same as an effective sales presentation when delivered person-to-person.
2. **Don't talk about YOU.** Remember that your reader is thinking: W.I.I.F.M, or "What's in it for me?" They want to know what the value is for *them*; they don't want to know about YOU. In your letter, show that you understand about their feelings, their issues, and their values, and position the benefits of your product to them.
3. **Take the time you need, as short or as long as required.** As long as you are being clear, succinct, conversational, and not boring your reader, the "right" length is as long as it needs to be. I have written sales letters as long as 18 pages and as short as two pages.
4. **Use headlines and subheadings to break up the visual look of the copy.** Help the person who is "skimming" the letter for quick information. Blocks of endless text are overwhelming to your reader. Including a little "white space" on the page makes it easier on the eyes. Keep paragraphs to a maximum of six lines. Use bullets to highlight important facts.

5. **Spell and grammar check everything and get someone else to proofread your letter carefully.** Not all computer grammar and spell checkers are 100% accurate and they can't replace human judgment. A letter that is misspelled is the equivalent of the sales person going out with a wrinkled suit and "bed-head". Don't send out a sloppy letter!

6. **Let the letter sit for a day or two.** You need to maintain your objectivity about your letter. When you set it aside and then read it again a day or two later, it helps you to get the objective distance that allows you to catch mistakes or even find a better way to say something. The last thing you want is to send your letter out, then look at it again and realize: "Oh, no! I didn't catch that!"

7. **Remember to TEST.** Test your letter on a small scale by sending it to a selected subset of candidates, before investing a lot of money in sending it to your entire distribution list. Test every element we talked about: your headline, your offer, your bonus, and so on.

### **Don't feel up to writing the letter yourself or don't have the time?**

There's nothing wrong with hiring a copywriter if your schedule is too full to work on a marketing letter yourself, or if you have doubts about your ability to write well. If you prefer to outsource your marketing letter, here are three good ways you can locate a qualified professional copywriter:

- Referrals from other business owners in your community. Many of them will be happy to recommend talented and reliable writers with whom they have worked in the past.
- Use Google (try keywords like "copywriter" or even "sales letter" or "marketing letter") or your local yellow pages (try categories like "Marketing", "Advertising-Direct Mail", or "Writers").
- Collect good sales letters you receive from others, phone the sender and ask who wrote their letter for them. Believe it or not, I get lots of business that way. I will write a sales letter on behalf of a client, and not only are people buying the client's products as a result of that letter but some of those people will ask my client who wrote the letter -- and I end up with a referral!

Once you find a copywriter, you want him or her to demonstrate real-world experience in selling. Ask about that writer's one-on-one *sales* experience, not just his or her *writing* experience. Remember, we're talking about salesmanship-in-print; if you can't sell face-to-face or over the phone, how can you expect to do it on paper? That's why your copywriter should have some practical sales experience in addition to business writing skills. Check references and ask for writing samples of similar sales and marketing letters. Find out if the writer understands the basic sales letter components we discussed earlier in this article by asking the writer to describe his or her process or approach to writing sales letters. By learning about the writer's sales experience and writing process, you will be able to find a copywriter that is a good fit for your needs.

### **The final measure of a successful marketing letter**

By now, I should have convinced you of the importance of using sales and marketing letters in your business, and I have provided you with a formula and the specific critical elements so you can create your own letters. But will a great sales letter necessarily guarantee great results?

The success of any sales letter campaign really boils down to three components, and the letter itself is only one. But there are two other pieces of this process that impact the results of any sales letter campaign: your mailing list, and the offer itself. In the grand scheme of things, the list that you use is weighted at about 40% and the offer is worth 40%. The actual sales letter is only worth the remaining 20%. Does that surprise you?

Well, think about it: if the offer you're making isn't compelling enough to your audience, then even the greatest sales letter won't overcome that. And, if you're sending that letter to a list of the wrong prospects (and by "wrong" I mean not properly matched to your desired or target audience), then you've just wasted all the time, effort and cost of composing and sending the letter. The greatest salesperson in the world can't sell anything if he or she is knocking on the wrong doors. It's the same with this letter; remember that it is "salesmanship-in-print". So be careful with sourcing your mailing list.

You've got the tools now. Go ahead and write your marketing letter. Don't be afraid of it. With marketing letters you can generate leads, expand your market, set up appointments, and improve the bottom line of your business.

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