

# When to Use B2B Long Form Copy

## *By Steve Slaunwhite*



You may have heard Business-to-Business (B2B) is a short copy world. Especially when it comes to sales copy like emails, landing pages, and product pages. And for the most part, that's true.

Most of the promotional writing you do as a B2B copywriter is lead-generation copy. You might promote a free white paper, a free webinar, or some other offer to generate leads for a company.

Usually, you don't need long copy to do that. B2B emails tend to be no more than a page or two in length, and sales pages tend to be relatively short. The copy still needs to be fantastic and very persuasive. But, you don't need a lot of copy to accomplish the goal.

Yet, there are some exceptions to the rule. There are some circumstances where it *does* make sense to take a long copy approach to writing sales copy for your B2B client.

## 7 Times to Use Long Form Copy

There are seven situations where taking a long copy approach — copy over 800 words — often makes sense. Let's look at each one.

## #1. Promoting an unfamiliar product or service

Let's say a client is a forklift truck manufacturer and they're doing promotions to sell their forklift trucks. Their target audience is familiar with the product, so you don't need to educate them on what a forklift truck is. You can jump right into the features and benefits of your models, so you will not need a long copy approach there.

But, what if your client is a consulting firm with a consulting program that's based on new methodology their target market hasn't heard about before?

Well, in your copy, you're going to have to spend time educating the target market on what this new consulting program is all about. What concept is it based on? What are the features? What are the benefits? Why does it work?

You're going to have to give them a lot of information, because it's an unfamiliar product or service to them. You need to spend some time getting them familiar with it and excited about it. So, that's one situation where a long copy approach makes sense.

## #2. The company is unfamiliar

When the company is brand-new to the target audience you're going to have to spend some time in your copy building trust, building credibility, and introducing your client's company to that target audience.

The company could be a start-up or it could be a company that's established in one industry, trying to expand into another industry where they're not well-known.

This is particularly important in B2B, because in a lot of B2B industries, the buyers are very familiar with the companies in their industry.

For example, if you're a VP of sales in the retail industry, then you probably know who all the players are in the sales training world. So, when someone new comes along that you haven't heard of, the new sales training company has to do a lot of work in their copy to build that credibility, and introduce themselves to you in an impactful way.

In order to communicate who they are, you'll want to use long form copy.

## #3. Need to sell the problem or opportunity

I had a client many years ago, who had this fantastic software that helped law firms manage their emails. It's a useful product, but most law firms didn't realize they had an email management problem. It wasn't top of mind for them. They didn't get up in the morning and think, "Boy, we have email management problems, we need a software that's going to help us."

So, the copy needed to sell the problem, and explain why it was a problem they needed to fix. It wasn't something that could be done in just a few words.

Anytime you're selling something that's not top of mind for the target audience, consider using longer copy to give them the information they need.

## **#4. Asking for a direct sale**

When you're writing a promotion where you're asking your B2B target market to buy the product, you'll need longer copy.

This happens quite a bit with expensive training programs, professional development programs sold online, big ticket seminars, subscriptions to high-end business publications.

If you're asking the prospect to make a decision and buy online, then you're going to need more copy to convince them to act, because you're not just asking them to download a free white paper or sign up for a free webinar like in a typical lead-generation campaign.

You'll need to spend some time motivating them to buy. That takes some extra time, and longer copy. So, a long copy approach in that circumstance makes a lot of sense.

## **#5. Selling to the careful buyer**

When you have a buyer who is making a decision that's going to be high-profile or very expensive, they are likely to be extra careful to make the right decision.

If the consequences of making a bad decision are significant, they will want more information before buying. And because they're being very careful, they tend to read a lot of copy.

For example, if you are an operations manager of a company tasked with buying a new fleet of forklift trucks for the warehouse, where the cost could be \$400,000 or more, you don't want to make the wrong decision.

So, you're probably going to do a lot of product research, because you're being very careful and you want to make a good buying decision.

So, when you're selling a product or service that's very expensive or a high-profile purchase, a long copy approach is often best.

## **#6. Selling an expensive option versus a lower cost alternative**

I had a client many years ago, who sold a very expensive monthly publication. It was a monthly report on environmental regulations and legislative actions. The publication was sold to compliance officers in factories, plants, and warehouses.

There are many complex rules and guidelines, so this monthly report keeps them up-to-date. But, it's expensive — thousands of dollars a year. There are ways to get this information free, since it's public information, so they're competing against free.

When you're competing against a low-cost or a free option, you have to do a more selling to convince your prospect that it's a worthwhile expense. So, a long copy approach can work well in this situation.

## #7. Where long copy has worked before

And the final situation where long copy makes sense, is when it has worked before.

When your client has tested long copy in the past and it has worked well for their target audience, then it makes sense to take a long copy approach, because there's a track record of success.

Many B2B companies don't test longer copy, but ask your client if they've tried long copy in the past, and find out if it worked. You might be surprised if they have tested it with success. In that case, you have compelling evidence to take a long copy approach yourself in the promotional piece you're writing.

So, those are seven different circumstances where taking a long copy approach with your B2B sales copy might be a good idea. When you encounter one of these situations, give careful consideration to using long form copy. It could make your copy the clear winner.

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*L Joe Oleson* – over a year ago

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