

Fitness Guru Matthew Furey Gives You the Secrets to His Success

Matthew Furey is a fitness expert renowned for both mental and physical training. His programs are wildly popular, so we went to him to learn some of the key secrets behind his success.

CI: How did you come to be an expert in physical and mental training?

MF: Well, I had a big interest in sports when I was a young kid. I studied everything I could about it. I was fortunate enough to have some very good coaches who taught physical and mental aspects of training. I read a lot of books. I studied a lot on my own as well as what I was taught from my coaches. It was basically just a passion that I had. The passion was anything that would help me become a better athlete. And later on, I turned it into a career.

CI: When did you decide to shift your expertise into a business?

MF: My first business was as a fitness trainer. That was in 1987, right out of college. Two months after I graduated, I started a gym in Southern California. I had to write some ads then to get people in the door. They weren't good ads, but I was almost the only gig in town at the time. When that's the case, even poor marketing, if you're selling something people want, can work.

CI: When did you go into your current business and what was it like launching that business?

MF: It is a publishing business, primarily. I started it in late 1995 after reading and completing a course by Ted Nicholas on writing your own book and publishing it and making large sums of money. So that course really got me started. In 1996, when my first product was done, I wrote the ads and sales letter for it, ignoring Ted's advice to write the ad first and then create the product. I thought I knew better. It was a very painful lesson.

Since then, I don't break this rule unless I absolutely know my market and they've bought something I've been selling numerous times and I know it's a variation on the theme and the theme works every time. That's the only exception.

CI: When you write your sales letter before creating the product, do you test the letter to see what kind of response you get?

MF: I actually use the letter as a guide for the creation of the product. I pretty much get it ready. I won't market it yet, I'll just get the whole sales letter ready. It basically serves as almost a table of contents. It says, "Here's what you're gonna learn."

The speed with which products can be created today is pretty phenomenal, especially if you're selling a continuity product or newsletter. The only thing you really need initially is that month's issue. It's a lot easier than people think.

If you're planning on doing a 500-page course, though, and you run the ad and people order it, you've got 30 days to get it to them – so you'd better be really, really fast if you haven't written the course at all.

I advise, pretty much, that you have an unpublished copy ready to go. But make sure the thing sells before you print it. Otherwise you might sit on some inventory for quite a while, and it's painful to have that happen.

CI: What aspects of your industry do you find most challenging as far as writing promotions and making sales?

MF: With weight loss, people don't generally like to buy a diet program unless they see pictures of all the foods that they're not supposed to eat and are then told, "Hey, you can eat all these foods. That's part of the diet." That's a challenge. But it's doable.

With exercise, though, we've been told by all the researchers that nobody wants to exercise – that they want a program they can follow that's easy and doesn't require any work or any sweat and basically all they've got to do is watch some DVDs and all the fat and excess weight will just fly off their body, and so on and so forth.

I think that's not the case.

But with exercise, you've got a couple of different types of people. You've got the person who really wants a kick-ass workout, who wants to break a sweat and feel like he's been pushed. Then you have the people who want to get in shape without doing anything. Finding out which one you're talking to – I'd say that's probably the biggest challenge.

CI: When you've got an audience that falls into that second category – people who want to exercise without actually exercising – how do you approach them in your copy.

MF: I usually avoid them. My programs require work, and I like to just be straight up and tell people the truth.

One exception is that I do have some exercise programs that are for longevity. My Chinese Long Life system has done very well. It doesn't require you to break a heavy sweat, and it doesn't require you to do so many repetitions that you fall on the floor exhausted. It's completely different, because it works the internal energy of the body and the meridians of the body and the organs.

So that's got to be explained in the copy – that it's different. I'd go so far as to say that you let people know that with some exercise programs – where they are overly vigorous or go on too long – you may be doing harm to your body, whereas this program gives you only what you need.

Still, that's a far cry from saying you don't need to do anything or that 30 seconds a week is all you need. The key there is to recognize the age of the people and the benefits they are looking for. Write the copy to get their attention, but tell them the truth about the program. The last thing you want is for a bunch of people to order the program and get something completely different from what they were promised. Then your credibility is just shot forever.

CI: From a copywriting standpoint, what are the most important things to keep in mind when promoting an exercise program?

MF: Well, you write an ad to make money. You're not writing your ad just to write an ad. That seems like a really simple and obvious point, but I think a lot of copywriters miss this. They get caught up in "Oh, I need to write the copy, oh, I need to write the ad" – and then the focus isn't on "What do I need to say in order to get people to say yes." So they're just writing what they think sounds good or looks good, but the objective is to bring in money. That's how the ad ultimately should be judged.

It's easy to get caught up in what you're doing, the mechanics of what you're doing rather than the result the mechanics are supposed to create. So sit with a pen and paper before you write the ad and get clarity on how much money you want this ad to make and how well you want your writing to do. Have a vision or picture in your mind of that ... then you write the ad. I think if you do that, the ad is better. There's just more passion in it.

It's like you're going to go out and run a mile. Let's say before you run your mile you say to yourself, "I want to run this mile in five minutes and 10 seconds. My best before was five minutes and 15 seconds." Well, you're going to run harder because you have a goal in mind. And so if you have a goal in mind regarding the amount of money you're going to make with your ad, you'll write it with more passion – just like you would run that mile with more passion if you know you were being timed.

CI: That's a very good analogy. What sets the audience for exercise programs apart from other health-oriented audiences?

MF: I don't really know the answer to that question. I wish I did, but I think both audiences are probably the same. I'd say when it comes to exercise – and when it comes to specific types of supplements that improve health – you need the same factors. You need a story, you need some proof, testimonials.

I think health is health is health. Whether it's a personal fitness program, whether it's a book, whether it's supplements, or even a back brace or some machine ... I've sold all these things. I've sold personal training, I've sold fitness coaching, my book, my newsletter, supplements, and machines and devices ... and it's the same. It's just a matter of knowing what you're talking about, knowing the product and having a story, having a hook, having a great headline and lead, a strong close, bullets, testimonials ... it's always the same.

CI: Can you take us through the process you use when writing copy for one of your programs?

MF: My process ... well, it depends.

There are times when I'll have an idea for a product and inspiration just strikes like thunder and lightning and hail and rain all at the same time. Then I'll just sit with my laptop and, from start to finish, I'll crank out an ad. Or a sales letter. I've done that many times.

There are other times where I'll write the headline, the sub-headline, and the opening paragraph. Then I'll send it to a few people that I like to have look at my copy and ask them to tell me if it grabs them, if they keep reading, if I'm on the right track, if I make them feel like "Oh my god, what is this thing!" I get their feedback, and then I let it sit for a day or two or three. Then I come back to it, crank out a few more pages, send that, and get a feeling for if I'm still on the right track. Then, maybe two or three days later, I'll come back and finish the whole thing.

It all depends on the product and the benefits I'm trying to explain.

Another way is to start with what I'm selling. I always begin with that in my mind, but sometimes I like to write the closing part first, when I have the highest amount of energy. I spell out the offer, A to Z. Here's what you get.

I'm the wrong guy to ask for a single process. I've used all sorts of methods successfully. I think what I said earlier about having a vision of your result in mind is key. I really do think that's resulted in the best promotions I've ever done.

In some circumstances, it almost defies logic; it almost defies the words themselves. When you're really, really focused, when you're really picturing something you want with a lot of intensity, sometimes you write technically bad copy – but you write it with passion and people feel that passion and I believe it translates into more sales.

CI: My final question for you today: What traits does a copywriter in your industry need to possess?

MF: I think you have to be a writer who is down-to-earth, who speaks and writes in the language of the common people, who doesn't use highfalutin language or show-off language. If you're using technical or medical or scientific terms, you're careful to explain them in layman's terms so that it's easy to relate to you and easy to follow what you're saying. That's the biggest thing.

So many people want to impress and prove how smart they are and how much they know, but your job is not to do that. Your job is to communicate effectively to people in a way that will keep them reading. If you use jargon or language that your reader finds boring or dull, you're gonna lose the guy. There are a lot of health-related newsletters. The great ones – and the promotions for them – are great because of the language they're written in, the language of a friend. So they're enjoyable. They're a delight to read rather than being dull.

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