

The Most Important Direct Mail Copy You Will Ever Write

By Richard Spring

It's amazing how many aspiring copywriters don't practice what they preach when it comes to finding the work that will either launch their careers or add to their roster of clients.

Your own Katie Yeakle will confirm that I recently submitted a job request for her to post on DirectResponseJobs.com. Maybe you saw this post:

Southern California ad agency is looking for long-form freelance copywriters, both for direct mail and Web, who might also write radio spots to drive prospects either to call or to go to the long-form Web copy.

Products are primarily high-ticket purchases for the home: solar, replacement windows, designer furnishings, exterior paint, luxury mattresses, and more.

The Agency's Creative Director (and co-owner) knows good copy. Right now he writes all his own stuff, but the agency is growing too fast for that to continue.

Interested writers can submit samples to: RS281@aol.com.

We'll respond to everyone who applies.

Within two weeks, we received 22 responses to the post.

That's the good news.

The other news is ... *nineteen of them were submitted with cover letters no self-respecting copywriter would ever submit as a sample of their work!*

Hard to imagine. You're looking for an assignment from a big ad agency. It's the kind of assignment that can change your career. And this is how you introduce yourself (this is an actual response we received):

"To Whom It May Concern,

Greetings from Ohio,

My name is XYZ and I would be very interested in writing

some direct mail copy for you. You can see my sample

portfolio at (XYZ).com.

If you have any questions, you can contact me at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

Thanks for your time and I hope to hear from you soon.

In the immortal words of every teenager with a cell phone: O.M.G.

Here's another one:

My name is XYZ. I'm an AWAI-trained direct response

copywriter.

I want to thank you for your time in reading my email.

After reading your posting on the directresponsejobs.com

board – I understand that you're looking for a long-term

copy writer who is of quality, not simply of "quantity."

I believe in quality over quantity. I believe there has to be

value in what you read — short or long copy.

About myself, I'm currently a freelance copy writer with 2xRevenue [?] writing various health/supplement ad copy/emails/VSLs via abcd.com.

My role, aside from producing various content and editing, is not only a self-driven, punctual, and deadline-meeting role but also very a creative one. All the research I find is the paint to my canvas which enables me to produce good quality work.

I know you're looking for someone who's not afraid to communicate at any level. I can only show you that I'm a communicator — to you and to anyone else.

To close, I want to tell you I'm a hard worker and will continue to be a hard worker even when challenged and even then, I push through.

Any portfolio samples given upon request.

Thank you for reading and I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

XYZ

This aspiring copywriter used "I" or "me" no fewer than seventeen times in his cover letter. He never once mentioned what he could do for the agency or its clients.

The agency's response: "I won't even look at his copy samples just on principle."

One more:

Hi there,

I came across your freelance job posting on Direct Response Jobs.

I'm a direct response copywriter. I've worked mainly in the health and financial space, but I'm very interested in what you guys are doing as I've spent a lot of time in construction throughout my life. So I'm familiar with furnishings and energy efficient technologies.

*I've attached some samples for you **even though it might not be a 100% fit in what you're looking for.***

***Would you mind sending a few examples of what you consider long-form copy over? I just want to get an idea of what you guys are looking for** to see if it would be a good fit. I might have more samples **inline** with what you want/need.*

Let me know if you have any questions. Just reply back to this email or call xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Best,

XYZ

By now you get the idea. Of the 22 responses, 19 were very similar to these.

I repeat: Oh. My. God.

The other three were just "OK." Not one said,

Dear Agency Creative Director,

Love the clients you described. Your "niche" is brilliant. Can't wait to sink my teeth into solar or major purchases for the home — right up my alley!

Attached find two writing samples. One generated \$X Million in sales, and it's still being mailed. The other generated a cost-per-lead of \$8, which is half what my client expected in his wildest dreams.

Want good copy that generates results? Give me 25% down on the fee we agree to, and I'll take the rest when you accept my copy. Beyond the small "down payment," if you don't like my work, simply don't pay me!

I'm at your service and thanks for the opportunity!

Best,

Joe Copywriter

So to all you copywriters out there who respond to job postings (or who just want to get more work): Your cover letter is ...

Direct Mail Copy!

In fact, it's easily the most important Direct Mail Copy you will ever write!

So take the "I" out of it and tell them what's in it for them.

Think about the type of letter that's going to get a response.

Make them an offer they can't refuse!!!

You get the idea: I mean, why spend all that money and do all that studying and learn all the wonderful things AWAI teaches you — only to go brain dead when the most important time to use it comes along?

... and if you're interested in copywriting assignments from a big and growing Southern California Ad Agency, you know what to do!

Epilogue: We ultimately received about 25 applications. Thirteen submitted actual spec copy. As an FYI, and to be expected: some of the submissions were really "raw," others were well presented and showed considerable time spent, and we've likely uncovered one or two who will do work for the Agency.

(Richard Spring is a former partner of the legendary marketing guru Jay Abraham. He's launched several successful businesses and written a bit of copy in his own right — generating millions of dollars in sales for a broad range of clients over a 35-year career as entrepreneur/marketing consultant/business owner. Richard says the job of copywriter for the SoCal Ad Agency, on whose Board he sits, is still open.

Send your cover letter to RS281@aol.com if you're interested.)

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3 Responses to "The Most Important Direct Mail Copy You Will Ever Write"

Greetings Richard, All I can say is "ouch!" I wasn't one who submitted, but had I done so, I'd probably received an OMG too.

Your critique is immensely helpful. Thanks for sharing.

Now to sharpen the cover letter skills...

Guest (Scot F Martin) – over a year ago

Richard, I agree with Scott's comment

But may I humbly suggest you brought some of this response on yourself. One of the first rules of good copywriting is establishing trust.

A "Southern California ad agency" is what we typically see on Craigslist or eLance. Is this a serious search, or someone casting for email addresses?

They you ask for the order with no name, and signed with an "aol.com" address.

Showing some respect may have generated some better responses.

Respectfully yours, David

David Tomen – over a year ago

Great article Richard . . . exactly the information I needed for cover letter inspiration! Thank you for this well-written, motivating and value-packed piece.

June Frost – over a year ago

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