

Don't Be Fooled by the 'Big Lie' of Copywriting

By Will Newman

Yesterday, I shared with you [one of Mark Ford's foundational secrets for successful persuasive writing](#): the Rule of One.

I told you then I'd be sharing a few essential secrets covered in the *Circle of Success Targeted Learning Programs* over the next three days.

Today: One of the biggest lies told to new copywriters.

Well, 'lies' might be a bit harsh. But if you research 'emotions and copywriting' on the Internet, you'll get hundreds (or more) so-called experts giving you misleading information. And that comes as close to lying as one can get without trampling on the truth.

That lie: If you want to grab your prospect emotionally, harness fear and greed.

Fear and greed. Yes, powerful emotions. But in yesterday's post, I asked you to come back today to learn about copywriting's biggest lie. Did that cause you to feel fear? Greed? Or maybe curiosity?

Well-crafted headlines and leads targeting other emotions can pull prospects into a promotion as effectively as fear or greed. For instance ...

**Tennessee trucker makes
\$1,400 a night in his sleep!**

One of the 'fear and greed' champions might say this headline talks about money, so it inspires greed. Balderdash! The primary emotion it stimulates is curiosity.

"Hmm," the prospect thinks, "how did he do it? Could I do it?" That curiosity does tap into the desire to do well financially. We all want to do well financially. Why? To provide for our families. To have a comfortable retirement. To live *the writer's life*.

Does that rise to the level of greed? Hardly.

Or what about this headline for a very successful alternative health control we examine in the Leads Targeted Learning Program ...

In the future, this is how people will soothe still joints and ease discomfort.



Will Newman

Fear? Greed? Not on your life!

The copywriter, Kent Komae, tapped into concern, empathy, and a desire to have one's joint pain relieved.

We're complex creatures, we humans. We experience happiness, sadness, empathy, loneliness, a desire to succeed, a need to be recognized. We experience a *huge* parade of emotions every day.

"C-level" copywriters fall back on the 'old reliables' of fear and greed. And while those two emotions can power some successful promotions, you'll miss huge opportunities to write successful copy if they're the only emotions in your toolbox.

So, how do you figure out which emotions to target when you write?

By getting to know the most important person in your professional life. And it isn't some copywriting expert. That person is much closer to you than that. I'll introduce you to that person tomorrow.

Until then, let us know what you think about today's article. Comment below.

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17 Responses to "Don't Be Fooled by the 'Big Lie' of Copywriting"

Very good, the one really important thing that we all should be doing is to seek to serve each other, with our words, or with our ointments, L.O.L..to know who our audience is, and what they really feel, and desire is the whole point. Hopefully in showing caring, by meeting needs we will make the world a little better place, for us all...

Guest (BEAR) – over a year ago

Great article Will. The fear - greed polarity has gone mainstream. Every day when I check 401K and investment results, there is a fear-greed meter showing either extreme as the main elements governing the markets.

[FROM WILL: It gets a little boring; doesn't it?]

mike1000 – over a year ago

I joined COS this am!! Looking forward to studying wth you, heard so many good things about you! Also hope to get to meet you at Bootcamp!

[FROM WILL: Welcome! I'll be at Bootcamp, so please come up and introduce yourself. If you need some time to chat, we can arrange it there. I look forward to seeing you.]

BAS – over a year ago

Hi Mr Will Newman,

I thank YOU very much for your information.

As a foreigner I am trying to learn different type of "WRITING RULES".I am not dependent on making money by "COPY WRITING".As an AWAI member I read Your letters with great interest.I am not able to "BUY or PAY" any program.In our country it is forbidden to buy or sell any sort of credit cards.I apologize for being too calm.I am a product manager.

Yours faithful friend and admirer,

Ali Rely.

[FROM WILL: Thank you for your kind words, Ali. I'm glad my articles are informative for you. Please keep in touch.]

Guest (Ali Rely) – over a year ago

Whew! I have a hard time promoting fear and greed. I try to eliminate them from my life, so why would I try to stir them up in others' lives? Thank you for telling me it can be different!

I'm betting the person you will reveal tomorrow who is very important in our professional life, is ourselves. We have to write from who we are or the audience will sense it and not respond with their true selves. Although we may twist some arms, it doesn't make for repeat customers.

[FROM WILL: Fear and greed can be good emotions to use to sell certain products. But if you are the type of person who tires of that approach, trying to adopt it would be counterproductive. It would be hard for you to write truly convincing copy. So you're free to use any of the other myriad emotions in our lives.]

HappyCat – over a year ago

What a wonderful article!

When I first heard about copywriting, the idea of encouraging people's greed didn't sit well with me.

We are complex creatures - not just scared and greedy! Realizing this will help your prospect find what will really make his life better and your client's business successful.

That's the writer's life for me!

[FROM WILL: Before the great recession, I used it to advocate the idea that people aren't greedy. Because of the recession proved me wrong. But the people you will be writing to don't fall into those categories.]

Leanna – over a year ago

Will. How about the other "big lie" of copywriting - that it's easy to make a living as a freelance copywriter, because they're in high demand.

I've been copywriting for 15 years, served clients like Dell, IBM, Cisco, but never found the "high demand" for my services that AWAI promises is out there. It's a day-to-day struggle to find clients. Most companies don't have an ongoing demand for copywriting, or if they do, they have in-house writers or marketing agencies. How's that for a "big lie?"

Rob Lindsay – over a year ago

Yes, pain and pleasure can arise from any emotion. It all depends on what defines those two for an individual or persona.

[FROM WILL: A good response to those who preach that fear and greed are the only emotions worth targeting might be to quote an old advertising maxim "sex sells." And sex barely scratches the surface of the many emotions that rule our lives.]

teejay – over a year ago

I believe that circumstances & a fast pace world we live programmed to move fast and outta fear even though we know better or may not want to be moved from these areas it is adapt to survive. majority face,we live in a time that is fear runned rampid greed pushed based on need verses values.Some of my greatest mentors an learning opportunities grabbed my attention through tactics got me hook line and sinker then to turn valuable information and content around for personal growth and world betterment and learning how I can become the person who deserves because we all need.Point being sometimes trickery leads to amazing breakthroughs.

[FROM WILL: I'm not really comfortable with the word 'trickery.' To me that carries the connotation of dishonesty. Good copywriters are honest and I return. But verbal sleight-of-hand that leads a prospect to better her life can be very effective. Thanks for your comment.]

Guest (Alisha) – over a year ago

It's me again, I always enjoy your writings, and get a lot out them. I'm just really getting my business off the ground. I've read a few books and one of the better ones is by: Ray Edwards book; How to write copy that sells. A lot of templates, examples, and straight to the point. I have actually started gone back to read my copy writing excellration program. To get some more bases from it. I'm a PHD, PHY.D, so I tend to make things just a little harder than they need to be. Dr. J

[FROM WILL: I chuckled at your last comment. The resources you mentioned can be very effective. However, since you already have the Accelerated Program, I recommend sticking with that all the way through to ground yourself thoroughly in the basics of successful copywriting.]

Guest (Dr Jackson) – over a year ago

I am very happy to hear someone say that something else than fear or greed can be used in copywriting. There may be plenty of other people who, like me, get turned off by fear and greed ads.

[FROM WILL: Validation for your idea can be seen by the other members who've left their feelings about the one-dimensional aspect of appealing only to fear and greed.]

aflanders – over a year ago

Well said , as usual , Will. I think that pretty much No amount of emotionalism is too much , so long as you are accurate , telling the truth , and your facts are good.

[FROM WILL: Accuracy, the truth, and having your facts right: You are preaching the gospel of good copywriting.]

Guest (Barbara McCarty) – over a year ago

Interesting. Curiosity can indeed lead one to take action - just for the joy of discovery. Sometimes it can be difficult to tell the difference between the fear&greed and the curiosity marketing. My guess would be that the most successful copywriters tap into all of the above in appropriate proportions.

[FROM WILL: I've always disliked the old maxim of "curiosity killed the cat." If it weren't for curiosity, we wouldn't have had the wheel, the telephone, or the transistor (which arose out of the curiosity of the men and women who invented quantum physics). Curiosity rules!]

Luigi111 – over a year ago

Hi Will: I love the Rule of One. I agree 100% that that works, as I tend to talk like that. Now with Mr. Ford's label, I can do it intentionally in my copy. Also, the amount of emotions I deal with in a day are definitely not fear and greed, but I realize that we as humans are all looking for the same things. I believe that when you proofread your copy, you should be curiously comfortable as well.

P.S. I would like to invite you to visit my Blog. ashowerofthoughts.wordpress.com Please comment

[FROM WILL: Excellent blog. I enjoyed it tremendously. Keep writing!]

Guest (Monica P) – over a year ago

Thanks Will for the article.

The idea of One is awesome. But how do you actually represent the emotion correctly?

Asking because I'm looking at those headlines you gave, and I kinda identified the wrong core emotion. So are there any tips you'd give which can help?

[FROM WILL: This actually is a tricky question. Particularly if you're looking for some secret formula. All I can say, is to step out of your role of copywriter and just become an empathetic listener. Once you focus on a real prospect and that prospects real emotions, writing becomes much easier. Focus on the prospect; understand the product deeply; and write from the heart.]

Curiously Larry – over a year ago

I think it's wonderful that you always rely on other emotions. I don't like fear or greed.

Thank you, Will. Thank you Mark Ford.

Patricia

Guest (Patricia) – over a year ago

This is the hardest part for me. Determining the emotion - either secondary or primary. I am, I think, a pretty empathetic person.... but I just don't know how to pin down the correct emotion for the target audience. It's difficult to see what motivates ... and whether it is external or internal. ?

Padaro – over a year ago

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