

How to Make Every Sales Letter a Blockbuster

By Paul Hollingshead

As a copywriter you know about all the elements that go into a successful promotion. You know about writing conversationally ... making bold promises ... piling on the proof ... making the offer ... and closing the sale.

But, what makes the prospect want to read *your* promotion?

The headline and lead? Yes ... but most importantly, it's the idea behind the headline and the lead — the concept around which you wrap the whole package — that gets a prospect interested in your promotion.

And not just an idea, a *Big Idea*.

Packages based on weak ideas typically don't perform well ... and they definitely don't perform as well as they could. And you can't make a career writing packages like that.

But when you "get" the concept of the Big Idea — when you can identify and develop powerful, compelling concepts for your promotions — you'll wind up making a lot of money.

Keep in mind ...

Of every tool and technique copywriters use to write copy, implementing the Big Idea effectively can have the strongest impact on package performance.

Okay, so maybe you can get away with weaker packages in *some* markets. But I know you want to write copy for markets where packages mail in the millions and you can earn tens of thousands of dollars in royalties.

That means writing for the competitive markets — and *that* means giving your promotion every advantage you can so it will stand up to the competition.

And, something else happens. When you know how to anchor your promotion with a Big Idea, headlines come easier. Leads just flow onto the page, and your letter falls into place.

That's because good ideas breed good copy. You're excited about it. You believe in it. And, I can tell you from personal experience, my best results have always come when I've been most excited about the product I'm writing about and the Big Idea behind it.

A little later, I'm going to tell you how to get a special report I've written that will help you master the Big Idea. But before I show you how to get it, let's look at ...

The 4 Elements That Are Crucial to Your Letter's Success

Here's a system I've come up with that assigns points to the four main elements of a promotional letter. We're not going to get too analytical about it, but it helps you see the importance of each part of the letter.

1. The Big Idea (30 points)

This is the idea that drives the package, sets it apart from all the clutter, and grabs the reader's attention.

2. The Headline (25 points)

The headline captures the Big Idea in an intriguing way, makes your reader want to learn more, and hints toward a promise or benefit.

3. The Lead (25 points)

The lead sets the tone of your letter, establishes rapport with your reader, fleshes out the Big Idea, makes it real, and delivers a powerful benefit or promise.

4. Everything Else (20 points)

Everything else is the nuts and bolts of the letter — all the things you have to include for the letter to finish doing its job.

Now, we can quibble about how many points to assign each element. But after having written many controls — and many packages that weren't so successful — and after having reviewed hundreds, maybe even thousands, of other winning promotions, I'm confident that my point-value system is pretty close.

Here's how the points translate to success or failure of the letter:

- 100 = Home-run hit!
- 75 = Good, solid, money-making package
- 50 = So-so, breakeven at best
- 30 = Most likely a loser
- < 30 = Out-and-out bomb

If you write a package where all the elements are perfect — 100 points — you have a blockbuster. The promotion brings in a flood of orders, and suddenly you're known all over the industry as a great copywriter.

At 75 points, your package is a good, solid money-maker. Most successful copywriters — myself included — consistently write packages at this level. We can stay in this business because we can write decent packages that keep our clients happy.

A 50-point package will just barely break even. It's not a good place to be, because if you keep churning out promotions like this, you become known as an average copywriter.

Down at 30 points or below, forget it — we don't even need to talk about that.

How to Write a Blockbuster Promotion

Using my point system, you can see that if you nail the Big Idea, you're nearly a third of the way toward writing a winning package.

Now, stop and think about this a second. If you *don't* take the time to find a Big Idea that captures your reader's interest, you're putting yourself at a serious disadvantage. That's why many promotions bomb — they don't have a unique "hook," and readers who have seen it all just chuck them in the trash.

Because this is such a crucial part of the promotion, I spend about 30% of my time on it. Makes sense, right? If the Big Idea accounts for 30% of the promotion's success, you should devote a large chunk of your time to finding and developing it.

Once you find your Big Idea, you then turn it into a headline. That's where your skills as a copywriter really come into play. But if you can succinctly capture your Big Idea in an intriguing headline that draws the reader in, your package is now at the 55-point mark in my point system — above break even.

Now for the lead. You can really blow it here, because if you don't quickly start proving your case and promising a benefit, you'll lose your reader. But a Big Idea makes writing a strong lead so much easier. With a compelling lead, you can add another 25 points.

Big Idea ... powerful headline ... compelling lead: That adds up to 80 points!

As for the rest, you want to do as good a job as possible there. But even if some spots are weak — say, your guarantee isn't so hot or you don't have great testimonials — you can still have a package that racks up well over 80 points. And, if you work hard and nail everything else, bingo! You've got yourself a blockbuster.

Okay, so you know that a Big Idea is crucial to the success of your package, especially in areas where the competition is fierce, such as financial and health.

By now, I bet you're eager to find out exactly what a Big Idea is ... and how you can craft your own Big Ideas.

I don't have room here to tell you everything you'll need to know. But don't worry, I've asked Katie to give you access to my special report called ***The "Big Idea" – How to Find and Develop a Captivating Idea That Sets Your Promotion Apart From the Crowd***. It's free to you as an AWAI member.

No strings attached. Well, one. To get the report, you have to [click this link](#). Once you do that, the report is yours ... and you're on your way to making everything you write a winner.

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2 Responses to "How to Make Every Sales Letter a Blockbuster"

Hello Will, It is an excellent issue.

As a new member, I get a hard time finding THE BIG IDEA.

That is why I got The Barefoot Magazine. Getting your first Client, Money Making Website. Actually this morning at 9:20AM, I Just purcharsed The Barefoot Writer Club.

I needcto follow the footstep with the experts like Master Paul, Katie, Rebecca, Mindy and yourself.Have good day. GOD BLESS. Jane as Jennie

jennie – over a year ago

Great article.

** I read it last week, and I read it again this week, is a keeper.

** I am NEW, just getting started, in fact trying to contact first clients now.

** My issue is I am an Internet Researcher.

Dale-NoMoHype

Guest (NoMoHype) – over a year ago

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