

RAZVAN ROGOZ

# COPYWRITING RESEARCH

WHY IS IT  
IMPORTANT  
AND HOW TO  
DO IT



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Dear friend,

When I was a kid, I never wanted to eat my vegetables. They didn't taste good. I wanted to eat the fries, the stake and the chocolate cake (no pun intended).

Now, as an adult, I wish I ate my vegetables because I would have had a better level of energy and a far better general health.

So it is in writing. Everyone likes the creative part of expressing ideas, of coming with something amazing. Nobody likes the "vegetables" when it comes to writing - in this case, the process of research.

Research isn't sexy.

Research isn't why people want to become writers. I doubt you'll ever see a young writer saying "well, my fantasy is to spend hours and tens of hours reading Wikipedia entries, Amazon reviews and newspapers from 14 years ago".

Yet, a good book can exist only on solid research and planning.

Fascinating characters don't just exist. Exciting scenes aren't just the product of imagination. That magical attribute of a work to be a "page turner", which means that it builds momentum and there is always something to look forward isn't a mistake. It is based on effective research and planning.

Do you think this is different when it comes to copywriting?

No. If anything, it is even more important.

When it comes to a book, the person in front of you paid for it. She wants to read it. She is interested in taking it to the end.

Copywriting on the other hand deal with creating ads, which nobody really wants to read, apart from maybe other copywriters. In a book, she may say “well, I’ve paid for it, maybe it will get better” but in your copy, the first moment she’ll notice you’re not talking about what she needs, then it is game over.

You know the golden rule?

It is “do unto others as they wish they’d do unto you”.

This is a good rule of copywriting - treat people as you wish people would treat you - appealing to their self-interest. But there is one more rule ... which we can call the “platinum rule”.

This is ...

“Do unto others as they wish you’d do unto them”.

In other words, treat your prospect as your prospect wishes you’d treat her. The only way you can do this is through research, methodical, tedious, time consuming but critically important research.

In this report, I’m going to teach you how to research. This is for copywriting projects. Researching for a book, a movie, a video game tends to be different. Here, I’m teaching you how to understand to whom you’re selling and how to use this information to be more persuasive.

This is likely not to be very exciting. Personally, I’m not keen on research. I like to write and brainstorm. Yet, copywriting is about results, not creativity.

You are not judged by your ability to write. You're judged by your ability to sell and a large percentage of that outcome comes from your ability to do proper research.

### **“Become A Stalker: Customer Research”**

To be honest, if you are to sell something, you should interact in real life with your prospect. If you are to sell a hair loss product, then you should spend many hours talking to men going bald, specialists trying to solve this problem and maybe to some degree, even be bald yourself.

If you are selling to elders in a nursing home, ideally, you should work there for one month to become very familiar with their problems, desires and idiosyncrasies.

This is because it is hard to understand a person until you walk into her shoes. It's hard to understand irrational enthusiasm for something if you don't understand why it is interesting ... or understand the urgency of solving a problem if you don't understand how painful it is to have it.

So this is the ideal - go through what the prospect is suffering or observe it as close as possible.

In the real world, this is a bit hard. If you're a freelance copywriter, chances are that you need to juggle 4 - 5 projects per month unless you're an AAA copywriter, which gives you little space to experience problems first hand. Then if a client is paying you \$500 for a sales letter, unless you're really, really determined to become a top copywriter, you won't invest tens and even hundreds of hours to understand as there is no motivation.

Don't get me wrong - I suggest that for every project you become very familiar with it. I suggest that if you need to sell to people suffering from weight problems, to spend eight hours a day at the gym, befriending them and spending other countless hours talking about their problem.

At the same time, I understand that for this kind of dedication, there must be a considerable reward at the end of the rainbow and that most copywriters will never go so far to do it.

This takes us to the second way of researching - online. This is less effective than actually experiencing hands-on what your problem is experiencing, but still effective.

### **“Make The Internet Your Secret Weapon”**

The Internet is a strange place.

While some people are complaining about how the NSA is supervising us or how Facebook is selling our data to advertisers, we give, intentionally, way too much info about us online.

Think about it. How hard do you think it is to find out where someone is working, since then, where that person lives, when is their birthday, what preferences they have and even what their blood type they have? All of this are information people give, for free, online.

LinkedIn tells the professional story, Facebook tells the personal story, Twitter and Instagram tells about distinctive moments of their life while blogs gives marketers a window into their mind.

This is not all. Your market is most likely on forums, where she engages on conversations about preferences and dislikes. The information found on Internet forums tends to rival the information found in a focus study group.

Then you have Amazon.

amazon.com is a treasure cove for online research. When she buys something, she is very likely to leave a review or share thoughts. While it is estimated that only 1 out of 100 people leave a review, many books and products have hundreds of them.

In this reviews you can find what people want, what they like, dislike and even suggestions on how to make it better. If you are a self-improvement coach and you are launching your first eBook, then reading the feedback on what the competition is doing (as reviews are nothing but feedback) will give you critical information.

Most will provide one liners like “good book” or “disappointed” which is not going to help. Yet, some provide 500 - 1000 words analysis that if you know how to interpret, it is the same as what some companies provide for hundred of dollars.

The secret here is to know where to focus. In any market, you want to target those who are urgently looking for a solution or are irrationally passionate about something. In other words - you’re targeting your best customers. These people will write in length on blogs, on forums, on social media about what makes them click.

**“Build A Marketing Persona”**

When you're writing a copy, you're not selling to a marketplace. You're selling to a single person. If that person is persuaded, then everyone similar to her are persuaded too.

This is what most copywriters find it hard to wrap their mind around. Your copy is a sales person. You are putting it in front of your prospect. Then you multiply your sales person by thousands (leading to your marketing) while you multiply your prospect by thousands (leading to your market).

You may sell to 5.000.000 people but the copy is designed to sell to a single one.

Pro copywriters tend to take the photo of a real world prospect (by doing the entire stalker thing) and tape it to the wall. When they write, they don't write to some imaginary prospect but to a person they know and who needs their product.

I don't tape the photo of my prospect to the wall (even if I definitely should) but I do use customer avatars. What are these?

Your customer avatar is a vibrant description of the person you are selling. I repeat this part. The person, not the people. It is not a demographic explanation like age, sex, location, even if this may be a part of it. Instead, it is closer to how a character is designed for a book or a movie, in luxurious detail.

Nobody will ever see your customer avatar. It is a tool, a prop, designed to help you. You can write it first person or third person. You can put the character into a story or talk in a more impersonal sense. The important parts are to become very clear on what are the beliefs, motivations, fears, desires and behavioral patterns of your avatar. If you can write about this as you would describe a friend, then you are on the right path.

There is a way to supercharge this process.

Once again, this has to do with “stalking” your prospect. If you meet someone who acts as a perfect, ideal prospect, then you will simply use that person as your avatar.

This happens quite often. Many times I’ve met a person that was actively looking for what I was selling. This person was extremely enthusiastic about change or about the desire to change - which is the type A, gold prospects every marketer is looking for.

If you find someone like this, then get to know the person and don’t create a fictional avatar but rather, describe this person and talk to her when writing your copy.

### **“What About The Competition?”**

I don’t research the competition so much. This is because when you research what everyone else is doing - you end up either trying to copy them (making your copy a Frankenstein) or trying to avoid what they’re doing (inducing yourself reader’s block).

This doesn’t mean that you should do the same. Looking at what others are doing is great for swiping. You can come with the perfect headline, guarantee or close. I need to learn how to swipe more and originality doesn’t really pay in copywriting.

Where competition research really shines is in product development. If you are still building your offer (product + bonuses + price + delivery + terms), take a look at what others are doing. You can understand how to come with an offer that is clearly superior to what everyone else is doing.

The offer is important. What they are getting is sometimes more important than the copy. The feeling of getting \$100 worth of value for \$10 is very strong in a letter. Sometimes simply giving more and operating at a smaller profit margin can help you gain market share extremely fast.

At the most basic level, when you're analyzing the competition, analyze their feature, benefits and offer. At a more complex level, you can check their positioning, tone and theme.

### **“Is The Market A Factor?”**

In some markets, being aware of what's happening is critical. In others, it is not.

For example, in the business opportunity field, the market goes in cycles. At some point it was all about mobile marketing. At another it was about SEO. Back in 2010, the craze were product launches. About two years ago, the name of the game was authority websites.

Think about this as trends through which the marketplace is going. Back in 2012, disaster movies were very popular because everyone was thinking of the “end of the world”.

What is on the mind of everyone matters. Be it a new president, a natural disaster, a technological advancement or anything that constitutes as major news can influence your marketplace dramatically.

When oil prices were very high, products on how to run your car on hydrogen (obtained through electrolysis from water) were very popular. Since the new president of the USA, products for survivalists are becoming extremely popular as many people feel that the world is ending and they

want to prepare. The iPhone 3G opened a new marketplace through the App Store and for a while most products were on how to earn a fortune by releasing applications. Today, as of writing this, the “tulip mania-like” bitcoin craze is what’s on the top of everyone’s mind.

Understanding the trends that currently exist is like finding the perfect wave and riding on it. It is not a guarantee that you’ll succeed but you’ll have a lot of momentum which helps.

There isn’t a way to actually uncover trends apart from knowing what is happening in your marketplace. Google News helps but generally, it just comes down to knowing what’s new and what’s popular. When all else fails - check how the competition is doing, some of them will have picked on the trends.

If you are selling in the biz op field, checking a forum like WarriorForum is good. Sites like Quora also help but most often than not, you need to connect the dots yourself.

### **“How To Become A Good Researcher”**

Understanding human nature is not a one time thing.

You don’t follow one formula and then expect perfect results. I know how to research because I always study. I improve myself. I read books on persuasion and psychology, on behavioral economics and behavioral analysis, on seduction and dating and generally, on why people do what they do.

I do this because this is what I love to do. I’m fascinated by how we interact with each other and how the world works, on a human level.

Good research is always understanding what you sell, to whom you sell and in what circumstances you sell. The second comes down to a long life study of human psychology. There is no shortcut.

This doesn't mean that you need to get your PhD in psychology before you write your first sales letter but if you want to become good at business, you'd better master sales and marketing. No matter if you are a copywriter or a Fortune 500 CEO, you need to understand how people work.

### **“Understand Exactly What You're Selling”**

I haven't left this last by design but honestly, understanding your prospect and your market does come before understanding your product.

Yet, if you skip this step, you'll fail. Your copy will have a fuzzy feeling that won't convince anyone to buy.

The process of understanding your product is something you'll do during your entire letter, yet it starts with your offer. Then it is about listing every single feature of your product and understanding why it exists.

Another important element is your USP. The USP is that one element of your product that makes it unique, even if everything else is similar to the competition.

A good formula for finding your USP is We do (key benefit) for (target market) through (unique approach).

The unique benefit comes from POD (point of differentiation) benefits. If everyone is offering eBooks and you're offering video, that's a POD. If everyone is using old strategies and you have something new, that's again a POD.

It is not easy to understand what makes you unique. In practice, nothing makes you truly unique. Whatever you are doing, there is someone else doing it already to some degree. If you are really unique, it is mostly because it doesn't work. So being the fastest, cheapest or providing the highest value is not really a way to be unique.

However, you don't need to go for absolutes. It is about how you position yourself relative to the known market.

Let's take the copywriting field.

A generalist approach would write for everyone, everything. This person would write sales letters, articles, eBooks, absolute everything.

Someone more specialized would write only sales copy. This would be a pure direct response approach.

Someone even more specialized would write only copy for weight loss markets. And someone even more niched would serve weight loss for the Asian market.

In none of the above cases you are unique and there is someone else doing this too. However, the more specific you become in your value proposition, the stronger your POD become. As a general idea, the more niched you are, the easier it is to sell, the smaller your market becomes. It is better to be a relatively unique or rare solution to a small group of people than a general solution to a large number of people.

The bulk of your work here is to understand every feature of what you're selling and to some degree, what this means for your prospect. This is done

by answering two questions “what it is” and “what does it do” and it applies to everything, including price and guarantee.

### **“Final Thoughts On Research”**

In some cases, research means reading a 500 page book to understand it. Needless to say, when promoting information products you haven't created, you need to study them first.

In other cases, it means reading about markets and industries you don't know about. When I've created a direct mail letter aimed at school principals, I've read an entire book about how to be a good principal as I knew nothing about who is reading it.

In other cases, the research is very simple because you are very familiar with the market. If you love hiking and you're doing it every two weeks, then you don't really need to research that much about hiking. You are your best ideal prospect (although this case is rare).

Some markets are hard to understand unless you experience them. If I am to sell scuba diving equipment, I would be lost. I don't understand the marketplace and watching YouTube videos on the topic is not helping. I would need to do some scuba diving myself or at least befriend people who are doing this and spend a lot of time understanding it.

Most enthusiast markets are like this. Most online research will only come as a superficial source and it will not help you that much. If you're selling to people who love computer over-clocking, reading the Wikipedia entry on this is not helping you. You need to understand their passion for how using liquid nitrogen helps them get an extra 350 MHz out of their CPU or how the new GeForce card from Nvidia gives them an extra 20 FPS in a 4K

resolution. Yes, if you are not passionate about the topic, what I've said above doesn't make any sense but for them, this is so exciting.

The same is true for folks passionate about cars. You don't understand what's the big deal behind getting 0 to 60 in 4.1 as opposed to 4.2 but for them, it is a huge deal.

Good copy is a transfer of enthusiasm and no matter how much I read about the lost art of calligraphy, I won't feel enthusiasm for it. That's why it is indicated to sell in markets for which you have a natural enthusiasm. The science of copywriting can be learned, the enthusiasm for a market can be not.

Good research, at the end of the day is about feeling the same as your marketplace is feeling. It is about seeing things from the perspective of another person, no matter how irrational it is. When selling to young mothers, the best copywriter is another mother. When selling to sky-divers, the best copywriter is someone who loves sky-diving, even if he is not a pro.

This doesn't mean that you should reject every project that doesn't fit you. If you do so, it's kind of hard to get some experience on what works and what doesn't. However, I guarantee you that if you can't find a way to be passionate about helping your prospect and understand her irrational passion and emotions, the copy won't be very powerful.

Sincerely yours,

Razvan Rogoz

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