

Creating an Enemy

By Will Newman

If you want to write winning promotions, there's one thing you absolutely have to do: establish intimacy with your prospect.

There are several ways to do this. But one of the most effective (if done correctly) is by establishing a common enemy – one that both you and your prospect share.

As Michael Masterson says, "When you do that, your reader will stop seeing you as a salesperson and start seeing you as a friend – someone who shares the same perspective as he does."

WHO ARE THE ENEMIES?

The common enemy that you choose to target in your copy depends on two factors: what you are selling (your product) ... and who you're selling to (your prospect).

Now, if you decide to use this approach, it's important to remember that your ultimate goal isn't to "bash" the enemy – it's to provide/sell a solution to your prospect's problems.

So the enemy has to be someone or something that your prospect feels – at least subconsciously – is keeping him from getting what he wants or needs.

Let's say your product is an investment advisory service. Your prospect is a 65-year-old man. He's worked hard acquiring what he has, and worries he'll lose it all to taxation, frivolous lawsuits, or similar attacks on his wealth.

In writing to him, you can establish several enemies, including the IRS, sue-happy lawyers, and something like "the scoundrels who are trying to steal your identity and everything you've worked hard all your life to acquire."

On the other hand, let's say your prospect is an "average Joe" who's labored 30 years at a metal-stamping machine. He's barely had the opportunity to save enough money for a down payment on a new car ... and certainly not enough for retirement.

Who's his enemy? The privileged rich folks who've had everything handed to them on a silver platter. The people who control his life ... and won't let him catch a break.

By bringing your prospect's obvious enemy into the forefront, you trigger an emotional reaction to his situation. He feels threatened by the enemy, and you give him somebody to bond with who understands him ... you.

Bingo! He HAS to read more of what you have to say.

ENEMIES COME IN ALL FORMS

Enemies can be individual people, groups, agencies, or things. If you're writing a promotion for an alternative health newsletter, for example, you would NOT want to make the prospect's doctor the enemy. (Your prospect wants to trust his doctor.) But you might go after HMOs. Or the FDA. Or lawyers whose malpractice suits have frozen physicians with fear.

Other possible enemies for this target audience include con men, the U.S. government, politicians, and carbohydrates.

Carbohydrates? Yes. Sugars, carbohydrates, fats, artificial sweeteners, aspirin, plastics, and the like can all be effective enemies in the alternative health market ... depending on which of your prospect's problems you're trying to solve.

And THAT is the key. If you're using this approach, you MUST tailor it to your prospect – what he wants from life, what he fears and hopes for (his core complex), and what you can offer him through your product's benefits.

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

There's no denying that the common enemy approach is a powerful way to establish intimacy with your prospect. But it won't work with all promotions.

It's often effective to identify an enemy for information products. But it seldom works for more conventional products or services.

If you're selling Bose speakers, for example, what's the enemy? Silence? Unclear music? Not likely. Products like this do not lend themselves to the enemy approach.

DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY TOO MUCH TIME

Ultimately, your prospect buys because you provide him with solutions. Presenting an enemy gets him emotionally charged at the beginning of the letter, so he'll keep reading. But if, after getting him involved, you spend too much time continuing to focus on the enemy, your prospect loses sight of why he opened your letter in the first place.

Use the enemy like salsa. Enough to enhance your prospect's emotional bond with you. But not so much that he tosses your letter away like an over-spiced taco.

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