

The Shortcut Way to Become a Better (and Richer) Copywriter

By Sandy Franks



My husband and I are hooked on the *Game of Thrones* (GoT) television series. Unless you are living under a rock, you need little explanation of just how popular this show has become.

GoT is based on the best-selling book series, *A Song of Ice and Fire*, written by George R.R. Martin. The season finale just aired a few weeks ago, drawing a record-breaking 16.5 million viewers.

If that were a direct-response sales letter, you'd be one filthy rich copywriter.

Much of this last season was filmed in Iceland. I know, because in addition to watching the series, I also love to watch the behind-the-scenes video logs that showcase how episodes are filmed.

Sometimes the set producers, the actors, and director are interviewed. I've found directors to be fascinating people.

They are responsible for bringing words on paper to life. But they also know how to bring out the best in each member of the cast. In fact, they truly are an actor or actress's secret weapon.

Much like how a Copy Chief is a copywriter's secret weapon.

How do I know? Because I've been a Copy Chief for most of my career. And during that time, I've turned many good writers into superstar copywriters.

Like Chip B., who writes million-dollar promotions for one of Agora's largest financial publishing companies.

Chip had no prior experience writing financial packages. He was working in the nonprofit industry, writing fundraising letters.

While that's a noble cause, he wasn't happy with the amount of money he was earning. Chip sent me a resume with a few writing samples.

Those samples showed he was a good writer, but I would have to teach him how to become a copywriter. Today, I'm going to share what I taught him with you.

If you follow this process, you'll fast-track your copywriting career. You'll know what it's like to work under a Copy Chief, and walk away with a better understanding of what's expected from you as a copywriter.

I started the teaching process by giving Chip renewal letters to write. Those are mailed to paid subscribers of a service with the goal of getting as many of those subscribers to renew for another one-year or two-year period of time.

Sounds easy, but remember, you're asking someone who has already paid for a service to pay again but in advance, which is precisely why I started the process here.

Before writing a single renewal letter, I had Chip read the last six new subscriber promotions we had used to bring on those paying customers. I wanted him to see what ideas attracted them to the service in the first place.

But it was more than just a reading assignment. He had to highlight every claim made ... underline the benefits of the service, break down the offer, and paraphrase the Big Idea.

This is what I call reverse engineering a promotion. And as you can imagine, doing that for six full-length sales promotions is extremely time-consuming. But I guarantee by the time you are done, you'll know how your prospect thinks, what their buying motives are, and what they expect to gain by subscribing to the service. And you'll know this without talking to a single paid customer.

Of course, I asked him to read every issue of the actual newsletter. This helped him get to know how the editor thinks, what world views they hold, and the ideas they share with their subscribers.

But reading each newsletter wasn't nearly as important as reverse engineering the sales letters. Why? Because ultimately, his job as a copywriter is to bring on new paying customers and lots of them.

Once he completed the reverse-engineering process, it was time for an idea pitch session. That's where we discuss ideas. Chip's role was to lead the discussion by pitching his ideas. But because he had that "insider" understanding of the customer, coming up with ideas wasn't difficult.

After the idea was fleshed out, it was simply a matter of execution. Remember, copywriting is 10% writing and 90% idea generation. If you spend time learning how to generate ideas, you'll have a higher degree of success writing winning sales letters.

When your text is turned into copy, a Copy Chief's job is to make sure every word you put on paper matters. They also know how to shape Big Ideas so your copy resonates with the target audience and has the best chance possible of getting a high response or conversion rate.

That means making edits paragraph-by-paragraph, and line-by-line. Every edit is done with a strategic purpose in mind.

What kind of edits are we talking about?

Here's a brief rundown of what a Copy Chief is looking for in your copy (you can use this as a checklist, too):

- Are you showing the reader and not telling?
- Have you included enough details to make your examples feel real to your reader?
- Do you transition from one paragraph to the next seamlessly?
- Are you writing in a conversational tone?
- Do you have the proper amount of proof for every claim made in the copy?
- Have you made sure every passage of copy compels the prospect to read the next section and the next one after that?

If you find your copy comes back with edits, don't freak out. It's normal. The red ink helps you "see" how to make your copy better.

In fact, from my perspective, if you turn in copy and there isn't a single edit or suggestion to make it stronger, then chances are, the person reviewing your work isn't well versed in persuasive writing.

You might go through a few rounds of edits before the final version is approved. That's exactly what happened with Chip's copy. And we did this for every piece of copy he wrote. And each time, his copywriting skills improved.

By the end of the year, he wrote a sales letter that outperformed the control. And the rest, as they say, is history. Chip now earns a six-figure income just on the royalties he is paid.

You can use the same process I outlined here to give yourself a big competitive advantage too.

And while working with a Copy Chief will speed up your learning ...

The key is to stay focused and keep learning as much as possible, and as quickly as possible.

Because here's the thing. The quicker you can learn to become a great copywriter, the faster your income will grow. Possibly soar to six-figures.

What questions do you have about working with a Copy Chief? Please share in the comments below.

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3 Responses to "The Shortcut Way to Become a Better (and Richer) Copywriter"

I am interested in doing e-newsletters, case studies and possibly white papers. Can the Copy Chief checklist above assist with these goals? Can you suggest any other shortcuts?

Guest (Denise Legg) – over a year ago

I am new to AWAI and just reading most all of what comes with starting from day one. As of today I am still not sure what writing I will do, at what stage will I need a copy chief? as of now I am just starting to write with the 30 day challenge. I hope there is another source that can judge my writing at some point, so I know if I am gaining skills.

Guest (Val) – over a year ago

If you are not sure as to where to start and or what type of writing you should do, I would like to suggest that you go to your resource guide and follow it all in order to understand more about the entire writing and skills you may obtain. You also, can always get on line and do research yourself.

Steph – over a year ago

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