

# 5 Tips on Writing Short-Form Copy for Social Media

*By Nick Usborne*



Recently I've been writing and talking a lot about short-form copy.

How come? Because short copy is a big deal when you're writing for social media.

And social media is becoming a bigger and bigger deal for more and more companies.

I'm not suggesting you give up on writing longer-form copy. But you should absolutely have short-form writing skills in your toolbox as a copywriter.

Most companies now have a social media presence.

And most of those companies aren't doing it very well.

In particular, they're really messing up, when it comes to the words.

And that's where YOU come in.

# What's driving this change toward short-form copy?

Well ... almost by definition, social media updates are short.

Whether you're writing a post, a tweet, an update or the reply to a comment, you'll usually be using just a few short words. This is true for Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and pretty much every other social media platform.

The size of the screen matters, too.

Most social media is viewed, not on a computer monitor, but on a smartphone. A super-small screen by comparison. And nobody wants to read long copy on a smartphone.

Besides that, when they're engaged with their smartphone, nobody spends a lot of time on any one thing. Watch someone on their phone and you'll see them skip from one screen to another, from one app to the next.

Social media is consumed in the way you grab a snack. It's not a three-course, sit-down, "long-form" meal.

## Now, let's look at 5 ways to write short copy for social media ...

Deep dive into the world of short-form copywriting and you'll find more than five ways to grab your reader's attention.

But these five tips should get you started.

Use them when you're writing a tweet, the title for a YouTube video, the title for a Facebook post ... or anywhere else where you have just a few words to work with.

And remember, the purpose of this short-form copy on social media is to grab attention and get people to click through to another page.

It's on that other page that we do the heavy lifting to drive an action, whether it's to sign up, register or buy.

Our short copy is just the opener ... it's to get people engaged and clicking.

## Tip #1 – Engage their imagination.

When you don't have 100 words to describe something, you'd be better off using 10-15 words to get your audience to paint a picture in their own minds.

As an example, let's say you're selling moisturizing cream.

Instead of writing 100 words describing the attributes of the cream, use just a few words to stimulate your reader's own memories and imagination.

Maybe something like ...

"Do you remember how dry and itchy your skin felt last winter?"

Do it that way and you're leveraging the reader's own memories to make your cream sound attractive.

Think about it ... you've invited them to think of a problem they would like to have solved.

## **Tip #2 – People love a list with numbers.**

There's something eye-catching and intriguing about the promise of a list. That's why you see so many social media posts that offer to share a list with you ... if you click through.

To grab attention and get the click, you can write short lines like ...

- 21 must-try vegan restaurants in Manhattan
- 7 questions you must ask before buying a used car
- Top 10 WordPress plugins
- The 7 secrets of successful writers

## **Tip #3 – Share a secret.**

People love secrets, particularly when they're invited to become one of the "few" who get to know the secret.

Of course, if we pause to think about it for even a fraction of a second, it's clear that none of these are really secrets. But even so, we still find ourselves hooked!

- The secret ingredient in bread that could save your life
- The secret to SEO success for bloggers
- The hidden secret they never told you about Elvis Presley

- 3 fitness secrets that could add 10 years to your life

## Tip #4 – Surprise and intrigue.

It's fun to be taken by surprise sometimes. And we love to be intrigued. We like being faced with a puzzle to solve, or a mystery to unravel.

Here are two of my favorite newspaper headlines. (Yes, I collect this stuff!)

"Dog drives car into coffee shop."

And ...

"Body found. Man still missing."

Yes, these are both real headlines. I think if you saw either one of these as part of a tweet or Facebook post, you'd want to know more.

If you really want to know ...

The dog nudged the automatic gear shift into drive when his owner left the car running and went into the coffee shop.

While searching for the missing man, the police came across the dead body of someone else.

## Tip #5 – Tell them something is new.

Humans are hard-wired to be attracted to stuff that's new.

We just can't help it.

Just look at the way people line up for the latest Apple iPhone. There's nothing wrong with the phone those people have in their pockets, but they'll still line up for the latest model ... because it's NEW!

Regardless of the industry your client is in, there'll be a way to find and share something new ... even if it's only their latest new hire.

- New White Paper on Enterprise Social Networks now available ...

- Check out what's NEW on our video channel ...

- Apple announces new iPad ...

- Welcome our new team member, Janice

# Short-form copywriting is a super-valuable skill

As more and more clients and prospective clients ask you to help them with their social media marketing – and they will – short-form copywriting skills will come in really, really handy.

And, here's one more thing ...

Short-form copywriting for social media is a LOT of fun!

When I'm writing long-form copy, it often feels like hard work.

But, short copy for social media?

Much more enjoyable. It feels more like play than work. : )

This article, [\*5 Tips on Writing Short-Form Copy for Social Media\*](#), was originally published by [Wealthy Web Writer](#).

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