

9 Proven Headline Formulas That Sell Like Crazy

(5 MIN READ)



1. Say it simply and directly.

The direct headline should be used far more often than it is. No cleverness. No jokes. No wordplay. The direct headline gets right to the point. It works particularly well with strong offers, recognized brand names, and product or service types with which the reader is familiar.

- Pure silk blouses ... 30% off
- The Ultimate Tax Shelter
- FREE subscription to BlogMaster

2. State the big benefit.

One of the first techniques you should always explore is transforming your major benefit into a headline. After all, your number one selling point should be up front. It stands the best chance of selecting the right audience and preparing them to respond. Plus, if they read nothing else, they have at least seen the best selling point you have to offer. If you have trouble writing this kind of headline, it's a sure sign you need to think a bit more about your product or service.

- Now! Moonlight Your Way to a Million Dollars.
- Create your own cards, posters and banners in minutes!
- Get a FREE vase when you buy a dozen roses.

3. Announce exciting news.

People read newspapers and magazines because they love news. It's just basic human nature. We're curious. We not only want to know, we need to know. Casting your headline in a way that suggests news, rather than advertising, can have the same powerful appeal of a feature story in the morning paper. An important note: the product or service doesn't necessarily have to be newly created to qualify as news. It merely has to be news to your reader.

- At Last, American Scientists Have Created the Perfect Alternative to a Mined Diamond!
- Introducing the newest idea in cross-training. From NordicTrack.
- Now program your DVR by simply speaking to the revolutionary DVR VOICE programmer.

4. Appeal to the “how-to” instinct.

The how-to headline appeals to the need most of us have to improve ourselves or our lives in some way. The secret here is to focus on a need or want and promise to fulfill that need or want. Be careful, though. The how-to must highlight the benefit or final result, not the process itself. Look at this example:

- How to make money working from home with your PC.

Suppose instead it read, “How to start a full-time computer business in your home.” This misses the point, doesn’t it? It sounds like a lot of work. It says nothing about the real motivator, which is using a computer you already own to make money easily. To write a how-to headline, begin with the words “How to” or “How” then immediately fill in the benefit.

- How to stop smoking in 30 days ... or your money back.
- How You Can Profit From the 3 Greatest Service Businesses of the Decade!

5. Pose a provocative question.

Asking a question directly involves your reader. However, your question cannot be random or clever. It must relate directly and clearly to the major benefit of the product. It must also prod the reader to answer “yes” or at least “I’m not sure, but I want to know more.”

- Do You Make These Six Common Mistakes On Your Taxes?
- Gotten a speeding ticket lately? Read this.
- How do I know which mutual funds may be right for me?

6. Bark a command.

Sales copy often falls flat because it fails to tell the reader what to do. This headline type allows you to be direct, provide a benefit, and take a commanding posture simultaneously. It's not conversational, it's dictatorial — but in an acceptable way that readers have come to expect in clear writing.

- Become a famous blogger in 60 days.
- Call anyone, anywhere, without a phone line for FREE!
- Stop wasting money on Web design. Use InstaSite to create your own Web site in minutes.

7. Offer useful information.

Let me clue you in on a little secret. Most people don't want information. I know you've always been taught otherwise, but it's true. People are drowning in facts. What people really want is a sense of order and predictability in their lives. We want to feel a sense of power over our world. Therefore, we seek out the secrets, tips, hints, laws, rules, and systems that promise to help us gain control and make sense of things. Notice how these headlines promise information that does just this.

- THE 20 MOST IMPORTANT STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO LIVE LONGER.
- FREE. The best kept secrets in America.
- Free brochure shows you how to end your money worries for good.

8. Relay an honest, enthusiastic testimonial.

A testimonial headline can do two things for you. First, it presents your reader with a third party endorsement of your product or service. Second, it capitalizes on the fact that people like to know what other people say.

- “Quite simply, the finest design software ever released.”
- “This diet program worked for me. It can work for you, too!”
- “It’s the first book on personal finance that really made sense to me.”

A variation of this strategy is to write a headline in the first person and put quotation marks around it. This “virtual testimonial” gives you a more interesting headline and improves readership.

9. Authenticate your proposition with a little something extra.

People distrust sales copy. And for good reason. A lot of it proves inaccurate or downright dishonest. To cut through this distrust, you can add a little something extra to your headline that seems out of place, yet rings true. Look at the following headlines and notice how the words “Ohio man,” “Obsolete,” and “Frustrated bartender” stand out. Their specificity or quirkiness adds a truthful aura that traditional copy could never achieve.

- Ohio man has 21-year tested formula to create multimillion dollar business from scratch, without bank loans, venture capitalists or selling stock.
- Small Company’s New Golf Ball Flies Too Far; Could Obsolete Many Golf Courses.
- Frustrated bartender develops incredible device to clean and disinfect your entire home...

There are many, many other ways to write a headline. Whatever strategy you choose, don't make a decision too quickly. Take time to brainstorm. Write dozens or even hundreds of headlines. You never know exactly what you want to say before you say it, so giving yourself plenty of choices is the surest way to arrive at the best, most powerful headline.