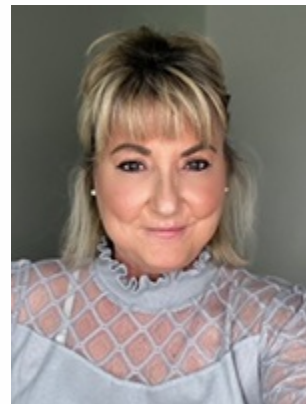


# How You Answer This Question Determines the Fate of Your Big Idea

## *By Sandy Franks*

- **Keep in touch with your contacts**
- **His copywriting path took an unusual course**
- **His team of copywriters generates over \$150 million**
- **Three-step process for coming up with the Big Idea**
- **Never too old to learn new things**



**Sandy Franks**

My parents taught me the best thing you can do when you decide to leave a job is do it on good terms. When I retired from my position as publisher for Agora, Inc. a little over two years ago, I took this advice to heart.

Not only did I leave on good terms, I've made a point to keep in touch with many of my former Agora colleagues. Today that connection has a payoff for you, Dear Copywriter.

What I'm going to share with you today comes from one of Agora's superstar Copy Chiefs, Joe Schriefer. Joe heads up the copy team for one of Agora's largest financial newsletter divisions, Agora Financial Publishing.

It's named such because it's one of the original newsletter publishing divisions, long before other divisions came online. Joe is a long-time "Agorian." He started out in a division that handled all of the company's mailing list needs, NameBank. (That division no longer exists.)

During heavy direct mail days, it was the people in NameBank who would order the list for your direct-mail campaign. And in turn, if another company wanted to mail your house list, they would do so through NameBank.

Joe was one of the people who processed mailing list orders. I think it's more than fair to say that being on the list side of publishing is what got Joe hooked on direct-response copywriting. From there, he took a job in the marketing department of Agora Financial Publishing. It wasn't long before he was overseeing all of their marketing efforts, including copy.

Now he oversees a team of 19+ copywriters. He's helped the division rack up over \$150 million in sales in a few short years. Joe joined me recently for an *Advanced Training* Hot Seat Copy Review live webinar. That's where *Advanced Training* members submit copy and during the webinar, a guest expert and I offer critiques.

When we were done with the copy reviews, I asked Joe if he could spend a few minutes talking about how he goes about coming up with the Big Idea behind all of those successful promotions he's developed.

You see, one thing I notice with most aspiring writers, even writers with a little more experience, is the Big Idea they come up with isn't so big. In most instances, the writing is excellent. But the plain and simple truth is good writing can't make a bad idea work.

How does Joe help writers come up with Big Ideas? He has a three-step process I'll share with you. But there is one question you must ask yourself and be able to answer YES that determines if your idea is a Big Idea.

I'll get to that in a moment. For now, let me share the three steps Joe uses to help come up with Big Ideas.

**Big Idea Step #1:** Read, read, and read. You've heard this a dozen times or more. Why is reading important to coming up with Big Ideas? As Joe explained, reading and absorbing information is a way of training your brain to think of Big Ideas. In other words, more input equals one good output.

Joe added this. "As Abe Lincoln said, 'If you give me six hours to chop down a tree, I'll spend five hours sharpening the axe's blade.'" So the more time you spend reading, the better you'll get at coming up with Big Ideas.

**Big Idea Step #2:** Have a mission in mind. Think of yourself as being on a mission to solve a problem. That kind of mindset puts your brain in the right mode to uncover and discover new ideas.

**Big Idea Step #3:** Share your idea with others FIRST before you write about it. Talking over your idea with others helps in two ways. First, as you explain your idea, you'll get immediate feedback. Watch their reactions, including body language. Second, with input from other people, you can make your Big Idea better and stronger.

Those are the steps Joe uses to help his team of copywriters uncover Big Ideas. But there's one question that everyone you share your idea with must say YES to that really helps separate good ideas from marginal ones. You must answer Yes to:

## Is this an idea that can't easily be dismissed?

Our brains are hard-wired for new ideas. If something strikes us as unique, strange, or different, we'll want to process it further. But if it feels too familiar ... something we've seen before ... our brain will pass over it.

Makes complete sense, right? That's why I think asking and answering Yes to this question will help you know whether your idea is worth writing about in a sales letter. If you can't answer Yes, then you've got to repeat Steps 1-3.

Your takeaway for today: Next time you sit down to write sales copy, see if your Big Idea passes the YES test.

Published: May 29, 2017

**Related Content:**

- [Know Your Audience and You'll Nail the Right Headline](#)
- [Mark Ford's Secret for Making Your Headlines Better Than 95% of all Headlines Written Today](#)
- [How Great Songs Illustrate This Basic Copywriting Principle](#)
- [How to Get Your Prospect to Say Yes to Your Offer](#)
- More by [Sandy Franks](#)
- More from [The Golden Thread](#)

**Copyright © American Writers & Artists Institute([www.awai.com](http://www.awai.com))**

**American Writers & Artists Institute**

220 George Bush Blvd, Suite D

Delray Beach, FL 33444

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