

# Developing Experiential Confidence - Being a Fearless Best Friend to Your Prospect

*By Tim Garrett*

I'm sure you've had the experience of meeting up with a best friend you haven't seen for a number of years, and within a very few minutes, it's as if no time had passed at all. You started using familiar language and expressions only the two of you know, recalling shared experiences, and getting so loud that strangers moved a safe distance away.

Your *experiential confidence* in the relationship, during this kind of meeting, is high. You can tap into these same sort of experiences to bring big benefits to your copywriting skills.

As a freelancer, you want your copywriting to exhibit a high degree of *experiential confidence* toward your prospect. It's as *if* they're your best friend or someone you know very well. It's as *if* you're writing to them showing you've been listening, you're there for them, there to help.

So how do you get the *experiential confidence* you need for an unfamiliar prospect? And how do you do it in a relatively short amount of time? After all, you've only, really, just met.

Well, the obvious answer is to research like crazy!

But before I offer suggestions about where to research, I want to offer advice on how to approach research — what to look for — before you ask for that data card, laugh or cry over a blog, or begin sifting through a ton of stats and demographics.

When meeting a best friend you haven't seen for a while, you talk up a storm! When researching a new prospect, you want to get answers to the same sorts of questions you would ask your friend. Your aim is to build an interactive relationship with a real-live person. (By the way, write down everything you learn as you go.)

These are some of the fundamental questions nearly everyone uses to get reacquainted. Use them to guide your research and shape a true-to-life persona for your prospect:

**What's going on? What's doin'? 'Sup? How are you?**

Take your pick. This rhetorical question has never been about a person's physical state but gets the conversation going. You've asked this a million times, so go with it now. In short, think demographics and data card — big picture items: Age, gender, household income, occupation. Are they married? How long? Do they have kids? How many? Make this persona your new next-door neighbor. Get to know them.

### **What's happened to you? Why?**

From good fortune or bad, your prospect has been jarred out of their everyday life by a *precipitating event* — this **cause** changes everything. This is at the heart of your client's business objective and why they hired you. Your client sees potential for great things because of a trend in the prospect's behavior or an opportunity within a set of circumstances facing them, as stated in the client's product overview. What *you* see, empathizing with your prospect like you would a best friend, is the source of their concern. Find out what's bothering them. Piece together their story from beginning to end. You can find a prospect's situation, often eloquently and emotionally stated, in blogs, product reviews, and in one of my favorites — book reviews like those on Amazon. Look for books that specifically address a situation targeted by the client's products/services.

### **What's eating you?**

When you consider how some emotions and feelings can consume our resources, this is an apt way of asking your prospect how they feel about their situation. **Motive** — the thing that moves one to answer a call-to-action — originates deep within us. More empathy, please. "Go there" with your prospect. Pay special attention to any content you find that mentions or implies emotions. Phrases like, "chilled me to the bone," "put a smile on my face," and "brought tears to my eyes," all hint at a person's inner feelings. In addition, lesser emotions play their roles in more dimensional copywriting, as well.

Attune your senses to subtleties and variations in emotions. Make a list of them and consult a medical dictionary or medical magazine articles for the emotions' characteristics. Your prospect will be moved by your insight into their specific emotions and manifestations, and will more easily trust you ... just like a best friend would.

### **What do you want? What do you *really* want?**

There are goals, and then there are GOALS! Some we speak of openly and others we only dare hope for. Let these play off each other. Your prospect may want to lose 10 pounds, but what they *really* want (**internal goal**), is to walk down the beach in the skimpiest bikini they can find or play a tennis tournament without fainting from exhaustion. You'll need to dig wide and deep through many sources to find these gems, but when your prospect reads them, they'll know you "get it."

### **What have you tried to do to make things better for yourself?**

When talking to a friend, this is where they pour out their heart in a flood of the, "I've tried this-es." When doing research, key into the emotions of disappointment and exasperation around these **activities** and the specific **manner** in which your prospect has tried them. Professional endorsements, interviews, and testimonials often mention why people nearly

gave up their goals before finding something (your client's products/services) that worked for them.

### What's keeping you from resolving this?

"A" versus "B," and oftentimes, versus "C" scenarios, often complicated by endless pro and con lists, can easily stop anyone in their tracks. If you can delve into your prospect's **internal conflict**, show that you have unique insight, you'll really gain their trust. After thoroughly familiarizing yourself with the conflict, win them over with an insightful and unique headline, specifically targeting their conflict.

### What do you fear losing, or hope to gain?

We're talking **stakes and consequences**, here. Coupled with the potent feelings of fear and hope, the potential for loss and gain set up a seeming contradictory state for your prospect. Recognize the presence of excitement or dread, or both, and play one against the other in your copywriting. Testimonials often mention trepidation around taking an action, but then go on to mention the prospect's delight when a big payoff came later. A list of benefits will help assure your prospect, whereas consequences help to overcome inaction.

### Let me help you.

Imagine that sometime during the Q&A interaction with your prospect, the two of you decide to sit and finish your heart-to-heart over a cup of coffee or glass of wine. Then questions stop. You know what to do. You reach out, take their hand to offer the reassurance. If one had the means, what best friend would not seize the moment and say the kind imperative, "Let me help you."?

At this point-of-sale moment, a critical event expressed in your copywriting's closing, we must convince our prospect that we hold the **solution** to their situation right here, right now. Do this like you would when talking to a best friend, because you have to genuinely want to help your prospect in order for this to succeed

The solution, of course, is found in your client's products/services. Threading the *Unique Selling Proposition*, benefits, proofs, and sources lending credibility throughout your copywriting will stimulate your prospect to answer the call-to-action (**resolution**). Imagine their sigh of relief when they realize you've given them just what they need.

Now, let's bring it all together with an overall view applicable to any prospect in their dramatic situation, a complete picture but still seen from a distance. Later, we'll zoom in to look at examples using specific details, but for now, try this:

**Situation** = Because this is happening (**Cause**) to my **prospect/best friend**, +

He/She has this feeling(s) and emotion(s) (**Motive**), +

And therefore, my friend must have this (**Internal Goal**). +

Although my friend has tried this and this and this (**Activities and Manner**), +

He/She is torn by these choices (**Internal Conflict, Stakes** and **Consequences**).

**Resolution** = When my prospect/best friend accepts my help (**Solution**).

Let's look at a couple of examples to see how these questions can inform your copywriting. As you tweak and develop the answers to these questions, you'll become more conversant with the situation and resolution of your prospect's story ... just like you would with a friend.

### Example #1

Situation =

My **prospect** plans the yearly vacation for her retirement group, but because of her heavy schedule of leisurely events, she has not booked a tour guide (**Cause**). When she realizes her oversight, she is distraught about the potential of disappointing those who depend on her. (**Motive**). She wants to fix her oversight to please her friends and also to maintain the perception that she is on top of everything (**Internal Goal**). She is torn by what to do. She wasn't happy with the tour guide service from last year, but she doesn't have any trusted references for an alternative. The one word-of-mouth reference she has is too expensive ( **Activities and Manner**). If she doesn't find a good option, she'll lose social status within her community (**Stakes and Consequences**).

Resolution =

You save the day by making her aware of a small group (your client) with a lot of experience leading tours for seniors, and for a small fee, this situation could be resolved with a top-notch professional service that has the ideal experience.

Imagine how ridiculous this example would be if you didn't research and understand the prospect's motive and internal goal. You might imagine her laying around the pool all day doing nothing to solve the problem ... and then you wouldn't know how to help her solve the problem.

### Example #2

Situation =

My **prospects** are all pet owners like myself, some of whom are losing their pets — companions for various lengths of time, some for up to 20 years — to disease, old age, accidents. (**Cause**). Some are feeling depressed, others can't sleep, some are so distracted they're missing work (**Motive**). They must find relief and peace of mind or things may escalate, possibly to losing jobs, a relationship, their health (**Internal Goal** and **Stakes** and **Consequences**). These prospects have tried everything from talking to friends and clergy, to taking yoga and meditation, to increasing medication beyond what was prescribed (**Activities and Manner**).

Resolution =

After commiserating with your prospects, you help them by saying, "Your pet wouldn't want you to suffer." After describing the benefits of attending pet loss therapy sessions offered by a consortium of veterinarians at very reasonable rates, you offer them, as a premium, a copy of *The Pet Loss Companion*, a book written by family therapists who run pet loss groups, endorsed by a well-regarded pet advocate, and filled with testimonials by people helped by one another through their grief. Your prospects are so moved by your empathy, understanding, and excerpts of the book, each one immediately calls for the next available therapy session.

## In Conclusion ...

I'll close with Nick Usborne's advice on finishing things — "We can't all be the very best at what we do. But, we can execute our work to the very best of our ability." When you do the hard work, your *experiential confidence* will soar, and then you'll be able to execute like never before.

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