

Thirteen Ways, Courtesy of Copywriting Legend Eugene Schwartz, to Increase Your Reader's Desire

By John Wood

Desire ...

It's the force that creates sales.

So writes legendary copywriter Eugene Schwartz in his classic book *Breakthrough Advertising*.

Schwartz says that our job as copywriters is to expand our prospect's desire so that it overcomes the reader's "scepticism, lethargy and price – and results in a sale."

He reminds us that as copywriters we're the scriptwriter for our prospect's dreams. Our job is to make sure our reader realizes everything he gains as well as everything he may possibly be missing out on.

So how do you go about creating desire in your copy?

Is it just a matter of listing benefit after benefit until the reader finally throws up his hands and says, "Enough already, I'll take it"?

Unfortunately, it's not that simple.

But the good news is there are techniques you can use along the way to continually build up desire in your reader.

In *Breakthrough Advertising*, Schwartz goes through 13 direct mail techniques to take "unformulated desire and translate it into one vivid scene of fulfillment after another."

If you feel your copy could use a desire-injection, I invite you to read on. What follows is a list with explanation of Schwartz's 13 ways to strengthen desire:

(Note: Schwartz gives rather lengthy examples in *Breakthrough Advertising*. For the purpose of this article, I will offer up examples of each of the 13 techniques selling a fictitious exercise machine called the RelaxFlex Supreme being advertised in a men's health publication.)

1. Your first presentation of your claims – Schwartz says to "first present the product or the satisfaction it gives directly – bluntly – by a thorough, completely detailed description of its appearance or the results it gives."

The first point is obviously pretty basic. Curiously, he says to present *the product* or its benefit to the reader. Most business-to-consumer copywriters focus on the benefits and try to keep the product more or less invisible. For business-to-business copywriters, a detailed description of the product's appearance and features is more applicable.

A short example:

The cardiovascular system of a teenage long-distance runner and a body of steel by doing *absolutely nothing*?

It's now a reality! Revolutionary new machine exercises for you. Now you can add years to your life without flexing a muscle.

2. Put the claims in action – Your next task is to expand the image. Schwartz says that "one of the most effective ways to do this is to put the product in action for your reader. To show, not only how the product looks, and what benefits it gives the reader, but exactly how it does this."

Example:

The RelaxFlex Supreme is based on a newly discovered, cold-fusion principle recently patented by Norwegian scientist, Arnold Decker.

Decker discovered a way to make the cells in your body *exercise themselves*.

All you have to do is lie in the RelaxFlex Supreme Bubble Chamber and press a button and his secret enzyme formula immediately goes to work.

Your cells are given the exercise equivalent of two hours of walking, four hours of swimming and five hours of lifting weights in just 15 minutes ...

... without ever having to move a muscle!

3. Bring in the reader – Schwartz says that if your product lends itself to it "to put your reader right smack in the middle of this product-in-action story and give him a verbal demonstration of what will happen to him the first day he owns that product."

I usually refer to this next step as "making it real for your reader." You help the reader visualize your product's benefits by making your reader the star of a mini-scene about your product.

Example:

Imagine just how much your life will change for the better ...

You come home from a long day's work. You're physically and mentally exhausted. There's a package at your door. It's your RelaxFlex Supreme.

You quickly set it up and experience your first 15-minute session. Instantly your body begins to feel stronger and your self-confidence skyrockets.

You decide to go to the local bar to test out your new look and share your newfound energy with the rest of the human race.

Women, who previously wouldn't give you a second look, now can't take their eyes off you. You feel like a king as they send you over drinks, glances and air kisses in hopes you'll bless them with some small talk or at the bare minimum, a friendly smile.

Men just look on in envy. They recognize you for who you are – a man who takes pride in his muscles and appearance. A RelaxFlex Supreme Man.

4. Show him how to test your claims – The next step Schwartz says is to "turn the demonstration into a test." He writes that you should "let your reader visualize himself proving the performance of your product – gaining its benefits immediately – in the most specific and dramatic way possible."

Example:

From the very first moment you use the RelaxFlex Supreme, your life will forever be changed.

You open up the box, and with the press of a single button, it's ready for you to use.

You lie down in it for the first time. You can actually feel your cells re-energizing themselves. You instantly have more energy. Your stomach muscles seem tighter already.

You can see a faint impression of where your six-pack abs will soon be. Abs that have eluded you for years are now yours with the touch of a button.

Your annoying love handles already seem less significant – they are no match for the RelaxFlex Supreme.

5. Stretch out your benefits in time – It's important to convey to your reader that their life will not just be better the day they receive your product, but every day of their life after that will be enhanced. Schwartz reminds us to show the product at work, not just for an hour or day but over a span of weeks and months so your reader can visualize a "continuous flow of benefits."

Example:

As each day goes by, you receive more compliments. As the weeks, months and years roll by, you actually feel more energized, more full of life than the day before.

Women continue to throw themselves at you.

But the very special woman who is now in your life (thanks to the RelaxFlex Supreme) understands. She realizes it's not your fault. You don't go looking for attention. The blame for this particular "inconvenience" belongs to the RelaxFlex Supreme.

6. Bring in an audience – Next, bring in "other actors besides the reader." Your goal is to provide a fresh new perspective through which your reader can view the product. Doing so, Schwartz says, makes "the product performances become new, vivid completely different again."

There's a variety of ways this can be accomplished – such as survey results, statistics, success stories and celebrity endorsements.

Example:

When Dr. Decker was developing the RelaxFlex Supreme, he tested it out on 100 overweight men and women. Within five days, 92% of the men had lost an average of 20 lbs. – 8% had lost over 30 lbs!

Prior to exposing them to the RelaxFlex Supreme, a series of tests recorded how much weight each person was capable of bench pressing. After just three 15-minute RelaxFlex Supreme sessions, that total shot up 178% for men and an astounding 212% for women.

It's no wonder Dallas Cowboy owner Jerry Jones ordered a RelaxFlex Supreme not only for every player on his roster, but for everyone on the Cowboy staff.

"I'm confident the Cowboys will win at least one more Super Bowl in my lifetime. That's because thanks to the RelaxFlex Supreme there's no doubt in my mind I'll live to be well over one hundred," Jones said recently.

7. Show experts approving – Schwartz reminds us not only to use celebrities and "ordinary people" but to use "experts in the field – professionals – the sophisticated, the discriminating, the blasé" to register their reactions.

Example:

Dr. Laura Snodgrass says the RelaxFlex Supreme is the biggest medical breakthrough since the filtered cigarette.

"Health clubs in the United States and Canada are in big trouble. The cold truth is that people don't want to see unfit people parading around in T-shirts that are too tight for them. Not when they can get the better results by sitting in their RelaxFlex Supreme Bubble Chamber while watching the latest Justin Bieber video and eating all the French fries they want. Very soon sadness as we know it will no longer exist thanks to this amazing machine," Snodgrass says.

8. Compare, contrast, and prove superiority – Schwartz reminds us to highlight the disadvantages of the old product or service side by side with the advantages of the new.

Now this doesn't necessarily mean mentioning a competing product by brand or name. Often that's not appropriate. Your task is to contrast why the new way of doing things (with your product) is much better than the old way (without your product).

Example:

Now, of course, you can stick with your traditional way of keeping in shape. Maybe you currently get up at 5 am and go for a two-mile walk, then hop in your car and go to the gym and work out on a stationary bike for an hour.

But why go through the hassle?

A half-hour spent in the RelaxFlex Supreme Bubble Chamber gives you the equivalent workout of riding a bicycle up and down Mount Everest.

9. Picture the black side, too – Eugene calls it the "Heaven-or-Hell" approach. He reminds us to highlight the negative and to irritate the reader's wound, so to speak. Then you apply the salve that heals it.

Example:

This is your opportunity to eliminate not only the unsightly flab that hangs over your belt, but to never again experience that winded feeling that comes when you bend down to pet the family dog.

10. Show how easy it is to get these benefits – Whenever the product touches the life of your prospect, highlight the ease of use. It could be in a number of areas: price, availability, ease of use, durability, portability, replacement, and maintenance, "even unwrapping the carton it comes in." It's another opportunity to drive home your products benefits.

Example:

One week from today, you could be in a position to push two buttons (one button installs the RelaxFlex Supreme, another turns it on) and lie back and do absolutely nothing – and within two weeks, be as fit or fitter than any Olympic athlete that has ever lived.

The hardest part of your experience will be phoning all your friends and bragging about how awesome your new body is.

11. Use metaphor, analogy, imagination – Schwartz says that while you have to always be truthful, you don't have to stick with raw facts to convey your points. He says there are "infinite opportunities for the use of imagination to represent those facts in more dramatic form, outside of the rigidly realistic approach."

Example:

When Spanish explorer Ponce de Leon (1474 – July 1521) set out on his voyage in 1513 in search of the fountain of youth, he could have saved himself a lot of time and effort by just sending away for a RelaxFlex Supreme.

That it wasn't invented back then matters little. The point is this is your opportunity to come as close to the fountain of youth as humanly possible.

12. Before you're done, summarize – This is pretty standard operating procedure for most copywriters. There are different ways to summarize though. One effective way I've found is to make a list of bullet points of how your reader's life will be improved by the product you're promoting.

Example:

The RelaxFlex Supreme is the only exercise machine you'll ever need to stay permanently in shape and add years to your life. With the RelaxFlex Supreme by your side:

You'll feel more energized, more full of life with each passing day.

You'll look ten, twenty, even a hundred years younger. Many of our customers are initially refused entrance into their own high school reunions!

Never again will a member of the opposite sex look at you like you're the invisible man. There's been a huge paradigm shift. The world now views you as if you're Brad Pitt and rest of the male species (including the real Brad Pitt) is Newman from Seinfeld.

You'll find you can easily outperform snot-nosed teenagers in physical sports well into your retirement years and beyond.

Another way to summarize is to list what the reader gets:

Example:

To quickly recap, you'll receive ...

The RelaxFlex Supreme – The new life-extending exercise machine that keeps you in better shape than most Olympic athletes. Stay in shape by doing *absolutely nothing*.

The PetFlex Supreme – Amazing new exercise machine for your favourite pet. It's great to live to be a hundred, but it will be more fun if "Fido" is right there beside you wagging his tail and licking your face. Also works on cats, parrots, turtles and geckos.

Of course, you can also present a summary to your reader in a couple of paragraphs without using bullets. You'll just want to present the benefits in a new and exciting way.

13. Put your guarantee to work – And finally, Schwartz says to "turn that guarantee into the climax of your ad – the last brief summary of your product's performance – reinforced at every stop by the positive reassertion of that guarantee."

In other words, don't just say "Guaranteed for 30 days. If you're not happy, we'll give you your money back."

Use the guarantee as a way to hit your prospect once again with the benefits he or she will derive from the product you're promoting.

Example:

The RelaxFlex Supreme is guaranteed for two full years. Yes that's right; you can try it for a full two years at our risk!

You can put everything I've said to the test. Feel your muscles surge, experience the increased energy and enthusiasm you have for life – and if you don't agree that you've never felt better, let us know and we'll happily give you all your money back.

As Schwartz writes in Breakthrough Advertising ...

"Advertising is salesmanship in print. Therefore, above everything else, advertising is the literature of desire."

The next sales letter you write, use his 13 techniques as a checklist and chances are you'll do a more comprehensive job when it comes to maximizing the desire your reader feels for the product or service you're promoting.

Published: February 28, 2011

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