

5 Ideas for Writing Effective Sales Letters

by Alexandria K. Brown, "The E-zine Queen"

Sales letters, sent via e-mail or snail mail, are an effective and inexpensive way to get your message out. Even if your letter goes out to thousands of people, it can give the feel of a personal communication — IF you write it in a direct and conversational tone.

To get your creative juices flowing, here are five tried and true formulas that can work for either e-mail or printed letters.

1. Tell a story — from either your point of view or a customer's.

Example: "When I started my own business, I was very nervous about keeping my books. I'm not a numbers person and wanted nothing to do with it! Then I purchased 'EZ-CASH-BOOKS' software. Instantly, all my accounting "dirty work" disappeared. I gained instant peace of mind, and now I can focus on my real job — finding and keeping customers!"

Copy written in a story format has great appeal. By telling a short story that relates to the reader's situation, you create empathy with her. People are also familiar with stories and enjoy hearing them (they appear daily in newspapers, magazines, TV, etc.). If your letter happens to be a long one, you can draw out your story for added suspense, saving the outcome for the end. (However, as we'll mention later, it's safest to send a short letter.)

2. Ask questions.

Example: "Have you ever stared at yourself in the mirror and wanted to cry? If we told you we have a product guaranteed to help you lose weight while you sleep, would you be interested? And what if we told you this product sells for less than \$30?"

Basic psychology dictates that when you ask a question, the reader feels compelled to answer it. You're involving them immediately in the issue at hand. Many effective sales letters ask a series of questions that are all likely answered with a "yes" from the reader.

3. Offer something for free.

"Visit our Web site, <http://www.ezinequeen.com>, today, and sign up for our FREE biweekly tips for e-zine publishers."

Think of three free things you could offer right now. A free e-mail or printed newsletter. A helpful article, report, brochure, or booklet. A complimentary consultation or a discount on a first visit.

4. Point out a fear or problem the reader may have.

"You may feel safe in your own home, but did you know that burglaries are on the rise in your neighborhood? This may be the ideal time to install that home security system you've been thinking about."

This method may seem sly, but the advertising industry has been doing this to us for years. Remember how Listerine convinced all of us we have "halitosis"? (It's the clinical term for bad breath, but it sounds like the plague!) Direct marketers call this "pushing the "touch" button. This

method isn't appropriate for all topics, but you'd be surprised at how many situations you can use it in.

5. Mention someone the reader knows.

"Your friend *Jenny Smith* told us you could use a little 'R&R.' That's why we're inviting you to the grand opening of our new 'Bath and Beauty' Web store, featuring home spa products to help you relax."

If you operate a referral program, this is an extremely effective way to reach out and touch your prospects. I wrote a letter using this format for a prominent day spa in New York City, and it generated quite a bit of attention. Why? The reader immediately sees the name of someone she knows — the letter makes an instant, personal connection.

(TIP: Ask your clients for the names of a few people who may be interested in your products/services, offering them an incentive if those people respond. These types of referral programs take some time to generate, but they're worth it!)

One Final Note:

Remember that your number-one goal is to "hook" your reader right away! We're all bombarded with tons of e-mail and snail mail every day, so you have a limited amount of time to grab our attention.

Your best bet is to keep your e-mail sales letters within one or two computer screens, and your snail-mail letters to one or two pages.

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Alexandria K. Brown, "The E-zine Queen," is author of the award-winning manual, "Boost Business With Your Own E-zine." To learn more about her book and sign up for more FREE tips like these, visit her site at <http://www.ezinequeen.com>.