

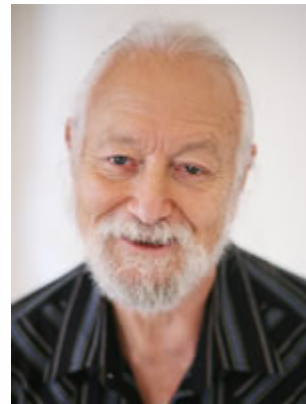
The Story Behind The Highest-Paid Copywriter Today and What He Can Tell You about Achieving *The Writer's Life*

By Will Newman

Today I'm going to introduce you to a friend of mine — a friend who happens to be the highest-paid copywriter in direct response ... Clayton Makepeace.

Clayton has more than four decades of direct-response experience under his belt. His promotions have made over \$1.5 billion in sales in the alternative health, financial, and information product industries.

But Clayton doesn't just write 'killer copy.' He's also played key roles in helping four major direct-marketing companies quadruple their sales ... leading to profits of over \$100 million per year.



Will Newman

Here are just a few of Clayton's credentials that have earned him the respect of his fellow multimillion-dollar copywriters:

- His copy generated over 2 million customers for a single product in just 36 months.
- He increased one client's sales revenue by 1,000% in a single month ... and increased other clients' monthly sales revenues by 4,400% in a single year.
- Clayton's sales copy helped to generate \$3.6 million in a single weekend and \$16 million in a single month.
- In addition to earning regular fees from clients, Clayton's earned royalties — money he earns from *past* promotions — of up to *\$3 million per year* since 1997.

With credentials like these, you might think Clayton was "born to be a copywriter." Not at all. Clayton came to copywriting through the back door.

Clayton credits his mother for much of his success. In a recent interview, he described growing up in the 50s and 60s in a traditional family setting where the man was the head of the household and made the big decisions.

But Clayton noticed early on that his mother always had a way of getting his dad to see her viewpoint. She called it "using psychology." In Clayton's words:

"I was seeing persuasion in action. Living with my mom and watching how she handled my father — who could be very unreasonable at times — was an early education in persuasion."

Like many successful copywriters, Clayton hardly distinguished himself in school. A high school chemistry teacher told Clayton he "wouldn't amount to anything." But academics wasn't his destiny. Copywriting was.

But the way Clayton puts it, he didn't wake up one morning and decide to become a copywriter. He stumbled into the career.

He was doing film and television work in the early 70s when a recession hit. The only job he could find was through an ad for a copywriter. With a wife and two kids to care for, he took the job.

The first thing his new employer did was give Clayton a stack of books by historic copywriting masters. Books by David Ogilvy, John Caples, Claude Hopkins, and Rosser Reeves. (We'll cover these historic masters in future articles.) Clayton spent his first weeks on the job reading — the masters were his copywriting education.

"Suddenly, everything I'd seen in direct mail and all the ads I'd seen made sense. Give people a reason why they should buy a product. If you read Caples or Ogilvy or Hopkins, you're going to get a wonderful education in the basics of direct response."

No formal copywriting education existed in the days when Clayton was breaking in. He learned through apprenticeship. He'd get instructions on how to write and then be given a promotional piece to craft. Experienced copywriters would critique the piece and help Clayton improve it.

This form of education worked exceptionally well. Since his first days in copywriting, Clayton has worked with industry giants like Weiss Publishing, Agora, and Rodale. He's also adapted his early training for working with his "Copy Cubs."

Just as this style of copywriting education worked for him, it works for the people he's trained. Many of his "Cubs" have gone on to hugely successful copywriting careers.

For all his success, you might expect Clayton to be unapproachable. This describes the anti-Clayton. Clayton is one of the warmest, most approachable, and fun people I've met.

That's one reason he's among the most sought-after teachers in the industry. And why I'm pleased to count him as a friend.

Is there an historic Master Copywriter you'd like to read about? If so — or if there's some other aspect of a copywriting education you'd like to comment on — please comment below and tell us about it.

Published: June 13, 2016

Related Content:

- [The Magic Formula Behind All Great Sales Letters](#)

- [Secrets Gleaned from Copywriting Legend Leo Burnett's Greatest Campaigns](#)
- [Adopting the Mindset That Lets You Write Great Copy](#)
- [The Big Idea is Hidden in This 5-Point Checklist](#)
- More by [Will Newman](#)
- More from [The Writer's Life](#)

5 Responses to "The Story Behind The Highest-Paid Copywriter Today and What He Can Tell You about Achieving The Writer's Life"

As a former Clayton Makepeace copy cub, I can heartily agree with everything you said. Being mentored by Clayton in the art of writing copy was what made me the copywriter I am today. He and his wife Wendy are amazing teachers. And Clayton was a blast to work with. Warm, generous, genuine and approachable, he always made work fun. And his stories during "employee lunch" every Friday were the highlight of my week. I wouldn't trade those three years that I worked for him for anything!

Guest (Deanna) – over a year ago

Will, thanks for the article on Clayton.

Another copywriter recommended I read The Boron Letters by Gary C. Halbert.

There seems to be some mystery and intrigue about the guy, and I'd like to know more.

Ari – over a year ago

How about Dan Kennedy? He writes 8 different paid subscription newsletters every month! And gets over \$18K a DAY for consultations- PLUS copywriting. And has authored 20 books. Pretty good role model.

Guest (Mark Mehling) – over a year ago

My Dear Will, I am reading these posts and am wanting so much to join COS, because I need the input and connection of other writers, but at this point I am in debt with a student loan. Does it make sense to you to go deeper into debt to get out of debt?

Monica Pt

[FROM WILL: When you are looking to start a new career, it makes sense to do whatever will 1) advance you the quickest, and 2) not cause a huge amount of stress. If student loans are providing a lot of stress right now, put COS on hold until you feel ready. And good luck.]

Guest (Monica P) – over a year ago

Clayton's mother have used some buttons on his father's psyche, but not a rational to persuade Clayton's father. Yet, there are copy writing fields that seem to demand rationality from copy readers.

One of such fields is health industry copy. Here is a copy of this kind. It includes an intriguing story of someone's father getting an Alzheimer's causing dramas in the family. His son wants to help his father. He reads tons of medical literature. Gets in touch with a competent biochemist. They find a solution. His father cured in 21 days. They claim the solution will cure the Alzheimer's in 21 days for anyone. The copy may say it has helped 92.3% of the product users. I do not play dice with health. There is no rational to buy the product.

AlexRedPine – over a year ago

Copyright © American Writers & Artists Institute(www.awai.com)

American Writers & Artists Institute

220 George Bush Blvd, Suite D

Delray Beach, FL 33444

(561) 278-5557 or (866) 879-2924