

8 Ways to Spot Dominant Emotions Your Prospects Already Have That Could Drive Your Response Rates Through the Roof – PART 1

By Clayton Makepeace

I'm asked one question about copywriting more often than all the others combined. The question is ...

"How do you KNOW what your prospects are feeling?"

Today I'm going to share the first 4 of my 8 personal strategies. Come back next week for the final 4.

1. Walk a mile in your prospect's shoes.

If you have a vivid imagination, you'll be surprised at how many of your prospect's resident emotions you can identify simply by thinking.

Close your eyes and put yourself into the prospect's shoes. Let the people you're about to speak to speak to you first.

As I sat down to begin writing my first *Health & Healing* promotion, I did exactly that. I leaned back in my chair, closed my eyes and mentally inserted myself into the shoes of a 50- to 70-year-old man (our target demographic) whose life was plagued by chronic health problems ... endless doctor visits ... taking fistfuls of costly prescription drugs every day ... suffering horrific side effects from those drugs ... and never really getting any better.

I saw myself showing up at the doctor's office on time, cooling my heels in the waiting room reading dull magazines for an hour, waiting for my name to be called.

I vicariously experienced being ushered into the exam room – and then, made to wait even longer.

Finally, I saw the doctor hurriedly burst through the door, ask me a cursory question or two, scribble a few chicken scratches on a prescription pad and vanish as quickly as he had come.

As I saw myself experiencing what my prospect experiences every day, I started feeling the emotions he was feeling: *Frustration* with health problems that his doctors couldn't seem to cure ... *afraid* of the consequences of failing health ... *exhausted* by doctor visits that interrupted his life ... worried about the cost and side effects of conventional medicine ... *embarrassed*



by the intrusive poking and prodding ... and *disgusted* with doctors who never seemed to take a personal interest in him.

Wow. Did *that* exercise ever bring my copy to life!

Being the prospect is even easier when writing for the investment and finance markets. You don't even need an imagination. You can experience *precisely* what your prospect is feeling every day of the year.

The very first thing I tell every young copywriter who's eager to break into the investment newsletter promotion field – before we even begin talking about the writing process or the principles of great direct-response copy – is this:

"The first thing you do, open a brokerage account. Take all the money you have in the world and put it *into* that account. No fair using a few hundred bucks you wouldn't miss if you lost it. You've got to have enough at stake so that you'll be thrilled when your principal grows and crushed when it declines."

"Then, start investing. Get advice from a broker and follow it with some of your money.

"Subscribe to a couple of investment advisory newsletters, and follow the guru's advice with another chunk of your money.

"Then, do some research on your own, and invest the rest of your money into stocks and mutual funds that you like."

That's it. I don't have to say another word. Nobody who takes that advice, and follows it to the letter, ever has to wonder how investors feel – ever again.

Suddenly, CNBC is the most riveting channel on TV and the thrill you get from reading *Forbes* makes *Playboy* seem dull by comparison!

The announcement of a quarter-point interest rate hike that once passed virtually unnoticed suddenly sends chills down your spine. A half-point hike gets you quaking in your boots.

When someone talks about an investor who struck it rich, you hang on every word. And you have an irresistible urge to knock on wood when you hear about someone who was taken to the cleaners.

And suddenly, the rumor of soaring earnings at a sexy young company gets you almost as excited as ... well, I'll leave it up to you to fill in your own metaphor ...

Then, one day, things *really* get interesting. You find a monthly brokerage statement lurking in your mailbox. How does that make you feel?

Are you eager to open it? Or like hiding it quick before your spouse – who secretly suspects you're not that bright but loves you anyway – sees it?

Now, you've opened and read the thing. How does *that* feel? Are you thinking that silk-screening it on a tee-shirt and hitting the nearest bar will help you meet chicks? Would plastering Xerox copies all over your bedroom walls get you lucky tonight?

Or would burying it along with Rover's droppings in the backyard be a better idea?

Or, do you just feel disappointed – like you took a huge risk, suffered through intense emotional highs and lows, wasted a whole month of your life, and have nothing to show for it?

Now – and this will take some imagination for younger people – imagine that you have all these feelings and you're just a few short years from retirement. Every month that flies by brings you 30 days closer to having to live on income generated by the paltry balance on that brokerage statement.

And now, as you sit there with your results in hand, how do you feel?

How do you feel about your broker? Is he a saint? Or a bum?

What do you want to do to those gurus whose advice you followed? Kiss them? Curse them?

Does this experience – whether good or bad – leave you wanting to find other investment newsletters and give them a try? Or is it convincing you that you could do better on your own?

Whatever your answers, chances are, they're the answers the vast majority of your prospects would give, too.

Since they were investing in the same markets you were, at the same time you were, the odds are that many, if not most of them, shared similar experiences – and have similar feelings about those experiences.

Now, since I write mostly for the health and investment markets, it only makes sense that I'd draw these examples from what I know. But no matter what you're selling ... no matter who you're selling it to, the process is the same.

Putting yourself into your prospect's shoes can get you a long, long way toward connecting your product's strongest benefits with your prospect's most compelling emotions.

2. Chat up your friends and family.

Everyone you know is a consumer. Chances are, some of them are even prospects for the product you're writing for now. Who knows? Their names could even be on the mailing list your copy is going to be mailed to!

They're close by, dying to hear from you anyway, and their input costs you nothing.

Ask about their experiences and feelings relative to the things your product does – the benefits it offers.

Which benefits have the greatest value to them – and why?

What would prevent them from buying it from you – right now?

How do they feel about other products like yours?

As you talk, be especially sensitive to the intensity with which they respond to your questions. It will give you clues to which of these thoughts and feelings are most dominant and which are not.

3. Talk to strangers.

I know your mom told you not to – but really: It's OK. *This is research!*

When someone asks me what I do for a living, I simply say something like, "Right now, I'm writing about _____. " And fill in the blank with whatever it is I am writing about.

Sometimes, it almost feels like my conversation partner has just been hit by an adrenalin dart. Everything he or she knows, thinks, has experienced and feels relative to the subject comes pouring out in torrents.

Sometimes, they even write my headlines for me!

4. Immerse yourself in the popular culture.

When I'm beginning work on a new package, I often start by taking the day off. I don't mean "off-off" – just out of the office.

I clamber up into my trusty pick-up and tool on over to the Barnes & Noble ... make a beeline for the magazine section ... and start scooping up everything I think my prospects might be reading.

If I'm writing a package on a health product, I start with all the magazines relating to health. An investment product? All the money mags. And so on.

That's my *psychographic* pile.

Next, I look at all the magazines designed for the demographic I'm going to be addressing. Women ... men ... senior citizens ... whatever.

Finally, I browse the book sections for titles that connect with the subject at hand. And finally, I go through the rack that features *The New York Times* non-fiction bestsellers.

I pick up anything I even remotely suspect my prospects may be reading. And no, I don't cheap out and browse them in the store. I pay up and take them home. What the heck – it's a write-off. Uncle Sam's paying for nearly half of them anyway.

As I detest shopping, I try to get all of this done in a couple of hours. "Find it, kill it, drag it back to the cave," I always say.

Then, I settle down in front of the TV and flip over to a cable network that's targeted at my audience. CNBC, Lifetime, Discovery/Health, whatever.

I grab my highlighter, an X-Acto knife, a pen, a note pad and go to work on my pile of research ...

- **I look for topics that are covered more than once or twice.** It's a great clue that this is a major issue my market is consumed with. If it's a situation likely to continue for some time, it may be a great theme or sidebar for my copy.
- **I note the tone of the articles on these topics.** Is the tone of the articles excited? Sarcastic? Angry? This, too, is a great clue to how my prospects may be feeling about the topic at hand – emotions I can stroke to better grab their attention and keep them reading.
- **I look for phrases that capture the essence and energy of what I'm going to be saying powerfully and quickly.** The best ones may become subheads or even a headline!
- **I look for ads that appear several times in the magazines I bought.** Studying these ads gives me tons of ideas for the types of emotional appeals, sales arguments and benefits my prospects are already responding best to.
- **Finally, I devour my stack of books, doing much the same thing.** Scanning the table of contents for phrases that capture the emotion I'm trying to connect with ... looking for tone elements that are appropriate for my message ... and if the book directly addresses the things I'll be writing about, picking up some great pieces of data to add credibility to my copy.

How helpful is all of this – really? I'll give you an example: When I launched Christiane Northrup's *Health Wisdom for Women* several years back, a single book entitled, as I recall, *Misdiagnosis – The Treatment of Womanhood as a Disease* – told me pretty much everything I needed to know to get in touch with my prospect's feelings relating to her medical care.

The launch package was another grand-slam, generating a 4% response. How were the royalties? *Humongous*, thank you very much!

Why is this simple, one-day process worth its weight in gold? Simple: Every one of the super-giant publishing companies behind these magazines spends millions on customer research. Looking at what they publish is like getting to listen in on their focus groups with my prospects – free!

Furthermore, each of these magazines aggressively tests the fascinations on their covers to determine which ones sell the most magazines. When you're reading these covers, you're not only looking at millions of dollars of research, you're looking at years of results.

Plus, of course, each of the repeat advertisers in these magazines have spent years and probably millions to determine what kinds of headlines, leads and copy tone produce the greatest response from my prospects. Again – pure gold.

Ditto for the books. Book publishing is one of the most cut-throat, competitive businesses going. The best book covers and liner notes reflect the very best marketing intelligence the publishers have at their command.

... Which equals? ... Anyone? ... Anyone? Right! *More free research for me!*

These four strategies I've just given you ... in themselves they give you more insight into your prospect than most copywriters will ever get.

But you're not like most copywriters. You want to write mega-hits. So come back next week to learn my final-four ... secrets that ensure you *will* understand your prospect's dominant emotions better even than he may even know himself.

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2 Responses to "8 Ways to Spot Dominant Emotions Your Prospects Already Have That Could Drive Your Response Rates Through the Roof - PART 1"

Hi Clayton..PART ONE..

I ask seemingly stupid questions, because I merely don't understand. Under #4: You state, "..the launch package was another grand-slam, generating a 4% response." How come that number sounds unboastingly drab?

This particular article is by far the one I have spent most of my time on. It speaks to me, and I wish its dynamic to compel me. I do hope anything I may say is appropriately UNrude..as I'm only speaking my raw, true thoughts on what I observe--not judge.

soarbolde – over a year ago

PART TWO..HI Clayton..

AWAI and its' writers are in the business of selling/marketing/persuasion; and you, yourself state, "..free..pure gold..listen in on focus groups..free research.." Thus, does a novice really, really need to purchase AWAI's programs to learn, to be successful, when we get it for free in these newsletters, you tubes, websites?

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