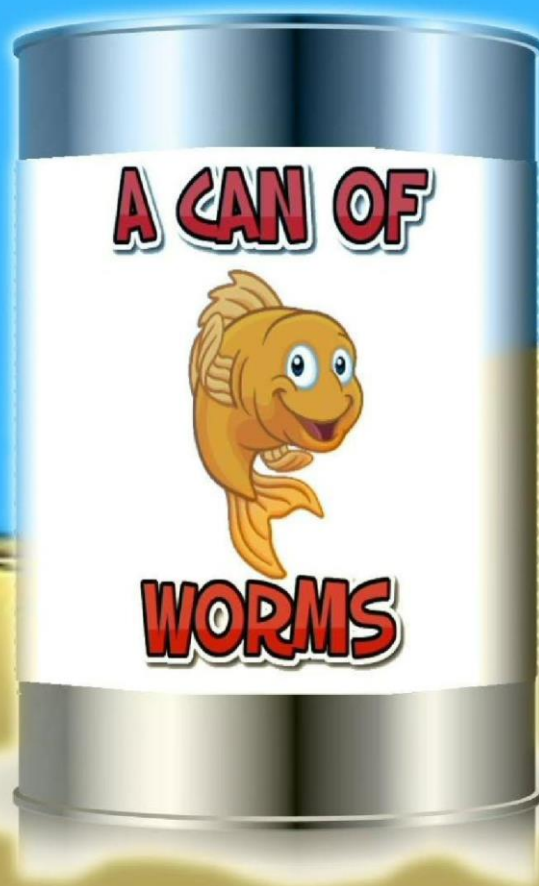


A CAN OF COPWRITERS WORMS

CONTAINS POSTS FROM THE
radiocopywriters.com
BLOG FOR COPYWRITERS



PLUS:
BONUS MATERIAL
NOT PUBLISHED
ONLINE...
all for FREE!!!

EARL PILKINGTON

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A COPYRIGHT MESSAGE

This is a free collection of posts that were put up between 2022 and 2023 on the www.radiocopywriters.com website.

They were written for copywriters (or students of radio copywriting), for salespeople who must copywrite ads for their clients, and for on-air and promotions staff who also need to create advertising material and promotions.

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Where I can I have linked to the picture on the Pexels site.

Cover (including the mascot 'Andy') is by Earl Pilkington.

Cover created at www.Canva.com

If you wish to use or quote from these articles, please feel free to do so – but I would like to see how you have used them. Please feel free to reach out to me and send me a copy of the completed article, or a link, etc. at: allmarketing@radiocopywriters.com

Earl Pilkington, 2023

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the collection of posts about copywriting for radio, collated from the www.RadioCopywriters.com website.

This is a free collection of those posts, as the posts themselves have been removed from the site in our latest update.

During their time on the website, they attracted copywriters from around the dial and the world who commented, sent messages, asked questions, and dived into the murky world of radio copywriting.

Comments and responses from emails sent directly, or posted on the site, and from LinkedIn have been included with some of the posts, where appropriate, including replies and shared conversations, in slightly edited form.

In this book you won't only find the original articles, but also a bonus few articles that didn't make it up onto the site for numerous reasons. These have been included to give a roundup of the first full year of posts as they were planned.

However, they do not appear in the order that they were posted online.

They have been sorted into different categories and grouped to help tell their collective stories in a better way than the original date order allowed, and after careful re-editing now make more sense in this order- thanks to the team of editors who helped to decide the final order.

All these post articles were written by our founder Earl Pilkington, with ideas, research and cajoling by a committee of 7 committed copywriters from around the world who also (at the time) worked in sales, on-air, promotions and management.

As such, I would like to take this opportunity to thank them again for their tireless work and support. Without your guiding hand and ideas, we wouldn't have been able to fill this book with posts. Thanks everyone.

And a HUGE final thanks to everyone who read and supported the site in its old format.

We look forward to the new direction and hope you will continue to support us.

Earl Pilkington, 2023

Please note that this icon:



refers to an external video link.

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1. OPINION PIECES

In which I give my personal reflections and opinions on the following topics:

- What is in a title, or are you defined by what your position is?
- Why copywriters should be the most highly paid people in radio.
- The biggest problems with radio ads.
- 10 tips for working in a sausage factory style radio station.
- The future of radio copywriting that is now here.
- Finally, should radio serials make a return (all be it in a new format)



What is in a Job Title? Or... What Do You Call Yourself?

((Never published online))

What your job title or position title is, or isn't, is something that many people don't discuss in our industry. Why?

I've been having discussions with copywriters around the world – and have noticed in their emails and conversations that so many of us have different job titles.

There are, apart from these:

- Creative Writers
- Creatives
- Copy
- Copy Writers
- Marketing Strategists
- Marketing Writers
- Advertising Associates
- Communication Specialists
- Freelance Writers
- Production Writers
- Technical Writers

And more, so, so many more.

Some even include a title of rank in their positions such as being a cadet, junior, senior, and chief of this or that, etc.

My most recent and personal favourites are simple... *and I think we should all adopt them as quick as we can:* You could be an **Author and Artist**.

If you think about it, you must admit that both of those titles capture what we do very well.

After all, our skill sets as authors and artists include:

Excellent Language Proficiency

While knowledge of grammar and sentence structure is desired, it is the very content of the meaning of words, the manipulation of imagery and describing a scene or setting that sets us apart as writers. We need to have at our command advanced reading and comprehension skills to do well and succeed.



Communication Skills that are ABOVE Average!

This ties in well with the first skill set – in that we need to be able to use multiple techniques to inform and entertain. To have excellent active listening skills. To be able to communicate to technically competent people, and the average listener.

Media Knowledge

The ability to produce, communicate, and disseminate media using different techniques, skills and technology while achieving goals set by our sales team, and our clients. From social media to newspapers, digital to TV, we need to be across every form of media – their short comings and their strengths.



Sales and Marketing Techniques

Knowing about 'radio' is not enough. We need to be aware of the principles and methods for showing, promoting, and selling products or services in most mediums. Why? Because we need to have a grasp of marketing strategy, tactics, and usage outside our field to do better at our job. Being aware of sales techniques and trends is a BIG bonus too when dealing with salespeople.

Customer Service

Ability to provide support, knowledge, and the theory behind what we do to our sales teams, our clients, and to our listeners. This client, customer and personal service is something that many workplaces try to ignore when it comes to being a copywriter – and I think it is one of our major strengths. In fact, I have yet to meet a Copywriter who is not a customer service wizard!



Clerical Skills

This should go without saying, but many of us are masters of administration, of clerical procedures, including systems such as managing files and records. As well as the all-important: word processing, stenography, and transcription. Some of us are across designing forms and other office procedures.

Professional Over-Thinker and Holder of The Keys of the Knowledge Base

Yes, this is a HUGE skill set – that's because we quickly gather, grasp, and collect knowledge about every industry we write for – from cars to fridges, butchers to banks, home building repairs and renovations to political pundits.

We must also know the rules and regulations, laws and legislation that can de-rail or protect a commercial and a client. Which all means that we over think EVERYTHING.

We wade through the quagmire of possibilities... can we say, 'this' or 'that'? Is 'that' piece of information relevant to 'this' commercial? And so on.



Imagination

Finally, we are the masters of imagination, of wordplay, imagery, rhyme, theatre of the mind, of fiction, fact and of being able to blend these things together to create a collaborative and cohesive commercial that will get people's attention, sell a product or service, and impart knowledge and desire in someone to act.



While I realistically accept that job titles are generally assigned – you can always start to refer to yourself as one thing or another – easily and without having to ask permission.

I did it!

I changed my personal job title from Copywriter to Senior Copywriter when I started to mentor young creatives.

Some 6 months later, it was on my company business cards – management never questioned it at all.

Now 8 years later – everyone refers to me as that.

But as of now, in June 2023 – I am starting to refer to myself as an **Author and an Artist**.

Why? Because I do both – I write and create, from the mundane to the shocking, the beautiful and thought provoking, driving people to talk about my work, or to communicate feelings and emotions – and isn't that what authors and artists do?

I ask you... what do you call yourself?

Should you change your job title?

Yes!

Yes, you should!



So, let's introduce ourselves right now...

"Hello, I am Earl Pilkington, Author and Artist, and you are?"

_____, Author and Artist.

See?

Wasn't that easy?

Enjoy the book.

Why Copywriters Should Be the MOST Highly Paid People in Radio!

((8 August 2022))

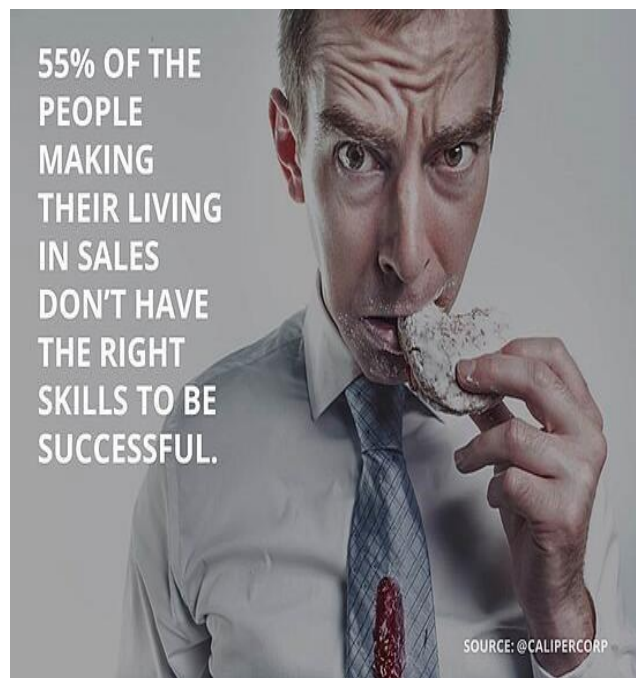
This is a very long post (or some might call it a rant) – but those of us who write copy – I am sure will agree with me on almost every point!

WARNING: Personal opinions ahead!



Let me break this down before I start – just so you know where I am heading with this post:

- * Let's face it: Sales can be taught to almost any person, if they are willing to endure the pain of rejection repeatedly.*
- * The ability to write good ads that are persuasive is much more difficult to learn than selling. You either have the skill, can build on it, or you don't have it at all.*
- * Radio advertising really does live or die on the quality of the copy message – not necessarily on the frequency of ads (we will talk about this shortly, so stay with me)*
- * Radio isn't like print at all – in fact any comparison to print and TV is just plain wrong.*
- * The voice, no matter whose voice it is, has the power to persuade, to transfer emotion – and it does it better than any other medium – when the words chosen are the right ones!*



So let's look at this objectively...

A Sales Rep/Manager/Account Manager (whatever you want to call them) can pitch and sell a package and/or frequency of ads to a client – they are incentivized by commissions and bonuses – and after the deal is done – they throw the copywriter a half filled in Copy Brief that barely gives you the information that you need (OK so that's not as objective as I thought it might sound – but it's true – right?)

The Sales team member then moves on to the next client and promptly forgets what they have promised that you would deliver for them.

Image from [21 Mind Blowing Sales Stats](#)

The Copywriter doesn't know what was said to the client – so now they either: send emails and/or make phone calls to the client to find out what they want, most of the time these aren't returned.

So, the Copywriter then tries to deliver on the half legible Copy Brief they received, and then both the Client and the Sales Rep wonders why the campaign didn't work.

COPYWRITING IS AN ART FORM

Let's face it – learning to write copy that works – is an artform. It takes practice, takes study and it takes time to develop the skill to write a call-to-action campaign for a chemist one minute and a branding ad for a car dealership the next, then a call to action for a real estate agent an hour later, followed by a call to action for another car dealership that doesn't sound like the previous script – but in their voice and style.

We should be not only the most highly paid for our skills, but we should also be able to veto commercials that we know won't work.

We have all been there, haven't we?

A client who insists that they want their ad to say THIS IS EXACTLY AS I WANT IT, DON'T CHANGE IT OR I WILL CANCEL MY CAMPAIGN – but you know it's not going to get any connection with the audience. But they insist, the sales rep insists, traffic insists that it gets done and on-the-air – argh! FINE!

It's no wonder that we get frustrated when clients say that 'I tried radio, and it didn't work!'

Really?

Did you listen to the copywriter who said it wouldn't but went ahead with it anyway?

Sure, a Sales Rep may also book a terrible schedule based on the client's budget and only air an ad once per day – ok – that's bad – but not terrible – something can be done with that – if the ad copy is right – if it's not, then no it won't work.

COPYWRITING IN THE REAL WORLD

Let me give you an example of the worst possible schedule for a client based on their below average budget – that worked extremely well, simply because the ad copy was right!

A few years ago, I had been given a 4-word copy brief (I kid you not) by a Sales Rep for a Jeweler. The advertising budget was less than stellar – it was one random spot in weekday breakfast for 2 months – that's all that the client could afford.

Keep in mind that I knew that the Sales Rep had spent a grand total of 25 minutes with the client before they came back to the station to put the booking through. They didn't care at that stage – it was just another sale they had made.

So, after some research by me as the Copywriter finding out what the schedule was - and having a heart attack, I then spoke very nicely to our traffic department (How I convinced them to run the ad before the 8am news – with no loading for

spot placement – I do not know?) I started to research the ad copy.

The ad was for Diamonds, not jewelry. The client had purchased a limited amount of cut diamonds, that's all they wanted to sell – not settings, just the diamonds.

AND this offer wasn't being advertised anywhere else – just on radio.

STEP ONE: RESEARCH

I proceeded to write 2 lists – one was the type of thing I know the client would want – clarity, carat, cut, colour, shape, and certification and the second list was about the emotions behind the purchase of diamonds. Was it a wise investment, not only financially, but in terms of longevity, the desire, the bragging rights, the motivation of the purchaser, the reward for doing so – was it a personal reward was it a celebration reward? Was it to seek redemption for a miss dead? Or just a gift? Who buys diamonds, who doesn't? The questions and answers filled a page.

As you can see that 4-word brief had exploded out to almost a page of notes – how long had this taken? Almost half an hour – so it was equal to the amount of time that the rep had spent with the client, and I hadn't written a word of the ad copy yet.

STEP TWO: WRITING

I then spent the next hour writing 4 different scripts – yes, I knew that the client only had 1 script running – but I wanted to find the right balance. I knew from previous dealing with this client that the one script that I liked the most, wouldn't be the one that went into production, so I had to give him choices.

I finally had come up with 4 very different scripts – one focused entirely on what a jeweler might think are the most important things – the 5C's & an S. The second ad was focused on the investment, the third on the emotional reasons, the final script was focused on reward.

Total time spent on the scripts writing was 1.5 hours.

Oh... and all 4 scripts said something like this at one point... "XYZ Jewellers are just about to open" and then reinforced the core message.

STEP THREE: CLIENT FEEDBACK

Now, I sent these scripts off to the client – but before I did, I said to them in the email: "...please find attached 4 scripts for you to choose from. Each one has been specifically targeted to different types of people, one for people like you who are interested in cut, carat, clarity, colour, shape, and certification. Another is targeted at men over 50 looking to invest, the next one pushes the emotional buttons of women 25-45 and the final is a generic, all ages, reward focus for all people. Due to your schedule, I highly suggest you pick one of these that is going to tick the most boxes for you in the type of person you want to target in your commercial."

Which one do you think they picked?

Well, if I were going to bet on it – I would have said either the first or the last ad. Maybe the last one.

The thing was – the client was sick that day – and his second in command had received the scripts – read them, then she called me and said – can we have 2 minor things tweaked, but she wanted all of them, and she wanted to know if she could run them in rotation? Ummmm... okay?

I explained the situation with the schedule, and they said yes – that's fine, she wanted to hit as wide a market as they could as they had a limited number of diamonds that they had invested in, and she wanted them all sold as quick as they could.

STEP FOUR: PRODUCTION

All 4 scripts went into production. Voices were chosen, deliveries polished, music beds selected, etc. Which took an hour in total to produce the 4 spots.

TOTAL TIME?

So: The Sales Rep spent 25 minutes with the client – gave me a 4 word copy brief and I spent 2 hours working on the copy (from the initial list to final approved copy), and an hour with the producer putting the ads together. Rep's time = 25 minutes - my time 3 hours.

RUNNING THE ADS:

The first ad (the 5c's one) went to air on the Monday morning. They had 2 phone calls, and one person who came in and asked about the diamonds at lunch time, 4 hours after the ad ran.

On Tuesday, the second ad (the investment one) ran, and they had 10 people come in throughout the day, and 5 of those made some purchases.

Wednesday, they had the third ad run (the emotional ad) they had 20 people come in (all of them women, and some with their partners) and specifically ask about the diamonds they heard advertised on the radio and more purchases were made.

By this point the Sales Rep was claiming all the glory saying it was their genius schedule... I let it slide as I was busy writing other ad copy at the time.

Thursday morning before 8am the ad for the reward yourself ran. By 9am had a line out the door.

By 1pm – they had sold out of their complete purchase of cut diamonds.

THE END RESULT:

The rest of the schedule had to be scrapped. The Sales Rep wasn't happy at all. My take-away, and the clients too – was that it wasn't the schedule – it was the messages in the ads that had made all the difference.

Did the Sales Rep get a bonus?

No, but they did get an easier sell next time they went and saw the client.

Did I get anything extra for selling all the clients stock? Nope! I was just getting paid my usual salary.

My job was just to get them in the door – it was up to their sales team at the jewelers to sell the items.

MY TAKE-AWAY FROM THIS:

My scripts used messages that were presented in ways to appeal to different people. From persuasive words to emotional deliveries, they each worked and worked well enough to motivate people to act.

The voices we had chosen to relay those messages were the right ones for the time. They had the right words to target the right demographics. And the ads ran at the exact right time to appeal to a large cross section of our listening audience.

OTHER EXPERIENCES:

As a side note to this - I feel that every copywriter at some stage has been either given a print ad (or a yellow pages ad in the old days) and told to write your ad copy from that – nope!

Some of us may have even been sent links to TV commercials and told to write them based on those. No thanks!

I have had to do this, and I can tell you that the results were terrible when we did what the client wanted.

Why?

Because radio is NOT print, and radio is NOT TV.

Radio is a different beast, and you need to use its strengths to get results.

Tell me - have newspaper or radio ever had to create a commercial based on their radio spot?

Not to my knowledge - or my time working in those fields.

CONCLUSION:

I know the power of radio and what it can accomplish – I have studied long enough to know that the choices you make in your messages make the difference.

The voices you choose and the hot buttons you press in a listener's mind with the right copy, makes a HUGE difference.

The people in sales (and I can say this as I was a Sales Rep before I became a Copywriter) – they couldn't care less – if they either make the sale or don't and

then move on.

So maybe... you can see why... I think that your station Copywriter should be paid more than the Sales Rep – if not, they should be the most highly paid person at your station!

P.S.: I wish I could share these scripts with you - but the station I worked at back then where I did this, didn't respond to my requests for copies of them. It was over 15 years ago – if they even still have them was going to be questionable. The client has long since sold up his business and moved on too. What I have written here is based on my memory of the spots and the feedback I got at the time.

COMMENT:

“From reading this I can understand your problem with clients and salespeople. At least you have seen it from both sides Earl and can make a judgement call about the situation.

That's something that not many copywriters can do.

It's a shame you can't get a copy of the jeweler's spots. I would love to have seen them or at least heard them.

I feel that I must point out that some of us in radio however don't have the luxury of having a copywriter on staff, so we must either write our own copy – or pay for a freelancer to write our scripts for us (never trust a jock to write an ad for you!)

When I write ad copy myself, I used to find it a real struggle to do it well enough to keep clients coming back.

This is where and why your site has been a godsend.

I have learnt so much in a short time from reading the posts about copy – keep up the good work.

While I am commenting, a huge thanks for the free e-book about 'First lines and Scene setters' I was fortunate to get this from your site when it was free and it gave me so many ideas, and my clients have loved the responses they got from their new commercials. If you don't have a copy, buy a copy today. It is well worth the price.”

87BeerSales

The BIGGEST Problems with Radio Ads!

((29 April 2023))

I have been on a bit of a downer this week about the state of radio ads – I basically heard some of the worst ads EVER on Monday, and it sent me into a bit of a spin about how bad some ads can be.



It got me thinking about our industry and why there are bad ads – we've all made them – and some brilliant ads – we've all made them too.

I am also aware that we might think an ad is terrible, but a client can love it.

Attentively we can fall in love with our own creations, and they can totally suck the airtime off the radio.

So why?

How and What are the biggest problems with radio ads – let me start with:

- 1. Lack of Creativity:** Many radio commercials follow a similar formula and lack creativity, which can make them forgettable and ineffective. For example – do they follow the same formula or style? Then they suck! I had a listen to a couple of ads the other day, made over several years, and damn it – if they didn't follow the same formula and were for competing business categories – so that was a HUGE problem, I approached the client who was currently advertising and said that we needed to change, and why – he totally understood, and we got right to it.
- 2. Poor Production Quality:** Poorly produced commercials can be distracting or irritating to the listener, making it harder to deliver the intended message. Be it from:
 - a)** using the same voices in every single commercial on a station (you know the ones where you tune in to an ad break and you can't tell when one commercial end and the next starts) well that's a HUGE problem – industry wide. I have tried and tried to advocate using multiple sources for voices, multiple companies and even voices from outside our country (we are a multi-cultural world, so why not use different nationalities on voices too?) but I always get shot down with this one.
 - b)** using the same sound effects in every other commercial (I remember when the record scratch effect was once in every single ad in a commercial break at a metro market) we need to do this type of thing differently.
 - c)** using the same EQ settings and reverb settings – producers need to lift their game with this – maybe some direction in the script would help, e.g.: make this voice brighter, that one slightly muffled, pitch this one up, etc.

3. Lack of Attention: Radio commercials have a limited time to capture the listener's attention, and if they fail to do so, the listener may tune out or change the station. This also means that every commercial shouldn't have an attention getting sound effect at the start of it – that's annoying. We need to find a point of difference and make the story be already underway before we join it.

4. Overcrowding: Radio commercials are often played back-to-back, which can lead to overcrowding and reduce the impact of each commercial. Commercial breaks of more than 5 commercials annoy me, massively, less than 4 and I wonder what is going on – and it doesn't matter if they are different lengths or not – 5 just feels right to me – it's a pity I can't convince our traffic and on-air departments of this.

5. Ineffective Targeting: If the commercial is not targeted to the right audience, it may fail to resonate with the listener and result in low engagement. I have heard young kids' voices on commercials trying to sell car servicing – what? Older voices for childcare services – pick the right voice, the right words and the right tone to suit your target audience – explain in detail to your client why you have chosen to write a script like this.

6. Repetition: While repetition can be effective, playing the same commercial too frequently can lead to listener fatigue and reduce its impact. I am a BIG believer in having 2 or more scripts for any one campaign – and they can be the same or different lengths, continuing the story or top and tail an ad break – radio is creative – let's be creative with what we produce – instead of playing the same badly produced, badly voiced and badly written commercial over, and over again day in day out for months!

7. Insufficient Call to Action: If the commercial does not provide a clear and compelling call to action, the listener is not going to take the initiative. This is not a joke – I have heard and written CTA ads which have made phones ring hot – lines form at the doors when a business opens, and have products sold out and the ads need to be pulled as there is no more stock – so why is it that a client wants to weaken your message with a heap of unnecessary fluff? In my experience it's because they are listening to the wrong people. Listen to those who write the ads and who have experience in our medium – we know what works, and what doesn't. Someone who does social media has no idea how radio works – and I have said this about 30 times this year alone to clients.

8. Inability to Measure Results: Unlike digital advertising, it can be difficult to measure the impact of radio commercials, making it hard to optimize campaigns for maximum effectiveness. Yes, we acknowledge this is a fact – but there are ways to measure. We had one client who advertised on socials, website, google, radio and newspaper – over 6 months she measured every single customer who came in the door, where they had seen or heard ads, they even had a couple of fake options in there (TV – they never had advertised on TV) and the results – RADIO won out with 90% of people hearing their campaigns – Newspaper, less than 15%, online, google search 20%, website 5% and socials 10% – so she

cancelled her newspaper and moved that money to radio – as a result WAY more business, and she has had to hire more people. If you have a client who doesn't know how to measure – show them how – the industry and your sales figures will thank you.

So yes – I have had a rant, and as I step off my soapbox?
I ask you – are you doing any of the above at your station?
Are you doing anything to fix it?
If not, why not?

COMMENTS:

“As a sales consultant I travel a lot, and I listen to radio ads in different countries, and yes, some could easily play on any station or every station. Some are so generic and bland as to not offend anyone. Others are just there to offend. I agree with you, BUT, in my experience, clients are the issue, not the stations or the copywriters. Clients either want to play it safe – or get attention any way that they can, with sale ad after sale ad, week in and week out. It is the clients who ask the impossible, with little or no intention of adding up the costs of doing it 'correctly' they just want short term results – few look at the long term disastrous effects of doing what they have been doing for the past 2-5 years.”

UnaS

“Thanks, Una, for your comments, and I agree, clients are a major part of the problem – but I think we don't help in either sales or copy, in just offering them what they want. Or what we think they want. We need to present them with other choices and give them the reasons behind the other script alternatives – and hopefully, when we have educated them enough – they will take our advice and get better results.”

EarIP

10 Tips for Working in A Sausage Factory

((3 October 2022))

Yes, I do work in a sausage factory - in that we churn, churn, churn copy out all day long.

That's churning out script after script, etc... sometimes 20 to 60 scripts a day - and it doesn't leave much space for creativity or room to write the best script that you can.

I have had a couple of clients ask me "how do you do it?" - and I always respond the same way - "It's lucky I have a short attention span, I can switch from writing a script for a pharmacy one minute to a car yard the next, then a gourmet butchers, an artisan bakery and even a hippie candle-shop."

Now, that means you are in danger of repeating yourself - something that I continually worry about - luckily, I don't think I have yet done that - touch wood!

So yes, sometimes I do worry about repeating myself - DOH!

But I do TRY to keep track of the scripts I write - those that get approved that is - the ones that don't I keep in my swipe file for when I need an idea in a flash.

What I am saying is: I do this, day in and day out, and have done it for 14 years in this one location - as of today!

That's right... today is my 14th year at the radio station I am now at. YAY!

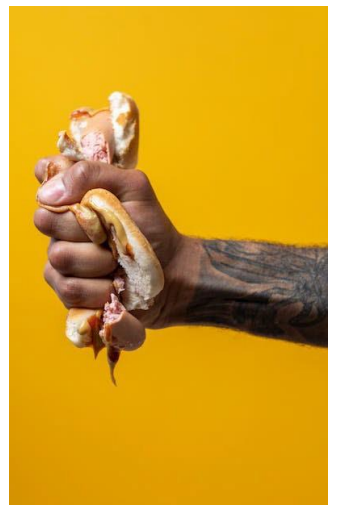
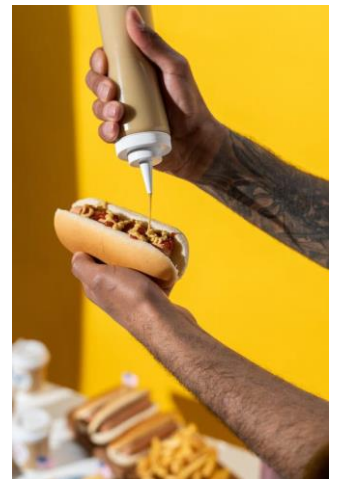
And yes, that is one heck of a long time - and during that I have written promotions, ads, sales copy, videos, and more - plus done production, digital, promotional work and working in almost every department at some stage, in some capacity.

Now there are good things and bad things about working in the one place for so long, you know the lay of the land, and what you can do, and can't do with certain clients. You get a feel for what they like and don't like - but you still get frustrated daily when people don't return your calls, emails - don't like your scripts - do like your scripts "but can we change this one line and add in this line, and phone number?"

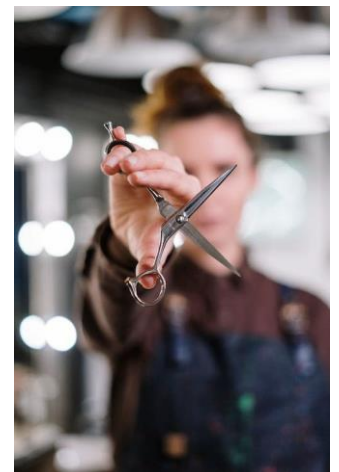
Ahhhh!

Nooooo!

So, I thought I would pass on to you... My 10 tips to survive in a Sausage Factory...

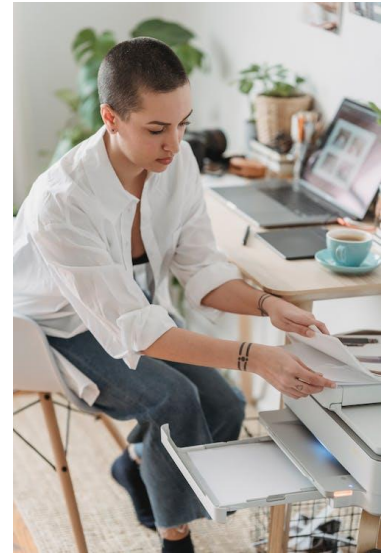


1. **Don't forget that you are good at what you do** - no matter how many scripts you have had to pump out today - you are better than the 'number' that is tracked. You write good scripts - remember that!
2. **Always write the best copy you can**, given the amount of time you must do it in. If that means having to cut corners by delving into your swipe file - then do it - your sanity and time are valuable.
3. **Coaching, mentoring, and training helps you to get ideas**, to build your skill set and makes you a better writer - always be upskilling yourself, no matter what situation you are in.
4. **Stay focused on rewarding yourself**, you deserve it for putting up with 'all of this'. Mine is time away from work and heading out of the country to my holiday destination of choice – Scotland! You can't just "keep on working" you need to reward yourself for pumping through all those scripts.
5. **Speaking of rewards: small rewards keep you going** - I buy and read books - so many books! I read on average 2 books a week - and I read everything from sales books, to copy, to biographies, and fiction - it's my reward to myself. AND I never regret doing it. I always discover something new about myself, or that I can use.
6. **Stand up for what you believe in** - if you have written a great script that you know is going to work - then go into bat for it - stick by your guns and say to the client that it will work for 'this' or 'that' reason. Don't just shrug your shoulders and move on - NO - it's the small victories that make a difference in a sausage factory. So, stand up for that script!
7. **Don't forget to keep abreast of the trends in the industry** - listen to the award-winning ads - discover why they won the awards - AND ask yourself - should this have won? There are many times I listen to an award winning commercial and think that a 5-year-old could have written better - but sometimes I go "WOW! What an amazing idea! Could I do something similar with the right client?" Don't steal the copy, but the idea and note what it was, how it was done and then use it down the track to inspire your own script idea.
8. **Editing makes or breaks a script** - and that can only be done with distance. Take 10 minutes after writing a script, and write another, grab a coffee, a donut, then come back to it and edit it.
NEVER try to do it straight away - I always find I get better scripts when I give them time to percolate in my brain and then I distract it with something else.
Sure, it adds 5 minutes to the script creation time - but it is worth every second.



9. **My final tip - DON'T trust the work printer to EVER work when you are in a rush!** I ended up buying myself a cheap \$35 printer for when the work one dies and have it sitting there ready to print - because you know the day you need to print 10 scripts, there's going to be either a service tech issue, a paper jam, printer device not recognized message, or you'll be out of paper. Before you burn the place down - buy yourself a printer!

10. **Finally:** if you smell fish for absolutely no reason (i.e.: there is no-one 'cooking' fish in the microwave) then 9 times out of 10 it means that there is an electrical fire, stay safe - **GET OUT!**



That's it for today - until next time, keep on churning!

Comments:

"I work in a hub for our group's stations, and we do the same thing, grind 'n churn out spot after spot – nothing too hot, because we just don't have the time to create. I want to return to the good old days of local ads for local clients, that are written locally."

FrakenstainIII

"Building a skillset is the best thing you can do as a copywriter. Train yourself if you must (spending your own money) and don't think that you know everything. You don't!

Keep on learning and growing.

Add to your skills at every opportunity. It is worth every cent that you spend."

JoanR


The Future of Radio Copywriting... Ai is Here!

((6 February 2023))

Be aware that this post has many external references and links, all were working at the time of publishing.

We knew this was coming... and it has kind of worried me for the past 5 years... and it should worry you too if you are a Copywriter in radio.



I read on Radio Online on Friday the article "[Radio Workflow Introduces AI-Powered Tools for Stations](#)" and [click on this video link](#)  and read the info on [the RADIO WORKFLOW website](#).

With Radio Workflow launching the 'Write My Ad' and 'Fix My Ad' tools, and on Monday last week someone giving me a script that had been written by [CHATGPT](#) (which was absolutely terrible by the way) I can see that the future of radio copywriters might be in jeopardy.

Especially as we seem to have little or no representation or curation of our industry from the top down.

Now I know that is a big statement to make - but the fact is that the latest advancements in AI technology will only get better, and although these tools are meant to be helpful and will allow a sales rep to 'create and edit ad copy with increased efficiency and precision, allowing them to focus on other important aspects of their business' So where is our protection?

The industry is quick to jump up and down to try to stop centralization (something that I still see on a daily basis around the world for on-air shifts) and on AI style voices (also known as deepfake AI voices - such as [Veritone](#), and [Voicebooking](#)) being used for commercials and also on-air talent - and the industry as a whole has done well to combat the intrusiveness of news services such as Google (here in Australia at least - read the [CODE here](#)), but now we have hit the copywriters in the industry - I see little or no push back from our leadership about our roles.

Why should they I hear you ask... it will save stations money in the long run - and if that is your only concern - then that is very short sighted, let me explain.

From my personal experience and perspective, the problems are 10-fold:

1. The AI has no knowledge of state or federal laws affecting advertising rules and regulations and they change on a regular basis. (I have written for Canada, several states in the USA, Australia, New Zealand, the UK, Germany and Norway, Switzerland, and Denmark - having to be across all those laws, rules and regulations can be a killer).
2. No creative copy being generated - it's all cookie cutter bland shopping list style ads (at least from what I have seen) that uses popular words and

phrases, so all ads have a high possibility of sounding like each other.

In Radio... CREATIVITY is king!

3. The AI will not write in the voice of the station - if you have a station style that is, and again, all ads will sound the same - leaving it up to production to produce a spot that sounds 'different' yet usable on the station.
4. The AI will not write in the voice that you would normally be writing for (or allow for the voice style, speech, and rhythms of the voice talent - be it client or professional voice talent)
5. The Ai may be fast, but fast - is not always good - good scripts take time to develop, massage and create an image in the listener's mind.
6. The scripts I have seen do not, and would not EVER leave a lasting impression, and make listeners act on the product or service being offered. In fact, they are quite bland and boring.
7. The claim of compelling copy being generated is based on using the correct phrases and words, not in a message that makes any sense, allows for word play, alliteration, descriptive imagery, and uses imagination (that's the old 'theatre of the mind') to sell.
8. I love the thoughts behind the claim that, with the AI "stations can save time and resources, allowing them to focus on other important aspects of their business", so copywriters only do that one thing do we?
9. The loosely structured sentences may read well enough on paper, but when spoken out loud - often fall flat. Therefore, the ad copy generated truly lacks substance.
10. Will the AI be able to answer key client requests to include a message - and be able to edit and make decisions about what to keep in and what to drop to achieve the goals of the client.

These 10 problems are only just the start of issues I have with using AI Chatbot style tools.

The statement from Radio Workflow CEO Fletcher Ford. "With Write My Ad and Fix My Ad, radio stations can now create high-quality ad copy with increased efficiency and precision in seconds. We believe these tools will make a significant impact on the industry."

That impact, as far as I can see is to create an industry that has no creativity, no copywriters, no regard for local, state, and federal laws for advertising and in the end, an industry with less listeners, and less revenue.

Other people have covered this topic too - don't just trust what I say on it...

[EMILY M. REIGART](#) at RADIOWORLD did a great article on this - read that [HERE](#) - it

was originally published in 2018, and was updated in 2020, and I think it needs another update to take in the changing landscape. A couple of days ago, RADIOWORLD did story on CHATGPT - read that [HERE](#).

DIMENSIONS CONNECT have a post that is worth reading, titled '[Will AI take over human-generated content in 2023](#)' and it raises some good issues.

And here is an article from Peter Saxon on RADIO INFO - [How AI will destroy bad news - from earlier this month](#).

So, what is next for us?

I honestly feel we have only just scratched the surface on this topic, and it may become an on-going rant - so what can we do as Copywriters?

Three things you could do today, right now:

1st Talk to your management about this situation with AI Bots and seek reassurance that your job is safe.

2nd Talk to your sales team - reassure them that what you do is far better than what a bot could do - especially when it comes to persuasive creative, psychological triggers and ticking those all-important boxes when dealing with clients - that you do so well.

3rd Email your countries radio governing body and express your dislike for this (e.g.: Commercial Radio Australia, NAB, etc). Ask the question... are they going to do anything to represent Radio Copywriters now, and in the future - we are the backbone of radio advertising, without us all radio ads will all sound the same, and listeners will switch off, and there will be less revenue in the long run.

This post was written by a HUMAN, not an AI-BOT - and is my opinion and thoughts on AI bots, the downfall of society, and the collapse of civilization... and the eventual takeover by our robot overlords.

Comments:

"Yup totally agree! Ai Bots will be the death of our industry. From commercials to on-air, I foresee the death of human creativity, all for the sake of 'let's see if we can do this' and saving \$\$\$ - mark my words it won't be long before entire stations are all Ai-Bots."

BenH8sChatBots

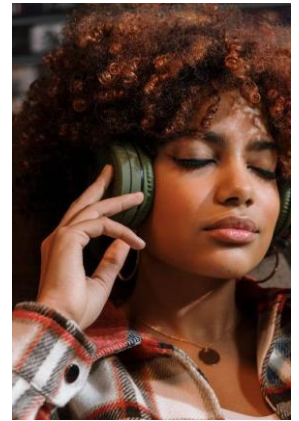
"Come on Ben. Sure, they are new and shiny, but it takes the right type of prompts to get the right type of product out of it, and it is just another tool in our toolkit belt. It's up to you if you want to use it, and to use it correctly."

Mandy

Should Radio Serials Make a Return?

((25 March 2023))

As you may know, I am a big fan of data, and I recently was reading some data about people listening to Audible, podcasts and audiobooks and thought to myself – hold on- we used to do this on radio with radio serials – Why did we stop? Should they return? Did they rate? Would people still listen to them? and so on, and so forth...



I even went back through my own archives to look at and listened to some very simple radio serials I had written with clients being the sponsors.

One was called ‘*Desperate House Wines*’ and was sponsored by an alcohol retailer – it was a parody of *Desperate Housewives* during the first season on TV, and my serial ran for 10 episodes. It was a bit existential, weird, and never really solved its mystery – but it was fun, and listeners (and the client) loved it.

Another ‘*The Radio Adventures of Pie-man*’ which was sold to a bakery and ran for 20 episodes. It was about a baker who ate a very strange pie that gave him and his bakers apprentice superpowers – sort of!

Finally, I wrote another parody, this time of the tv series ‘*Ghost Whisperer*’ which I had planned for 50 episodes (it had a HUGE story arc) and called it the ‘*Ghost Shouter*’, it was about a medium (or a ‘*less-than-average*’ medium) who used their powers for their own gain – *funny how that one never sold*.

All 3 of these serials ran for 60 seconds and were in the style of the shows that they parodied or, in the ‘*Pie-Man*’ show – was similar in style to the old time radio serials and Dick Orkin’s beloved “[Chickenman](#)” series – although mine was distinctly Australian in flavour.

I still strongly feel that if they are sold right, and are well written, well-acted, then clients will sponsor them, and listeners would look out for them – AND best of all – they become a commodity that a station could on-sell to other markets to make more money from them.

We know that listeners are there – looking for something different and a long form 60 second ‘commercial’ disguised as a radio play or serial would sell, and work for clients.

So, here are my 8 reasons why radio serials should make a comeback:

- 1. Engaging storytelling:** Radio serials are an excellent platform for storytelling. They allow writers to engage listeners with long-form storytelling, giving them the opportunity to develop characters and plotlines in a way that is difficult in other mediums. Fast action is possible, amazing locations, incredible tales of daring do, too! It’s all part of the ‘theatre of the mind’, show the power of it off people!

- 2. Captivating performances:** The art of voice acting is a unique skill that requires a lot of creativity and versatility. The radio serials allow voice actors to bring characters to life in a way that is both captivating and entertaining. You might even be surprised at how willing a local theatre group is to be involved, or even some of your own staff.
- 3. Cost-effective:** Compared to other forms of entertainment such as television or movies, radio serials are very cost-effective. With minimal production costs, they offer a low-risk opportunity for broadcasters and content creators. Clients will love being involved with and sponsoring a show that can showcase their name and their support of something different.
- 4. Accessible to all:** Radio serials can be listened to anywhere, anytime, making them an accessible form of entertainment to all demographics. They do not require any visual stimuli, which means they can be enjoyed while driving, cooking, or even while working. They can be played at different times of the day or night (to perhaps target different audiences).
- 5. Nostalgia factor:** Many people have very fond memories of listening to radio serials with their families when they were growing up. The return of radio serials could invoke a sense of nostalgia and help people reconnect with a simpler time. Bring back old serials like “Chickenman” and the like, you’ll soon see that they are still popular.
- 6. Educational value:** If you want to go this way, you can educate listeners on various topics and themes, making them a useful tool for learning. This could be particularly beneficial for children and young people who can learn important lessons while being entertained.
- 7. Cultural preservation:** Radio serials have been an integral part of many cultures around the world for decades. By bringing them back, we can help preserve this important aspect of our cultural heritage for future generations to enjoy. I have fondness for a fantastic New Zealand series called [Claybourne](#) – have a listen!



- 8. They are FUN to Write:** Yes, my final reason for this is because they are a lot of fun to write. You can do so many different things in a radio serial that you can't do if you are just writing straight commercials.

Stretch that creative muscle and write something different. Enjoy it.

Let me give you an example – if you have a client that has a mascot that is used in their radio ads – pitch them a radio serial with the mascot as the center of the action – give that mascot a voice, a back story and some type of action that they are trying to do (I highly recommend the book [SAVE THE CAT](#) by Blake Snyder) you will find that people will soon be suggesting ideas for story lines.

The chances are that the client will also, have never, ever – thought about it

before – and now they have an opportunity to capture an audience with a story about their business mascot – why wouldn't they love that?



By the way – **Chickenman** is still available to play – and last I saw all 275+ episodes were on [i-tunes](#).

There are many other serials out there that have been produced – but why not – as a Copywriter – come up with one and pitch it to a client – something very different, very polished, and with their name already embedded in it.

And yes, I still come up with random radio serial ideas and pitch them to clients all the time – you never know when one of them will say YES.

Comments:

*“Long live CHICKENMAN! He's everywhere; He's Everywhere!
Radio serials may have gone the way of the dodo, but the opportunity (as you say) is there to create a series of commercials for clients that work like a radio serial. Great concept – I'm pitching it to a client today!”*

Randy

“It's an interesting idea, I have never thought of pitching a serial commercial to a client before – I will try it myself and let you know how it went.”

BigJerryD

“I tracked down and listened to Claybourne, WOW! It's X-Files crossed with the New Zealand Māori legends, simply brilliant, with strong script and performances.”

SaraC

“The trouble is getting good performances. We tried in the 90's to do an in-house, long term commercial/serial with a client – but because they didn't want to spend the money – they didn't get regular voices. We kept it topical with events of the week in the scripts – but in the end it just fell by the side of a busy week. You need to commit if you are going to do this, and have a client commit to the spend too – otherwise it just won't work.”

JamesT2T

“It worked! I can't believe it worked! The first post I read on here, and it worked! I pitched a serial commercial idea to a car wash client – and they loved it – we have a freelancer working on 10x60 second spots with the car wash dog mascot as the star. The client has doubled their spend with us. Thanks for the great tip.”

BigJerryD

2. COPYWRITING & CLIENTS

In which I share advice and ideas on the following topics:

- My number 1 single best piece of advice for copywriters who work in radio all around the world.
- I ask are you including the right things in your scripts?
- I discuss the useful 'Seize the Day' spots.
- We ask, are you pushing the boundaries of your scripts, clients, and good taste?
- Does a wheel have to be round?
- Give you 8 tips to avoid playing phone tag with clients.
- Discuss the mattress buying cycle, and industry data, plus, importantly: how to use it!
- Writing Ad copy for a streaming client – is this the future of ads?
- Writing for celebrity voices and is it worth doing it?
- What is the value of each of the words in a script?



My #1 Single Best Piece of Advice for Radio Copywriters

((29 August 2022))

One of the people I mentor was having a very, very hard time lately with a client recently. And I mean a VERY hard time.

A client was calling them on their phone night and day and on weekends about every single little thing that the client thought was wrong with their ad - and they wanted it fixed straight away and they didn't want to be charged for any of the ads that had run before up until that point or for any production on their revised spot.

You can imagine how much of a nightmare a client like this is for any copywriter, salesperson and the person in traffic putting the ads into an on-air schedule.

So, I sat them down and told them something that I thought was obvious - later they said that it was the best piece of advice ever... so here you go:

"DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY!"

It's NOT your fault that THE client is difficult.

The problem is NOT with your talent as a copywriter, it's with your misfortune to have chanced upon an impossible business owner.

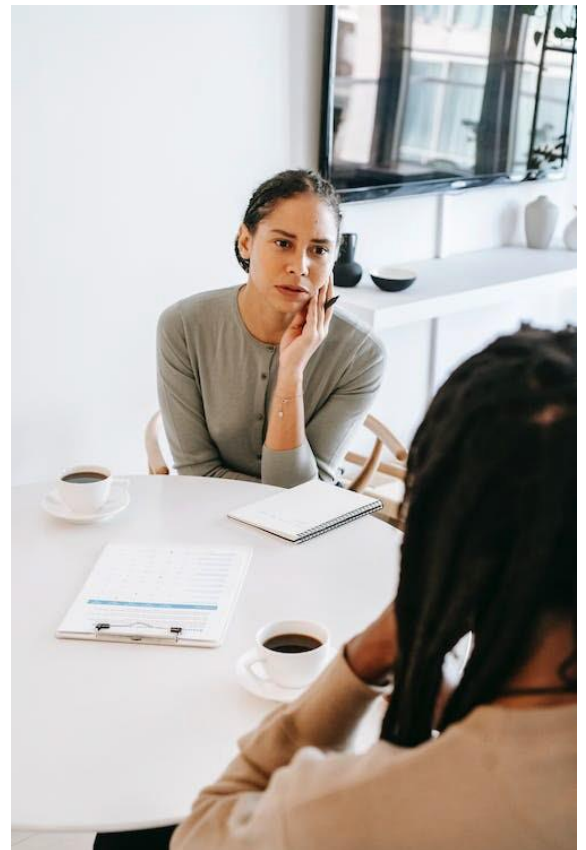
Most of the time this is simply because the client is NOT educated as to how radio works - more on this below.

No matter how much a client would like you to make their radio copy 'sing and dance and solve all my problems', it just won't!

No matter what you do, how talented you are, if you have won awards or not or are an award-winning Copywriter - they won't care.

So, what do you do?

1. **Don't let what they say and think dent your confidence.**
You're not alone! We have all have had clients like this at one point or another.
2. **Try to finish this campaign as soon as you can** and when it is done - set new



boundaries with the sales rep, the client, and your management. I even went so far as to change my phone number to stop clients from calling me out of hours.

3. **Develop a set of steps that direct the client as to the problems caused by ad copy changes** - from costs to delays to getting the ads on-air - I have one client who cannot have ANY ads on air until they have been signed off on by himself *AND* his wife because they cannot agree on anything - so we don't record a single bit of audio until they *BOTH* agree on the script. Another is told at every step of the way, about how much those changes are going to cost - with a new production charge every single time they change an ad after it has been produced.
4. Make it clear that **any campaign is only going to be successful if they listen to the person who knows the medium** - you are the expert, you know how radio works and you know what won't work too.
5. If they refuse to accept any of the above - then **suggest that they use a freelance writer or production company to get their ads made** as you can no longer service them. Be blunt about it if you must. But make it clear that they are one client, and you are writing ads for XXX number of other clients.

Remember not to take what they say personally - you are the professional - YOU are the expert in your field.

I also suggested my young mentee watch this TED X talk...
Or https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnJwH_PZXnM



You might need to spend a little time educating your clients as to how things work at your station - from deadlines through to script approvals - turnaround times, production costs and acceptable contact points.

I have done this myself. Creating a series of emails which walk a new client through how we do things, and then these get re-sent 6 months later, and then one year later to keep them in the loop in case any changes have occurred with staff (or they have forgotten how things work).

COMMENT:

“Great advice – simple and to the point. It's NOT your fault if the client is terrible – all you can do is try to handle them the best way you can, ignore them, or try to educate them. Don't scream at them – even though you really want to, and they deserve it!”

BreakH

Are You Including the Right Things in Your Ads?

((17 October 2022))

I had an insightful conversation with a client who had been a long-time advertiser with us (for the past 2 years)...

He had been doing a deep dive into the data about his advertising in local newspaper, on local radio and online.

Briefly he said... his Kitchen renovation business had been growing in a very stop and start way for years (even before Covid-19) and he had tried to see why - was it the advertising, the staff, or some other factor?



It turned out to be his advertising. So of course - I was all ears.

His online ad campaigns had failed him - all he had was the number of 'views' and click throughs, which didn't relate to anyone spending any more than 5-25 seconds on his site.

That's right only 5 to 25 seconds on his website after Pay Per Click (PPC) and Google advertising and Facebook ads. Total amount of PPC/Click throughs = 2,000. Not one of those people spent more than 25 seconds on his sight coming directly from his ad campaigns. OUCH!

Newspaper - he had been running a half page, then quarter page print ad for 5 years, mixing it up occasionally in 2 local newspapers. When he boiled down that data from those campaigns... Running 2x weekly press ads for 5 years - he had a grand total of 20 bookings for quotes - which translated into only 5 jobs for him in over 5 years of advertising in the local papers. DOUBLE OUCH!

Then we got to the part I was interested in - his radio commercial - as I had written all of them for him - I wanted to know how I had gone.

In the past 2 years he had run several different types - starting with a call-to-action campaign... his response - 20 bookings for quotes from a 2-week run - and of those 20 calls, 10 resulted in jobs.

Then he ran a branding campaign with us, we worked hard on it making sure it had all the right ingredients to keep people calling - and that worked.

In the first 6 months he had 40 calls for quotes, 26 resulted in jobs.

Then, during the Covid-19 lockdowns in our state, we changed his ads to suggest that people take a long hard look at their kitchens they were standing in right now

- and - note what was wrong with them, what worked and what didn't - because when lockdowns ended - he would be back with his team ready to change their kitchens... then lockdowns in our state finally finished - he braced himself - not knowing what was about to happen... he needn't have worried.

Suddenly his quotes jumped from 40 to over 100+ in the space of a month - suddenly he had over 80 jobs booked in - so many he had to stop his ads as he had too much work, and not enough workers to complete the jobs - blowing out wait times to over 6 months.

A month before he had cleared his back log of jobs - he called us again to restart his branding ads - and he also ran a call-to-action campaign and gave away a kitchen make-over too on-air with us - AWESOME!

He has since stopped all newspaper advertising, and only runs Google Ads to be in front of people when they are searching for Kitchen make-overs.

But everything else - he throws at radio.

For him - radio works - and he said to me he puts it down to having the right elements in his ads - which he has agreed to share with you here (these are from his Copy Brief document notes):

1. **An attention getting start.** Open with a sound effect, or a question, or a shocking fact will make people pay attention 30% of the time. Use humour sparingly at the start of your ad 10% of the time - but the best results, 60% of the time are from sharing an experience or seeking a comparison for the listener.
2. **Always use Sonic Branding** - Use the same music bed every time for every spot. From call to action to branding - AND - use the same voice - no matter what the ad is for.
3. **Target Your Message.** Know exactly who makes the decision about a kitchen refit or update - it is in 90% of case - the female of the house. Always keep that person in mind when creating your ad, and use language that appeals to them, and speak to them as a friend - woman to woman.
4. **Have a specific goal** - be it website hits, repeating phone numbers for quotes, increase Facebook likes, whatever it is - one commercial for each goal.
5. **You need to be where people are listening.** There is no point running an ad late at night, if people are making breakfast in a terrible kitchen in the morning. Our ads play when people are preparing meals, breakfast, lunch, and tea - and listening to the radio. We target those times only - and it works!

I couldn't have put it better myself - cheers.

Seize the Day Spots

((6 March 2023))

I was recently chatting to a new business owner (they are a new to radio, but the business has been advertising for years with us) about their bank of generic spots that we had ready to roll - they didn't know what I was talking about, and I thought that maybe you might not know about this too - so here we go:

We have on file, and ready to roll several scripts for this client's business - they include: 1 Generic ad which runs all the time - 4 live reads, 4 pre-produced 30 second commercials and 1x60 second commercial that is produced.

What are they?

They are all pre-set spots that, if we are in the right circumstances, we can push to play at a moment's notice.

If the weather conditions turn too hot - we run spot 2 - turn cold - we run spot 3 - suddenly it's a heatwave, run spot 4, etc.

We have a generic commercial that runs all the time - but we can replace it at any time with the catalogue of spots - when needed.

We do make sure that we get client permission to roll them - we don't just do it because the weather turns nasty - so it requires the sales rep and traffic be ready to make changes - but we essentially have these spots 'in the bank'.

I was thinking about these spots the other day, and how they came to be.

We had a hire company that was advertising with us - and they wanted some generic spots ready to go if there was a natural disaster (to advertise their generators, water pumps, etc.), or it got too hot (portable air-conditioners, large fans) and so on, and so forth.



It was a great idea - and we had a sales rep tell their other client about this idea saying that it would be good for them to do the same for their business - they liked it and locked away those scripts too.

These special spots have been the same for the past 5 years - and all they do is



remind the listener of the clients business name, what they have ready to go, and how to contact them - that's it - no prices, no fluff - just the facts - but it takes a sale rep who is on top of what is happening to make sure that the client is contacted and aware enough to give the traffic department a heads up to change the ads.

Have a look through your client list and see if you have any clients who could do with some generic spots that are 'special' enough for certain circumstances.

Make the scripts and stand by to show how reactive radio can be to what is happening in the world.

COMMENTS:

"Great idea, and we spoke to 5 of our clients about this idea, 3 went with it straight away."

DaveE

"Fantastic idea for that business model, but could it be done for another industry category? Say a car dealership?"

Michaels

"Yes Michael you could – from generic spots like 'we want to buy your vehicle now!' to 'we need a new mechanic/salesperson' or even 'we have too many (VEHICLE TYPES) and need to get rid of them', I am sure there could be at least 3 to 4 different generics your client could come up with – talk to them about the idea and see what they think (I would go in with some demo scripts first to show the idea to them)."

EarIP

"Interesting, and appealing to a certain client group, not sure it would work for everyone."

JanetK

"You are right Janet – not every client could or would like to do this – but it might appeal to some that tend to run the same type of ads year in, year out – or that have a limited product or service that is for one or two different circumstances that occur in a year. Choose your client wisely when you approach them with this idea."

EarIP

Are You Pushing the Boundaries?

((4th July 2022))

A New Zealand Herald Story hit my desk... it was about a radio commercial for a butcher... the headline says it all: **"Butcher's ad about processing mother-in-law meat not in breach of Advertising Standards Authority rules"** - read the full story - [HERE](#)

A complaint was made to the New Zealand Advertising Standards Authority, but the watchdog did not find grounds to proceed.



Photo / 123rf - Article and photo from the New Zealand Herald
29 June 2022 03:26 PM

To quote from the article:

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) has found no grounds to proceed with a complaint against a radio ad for a local Wairarapa butcher which stated that they could even process mother-in-law meat.

The radio ad for Scotty's Meats mentioned that the butcher can process a variety of meats, including home-kill, farm-kill, wild game and "maybe your mother-in-law too".

A complainant wrote to the ASA that the ad trivialized violence against women.

"Making a 'joke' about killing women minimizes and normalizes violence against women, and is offensive," the complaint stated.

ASA has found no grounds to proceed with the complaint but did say it found the ad to be "in poor taste" and "playing to the outdated stereotype that mothers-in-law are people that families want to get rid of".

(End Quote)

Now having not heard the ad - I felt concerned about the fallout from it for the client and the station running the ad.

But the article also made me think... are we as copywriters pushing the boundaries enough - have we ever got to the point where, as in this case - it has gone to court?

I can't say that I have ever chosen to 'play it safe' - but I know I have chosen not to send clients a script idea because I thought they were in bad taste.

Yes, they were fun to write, but I would never send something like that to a client and then let them put it on-air.

But maybe that's me.

COMMENT:

"This commercial was indeed tasteless and should never had made it to air. It was offensive and there was no reason for it to have made it all the way through any radio stations processes BEFORE someone questioned it. But the station that produced the ad SHOULD have been fined – in my opinion. It was a horrible ad."

KarenaA

Does A Wheel Have to Be Round?

((27 February 2023))

I have sometimes been asked by clients to reinvent the wheel.

What does that mean in Radio Copywriting terms?

To me it means that they want something creative that will stand out from their competitors ad, something different, but not too different.



Photo from the Discovery Channel MythBusters show
Square Wheels episode (Season 10, Episode 3)

Okay - the first thing I do is listen to the competitors' ads - if they are all straight announcer reads then I will do something creative.

If their competitors are being creative, then I would go the opposite again and go for a straight read.

But what if there are 4 competitors and they are all already doing something different what should you do?

I don't tell the client that I am doing this, but I look at how long those other campaigns have been running for.

If they have been running for months, weeks or days - I take note - if they are short term - then chances are they are not working - and they were just flash in the pan Call To action spots.

If they were long term, then obviously those spots are working for the clients - these are the ones I take notice of.

If they have been working, I look at why?

- Is it because of the core message?
- The characters (have they been used for a long time?) are they likeable?
- Is it due to some other factor - such as the clients voice?

I take notes, trying to discover what the best outcome would be to make the new client message stand out and go from there - making sure that I explain to the client why I have done what I have done.

Backing it up with information - but never the specifics of how long campaigns have been running for, etc. - they wouldn't want me to do that to their competitors, so I won't do it to them.

The important thing is that I don't have to reinvent the wheel - I just must look at it from a different angle to discover a new way of presenting the information they want.

Try it - rather than jumping in blind and doing what they ask - by doing some analysis first you will get a better result for your client.

COMMENTS:

"That's an interesting process, at least you are doing your due diligence for all clients involved, and making sure that it is not a direct copy of anyone else's ad. Thanks for sharing."

BenM

"I can see how some clients think that you might be doing them wrong by doing what you say you do. But I would just write the best I could for the client asking for it and let them sort it out between themselves."

NAME WITHHELD

"I can't see how you could say that (NAME WITHHELD) as you could be just copying one or more clients' commercials. Sure, we want them all to advertise, so why not try to create a diverse advertising message? Give them all something different? Otherwise, you run the risk of annoying a long-time advertiser, or someone who was about to spend major dollars with you. In my opinion you are better off doing this than run the risk of annoying any clients - and creating a point of difference that listeners can remember and act on."

EarIP

8 Tips to Avoid Phone Tag with Clients

((20 February 2023))

We have all been there, leaving a message for a client when you are trying to write their script.

Then them calling back when you are not available, and so on, and so on.

It can be frustrating.

How do you avoid it?



Try these 8 ideas from [OVERCOMING OBJECTIONS by Carl Henry](#) (*it's a sales book, but I found that they work for me*):

1. **IMPROVE YOUR TIMING.** Make calls when you know your client will be in (but how do I do that I hear you ask) First thing in the morning, mid-week. So that would be Wednesday morning between 8 and 9 am are the times that I get the best results. I tracked them for 2 months and found that calls made on a Wednesday morning got 80% return or answered straight away. Mornings for the rest of the week resulted in 60% returns. What are the worst times? Monday morning and Friday afternoon - avoid them at all costs!
2. **ALWAYS HAVE AN ALTERNATE CONTACT.** That means you get from your sales team members not only the office number, but their personal mobile cell number, or someone else to contact in the office if they are not available.
3. **KNOW HOW TO TALK OVER THE PHONE TO RECEPTIONISTS AND SECRETARIES.** These people not only field calls (often called the gate keepers), but they prioritize them. Make friends with them, a bit of banter goes a long way to see your message gets returned.
4. **THE MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION.** Find out from their staff when they will return, and you could ask them what the busiest time of day for them is so you can avoid it.
5. **HOLD TIME IS WASTED TIME.** I don't know how many HOURS I have wasted on hold to be finally put through, only to find that the client doesn't want to talk to me at all, or about the ad, or they are unprepared. How do you combat this?
6. **MESSAGES, MAKE THEM MATTER.** Send them an email or in the message you have left the following details: Who you are, why you are calling, what you are calling about SPECIFICALLY, and when you will call them back - or your

deadline to get their already agreed to commercial on-air. You can, if you are talking to their secretary, use a little joke - but be professional.

7. **REMEMBER THAT TECHNOLOGY CAN BE YOUR FRIEND.** From message banks to SMS messages, voice mail to email - use them, and use them often. I have left the same messages or sent the same messages to all of these to reach one client and when they finally got back to me - they had only seen one of them. Let them know of the other messages so they can delete them.
8. **FINALLY: MAKE YOURSELF AVAILABLE.** Establish regular 'in-office' hours that you can be reached on - I have even included these on my email signature at one time to make sure that clients knew what time I was going to be there - then I changed them for a month to say midnight to 6am - did anyone notice? No one at all. So be upfront in any messages, say you will be available from 9 to 5, and at lunch from 1 to 2. Then they know EXACTLY when you are available.

COMMENTS:

"Phone Tag! ARGH! I hate clients who don't return calls until late at night – then expect their ads to be on-air the next morning. Nope – if they don't call me back by my deadline – their ads get pushed – no matter what date the salesperson promised them."

AB

"Our policy is that our copywriter (me) doesn't talk to clients – that's our sales team's job. It came about because I told a client a few years ago now, to roll their script up into a tube and stick it up their... well you get the point (or at least they should have). But this works so much better for me now. I don't have to deal with them, and they only ever deal with their salesperson. End of story. Why you would put yourself out there and in their circle is beyond me. You are braver than I am!"

TaraB

The Mattress Buying Cycle or: Understanding Your Clients Customers!

((21 November 2022))

I was reading some info given to me by a client recently for their new radio campaign (it was put out by the peak 'sleep product' professional body in Australia) focusing on their latest comprehensive survey about the mattress buying habits of people.

I found it an amazingly interesting read (but hey! I'm a data nut!).

Their survey showed that they REALLY know their customers. And that they are constantly probing them to find out more.

Don't believe me?

Well... it used to be said that... *"Buying habits of customers change, and if you only have 3 days to make an impact on a client who is only buying once every 15 years..."*

* But that 15-year time frame has now compressed. In 2007, it was just over 10 years, in 2016 it is once every 9 years. Now, it is expected that the average customer is looking to buy a mattress is closer to 7 years. But buyers also want a product that will last at least 10 before it needs replacing. This means that consumers can take advantage of technological advancements, better comfort and more choices as their bodies change and they age if they buy more frequently.

* And they expect the price... to be higher than last time. In-fact significantly more than last time.

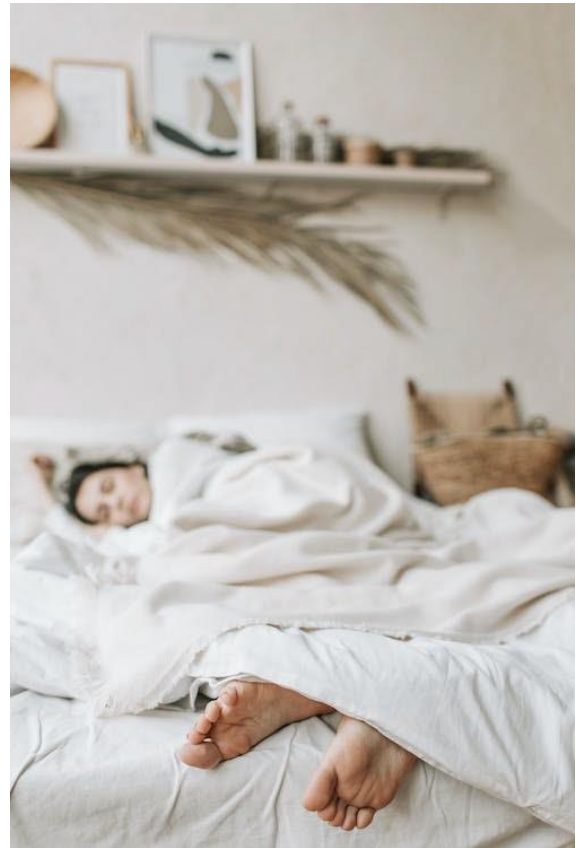
So, what did I get from this?

I thought the data was an interesting insight into consumers' minds, in an industry where I didn't know they did such a deep dive in their customers.

The survey data also included buying habits of men, women, their ages, their source of information about what they want to buy. Their research process before they seek to buy a mattress, the importance of 'hands on' in-store rather than online, and more... so much more!

What does this mean for you?

They know their customers well. Really well.



By constantly, and continuously surveying them... they learn more, can target better, and provide a better service – giving them return customers.

So, they know their customers better!

How did they survey?

They did surveys online through their websites, social media and through online competitions. PLUS: in-person questionnaires, in-store with people looking to buy mattresses.

My take-away from all of this?

If you owned a mattress store, then you had better be advertising all the time to catch customers, when they are ready to buy. And that means, not just advertising at traditional times, but all the time!

Remember: Buying cycles have changed, and they have changed a lot in recent years.

If you have a client that doesn't own a mattress store... then you should either look for data specifically about their customers (check their industry peak body for details) and their buying habits.

Then adjust your advertising to suit the buying habits of your customers - target them, and the results will amaze you.

Cheers. Sleep well.

COMMENTS:

"I shared this with a bedding client of mine – they agreed with it so much, they increased their spend – could you share some more case studies with us please!"

TomB

"I just found out that the major white goods group in our country does the same thing – if you hadn't written this post – I wouldn't have known to ask. Now the client and I are working on how to best produce commercials to engage those sections of the listeners who might be in the market for their goods – all based on the data that the industry has produced from their surveys. Thanks."

JenB

Writing Ad Copy for a Streaming Client

((11th July 2022))

While you may know that many radio stations stream their signals so that listeners can access the audio through the station website, their station app, or on a home smart speaker device (like Alexa and Google Home), and that there are also aggregating apps like Tune-In or i-Heart or similar. BUT... did you know that you can do something different for a client - if they are prepared to pay, and you have the right technology behind you?



Because a streaming signal is not simulcast, you can split an ad break.

Essentially that means that you can have different produced spots playing at the same time so that each listener will hear a different ad depending on their device, gender, age, household income, and other demographics.

This has been available in Australia since 2019 - as seen in this RADIO TODAY article on Addressable Advertising - [HERE](#) - and I have even heard recently some geolocation ads which do the same when you stream from one country to another (e.g.: NZ radio to Australia).

There are quite a few companies out there who can do this for you.

BUT - this post is something that happened about 6 months ago to me - and I have been waiting to find out what happened, I can't wait to hear the results.

To cut a long story short, a client was doing this in the U.K. as a test. Because this was a strange situation - I really wanted to be involved.

There were around 20 different spots where the core message was essentially the same in each, and so was the production - the only difference was the voices, the opening line, and the line after the client tag line - everything else was the same.

Simple enough? At least that's the way it was pitched to me.

There were 3 copywriters involved, and they wrote spots that were broken down to male focus and female focus, young (15-20), adult (20-30), middle aged (30-60) and OAP (that's "old, aged pensioners" for those not in the UK), there were also 2 spots that were targeted at higher priced products and lower priced products.

The process was simple enough - decide the categories, write the core message and the tail, then start zeroing in on the target audience. Then play those ads to the listeners and monitor the results.

I was asked to cast an ear/eye over the scripts to see if they would work. I was more than glad to help!

The technology was delivered through the station website, and a third-party piece of software and integrated with smart speakers.

I wasn't privy to the specifics of how it worked - but it truly fascinated me.

If this is the future of radio - it means a lot more scripts (YAY!), more production, and, more of a focused message.

COMMENT:

"That sounds like a nightmare – writing and producing that many different ads and then making them work. Glad that the technology helps with that – but I can't see our small station doing anything like this – way, way too expensive to set-up I think."

AndyH

Writing for Celebrity Voices... Is It Worth It?

((15 May 2023))

Over the years I have written some commercials to be voiced by Comedians, Actors, Artists, Politicians, 'Personalities' (read that as Reality TV wannabees or 'Z' grade celebrities), and Sports Stars.

I am not talking about the professionals who do this daily - but people who have never done radio commercials before - and are often being paid ridiculous amount of money to appear in one.

So: Who, How and Why did we get the best results from a Celebrity Voice?



It was always a bit of a process, trial and error, sometime stumbling on egos and tripping over common words (dealing with lisps and other pronunciation problems) - but eventually most of the spots went to air and delivered for clients *(in one case I did have a Celebrity Voice come in to record for an hour and produce a commercial that was so bad it was deemed unusable - we still had to pay them for their time though - if only I had known how to deal with them to get the best results - see below)*

Next time you have a client who wants to use a specific voice you can say... "Well, we could do that, but it will involve us doing..." you will be able to guide your client through what is going to happen - and if they agree, then you will be able to guide the Celebrity Voice talent too, to deliver for your client.

I will share with you along the way a 6-step guide to deal with the Celebrity Voice *(in fact from now on I will just use the term 'Celebrity Voice' as a catch all, rather than singling out individual types - okay?)*

The Lure of the Celebrity Voice, or: Why Clients Want to Spend Time with Celebrities!

Using a celebrity voice in your radio ad can add a touch of glamour and familiarity to your campaign, making it more memorable and engaging for your target audience.

For example, if you have access to a celebrity voice who played a well-known character - such as a lawyer - and you are doing a commercial for a law firm, then that will work for you as people will connect the voice to the role and add more gravitas to the client's business.

However, working with famous voices is not without its challenges. In this section, we discuss the pros and cons of using Celebrity Voices in radio copywriting.

The Pros

Familiarity: People tend to pay more attention to ads featuring a voice they recognize, as it cuts through the noise and creates an emotional connection with the listener. This is a short cut that I wish we had with every voice, but we don't so if you can cash in on it - do it!

Mass appeal: Celebrities often have a large following, which can help raise awareness and generate buzz around your product or service. They may choose to share what they are doing on social media (sometimes at an extra cost) so that will help your client in the long run. Plus, their popularity will have a halo effect on the business too - if your commercial script and production do them justice.

Expertise: Some celebrities have experience in voice acting or performing, making them well-suited to deliver a compelling performance in your ad. They know the tone that works for them to get the best delivery - listen to them, acknowledge that fact and write to it.

The Client: They get bragging rights for using a celebrity voice, from photos with them in the studio to "Look who I GOT TO RECORD MY COMMERCIAL!" Clients love spending time with celebrities - don't they just!

The Cons

Cost: The cost of hiring a celebrity voice can be expensive - and I do mean "EXPENSIVE" and may not always guarantee a return on investment. Plus, you may also have the added cost of either getting the Celebrity to the studio to record, how much time the recording will take, the 'creative' decisions that they make, etc... it all adds up to time and costs that you just may not have available.

Risk: Associating your brand with a particular celebrity may have unintended consequences if their reputation takes a hit. From someone suddenly being 'cancelled' to being dropped from their team or main forum where their celebrity is in - it does come with risk. They also tend to NOT be like the character or personality that they are known for - asking them to say a line 20 times to get the best delivery does not go down well with some people, and others do not take direction well.

Distracting: A famous voice can sometimes overshadow your brand message, causing listeners to focus more on the celebrity than on the product or service being advertised. This happens a LOT when you use celebrity voices in radio ads - people are so shocked that it is X Celebrity - they don't listen to the content of the ads and then wonder "who was that for?"

Choosing the right celebrity voice:

To ensure you get the most out of your celebrity voiceover, consider the following factors, discuss them with the client who is footing the bill and see if they are willing to commit to the investment, or that they happen to 'know them' this is not a good enough reason to get them to voice the commercial...

Therefore, they must be:

Relevant: The voice should be relevant to your target audience and resonate with them on an emotional level. As I said before, if they have played a lawyer in a TV show or Movie AND are willing to voice an ad for a lawyer then people will understand the relevance. If they are a sports star who has never needed a lawyer, why would they voice a radio commercial for a lawyer?

Tone and style: The celebrity's voice should match the tone and style of your brand, product, or service. If you have a fun business, but the celebrity voice is known for serious work - then the tone won't match up with what you are trying to achieve - but it might if you play with the script and the Celebrity is willing to go along with a silly script - but they might not. Think seriously about the tone and style - will it work for the celebrity?

Availability: Make sure the celebrity is available for recording sessions and willing to work within your budget. This is perhaps THE MOST important thing to consider as it will affect the delivery of your commercial in so many ways. I have had a Celebrity Voice come into the studio as they had 15 minutes free in their schedule - they read the script twice through perfectly - done and dusted. Others who wanted to spend hours recording it, and they could only fit us into their schedule in 3 months' time when they were back from an event... which when they came in to record - and they had a husky voice as a result of playing for 3 months solid - Find out their availability before committing - it makes a HUGE difference to the end result.

Agreement: They also must agree to you doing what you want to do, it's no good them turning up to a recording session and then saying, "I'm not saying that!" They need to know ahead of time what it is that they are going to say, why, and how... this is where my 6-step guide to dealing with celebrities may come in handy...

My 6 Step Guide to Dealing with Celebrity Voices:

Remember: THE SCRIPT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING!

You could start your script off with the Celebrity Voice saying who they are and why they are here - or you could start the commercial in the middle of the action, half way through a story, or have them talk about a product or service, no matter what you do - your script is the most important thing to get right - before they come into the studio. They need to see it at least a week before they come in and give clearance for it - they may even have some ideas beforehand to make it better - ALWAYS listen to this - and make changes if you need to.

Step 1: Celebrity Voice at the Studio.

ALWAYS treat the Celebrity Voice with respect, be cognizant of their time - if they have given you half an hour to do this in, then don't take a minute past that time limit - you don't need to fall over them with praise and being a fan - be professional - be on time yourself and have everything ready to go BEFORE they get there. There is nothing worse than them arriving and you are still setting up.

When directing them, be professional - be direct, tell them exactly what you want and why - and if they have difficulty saying a line - be available as the copywriter

to help them to come up with an alternative that will work for them and for the client.

Remember that the script that has already been agreed to is king - and the client is the one paying so you want to make sure you are doing the right thing by your client. Below this I have a special section on directing the Celebrity Voice talent.

When done - you can play them a rough cut (if you have time) and see if they are happy with the work they have done - then thank them and escort them out of the building - why? Because co-workers will always try to cash in and get time with the Celebrity - that's not why they are there - and it is their call if they stop and talk, take selfies, pop into a show to say hello to listeners, etc. You do not own their time at this point - you are acting on behalf of their agent and trying to get them on to their next gig.

Step 2: With the Script - Set the stage.

Create a vivid mental picture for the listener by describing the setting of your ad. OR, use music/sound effects and descriptive language to immerse your audience in the story.

No matter what you do - with a Celebrity Voice especially you need to set the scene in your commercial fast - don't waste time - get to the point. The same should be said of every single commercial that you write already - but I thought it needed saying here again.

Step 3: Establish a clear message.

Your Celebrity Voiced radio ad should have a clear and concise message that communicates the benefits of your product or service quickly. Avoid using jargon or complex language that may confuse listeners, or that the Celebrity doesn't understand. Establish their credentials if you must (that's their reason for doing the ad) or justify it by creating...

Step 4: Craft memorable dialogue

Dialogue is crucial in radio copywriting. Dialogue with a Celebrity Voice - DOUBLY SO - Write conversational, engaging dialogue that feels natural and captures the essence of your brand, and who they are.

If you have the client talking to the Celebrity Voice, then the dialogue NEEDS to be real - not faked and 'read from the script' allow for ad libs and genuine conversation to occur.

See below for more notes on a conversational or monologue style Celebrity Voiced commercial. Remember that you want the lines to be short, sharp and to the point and to also...

Step 5: Include a strong call to action (CTA)

Having a clear CTA is essential in Celebrity Radio ads, as it encourages listeners to act. Make your CTA clear, specific, and persuasive, with the Celebrity either telling you to speak to someone (a personal recommendation always works well in this

circumstance) or to contact the client in store - just don't have your Celebrity Voice say "go to their website" because that's not a recommendation that will get any more hits on their site - UNLESS: you have filmed the commercial making and include that on the site to get people to find out how much fun they had - the Celebrity MUST agree to this and will need to be compensated for doing it.

Step 6: Keep it short and sweet.

Celebrity Radio ads are just the same as every other radio ad - typically 30-60 seconds long, so make every word count (just because they are a celebrity doesn't mean that their commercial can run longer! Traffic will still have to schedule it amongst every other commercial, so your script needs to be TIGHT). You know the drill as a copywriter - Be concise and focused on your script, avoiding unnecessary details or fluff. But if you have enough content to make another commercial, or a series - then do it - but remember that the Celebrity Voice will have to be compensated for it.

How to get the PERFECT Voiceover: Tips for Casting and Directing Celebrity Talent

Casting: Finding the right voice

You might be lucky and have access to an agent's website which contains samples of Celebrity Voices that you can listen to and see how they sound, sometimes not - and you must base your script upon what you already know or can find of them online.

But if you must cast the net wide enough to find the right voice talent, consider:

Relevance: Ensure the celebrity is relevant to your target audience and has a voice that will resonate with them. See above, as this is still vitally important and not enough clients think this through.

Versatility: Choose a voice that can adapt to different tones and styles and can deliver a convincing performance.

Budget: Be realistic about your budget and find a celebrity who is willing to work within your means. Some voices in Australia will do a script for as little as \$300, others for \$3,000, and others for over \$10,000 for a 30 second spot - that can only run for 3 months - if you want to run it past that you need to pay that fee again - keep that in mind when talking to your client about the commitment that they are making to using a Celebrity Voice.

Directing: Getting the best performance from a Celebrity Voice

To get the best performance from your celebrity voice talent, remember:

They are human: They are just like you and I, they will need water, a toilet break, time to get their head together and a couple of takes to be done to get it right - don't lose your cool - treat them like they are 'special', as in - just like every other voice talent you have in the booth, i.e.: **Always be professional!**

Provide clear direction: Give the voice talent specific instructions on the tone,

style, and delivery you want for your ad. There is nothing worse than having them in the booth, and everyone is sitting around waiting for the magic to happen. Give them a script, standing them in front of a microphone and expecting them to deliver is not good enough. EVER!

Encourage collaboration: Allow the celebrity to provide input and suggestions and be open to their ideas. Record different versions if you must, but make sure you have what is in your script - first, then allow time to do different takes.

Be patient: Keep in mind that voice acting may not be the celebrity's primary skill, so be patient and work together to achieve the desired result. Sometimes it can be frustrating, and annoying - but your client is the one who wanted the Celebrity Voice - do it for them.

How to Make Your Celebrity Voiced Ad Stand Out...

Be innovative: Create a scene, a story, or a reason for why they are voicing the commercial. Experiment with unconventional formats, storytelling techniques, or sound design to create a unique and memorable ad. Don't just have them say "This is <NAME> for <CLIENTS NAME> and I'm here to talk to you about XYZ" boring!

Target the right audience: Tailor your ad to appeal to your specific target audience and choose the right radio station or platform to reach them. It's no good having an older Celebrity Voice making a commercial for a young current fashion label in town - unless there is a definite link. You need to make sure that you can link your Celebrity Voice to the business with good reason.

Leverage the power of humour: A well-executed, funny radio ad can be incredibly memorable and engaging for listeners. Having a Celebrity Voice do a commercial about something that is left of center of their normal sphere will make the ad stand out - maybe for the wrong reason - unless you add humour to it.

Be careful - make sure the humour matches the celebrity - or they won't be happy.

Another Way is to Master Monologues and Dialogues with a Celebrity Voice...

Striking a balance between monologues and dialogues with a Celebrity Voice can be difficult. Especially (and yes, I am pointing at a specific group) Sports personalities are not usually known for their voice acting abilities - you need to coach them to get the best results.

Here are some tips to help you achieve this:

Keep it conversational: Write dialogue that feels natural and true-to-life and avoid overly scripted or stilted language. You want it to sound like it really is them giving their opinion, telling their story, and saying what they want to say.

Use monologues strategically: Monologues can be effective for conveying important information or setting the scene, but do not overuse them with a Celebrity Voice - why? Because so many of your other commercials are mostly

monologues - look at what you produce and play on your station - if they are mostly monologue commercials - do a conversational script - if they are mostly conversational- do a monologue.

Engage the listener: Write a script that encourages listeners to respond and interact with your ad, making them more likely to remember and act on your message. This rule should be the same with all your commercials, but with a Celebrity Voice script - doubly so!

- AND THAT'S IT FOR TODAY -

Writing radio ads for celebrity voices can be a challenging yet rewarding process for both you, and the client, when it works, when you have the right script that has been written for the right person to read.

By following the above tips in this post, you can create engaging, memorable, and effective radio commercials that resonate with your target audience and deliver results for your client's business, by adding some 'celebrity' to your ads.

Armed with these insights and tips, you're now ready to tackle your next radio commercial script for a Celebrity Voice and create a radio commercial that will truly stand out.

And remember, it's not just about having a famous voice in your commercial; it's about crafting a message that captivates, engages, and ultimately converts your listener into a loyal customer for your client's business - if your commercial doesn't do that - then it's not worth doing.

On a final note - don't use celebrity voice impersonators (or AI versions of celebrity voices, or celebrity voice changing software) as it can land you in some serious trouble with the celebrity's legal team hitting you and the client with a massive court case and fine.

Go with the real Celebrity Voice - it may be more expensive in the short term, but in the long run your client will be better off for it.

COMMENT:

"Longest post EVER on this site! But worth the read. I am bookmarking this!"

RachL

What Is the Cost of Each Word in a Radio Script?

What are your Words Worth?

((Never published online))

I have had many, many different discussions with clients over the value of the words in their scripts – few have ever questioned why I say this – so here is a brief response I wrote when I did have a client at a regional radio station question me after I sent a script through with less than 64 words in it for a 30 second commercial...

If the average spend/price/cost of an advertising package on this station is say \$3,000 – running 5 ads per day – then you as a client should expect to get at least double that investment back – right?

Let's say 2.5 times your investment back. That would be a return of at least \$7,500.

Fair enough?

Let's then work on a 30 second commercial, if it was a soft sell one with 64 words (or less) that would equate to \$117.17 of value in every single word that has been chosen.

In a medium sell commercial with say, 78 words, that would equate to roughly \$96.15 in value for every word.

In a hard sell commercial with 87 words, that would be \$86.10 per word.

In an extreme hard sell script with 95 words, that would be \$78.95 per word.

Word choices in scripts costs the clients' money or increase the value of their investment.

Does that extra word that they want to include, or you want to include contribute to the sale of the product or service? Or does it cost the client in the long run?

Think carefully about that extra word.

Does it help to sell the story? Or make money for the client?

More importantly... will those extra words contribute to their bottom line, and make them come back to radio and spend more money with us?

If not – then don't put it in!



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3. EDUCATING CLIENTS

In which I share advice and ideas about how to educate clients into and along their journey through radio.

Topics include:

- Educating clients – how do you approach it?
- Why advertise with us in radio.
- And how to read a script – some useful advice.



Educating Clients

((1 August 2022))

Over the past couple of weeks, I have been working on a side project in my day job for my Sales Team Manager - one that is basically: "Educating Clients".



We are trying to find a way that will not only capture their information, educate them, and get them ready to buy advertising - and it's a hard task!

First, some background: We've been doing this for years (at least the last 6) in one way at our radio station - with a blog that is specifically for our on-air clients - see that [HERE](#) if you want to. Posts were going up there every Tuesday morning as this was the time that we saw more client activity on our station site.



West Coast Radios: CoastLive.com.au Blog for Clients logo

In the **Blog for Clients**, I cover everything from advertising basics to mental health. Marketing their business not only in radio but also newspaper, tv and online - and look at specific sectors and problems that clients email me about. We've also had videos. Silly posts. Competitions for clients, and more!

I work usually about 3-4 months in advance with the posts, and if something crops up - I drop a post and then take that issue head on and devote as much space as I need to answer the question, or giving details about the topic - such as survey results or when something major happens.

Sometimes while researching an article, I find information that is GOLD, and it helps me or other people out - other times I just come up with the answer to the next question and move on.

But about a month ago I decided that I was going to get a little bit ahead with my post scheduling - and have managed to complete 6 months of posts - so now I don't have anything more to do with that until the end of the year unless something else pops up.

This left me with time to look at other ways that other stations educate their clients and what I found was well... a little disappointing - especially given what I was being asked to do - I need some inspiration.

WHY?

I found that there is a plethora of single "Why Advertise with Us" pages on most radio station websites - and the thing is - they ALL look like and sound like they

were written by the same person years ago, no matter which station or which country these stations are at.

Sometimes the wording is EXACTLY THE SAME too!

It's almost like we all had the one press release about radio advertising and copied and pasted it to every single radio station - no matter the format!

Occasionally there will be a short promo video about the station - which look great and show the general wackiness of the station or personalities - but offers no actual reason as to why a prospective client should advertise with them.

Stats and data also take up a large part of station sites - with "XX% of people listening to our breakfast show" - style stats - which is great but if I was a client - I would say... 'so what?'

Very few have rate cards - a couple have media information kits which are great for other media outlets but have nothing for actual clients and businesses.

I think you see my point.

If I was a client, looking at YOUR station "Advertise with Us" page - what would I see?

Would it convince me to advertise with you?

Or go with a competitor?

Should you use your copywriting powers to try to update, convince and show how and why advertising with your station works? YES!

Let me know below what you are doing now - include links if you want - and then I will check on those same pages in a couple of months' time and see how much they have been updated.

COMMENTS:

"Great point, I just had a look at our market, 3 stations, all pretty much have identical details on our websites – OUCH! Working on changing that right now."

Ted

"I looked at the major metro websites for stations, and 90% of them were the same, so what you say is spot on – the two that were different, one had videos, the other had nothing – it was a blank page!"

ChloeM

Seeking Feedback: Why Advertise With us?

((22 August 2022))

On the first of this month, I told you I was looking for some ideas about educating clients and getting them on-board with advertising.

I was sent a couple of links by some different stations around the world - and well - I hate to say it - they all looked the same! Some were even worded identically!

So, I went on a hunt and found some interesting facts that were put together by Commercial Radio Australia, and from other sources - and put them together on our stations 'Advertise with Us' web page.

[Have a look and see what you think](#) - I even made a video for those clients who don't want to sit and read (it is almost identical to the text you must scroll through).

Watch the video on the page and see how we have presented the data and details.

We even have radio spots on our 2 stations running now to point prospective clients to the website...

97.3 Coast FM version of the 'Advertise with Us' campaign - voices by [Abe's Audio](#) with production by Carl Darby and written by Earl Pilkington. 91.7 The Wave version of the 'Advertise with Us' campaign - voices by [Abe's Audio](#) with production by Carl Darby and written by Earl Pilkington.

COMMENTS:

"Interesting stuff – can we copy what you have done too?"

LucyG

"Thanks Lucy, yes you can, but then you run the risk of sounding like everyone else doing the same thing – you need to look at finding the right way that your station voice can come through with presenting this information to clients, be that through fact sheets, videos, audio, PowerPoints, slideshows, a talking head, or an animated video. Find a way that sells you as a station and keeps to your brand, then present the information that is relevant to your audience."

EarlP

How to Read a Script

((7 November 2022))

I was trying to explain to a client a while ago about why the script was written the way it was, and they couldn't grasp the fact that they just couldn't fit 140 words into 30 seconds... So, I wrote a blog post about this subject and put it up on my day job's Blog for Clients site - if you haven't seen that then here it is below in its original form:

STOP!!!!

Before you make any changes to that script I sent through - let's look at how to read it so that it makes sense.

First - Check the duration of the script - so you know that what I have written is specifically for 30 seconds, 15 seconds, 60 seconds, or 10 seconds - this is fixed, no matter what we do - we can't go past this duration.

Next - check the production notes section of the script. Does it say a 'hard sell style read' or 'friendly conversational style' or other such notes, such as setting or feel? If it says 'hard sell' then that is what style read we are after from the voice artist - hard sell reads are usually anything over 82 words - and are done in the style of a 'shouty commercial' whereas a 'friendly conversational' style read is slower, and usually under 80 words - normally about 75.

And before we get to the script - remember that if we are mentioning prices, phone numbers, website addresses and physical bricks and mortar addresses, then they will all be spelt out - such as 9581 2666 = "nine five eight one, two triple six" or \$23,990 = "Twenty-three; nine; ninety" OR "www.mybusinessname.com.au" is "My Business Name dot com dot a-u" or finally 2/13 Any Blank Street = "Unit 2, thirteen, Any Blank Street, Suburb". All of which costs us words in our word count.

Now: On the Left-hand side of the script are notes to produce the script - such as voice (MALE or FEMALE or CHILD, etc.) plus music stops and starts, reverb and other SFX (sound effects) notes - you can ignore these as you are reading the script. Got all of that? Right!

Now it's time to read the script...

I recommend you ask someone to read the script to you - out loud - so you get a feeling of what it might sound like when produced... this gives you a better guide than reading in your head and allows you to run a stopwatch if you want so you can see how things are timing out.

CLIENT NAME	YOUR BUSINESS NAME HERE	ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE	MIKE	CALL TO ACTION
TITLE	WHAT THE SALE IS ABOUT	START	9-2-22	TIME
DURATION	30 SECONDS	END	18-2-22	TIME
KEY NUMBER	1234-56	CART NUMBER		CUT 1 OF 1
VOICE(S)	MALE VOICE	STATION	ALL STATIONS	
MUSIC BED	ROCK AC MUSIC	TRAFFIC		
DATE / WRITTEN	8-2-22	EP	WORD COUNT	87 87 MAX
				V SOURCE: Outsourced
PROD. NOTES				
Music Up				
MALE	We are doing a hard sell read to tell listeners about our price and products and where we are...			
SFX	((CAR TYRES/CAR HORNS/DOORS SLAM/FEET RUN ON CONCRETE))			
	...so you can come in and buy ONE of only FIFTEEN:			
	Mikes Limo, low kilometres, limousines, one owner, only five dollars each, limit of one per customer, once sold, there are no more at this mad price!			
	For full details see "Mikes Limos dot com dot a-u"			
	Or run on in too: our street address in Mandurah today, or you will miss out on this bargain offer!			

If you don't have someone to do this - ask me - I will grab my desktop microphone and read it and send you an audio file so you can get a rough idea - remember that I am a desk jockey - not a professional voice artist - but I will give it my best shot.

Okay... have them read the script - just listen to the message - is the core details correct? i.e.: details, prices, names, addresses, website, etc... make sure that all of this is correct first before you make any other changes.

Next, have them read it to you again, this time you are listening to the message - is that one 'thing' that you want - getting across? Is there too much detail? Too little?

Does it connect with you and make you say, 'I want to know more?' OR are you confused by the message?

Now is the time to scribble notes and make changes - try not to go over the word count that I have already given you in the script - if you do it could require a complete re-write (we have had clients add 50+ words to an 87 word script - it just can't be done in 30 seconds - so keep to the word count, even if that means cutting words).

Next send the changes back to me and we will make those and send the script back again.

We keep on doing this until you are happy with what you will get.

If we are all good to go - then you just need to sign off on the script - and we can then send it off to be voiced - usually this happens within 10-30 minutes of you sending your approval through - so if there are any changes after that - let us know as quick as you can, otherwise you may be charged another production fee to cover the re-recording and studio time of the voice artist over east.

Then when we get the voice back, our producer puts it together with music and sound effects and we send you a copy before it goes to air.

So that's it - that's how to read a script.

COMMENTS:

"Of course, it seems obvious to us how to read a script. Sometimes I think we forget that clients have no idea, it's like sending them a scribbled note that is an idea for a print ad – they just won't get it. But I do like the concept of sending an audio file to them instead of a script – does it help to get them across the line?"

PaulW

4. COPYWRITING & SALES REPS

Next, we talk about copywriting and dealing with our sales team.

Topics include:

- I have a theory about why radio can be different yet stay on brand for clients (it might not be a theory you agree with though).
- The client needs a sales event name, can you do it?
- Black Friday names for sales.
- Dealing with sales team members who are not on their A game!



I Have a Theory!

((10 October 2022

I have a theory about writing advertising for radio, one I'm pretty sure no one will buy into, or even agree with it, but it is my theory and by gum I will stick to it... why?

Because this idea runs counter to everything, I've learned about how advertising works (as I channel Monty Python's Anne Elk sketch) this theory, which is mine is the following:



"Radio may very well be, the ONLY advertising medium where one-off ads are not a bad idea at all for the right client."

Wait, what?? I know, I know, it is branding heresy.

It goes against everything I have ever said and done, but I think it might be true.

I mean, who'd suggest stringing together a bunch of one-off print ads and calling it a campaign? Yet alone charge a client for it... but wait...

In radio, if you have a good idea, then throw the idea (theme or usual branding) of a campaign out the window and let it get squashed by a passing dinosaur.

I have done it myself for a bedding company, running weird, one-off campaigns that have no sense of a "campaign structure or plan".

Yet there are other examples out there in the real world too... remember the "Real American Heroes," campaign - they are brilliant one-off pieces that stand alone - but they do sort-of have a kind of campaign structure.

But, when a client insists that every radio campaign has the exact same structure, every SINGLE TIME! Then I say no to that.

I like the odd, the different, the stand-alone one-off ad works better at getting attention than a branding campaign - and I would prefer to write these any day, for any client - if they believe in my theory that is.

COMMENT:

"I disagree! For a cohesive 'on brand' message, you need to keep things uniform – across every message, but, if it works for your clients then maybe there is something in it. Personally, I don't want to take the risk."

LisaMA

The Client Needs a Sales Event Name? Can You Do it?

((29 May 2023))

So, a rep comes to you to talk about their client - "I need a commercial for their HUGE once a year sale... but they can't think of a name for it. Can you come up with one that they can use?"



I reply, "That's a pretty heavy thing to lay on the head of a copywriter - but sure, I can do that... ummm... isn't this business in a business category with 4 other businesses in town?"

"Yup, you can do it..." they say as they walk out the door, leaving a Copy Brief with 2 bullet points on it for me to base the script on.

'How the heck do I do this?' I think to myself.

This was a few years ago, and I can tell you know that it doesn't get any easier when this happens (and it does about 3-5 times a year - every year).

So where do you even start?

Well usually, if I have the other business' old ads on file - I will look through those first.

So, I know which ones I CAN'T USE!
I write them down and put a great big **RED CIRCLE** around them.

Secondly, I look at the Copy Brief - just what have I been given to work with?

That's useful... 40-50% off everything some items excluded. No description of what is excluded or what EXACTLY I am advertising.

Right...

Next, I jump online and see what their Facebook and website has on it - maybe I can get an idea from that - nope nothing but badly done print ads converted to Facebook ads, no actual content... oh look a pet's birthday... scroll... scroll... a client who won a competition.

Nope nothing on Facebook, and their website is just a landing page with their opening hours and a map to find them, and their phone number.

Okay... ((CRACKS KNUCKLES)) ...now to start a deep dive into the business category.

I usually do this in several stages, and I will walk you briefly through those now.

My personal process (as of May 2023) is:

1. Use [SWURL](#) - it's a search engine that shows you the latest news stories, YouTube videos, links, Instagram posts and more. Just to see what is happening in the world of that business category. I have a brief read of some of the top posts and note any words down on your list that seem appropriate.
2. Next, I head to another search engine [ANSWER THE PUBLIC](#) it's a unique search engine to help you discover what people are talking about online. It's VERY useful. I do a bit of a dive into those results (check out the visualization and raw data) and then... write those choice words onto the list.
3. Now, I do a [Google image search](#) (yes I know - weird right?) and type in the business category name and then the words "Sale" or "Annual Sale" and see what comes up - sometimes you will get old print ads, posters, sometimes photos of banners, people in front of stores, and the best of all - sometimes a word or two will stand out that will give you some more contextual 'words' to put onto your list.
4. If I am really, really stuck, I head to one of the best slogan/blurb/tag line sites on the web - [Brandon Gailles](#) site - and search for the business category there and add 'slogan' after the business category. Finding a couple of words or phrases that spark something in me.
5. And finally I head to [Thesaurus.com](#) and type the word, or a series of words for the sale or based on what I have on my list, into the search and see if any synonyms come up that work for me.

So now I have a list of seemingly random words or phrases, plus a short list of ones that I can't use.

Looking through them I tend to try to match them up and write down a 2-3-word phrase or idea based on those, or that work with the business name.

For example, if you had a Jeweler as the business category, then the words that match that would be sparkle, diamond, priceless, precious, deals, gold, bling. You get the idea.

So, in this example I have matched Bling with Thing 'The Bling Thing Sale' nope that doesn't work. How about 'Luxury Sale Time', it's a possibility... 'The Jewelry That Rocks Sale' has a great ring to it... Or 'The Priceless Sale at ((BUSINESS NAME))" I like that one!

Now I contact the client and read to them over the phone my top choices (I only EVER give them 3 to choose from) and I always start with the worst one of the 3, building to the best - this makes them agree with me 90% of the time.

Sometimes I can't reach them by phone, so I email them and let them know (in the

same order) and then write a basic generic script to see how the sale name works in script format. Most of the time there is no problem - only rarely have I ever had to change it as it is too much of a tongue twister for a voice artist to get their mouth around.

With sale name in hand, a demo script and the client's approval - I then start to build a series of ads based on that sale name... and well, you know the rest - Approvals? Changes? Corrections... getting final sign off and then making the ads before putting them on-air.

How long does this process usually take me?

About half an hour to an hour to come up with the name if I am really stuck. Otherwise about 15 minutes. Because I have refined this process over the years (as I said I get lots of practice at this type of thing) I can fairly fly through it.

There you have it. Next time you have a client or a sales rep hand you a job where you must come up with a sales event name - you can use this handy 5 step guide to choose the name that will work for them.

Have a go and see what you can come up with.

COMMENTS:

"Who knew that there could be a process to do this?

Why are some business owners so lazy?

I would hope that you get something to do this for them as it doesn't seem right to spend your time coming up with their marketing!

But when you do – I suppose that they would come back to you and your station again because you did that for them last time... I don't know it sounds kind of dangerous to me – has it backfired?"

CaroleJ

"Hi Carole, that's all right – some are just plain lazy, some do expect it, others appreciate that we go the extra mile for them – it hasn't backfired on me yet – in fact I have even had clients ask me to look at their print ads for them, and their TV commercials – so I suppose I have become their marketing 'go-to' person when they have a question. I really don't mind though, if they keep spending with us on radio first."

EarlP

37 Black Friday Sale Names

((12 December 2022))

Recently we have driven our copywriting brains through the BLACK FRIDAY and CYBER MONDAY sales, and I thought to myself while wondering around in the shops in beautiful Edinburgh in Scotland - that the name for the sales seemed to me to be all the same...

But were they?

Here is a short list of BLACK FRIDAY style sales names that I came across:

- Black Friday Sale
- Black Friday Weekly Sale
- Black Friday Monthly Sale
- Black Friday 3 Day Sale
- Black Friday Limited Time Sale
- Black Bag Friday Sale
- Black Friday Super Sale
- Black Friday Weekend Sale
- Black Weekend Sale
- Black Fri-Yay Sale
- Black Friday Monthly Sale
- Black November
- Black Friday Deals
- Black Friday Event
- Black Friday Is Just the Beginning Sale
- Black Friday Bonanza Sale
- Black Friday Frenzy Sale
- Bonus Black Friday Sale
- Big Black Friday Sale
- Unstoppable Black Friday Sale
- Non-Stop Black Friday Sale
- Black Fridays Made Better Sale
- Black Friday Door Buster Sale
- The Biggest Black Friday Sale of The Year
- The Pre-Black Friday Sale, Sale!
- Mega Black Friday Sale
- Irresistible Black Friday Savings
- I'm On My Way, To the Biggest Black Friday
- Black Friday Countdown Sale
- Bring On the Black Friday Sale
- Black Friday Cardio Workout Sale
- The Black Friday Survival Sale



- Black Friday Team Sale
- Buckle Up for Black Friday Deals
- Get Your Black Friday Game Plan
- Sneak A Peak Sale of Our Black Friday Deals... This Thursday Only
- Black Friday Alert

Uh-oh! That is a lot more than I thought there would be!

In fact, with 37 just in this sample - it just goes to prove that sales names in clients advertising doesn't need to be the same old boring thing - you can give them a twist or a turn and come up with something new and unique - if a client is willing.

BONUS:

Since this post went up on the site, we have been sent quite a few extra BLACK FRIDAY SALES NAMES... here's a couple of extras for you that we liked from around 13 of the 20 extras from Dean that were sent through:

- The Better Than Black Friday Sale
- Bring It on This Black Friday Sale
- Our Black Friday Sale is BACK BABY!!!
- The Totally Unexpected Black Friday Sale
- When It Comes to Push and Shove, Do It ONLY on Black Friday!
- We Prefer ALL Fridays to be Black Sale!
- Gotta Catch All of Them Specials This Black Friday!
- This Friday is Better Than a Black Friday Sale
- We Live for Black Friday Sales at...
- No Waiting! It's a Month of Black Friday Sales Specials!
- We've Got Black Friday Fever at...
- Massive Black Friday Discounts at...
- I'm on My Way to... For This Black Friday's Sale

Thanks Dean.

Dealing with BAD Sales Reps

((Never published online))

We have all had experiences of both good and bad sales reps.

Ones that give you an amazing, detailed copy brief, with a lot of information, contact points, and they tick every box for the perfect person to deal with.

Then there are those reps who are THE WORST!

They don't fill in their paperwork.

Don't give you a copy brief.

Don't give you any information at all – and then... then they throw you under the bus when the client isn't happy with what you write for them.



In both cases – I have been there and dealt with that, many, many times!

So, what can you do when the worst thing happens, and you get a BAD sales rep?

First, I try to find out if it is that they just don't know any better – in which case you need to educate them – or they just don't care.

In the first example you need to spend some time with them, explaining what EXACTLY you need to deliver what they and the clients want. If they can't give you those details, then you need to speak to the Sales Manager about them.

But let's say they are open to learning – then walk them through filling in a copy brief EXACTLY the way you want it filled in. Tell them the bare minimum you will accept, and why.

Next you need to explain why, if they don't give you that information – you will not be going ahead with any script. That information is vital to achieving what the client wants, and them getting the sale.

Hopefully by that stage – they have improved their game. If not, then it's either more one on one coaching, or talking to the Sales Manager.

If the Sales Manager is the problem, then that is a whole new issue that you will have to address.

At one station I worked at, our copywriters were invited into sales meetings, where we ALWAYS went over how to fill in a copy brief. Or walked them through the process that happens in production.

Why?

Because they kept on forgetting – getting new staff, ignoring processes and worst of all – going to their ‘friendly copywriter’ or producer to get their job done ‘just the way they wanted’.

If this is the case, we had to constantly remind them that no salesperson was above going through the process. If they were caught breaking this, then the commercial would be re-assigned to someone else – regardless of their protests.

If they just don't care (and even if they are the best performer in the sales office) then it may be a case of either grinning and bearing it – or – subtle education.

By subtle I mean constantly calling them, emailing them, emailing, and calling them and asking them questions constantly until they get the message that you need that information before you proceed.

And whatever you do – don't go any further with the script – UNTIL they give you that information – you need it otherwise you wouldn't have called.

Good or bad – whatever type of salesperson you get landed with – try your best to remain professional – tick the boxes and do what is asked of you – but if they don't or won't supply you with what you need to get started – then just don't go ahead with it.

They will learn eventually.

One salesperson I worked with took 2 years before they finally gave me a copy brief with the right information on it, that was 2 years of long and drawn-out campaigns for every single of her clients – until she learnt that other sales team members were getting their ads done within a couple of hours.

Why was that?

They filled in their paperwork properly and gave me all the information I needed to write their clients commercials.

So, what I am saying is that this may be a long process – but in the end it will be worth it.

Perseverance is the key. Stick with it and eventually they will come around.

Making your script writing process faster, more effective, and bringing them in more repeat business.

Hopefully that has helped someone out there get an idea of how to focus that lazy/bad sales team member and make their job a LOT easier for you.

Good luck out there.

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5. COPYWRITING THEORY

The best section of the book (in my opinion) where we discuss many different, and useful topics for copywriting...



- Using the power of one in radio scripts.
- Is correct grammar killing your radio script?
- The single most horrible word in your radio scripts – do you know yours?
- Stealing, liberating, or copying ideas in your radio commercial scripts – should you do it?
- 6 ways to write a creative script.
- Do you use the passive or aggressive voice too much in your scripts?
- Writing for different age groups – how to do it, and should you do it?
- Copywriting for voice talent. Know who you are writing for to get the best results.
- Writing jokey ads – once they stop laughing – will they still buy?
- Making claims in your commercial scripts – an Australian perspective.
- And finally – a post that was never published about word count.

Use The POWER of ONE when writing your Radio Scripts

((30th June 2022))

This post was originally written in 2012 by Earl Pilkington on the now closed blog for his book, re-purposed for West Coast Radio [BLOG FOR CLIENTS](#) (in both 2014 & 2017), then republished on [radiocopywriters.com](#) as the first post on the site.

Have you ever had a client who wants to run a shopping list commercial? One that goes on and on listing price and product. And then they complain that it didn't work.

That's where the power of ONE comes in to play!

I had this thought really re-enforced yet again while chatting to a new client, someone who had finally decided to give radio another go after a very short run Call to Action campaign that they had run before, had failed...



Before they had said ***“We’ve always done it this way, and we always will, we won’t change because our customers don’t change.”***

Then, this same client had said to me previously... ***“We tried that once before, about 6 years ago, it didn’t work then, so it won’t work now.”***

What had they done before, and why didn't it work?

Their 'shopping list' style commercial with lots and lots of prices, products, and codes (this was a tire distributor) and they didn't sell one set of tires... I wonder why?

There were simply too many messages, too many options and too much information for a listener to absorb any of it and act on it... what they needed was to simplify the message down to just one core idea only... just one!

And I had to sit down with them and talk about why I was going to do it. Below is what I covered with them...

My Experience:

Now... In the almost 40 years I have been involved with media I have seen a lot of bad, good, and mediocre ideas come and go.

I have been saddled with some very restrictive “Do's and Don'ts” in the production of a commercial from both the branding packages supplied by client, and from station management in different mediums.

Here is what I have learnt...

The execution of any idea (or lack of execution) can either kill or complicate its delivery.

But the actual idea or concept itself must be singular, this is...

One idea.

One concept.

One theme.

I think you get the message.

Real World Example: TV

While working in television I produced some great TV commercials, and some very sucky ones too.

I had one TV commercial work so effectively that it sold a very expensive multi-story house, sight unseen, by someone working on an oil rig thousands of miles away. It was simple, little text on the screen, and only a phone number on the end of the commercial.

Also, a commercial with thousands of dollars thrown at its production, and everyone involved in the commercial production ended up scratching their head and wondering about what the hell they had just produced. It was full of text, dialogue, and descriptions... it just sucked in every way possible.

Real World Example: Other Mediums

I have also, have to say that I have sadly designed websites that were so graphically slick and intense with content that the majority of people couldn't load them due to their massive size, others so simple that sales on that website drove business up an extra 120% from what they had been.

I have also designed street signage, business fronts, displays, newspaper print ads, store layouts and more. All have either suffered from being too complicated; Few have suffered from being simplified a little.

Real World Example: Radio

Now... I have also written and made radio commercials that were so simple they drove people to go the extra mile to get to the business location, with a maximum of 50 words, the imagery we used sold the concept, the product, and most importantly the business.

And other radio spots that just drove people nuts. Mostly against my advice, we did them that way because that's "what the client wanted." With a message that is all over the place, it is no wonder that people didn't act on them.

So, What Should YOU Do?

Technology and trends move on, and so do the tastes of the public.

Just because an idea didn't work before, doesn't mean it won't work now, but you need to simplify it for today's 3 second attention span audience.

Remember... the more complex the message, the less chance you have of convincing a prospective client to act on it.

So, simplify your message. Just pick one theme, idea, or concept to sell – and go with it, maybe with a secondary message that gets mentioned once only (that being the price - unless the price is THE one message you want to convey)

Have the product or service you are selling – highlight it, scream it from the roof. **BUT** make it just *ONE!*

Then, have either *JUST* your address, *JUST* your phone number, or *JUST* your website. Not every single contact point (no one wants to know all your social media Instagram, Facebook, Linked-In details!)

Next time you are writing a script for a client, think about your ONE core message, and only use that.

No matter how tempting it is to go nuts and add in everything else that you want.

Do it once - you and the client will be surprised by the results.

The Results of doing 'The Power of One':

We wrote the client a commercial, focusing on just one thing, this was an extra service they offered, lens de-fogging for car headlights. The time it would take was less than 15 minutes per headlight and it would get rid of the yellow stains that develop thanks to UV damage.

We had found the one core message we wanted, which was the time it took and as a secondary message, the price point. \$50 (Australian) for a half hour fix of your headlights, making them brighter at night, and made your car look smarter.

We tried several different ways of saying this before we settled on a script, had it voiced and produced - then started playing it on-air. All good?

I kid you not - the client called after it was on-air for 2 days and wanted the ad pulled - they had over 40 bookings already, they didn't have time to fit any tires!

It was too effective. AND... the client is now hooked on Radio Advertising!

All because we took the time to educate the client about "The Power of ONE MESSAGE" per ad.

Try it and see for yourself!

Is Correct Grammar Killing Your Radio Scripts?

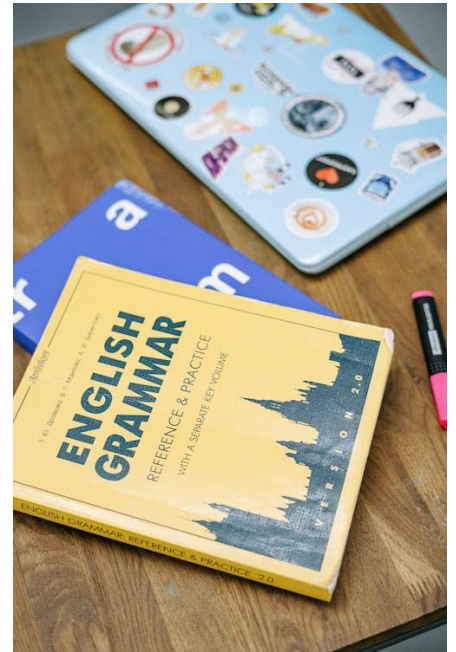
((25 July 2022))

This post comes out of a conversation with a client on Friday that had me thinking again about why I write, the way I write.

As I said to her: *"I prefer to write the way that people speak, because radio is a conversation with the listener, and people don't speak grammatically correct. At least none of the people that I know do."*

I know what I write would not make my High School Teachers or University Professors proud.

But the thing is - I am trying to write to sell - not win an award or get an "A" grade.



I want people to act. To click on a website. To make that journey into a store. To buy a product or service. To tell their partner or their mum about a new store, their dad about a restaurant, their friend about... you get the point.

In short **"I DO take some liberties with the English language, and I am okay with that!"**

I had a lecturer at university who said (and I later found out it was from direct-response legend Herschell Gordon Lewis), **"Grammar is our weapon, not our god."** The lecturer added that "You can choose to live by it or die by it."

Yes, it's all well and good to know the grammar rules, but only so you can break them.

Next time you face a Grammar Nazi, ask yourself this question: **"Which word or sentence will be clearer to the listener and why?"**

My Golden Rule = choose clarity first.

Usually, it's for no other reason than it is shorthand and enables 'fast comprehension' in a commercial script.

Why spend 3 words saying something that can be said in 1 in a script?

While I do agree that literacy must prevail - and I have sometimes been guilty of dropping some clangors into live read scripts - but - the unexpected does help to stand out in people's minds.

So here are 3 simple rules that I try to live by (but don't always do so) for the Grammatically Challenged like me:

An Active Voice. Always, and I do mean ALWAYS, your radio scripts should be written in the active voice.

For example: Active voice: I wrote the sentence, or I am writing this sentence.
Passive voice: The sentence was written by me.

Subject & Verb Agreement. No matter what you are writing, from a 10 second credit or a 60 second commercial - singular subjects take singular verbs and plural subjects take plural verbs.

There is no exception to this rule - maybe. While it's a simple rule, execution is sometimes problematic. The key is to clearly identify the subject of the sentence.

Sometimes, it's not that easy when you are writing ad copy.

Use of Modifiers. Modifiers can and do cause a variety of problems. Sometimes I have had people ask me which modifiers they can use and how many modifiers can they use?

My golden rule: Let clarity be your guide. Also, poor placement of modifiers results in confusion, your enemy. To make comprehension easy, put modifiers near the words they're modifying.

Rules to Bend or Break While 'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn' by Mark Twain ushered in a new era in American literature. I think that one of the main reasons why he took a firm grip of the imagination was Twain's use of the vernacular and perspective.

I recently have been going back and re-reading his stories to try to teach myself again how to write conversations because it is such a weak point of mine. Remember that when Mark Twain was writing Huck Finn, he wrote not only the way people talked which was a departure from the stiff, formal English which was common during the Victorian period and other books of the era, but he also wrote in the voice of different classes and groups - and his writing worked so, so well - because he had an ear for conversations and voices.

It was also his perspective of giving our young hero a voice, one that changes as it goes along and evolves as he does in the story.

This is something that has always stuck with me.

Most importantly though, for radio copywriters, writing the way people talk is essential.

Why?

Because our copy should always try to be conversational, friendly, and informal. That way our conversations stands a better chance of getting prospects to click, call or buy a product or service.

This is why sacrificing the following conventions can be in a radio copywriter's best

interest.

Ending Sentences with a Preposition. I am waiting to be shouted down on this one - yes, some people say that this is a no-no, BUT hear me out - ending a sentence with a preposition can warm up your copywriting, it's how people talk!

Which sounds friendlier to you: "*Here is the information you requested*" or "*Here is the information you asked for*"? I know which one I would pick.

Also, when I record myself reading my scripts - I often find that I will naturally contract words and alter a script as I go - usually I end up trimming about 3-5 words as I go through a 30 sec script - now that's a big plus in my book!

Beginning Sentences with a Conjunction. Beginning sentences with conjunctions (and, or, but, nor) is more common these days, even in modern journalism.

Not only is it the way people talk, but it can also shorten sentence length, a plus help in delivering sales messages.

Other Informal Devices. Use contractions to warm up your message. Also, use sentence fragments. Not only do they shorten average sentence length, but they also add rhythm. And drama. Giving a beat to what you read when you read that sentence out loud.

Punctuation. I do this - and maybe I overuse it. That is: Use punctuation in your writing to your selling advantage.

I'm inclined to use more dashes and an occasional exclamation point and ellipsis to add drama and excitement to the sales message.

Commas can be subjective, so I like to record my scripts... just to show the reader, what I want, how I want it read, and then they can follow the script.

Finally: While I do keep a grammar book, stylebook/guide, a dictionary, and other writer's references on or near my desk always (I can highly recommend POWER SALES WORDS by Vicky Oliver for example), you shouldn't ignore them totally.

After all, they make great places to rest coffee mugs!

"Just kidding!" You are still going to need them... Occasionally.

But don't let grammar be your god, write like people speak, connect with their ears, win their hearts then their minds with your message.

The Single Worst Word in Your Scripts!

((25 July 2022))

This might be a bit controversial - but I think that the single worst word in any script is "MORE!" as in "and much more!"

& MORE



I am guilty of using this and did a search through my scripts for this year alone and was horrified to see a total of 2,316 scripts with that in it - out of 6,320 - that's almost 37% of the scripts I have written so far (that includes branding, promotions, live reads, and call to action scripts).

"YIKES!" I need to stop doing it!

So - should I just list the prizes, products, services, acts, and every type of item in a script?

I don't know - as in many cases with that scary 2,316 scripts - they were short run call to action spots to advertise sales - but obviously "and more" is a bit of a crutch for me to lean on - so here are some alternatives...

...And guests, and extras, among other things, and then some, and what's more, for example, in addition, into the bargain, just like, not only that, on top of, and so on and so forth, also, to name a few, and such as.

Did you have any alternatives to "and more" that you use in your script copy that can be shared with our readers?

COMMENTS:

"My fall back is the word 'plus' I have to stop using it."

KallieD

"Mine is SO. Starting so many sentences with it. SO... so... SOOOOOO! UGH! Must stop."

NeilC

"I had never thought of this, I did a scan through my scripts and there are quite a few phrases always seem to use. Putting a stop to that now with a sign on my desk of the words with a line through them - no more! Thanks for making me aware of this."

SkyeF

Stealing, Copying -or- Liberating Ideas for Your Commercial

((14 November 2022))

There is a brilliant book by Mark Earls called "[Copy, Copy, Copy](#)" and it gives licence to its readers, and also rules, on how to steal the best of what others do... for your own purpose.

There is also a website called [swipefile.com](#) which is a location on the web to gain access to the best advertising for marketers.



Now why have I given you these 2 examples?

Because, in my opinion, the most creative, most original thinkers were NOT that creative or original in the first place.

They were experts at reframing what they had seen come before and repurposed that work to suit their current job.

Don't believe me?

I have my very own physical, real world swipe file...

It's a three-draw cabinet which is full to the brim and overflowing with advertising, including: print ads, posters, flyers, plus: books full of post it notes marking pages, paragraphs, and whole chapters... There are movie posters, loose pieces of paper, thumb drives full of pictures of advertising, and magazines, plus, lots and lots of cd's of radio commercials from the Mercury Awards to the Lions and the Australian radio industry. And loads of advertising material from around the world that I have gathered over the past 30+ years.

Yes, it looks like an overflowing rubbish bin at times, but, BUT... I really 'do' use this when I am stuck, to spark my own ideas, and some of the things that can come out of a dive into the swipe file can be truly illuminating and rewarding.

BUT this takes time, and you must take that time to get it right.

LIGHTING LOTS OF FIRES - or On Writing LOTS of DEMO SCRIPTS

I very, very rarely will ever only write one script for a client - instead I am more likely than not going to write between 3 to 5 scripts - then select which one or two are the best to send off to them. One might be straight, cookie cutter radio script - the others will be creative - somewhat insane and zany - and often - inspired by my

swipe file - or by a word, phrase, or idea they have said or written in our note sessions that sparked some inspiration in me.

I find that you have to write every idea down - and see what catches your attention - some of those ideas may suck immediately - others not so much, and they might need massaging, pummeling or dragging out the back and leaving in the trash - and yet others will jump off the page and into your ears through the theatre of the mind and capture EXACTLY what you were after.

But if you didn't start by writing them down - then more likely than not - nothing would happen, and you would end up with a dead, flat script.

Hedging all your bets on one script is like taking a match and trying to light a forest fire, by setting light to one tree only.

You must set yourself up for success by looking at all the options and finding what sparks your interest, and what captures your soul.

A REAL-WORLD EXAMPLE:

This is where the swipe file comes in - here is an example from earlier in the year... I was writing a radio script for a surf shop; the brief was a generic branding ad for them.

So not being the surfing type I did a quick 5-minute research hunt on the internet - and nothing inspired me there.

So, I dove into my swipe file.

There on the top of the second draw, was the classic movie on VHS - 'The Endless Summer' - I LOVED this as a 21-year-old when I was managing a video store. Not for the surf, but for the hilarious Bruce Brown commentary.

I put it on to refresh my memory of [the first 2 minutes and the opening lines of the movie](#) - it had me hooked again... "*Summer means many different things to different people...*" and it went on from there.



YES! okay - now to tweak it so I can use it in a radio commercial...

I could re-arrange the words, but that's too obvious.

I want something that will inspire and bounce off the thrill and the fun of surfing.

"Summer means body surfing, boogie boarding, long boarding or surfing... or just soaking up the rays!"

That's okay, a bit long, and a bit too close to the original for my liking.

So, something more scene setting...

"Serene balmy days on tranquil beaches..."

Better but a bit cliché.

"Where does the time go when it's Summer?"

I like this because it lends itself to launching into details about the shop and seasonal specials - so I ended up writing the spot based on that one line.

I did end up writing 5 demo scripts for this client - and only selected 2 to send to them - of which the one with the "where does the time go..." was the one they went with.

I didn't plagiarize it.

Didn't copy it.

But liberated it from the ideas held within my swipe file.

SO, WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

I urge you to try it yourself.

Go on - start your own - start collecting ads or material that you find interesting - inspiring and perhaps a bit left of center that you like.

Down the track (not 30 years later like me I hope) you will find something in there to inspire you when you are coming up with your next campaign.

But, Never, EVER steal directly!

Swipe the concept - borrow the idea, liberate the core message, **but don't copy it word for word.**

It will seem false to others, and not work for you - especially if you just slapping your business name in the place of the original name.

PLUS, you will be breaking copyright laws, which are a MINEFIELD - **so just don't do it!**

COMMENT:

"Excellent suggestion and great example of showing how to do it too."

Dough

6 Ways to Write a Creative Script

((8 May 2023))

Here are six simple ideas that can spark creativity when writing radio commercial scripts:



- 1. Start with a clear concept:** Begin by identifying a clear concept or idea that you want to communicate throughout the radio commercial. From a product benefit to a unique selling point, or maybe it's a specific brand message. Once you have a clear concept, it can serve as a guiding force for the rest of the script.
- 2. Use humour:** While Humour can be a powerful tool for capturing listeners' attention and making your commercial memorable, it is hard to accomplish a great script that will bare up to multiple plays on-air and won't get annoying. While you can consider incorporating a humorous angle or joke that relates to your product or message, I prefer to go the way of having 2 scripts in rotation, one serious and straight, the other using humour or creativity - and have the humour one on less of a rotation (e.g.: 60% straight, 40% humour) that way people won't get annoyed by it, and it comes as more of a novelty when it plays. Just having the one script that is a joke - gets boring fast.
- 3. Tell a story:** A well-crafted story can help to engage listeners and create an emotional connection with your brand. Consider telling a story that demonstrates the value of your product or service, or that showcases your brand's personality. Focusing on a member of staff or the story of the product - tell the story well, and people will listen out for it.
- 4. Use sound effects:** Sound effects can help to add interest and impact to your commercial. Consider using sound effects that relate to your product or message, or that create a mood or atmosphere that supports your brand. I have had one commercial which was all sound effects, no words, until the last 5 seconds - others which use sound effects throughout as the voice talks - choose the right sound effect and it will help to tell your story effectively.
- 5. Keep it simple:** Sometimes the simplest ideas can be the most effective. Consider focusing on a simple, straightforward message that is easy for listeners to understand and remember. This can help to ensure that your commercial is effective and impactful. Focus in on the one core truth and use that. Nothing else - no fluff - just the bare bones of the story.
- 6. Start at the end:** Yes, I know I put this at the end of the list - but I did it for a reason. Start writing your script - but with all the end details that you know you must include. For example, the business name and contact point. Once you have that you are free to create everything above it - this one is by far my favourite thing to do, and I do it every time I sit down and write a script.

Are You Better Off Writing in a Passive or Aggressive Voice in your Next Radio Commercial?

((24 April 2023))

Some people might argue that all radio ads should be done in a passive voice - others in an aggressive one - and over the past couple of weeks I have been taking a closer look at ALL the ad copy I have written and taken note of the results of my own writing.

I have written 130 radio scripts in the past 3 weeks - 103 of them went to air (those that didn't were demo scripts) But as I wrote them during this time - I took note of what their 'voice style' was.



I justified the voice style as follows: **An aggressive voice script** was one who's first line was either 'active' or suggesting action, talking with urgency, or excitement, or setting a scene.

A passive voice script was based on the first line of the script being a generic read style or containing no action.

I tried to narrow down each script (even the creative ones, promos, and credit liners) into only those 2 categories. Sometimes this was hard as the action didn't start until the 2nd or third line - but to fit into my survey - I based it on the first line only.

There were 41 Passive style scripts, 89 aggressive scripts - these are playing across 8 stations (yes, I write for 2 in my day-to-day job, but I also freelance for other radio stations in other countries).

The aggressive scripts were mostly hard sell, call to action campaigns, some were my creative scripts - as clients wanted something along the lines of an argument, or similar style scene.

What I discovered was that, in my own writing, an aggressive voice could come across as pushy or confrontational, which could have turned off listeners and make them less likely to engage with the commercial.

I was hyper aware that aggressive language may also make the commercial sound insincere or gimmicky.

But any type of action negated this and drove creative action or storytelling in a

better way.

I was tending more and more towards an action-oriented script, connecting with an emotion or a scene first.

Over-all this was an interesting exercise, and helped to flex my writing muscles - I can highly recommend doing this to any radio copywriter as you may also discover some of the crutches that you write under.

Yes, I agree that it is best to use a clear, concise, and engaging active voice when writing a radio commercial, having some action or 'aggressive nature' to it will make the script stand out and achieve better results for a client.

Capturing listener's attention, conveying the message effectively, and leave a lasting impression on the audience by using an 'aggressive' or 'active' first line... this is going to get better results for your client.

And in my book - this is always a good thing to do.

COMMENTS:

"I had never thought of this. I went and checked on the last 5 scripts I have written, and they are all in a passive voice. I re-wrote them as aggressive, and they sounded much better. I will try this again when the next commercial comes across my desk and write 2 different openings and see which one works better for me. Great insight!"

AlexisP

"Me too. After reading this I checked in on my style, and I write everything in a very, VERY aggressive tone."

BelleG

Writing for Different Age Groups

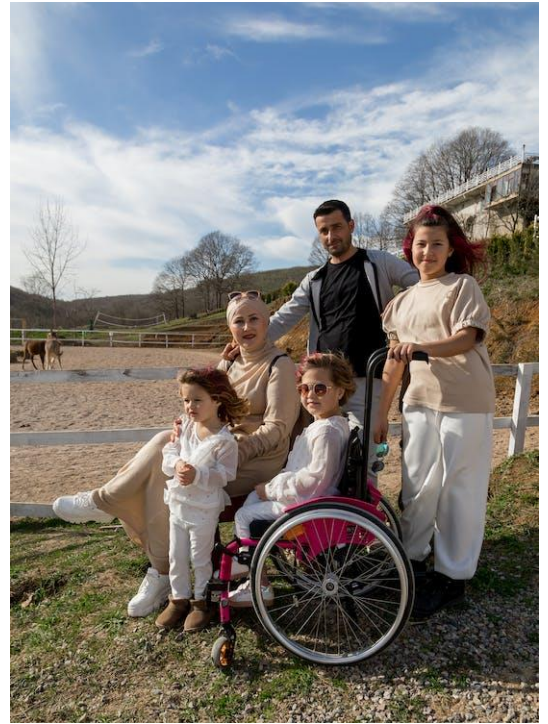
((26 September 2022))

I was recently writing an ad for a client, and they were asking why I wrote what I did for them... I thought, well - you told me your target audience was men 50+, so that's who I wrote it for, as it's what you had on the copy brief - not women 25+?

"Oh" they replied "I didn't think that was a serious question when I filled in the form."

I'm sorry, what?

Too many people think the over-50 crowd is only interested in buying pain relievers and pre-paid funeral plans, not, as in this case, computers.



I had spent quite a lot of time crafting what I thought was a great spot to suit the over 50s, harkening back to the dial up days, and doing video chats and catch ups, reading a bedtime story to the grand kids overseas, etc.

So instead, I had to scrap the script and re-write it to be more focussed on young women, which was harder to do considering all the other options they have already at their fingertips with their mobile phones.

But it made me think about writing for different age groups - I am sure we all try our best to do so without falling into cliché land. And without stereotypes taking center stage.

Personally, I would love to target over-50s in this client's category - I don't think people are doing it enough.

Why?

Because it's EASY to get over-50s to listen to a spot that tugs at the heart strings, informs, and educates, and connects with them and their life experience.

It takes more work to get through to those 25-year-old females. It's even tougher to keep them.

At least I find it is.

Copywriting for Your Voice Talent

((13 February 2023))

Here is something that most copywriters don't have to think of, when writing a script - but when you work in a sausage factory situation like I do - you must try to write your radio commercial scripts to get the absolute best results for the client - using the voice talent you have access to. Sometimes that voice talent is the client themselves.

So, when you write a script - any script - do you do it to a word count?

A Syllable counts?

A self-timed limit?

Or to the voice of the voice talent, that you are using?



The last one is a hard one to do - and I have done it multiple times when I am writing for a client specifically, or a voice talent that I have regular contact with - in one or both cases they have a speech impediment.

Or they talk very, very slowly. Or very fast.

All of these, I can compensate with when I write the commercial script for them (take that AI Script writing!)

For example, I have a well-respected voice talent that I have written many, many scripts for, who has a lisp. When you talk to them day to day, it is barely noticeable. But put them in a booth, and the 'radio voice' switches on and the lisp becomes more pronounced.

We then either must write to avoid words which will exaggerate that lisp - or spend a lengthy time in the edit cleaning up the audio file.

My preferred solution is to write a script that does away with the lengthy edit - allowing for one or two clean-ups - but sometimes it can't be avoided with certain company names making the lisp more pronounced.

In the other case with clients who I know - I have written their scripts to be either very short, or longer as I know how fast they talk, how animated they get (or don't) and how much time I want to spend in the booth with them coaching the best performance out of them.

And this brings me to the core of this post - writing to the talent you know is much easier than writing for someone, anyone that you don't know. If you use a voice bank or company (for example) and you could get any voice.

But writing to the strengths (or to avoid the weaknesses) of your voice talent is always... ALWAYS going to be a good thing. You will get a better performance, a better delivery, better timing and a completely believable commercial.

Compared to something written for 'anybody' to voice.

Try it next time you sit down to write a commercial script.

Pick a voice that you know will be able to voice your commercial. Listen to their previous commercials, listen to them on-air if you get a chance. Or have a chat with them to see how animated they can get.

Then write to those strengths.

Avoid their weaknesses and then you will absolutely have a script that will make not only the client happy, but the voice talent happy too.

COMMENTS:

"We have a word count list for each of our voice's that we use, how many words they can fit into a 60 second hard sell read style commercial – before we need to speed them up. Looking at that list as I type, most are around the 140-word count, others are up to 170.

I guess that this makes sense if I was writing specifically for them – but that doesn't allow for the voice talents skill of timing out a read to their style, and their interpretation of what I have written...

Therefore, I agree, but also disagree.

The big problem we have is that we don't have the same time that voice talent is available. If we get a script approved first thing in the morning – we can get it voiced by anyone. But after lunchtime – we have 2 voices we can use.

And sometimes that commercial MUST be on-air tomorrow morning for breakfast."

Deank

Once They Stop Laughing, You Still Have to Sell their Product.

((22 May 2023))

I was recently asked by one of our sales reps to write a 'funny spot' for their client - I had to grit my teeth - writing humour is not a strong point of mine - it takes a LOT of work to make an ad sound funny. But I had to remind them that the object of a radio ad, funny or not, is to get people to buy the product or service being advertised.



While it is okay for the listener to respond, "That's a funny ad" what I want is for them to say, "That's a great product, I'll look for it."

Humour should not only showcase the client's product, identify it so it stands out, give them at least one key feature and - not bury the details after the punch line has been delivered.

How do you do that and still make people buy - as I said - it can be very hard to do - sometimes you can get lucky and find something that you can easily write to - other times not so much.

Rather than go for generic joke - should you try to identify the joke so that the product and joke go hand in hand - yes!

Here are some advantages and disadvantages of using humour to sell a product in a radio commercial:

Advantages:

- Comedy or jokes can make the ad memorable and stand out among other commercials. One I wrote for a glass company was about living in a glass house - and it wasn't a pretty sight! People still remember it 5 years later.
- It can create a positive association with the product in the mind's eye of your listeners. We had a vet clinic who wanted something to make light of pets getting fixed - the ad was very positive, listeners loved it and they reported a 150% increase in bookings. With people able to quote the ad back to them!
- Humour can help to lighten the mood and create a more positive emotional connection with the listening audience. One spot (I was in a team of writers for this one) was so clever, so insightful that listeners loved hearing it - even though it was for a funeral service company.
- My favourite thing to try to do is to use it to create a memorable catchphrase or slogan that becomes associated with the product. Coming up with a jokey tag line is amazingly hard to do - but when it works - it works.

Now: The disadvantages are many, but let's look at the basics:

- It can be subjective, and what one person finds funny, another may not. This can make it difficult to appeal to a broad audience. And once you get a complaint - you better get ready for more of them.
- It can distract listeners from the product and the intended message of the ad. Having the punchline too near the end close of the ad - can make people laugh and miss the contact/product details.
- Some people might think that the 'joke' as unprofessional or inappropriate for certain products or industries. I have tried to work comedy into an accountant's radio commercial (and they asked for it) but when they heard the finished agreed to product - chickened out because they thought it made them sound unprofessional.
- If the humour of the ad falls flat or is poorly executed, it can have a negative impact on the brand and the product being advertised. I have heard this happen so many times it makes me cringe now when I hear an attempted comedy ad.

If you really want to hear some great examples of comedy ads - then this year's nominations for the Radio Mercury Awards is worth checking out. This year's awards are dominated by funny commercials – see the full list [RIGHT HERE](#) on the Mercury site.

So, let's wrap this up: Writing a funny ad is not for clients to do (and sometimes they really try). It's not for amateurs either. As any professional comedian will tell anyone who will listen - being funny is serious business.

Even if you think as a copywriter that you are a master joke teller, the life of the party and can write a funny and successful ad - seriously think about what you are about to commit to the airwaves - will it really work in the way that it is intended? Really?

COMMENTS:

“Nothing worse than a badly written joke in a radio script. There's nothing worse than a badly written joke that runs for more than 4 days too.”

AB

“Agree AB – especially if the joke is not funny. But any ‘joke’ style commercial needs to have a short run, at least that's what I tell my clients.”

EarIP

Making Claims in Ads (Australian Details)

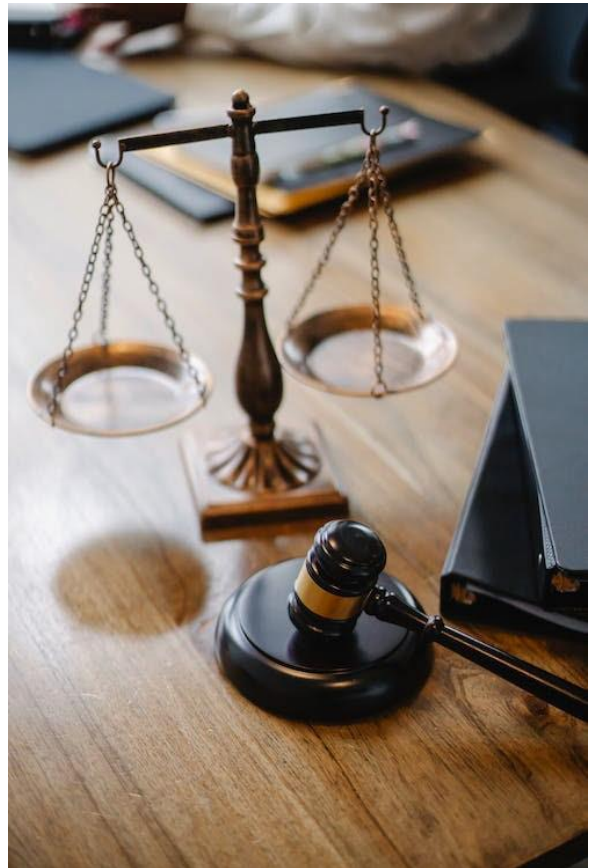
((5 December 2022))

Today we are taking a very simplistic view of making claims in your radio commercial scripts...

Most radio commercials, 99.9% of them are perfectly legal, but it's that point one percent that can be controversial, liable, or could at the very least land you in some mighty big legal trouble.

Other ads are subjective and should be approached on a case-by-case basis, for example: Can you claim to be the 'best' in town? Have the 'best' steak or service around? Or can you claim to be better than another business in the same industry as you?

Let's have a check on what the law says, and what we can and can't say.



Australian Consumer Law (from here on - the ACL) says, on the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission website:

Two fundamental rules of advertising and selling are that:

- i. You must not engage in conduct that is likely to mislead or deceive**
- ii. You must not make false or misleading claims or statements.**

In practice there is overlap between the two rules. A particular statement could breach both...

It should be noted that this law applies equally to any statements or claims made about products or services in the online environment.

Businesses that sell or promote online should ensure that their use of online vehicles does not create any misleading impressions or include false claims.

Related information: [False or misleading claims](#)

Legislation: [Australian Consumer Law section 29](#)

Of course, there are other things such as 'Bait Advertising', 'Special Offers', 'Rebates, Gifts, or Redemption', 'Cash Back Offers', and other techniques which can be highly questionable. But today we are focusing on a 'claim' that you can make about your product or service in your commercial, NOT the techniques used.

While you CAN claim to be the 'best' in town, or have the 'best' steak or service, etc. - we see that as that is a subjective observation about your product or service.

It would be preferable that you have some type of evidence for such a claim, such as a review from a customer which says that you are the 'best'.

But... you CANNOT claim to have a better product or service than another business, and name them in your commercial!

By saying 'your competitors' you might be able to get away with it. **BUT** that's a mighty BIG '*might!*'... The ACCC and the ACL might become involved, and lawyers need to be engaged.

Now, the responsibility for claims made in advertising as per the ACL, Schedule 2, Subdivision A of Division 2, Part XI of the Act: "**The primary responsibility for ensuring that an advertisement complies with the ACL rests with advertisers.**

Firstly, because the claims made in an advertisement are made by the advertiser.

Secondly, every advertiser knows (or is expected to know) whether the facts support the claims they wish to make in their advertisements.

The ACL provides a defense for the media in relation to misleading advertisements that are published by the media in the ordinary course of business. This defense means that the media will not be liable under the ACL for advertisements that are found to be misleading or deceptive.

However, this defense will be invalidated if your station knew or had a reason to suspect that an advertisement was likely to be misleading or deceptive but broadcast the advertisement anyway."

For a full, comprehensive list from the ACCC go [HERE](#).

So, what else should you do to avoid any problems?

1. Don't omit or fail to give key information. While terms and conditions apply is a good catch all, it doesn't cover things like start and end dates for promotions.
2. Make sure pricing you give is clear (for example, not: price does not include booking and delivery fee).
3. Don't exaggerate the capability or performance of your product. It can't save you hours every day... or can it?
4. Make sure that any qualifications are clear to the listener, e.g.: by saying XX% off everything in-store, some exclusions do apply - well then, it's not everything then, is it?
5. Have evidence available to back up any claims that you make. If you have independent testing that proves what you are saying, then yes, but that testing must be available on your website, or in-store to ANYONE who asks to see it.
6. Be very careful of claims in product names that imply effects or benefits. E.G.: The Skinny Mini Me Chip has 40% less fat than other products. So, I would take from the name that it's a healthy chip that makes me skinny and has less than 40% fat

than other chips???

At our radio station, we require any commercial that makes any claim when comparing one product or service to a competitor, to be backed up. You will need to acknowledge that you have evidence to prove your claim is true and correct and can produce that evidence if required.

NOW: What if you are running a competition and making claims in that - I can find no better example about what you should (or in this case shouldn't say) in the PEPSI - win a Jet promotion - for full details read all about it - [HERE](#) - so be careful!

To wrap this post up... It is best that, if you are going to make any claims in your commercial on radio (or that fact, make a claim in any form of advertising) then you had better make sure that you are covered by having evidence to back it up, or make your claim generic - rather than specific.

Or you could run your claim past a lawyer first to make sure you are covered.

When we write a script for you here, we may even run it past our lawyer to make sure the both of us are covered.

In closing then, it's better to be safe, than sorry.

Be careful about what you are claiming in your commercial and if in doubt, have it checked by a lawyer before you proceed.

COMMENTS:

"Making claims of any kind in a radio script can create problems – I tell the people I write for as a freelancer that they are better off not doing it – to refrain from attack ads – and instead tell their story.

If they insist on doing it, I refuse the account – and stand by the fact that my principals are more important than lying outright about unsubstantiated claims"

JoanR

"I appreciate your honesty Joan – I hope you don't lose too many accounts or jobs this way. Taking a stand is good for the soul, but you still need to pay your bills and survive. Stay safe and keep writing."

EarlP

"Thanks Earl. I choose to knock back work all the time, and only do commercials that interests me, lights me up, and broadens my horizons. Sometimes that means turning down some very lucrative clients – but I can live with that.

JoanR

Word Count and Your Sanity

((Never published Online))

Staying sane while writing any script is a hard thing to do.

It is even harder when you are trying to fit everything in on a word count.

My rough guideline is below – it is broken into what is recommended, what is highly recommended, what is not recommended and what is to be avoided at all costs.

The table is based on an Australian word count only – if I was writing for the U.K. I would drop them by 2 words each time, for the U.S.A. (depending on the state) increase it by 2 or drop by 3, etc.



SCRIPT DURATION	Recommended	HIGHLY RECOMMENDED	NOT RECOMMENDED	AVOID AT ALL COSTS
10 sec	17 words	20 words	22 words	25 words
15 sec	30 words	35 words	40 words	45 words
30 sec	63 words	78 words	87 words	95 words
45 sec	95 words	117 words	129 words	141 words
60 sec	128 words	156 words	180 words	200 words

The RECOMMENDED word count allows for lots of inflection, and emotional content.

The HIGHLY RECOMMENDED is what I would class as a typical straight read style script.

The NOT RECOMMENDED is a fast read script.

The AVOID AT ALL COSTS is a hard sell, maximum read and sped up script that should really be avoided at all costs for everyone's sake.

I know other stations go off syllable count, sentence length and other versions – but I have found that word count gives me a better guideline on how a script will turn out.

Of course, you need to add time to your script if you have cues for sound effects and music in there.

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6. COPYWRITING TOOLS

In this section we look at some useful tools and tips for you to fall back on when writing your commercials.

- My personal radio script style guide.
- Listening Journals – do you know what they are and have you ever used them?
- An odd but essential tool for copywriters in radio.
- Voice choice in radio ads.
- Using sound effects in your commercials.
- Using the right music for your commercials.



My Radio Script Style Guide

((12 September 2022))

After last week's sample of 2 random scripts, I pulled from my stack of favourite scripts - I had an email from Ron in Canada asking me about my style of notations I use in my radio scripts - it turns out it was a great question...



1. **Double Brackets or something like ((THIS)):** Every time I include double brackets in a script it is something that is not to be said - it can be a style I want the line read in or as in this example *((read as if frightened about what is around the corner))* or it might be a description of a sound effect such as *((SFX: LOUD THUMP))*

2. **BOLD** text or NOT BOLD TEXT:
In my scripts I use **BOLD** text as the script I want read out loud, not BOLD text is sub-text that is what I want the announcer or voice artist to give. Usually, it will be double bracketed too. But not always, as in: **Dave You don't just call and ask for it** sarcastically? OR **Dave You don't just call and ask for it?** ((SAID SARCASTICALLY)) personally I prefer the ((DOUBLE BRACKET)) but honestly, most of the time it depends on space on the script page.

3. **Text using "Quotes":**
If I have more than one voice in a commercial script - I usually have an ANNOUNCER who has no quotation marks around their speech unless they are saying something with a particular style or expression. BUT a character or named person will always have "quote marks on their speech" to indicate that they are a character or person. E.G.: ((ANNOUNCER)) **This is Dave...** ((DAVE)) **"Hi!"** ((ANNOUNCER)) **Dave doesn't know how to fix his car** ((DAVE)) **"But I will give it a shot!"** ((SFX: GUN SHOT)) ((ANNOUNCER - SHOCKED)) **"DAVE!"**

4. **Production Notes:**
Usually, I give production notes at the top of the script, they are usually either numbered as to when I want a certain element to start or stop, or give directions in the sidebar as to when music should stop and start, etc. Sometimes I may even have footnotes on my scripts or insist that I am in on the final edit to make sure that the clients wish (and mine as the writer) are observed by the producer. I may even indicate on a script if a line can be dropped for time (especially on a long script), or where I want cross fades, bringing one piece of music or sound effect or voice up over another piece of audio.

So yes, sometimes my scripts can look a bit busy - and it was something I was

unaware of until asked about it by Ron.

But I do think that the descriptions and notes I put on my scripts do help a producer when building a commercial in the production booth - at least it helped me when I worked as a producer.

What are your thoughts?

COMMENTS:

"Thanks for answering my question, Earl. We use just paragraphs of text with no notes at all. Since I suggested the change at work, we tried it out and our producer LOVES IT! But our station jocks do not like it at all – they are used to the old style. I will let you know how the change goes."

RonD

"Ron – you don't need to change your style. Do what works for your voice talent. If they are used to the old way, then why change it - add in details for your producer but do what works for your team. This is just the way I do it as it was the way I was taught when I worked in TV".

EarlP

"We use a template that is chiseled in stone – it hasn't changed in the 20 years I have worked at this station – even when we changed from typewriters to computers we copied it across – I think it's time we changed it up!"

MaddB

Listening Journal

((15 August 2022))

I was asked last week by a copywriter to have a listen to the ads that were on-air on their station and let them know what I thought, so I grabbed a sheet of paper, dialled them up on the inter-webs and started to take notes as I streamed their station.

The exercise reminded me of a Listening Journal - and I thought that some of you might not have heard of this before - I don't know why not - but 6 out of 10 people I spoke to in the past week hadn't heard of it before.



Some of the on-air talent that I know use a listening journal to track their shows, noting things such as timing and songs, voice, levels, intro's, outros, etc.

Or they listen to other stations and note how they do those shows.

But you can do the same thing with ad breaks too.

When I do this, I tend to write down: Station name, time listened to (usually no more than an hour) and then something like this - note that this particular one was taken from a listening journal created by one of the on-air team 2 weeks ago - *thanks Paul for letting me use this:*

4:10:54 ⚡**TB: Stager Capital Give me the Cash**

4:11:50 Spots

⚡**AD 1: TFL/Partnership**

⚡**AD 2: Quick-Fit Tyres**

⚡**AD 3: Just Eat**

⚡**AD 4: Peppa Pig World**

⚡**AD 5: Tesco Mobile**

⚡**AD 6: Wagga-Mama**

⚡**AD 7: Corona Safety CSA**

4:15:43 ⚡**Out of Break Generic (Short)**

I will also note down the opening line of each ad and anything about it that I liked

or disliked, if it was a call-to-action spot, a branding spot or CSA spot.

In this ad break for example was from Capital London - they were all national ads produced by agencies.

Other stations I have listened to have nothing but local ads, others a mixture of the two, or include live reads.

I also take note of specifically timed ads or something that makes the ads stand out. For example, ads that were only 5 seconds long, or top and tailed a break.

It all helps you with your writing, and you'll discover the traps that you might fall into/fall back on - and some new ways to write that you hadn't thought of before.

Try it - pick a station at random and listen for an hour, take note of their ads, and see if they help you write better - I know it works for me.

COMMENTS:

"Fantastic idea. I have started to listen to other stations streams with an ear to educate myself – rather than listening for fun. Thanks."

PCB

"I had never heard of a listening Journal – what a great idea. I ended up using the Audials Radio program to pick a station in another part of the country, record an hour, and then play it back and listen to their ad breaks - makes a huge difference when you hear other stations and gives you some great tips on tackling clients different ideas too."

H4HAPPY

"I haven't done a listening journal since the late 1990s – wow this brings back memories of being in radio school."

SaraM

An Odd but Essential Tool for Your Writers Tool-Kit?

((18 July 2022))

All this week I will be looking at the different types of tools a radio copywriter can use, and what you should have in your toolkit for each of the different job titles you may have. Today I look at one of the single most important things - recording your voice at your desk.

When you write a radio script - do you just write it - say it in your head, then send it off to a client?

I hope not.

Every radio copywriter should read their script out loud. That's every script. Why? Because it is only then that you will discover the little traps that you have laid in the copy for your voice talent.

My best purchase to help me with this was a desktop microphone, stand and shield. I got a cheap one for only \$39 Australian at K-Mart - [HERE](#) - the microphone cable is a bit dodgy - but the rest is good enough to give a decent recording.

Of course, you can just use your smart phone and record the audio the email it to yourself and edit it.

I record my script into Audacity and time it out - is it too long or short? Are there any tricky traps? Too many alliterations?

Then, I will sometimes send that audio to the client instead of a script. Why?

Because some clients just don't understand scripts! They don't get the written word.

I have tried to say to them "get someone to read it out loud to you so you get an idea of how it might sound on-air" but it doesn't happen, and they add another 27 words!

Or I send them the audio and the script, and they say, "that's a bit short, isn't it?" Nope that's 30 seconds - that's what the spot runs so we can't add any more in there!

Some consultants have recommended to send the audio only or do a live read to them over the phone of the script - but I prefer to record my voice and send it through, and since I have started to do so - the number of changes I have had, have decreased and the number of approvals has increased (especially for demo spec scripts).

Finally, I then will then send that audio file to one of the voice production houses I use with the script - so they get the rhythm and style of delivery I am after, as well



as any tricky pronunciations. I have been told by them that this really helps the voice talent to get the delivery right.

So - that's 3 types of uses for one piece of equipment - now you can see why I recommend to all copywriters, get yourself a microphone and stand, and start using it for your radio scripts - you'll discover that your writing will get better, your approvals will increase and the results for your clients will bring them back! Not bad for a \$39 investment!

COMMENTS:

"My most 'essential tool' is my stopwatch. I have the same one I have been using for 20 years, and it has travelled from coast to coast across the country with me, been battered, dropped, has a cracked screen, and had the batteries changed twice in all that time. It's my good luck sales charm. They seriously don't make them like that anymore.

You make a great point about sending audio files only to clients – the trouble is that mine want to make so many changes to every script – that I would need to send the script too. The only time I would record my voice is when I have a client on the phone, and I am asking for a pronunciation guide on a tricky name, or I do it when I am sitting with them selling them the airtime.

My next most 'essential tool' is my notepad and pen. Can't live without them."

SuperSales

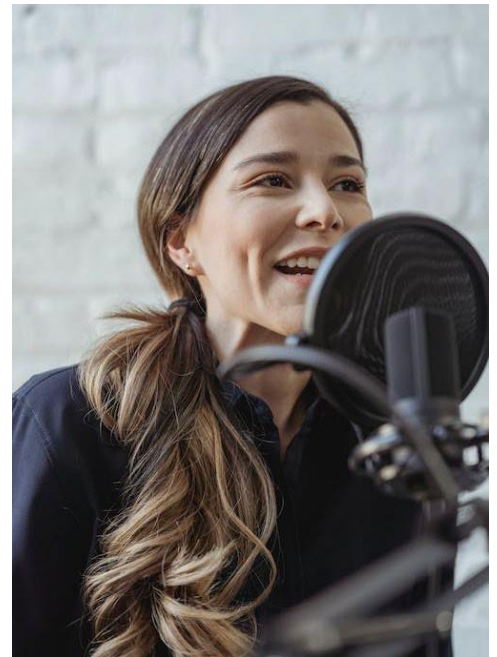
Voice Choice in Radio Ads

((1 May 2023))

I have this conversation with clients at least 3 times a week - "What voice do you want to read your commercial?"

They always ask why? Is it important?
Well, YES - if you want your radio commercial to work better than expected.

So, I took a quick look last week when I had some time, at why and how different types of voices in radio commercials can influence people's buying habits - I did not look at the age of the voices, just a generic voice and how they would appear to listeners.



I will note that I have looked at this from a western perspective only - and am fully aware that different cultures will have different biases:

- 1. Male voices:** Male voices are often perceived as authoritative and confident. They can be effective in promoting products that are seen as traditionally male, such as sports equipment, cars, or gadgets. Male voices can also be used to create a sense of urgency or excitement in promotions such as sales or limited time offers.
- 2. Female voices:** Female voices are often perceived as warm, friendly, and trustworthy. They can be effective in promoting products that are seen as traditionally female, such as beauty products, home appliances, or children's items. Female voices can also be used to create a sense of comfort and familiarity in promotions such as healthcare products or services.
- 3. Celebrity voices:** Celebrity voices can be effective in capturing people's attention and creating a sense of excitement or exclusivity. They can be used to promote products that are associated with the celebrity's image or values, such as fashion, sports, or entertainment products. Celebrity voices can also be used to create a sense of trust and credibility in promotions such as charity or social causes.
- 4. Accented voices:** Accented voices can be effective in promoting products that are associated with a particular region or culture. They can create a sense of authenticity and connection with the audience and increase the perceived value of the product. However, it is essential to use accented voices carefully to avoid stereotypes or negative associations.

The type of voice used in radio commercials can influence people's perception of the product and brand and affect their buying behaviour.

By selecting the right voice for their target audience and product, businesses can

create a more effective and memorable advertising campaign and increase their sales. However, it is essential to use voices that are appropriate, authentic, and respectful to avoid negative associations or backlash.

The most important word there is 'AUTHENTIC' using a voice that sounds like they are reading, are disconnected from the situation or script, or a badly performed act or accent - just will not work for any client, at any time.

COMMENTS:

"Yes! Gone are the days of using a WKRP in Cincinnati style 'jock' read. We now want authentic reads in commercials, with 'real' sounding conversations and audio.

Well pointed out and explained Earl."

ToniC

"Cheers and thanks Toni. Not that there is anything wrong with using an old-style commercial read – if it is the one and only commercial on-air at your station in that style – but if there is a lot of them, I am sure that listeners will stop tuning in.

Using authentic style reads works – but one thing I didn't mention is leaning too much of having CLIENTS voice their ads – it's something that starts to make your station sound way too 'regional' and not professional.

You need to find that nice balance between having one or two clients on-air and having way too many – it's something that we combat at our station by saying that the Production/On-Air Manager has the right to knock back a voice if it is not the right quality or in the right style for the station."

EarlP

Using Sound Effects in Radio Commercials

((27 March 2023))

Here are 7 ways that sound effects can be used in a radio commercial, when you write your scripts, add notes, describe what you want to convey.



You want to give your producer the best chance to nail that sound effect perfectly:

- 1. Create Atmosphere:** Sound effects can be used to create atmosphere and set the tone for your commercial. For example, using sounds such as rain, wind, or thunder can create a sense of tension and drama. But is it a light storm, a heavy storm - don't just write ((STORM EFFECTS)) - give some direction.
- 2. Emphasize Key Points:** Sound effects can be used to emphasize key points in your commercial. For example, using a sound effect such as a bell or chime can help to highlight a special offer or promotion. My favourite way of doing this is adding a production note tied to a symbol I include in the script, e.g.: #=Gong sound effect
- 3. Add Humour:** Sound effects can be used to add humour to your commercial. For example, using a silly sound effect like a honking horn or a cartoon sound effect can create a light-hearted tone. Make it the opposite of what you would expect, and it will stand out more.
- 4. Create realism:** Sound effects can be used to create a sense of realism in your commercial. For example, using the sound of a car engine or a door closing can help to create a more immersive listening experience. If you can get isolated sound effects recorded at a business - do it! Nothing beats 'actuality'.
- 5. Create tension:** Sound effects can be used to create tension and drama in your commercial. For example, using a sound effect like a ticking clock can create a sense of urgency and encourage listeners to act. But don't overdo it - I find that any sound effect that runs longer than 5 seconds on radio will lose its effectiveness.
- 6. Create a sense of location:** Sound effects can be used to create a sense of location in your commercial. For example, using sounds such as seagulls, waves, and boats can create a sense of being by the ocean. Again, make sure you describe the scene in your notes to make sure you are getting it just right.
- 7. Create brand recognition:** Sound effects can be used to create brand recognition. For example, using a signature sound effect or jingle can help to create a strong association between your brand and a specific sound.

By using sound effects in these ways, you can create a more engaging and memorable radio commercial that captures the attention of your target audience.

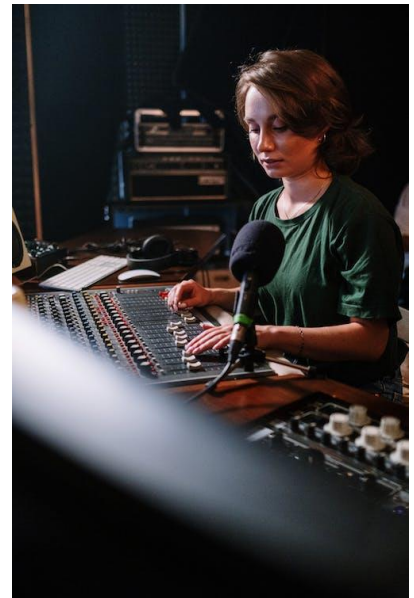
Choose the Right Music for Your Message

((3 April 2023))

I was talking a client through his music choices for his radio script the other day, and wondered if there was any research out there on this topic - it turns out I could find very little online (see the bottom of this post for those that I found) - so my preferences were based on my experiences - yours might be different.

You may not have even thought about it, but do different music styles influence people subconsciously when they are listening to radio ads? Is there a perfect match with music style and product?

So, I ran through a generic list of 5 that I usually say to clients and come up with these preferred styles and products - see if you agree or disagree with them?



Of course, there are sub-genres of these - but these are the 5 basic styles I tend to use, then I assign a mood with them to help my commercial producer to pick the right track to suit:

- 1. Upbeat music:** Upbeat music such as pop, dance, or electronic music can create a positive and energetic atmosphere that can increase impulse buying for products such as clothing, cosmetics, and food items.
- 2. Classical music:** Classical music is often associated with sophistication and elegance. It can create a relaxed atmosphere and encourage people to take their time and consider luxury products such as jewelry, high-end cars, or expensive watches.
- 3. Country music:** Country music is often associated with values such as family, patriotism, and rural life. It can influence people to buy products that reflect these values, such as home appliances, pickup trucks, or outdoor equipment.
- 4. Jazz music:** Jazz music is often associated with creativity, sophistication, and a relaxed atmosphere. It can encourage people to buy products such as art, books, and gourmet food items.
- 5. Hip-hop and R&B music:** Hip-hop and R&B music are often associated with a luxurious lifestyle and urban culture. They can influence people to buy products such as designer clothes, sneakers, and electronic gadgets.

Because different styles of music evoke different emotions and values it is only natural that they also can influence people's buying behaviour.

By selecting the right music for their target audience, your commercial scripts can create a more effective and memorable commercial to help to drive and

increase sales.

However, it is essential to note that the effectiveness of music in influencing purchasing behaviour can vary from person to person and is influenced by many factors, including individual preferences, cultural background, and situational factors.

As I said I was hoping to find some research to back this claim up - and these are the ones I found: The **BEST** one I found was on the Radio Centre website : [TURNING ART INTO SCIENCE](#) - this was amongst some amazing other resources too... [HERE](#)

Next was 2 academic reports: [Music and Radio Advertising: Effects of Tempo and Placement](#) (from 1994) - the full report is an interesting read. And... [Does Background Music Really Help Radio Commercials? The Effect of Involvement on Ad Recall](#) (from 2011) - which you must register to look at (sorry!)

COMMENTS:

"Sounds like a great area to do some research in, especially since there is very little modern and up to date information out there."

AstridW

"Question? Do you rely on your producer to pick your music all the time, or do you give guidelines in every script?"

CD

"CD – I tend to give a mood or style on the majority of the scripts that I write, but there have been occasions where I have sat down for an hour or so trying to pick the EXACT track that I want – especially if I know what I think will work with the ad. BUT – it all depends on the read that you get back – the voice may clash with the music bed in all kinds of ways – so I tend to, in 95% of the times, just give a mood or style. I have worked with my producer for 12 years, so we know each other well enough to trust our choices."

EarlP

7. WRITING COPY

Now we get to the pointy end of this free e-book... writing your script.

We aim to cover a lot of ground here – very quickly, so strap in.

- We look at the first line of any script – and why this could be the most important thing you write.
- 6 ways to improve that opening line.
- 20 prompts for writing creative commercials.
- Then 10 weird writing prompts to inspire something different.
- Next 5 different ways to write a script with the same information in it.
- What better way of showing you how I write scripts, than giving some script samples – batteries and butchers.
- Let's write something creative.
- Let's write yet another Butchers commercial.
- And finally let's write a Travel Agency commercial for a cruise liner holiday.



The FIRST Line of ANY Radio Script

((7th July 2022))

While effectiveness is a BIG thing in any business, money that a client is willing to invest in their radio commercial should also mean that it is effective too.

But how do you do it?

From the very first second of the ad you need to grab their attention.



You need to ask yourself...

Will it grab the listeners attention from the beginning?

Could it be any better if there were less words in it?

Could it deliver an effective message with some more tweaks?

Does it need something... different off the top? An attention getter?

Let's think about print advertising, especially newspapers...

When you create a print ad you target the average 12-year-old reading level... Why? Because that's the average reading level of people (it's an old piece of advice we were given when I worked for newspapers that still holds true today - although it might be lower now).

So, will the reader of your print ad hear the words in their mind as you intended them to be heard or not?

Is it too complex? Too... boring?

Too much text? Too little?

A lot of 'white space' to draw your eye to the core message? **BIG BOLD TEXT?**

I want you to think about the last time (or maybe it's right now) that you listened to the radio...

Were you doing something else?

Waking up?

Reading a blog post?

Working at your desk?

Were you distracted?

Did a commercial you were listening to; ever make you stop and pay attention?

If it did, was it because it started with a question that was relevant to you?

Did something unexpected happen, or was there an unusual sound effect or piece of music?

When you are writing any radio commercial script, remember to start smart with something that aligns with the clients branding, yet grabs a listener's attention.

As copywriters we can make the details jump out of the listeners speakers/headphones and into the "theatre of the mind", if we have enough time, but if we don't have that, we need to write better, and clearer.

There here are a couple of things we can do to make them work even more effectively to let you get people's attention faster.

THE UNEXPECTED OPENING LINE:

I really hate writing scripts that start like this "When you come to Don's Car Yard, you'll... ", but sometimes you've got to do what the client wants, no matter how much you try to educate them about what works and what doesn't in radio.

Instead, I would prefer to create something like:

"Maneuver your old monster down to Don's Car Yard" or "Tap-dance down to Don's Car Yard.. "

Why? Because the predictable is boring, the unexpected grabs your attention and makes you stop ...and listen. AND alliterations work well to make people stop and listen, especially if they are clever and unexpected.

Also, asking a simple question about a problem that everyone can identify with sets the tone for your commercial - "*got a problem A - here's the solution, it's B!*"

This is by far my favourite way to get people's attention, then, by using action and sound effects we can help to build that picture in that "Theatre of the Mind".

THE WRAP UP:

I would like to suggest that the opening line of any commercial (print, TV, or radio), should have an unexpected opening, something different that gets people's attention, then you can go in for the details or your commercial offer.

Remembering that there should only be one idea or theme per commercial, so you need to make that opening really set the scene fast - otherwise people get confused.

Try to steer clients away from shopping list style commercials.

Why? Because it is not an effective use of their time, or their money - it just won't work for them.

6 Ways to Improve Every Radio Script's Opening Lines!

((20th June 2022))

Many months ago, I had a long discussion with another copywriter about the single most important part of a radio script.

Opinions ranged from what we thought it could be... was it the call-to-action message?



Or what clients would consider the most important part - their business name, or the contact point?

On and on we went discussing all the different things that could be the single most important part before we finally settled on the opening line of the script.

Why was this the single most important part of the script?

For several reasons. In our opinion the attention getting, scene setting done in the first 3 seconds would matter most - simply because it would keep people listening to the rest of the message.

Without their attention being grabbed, then there was no point producing the rest of the script.

So, let's break that down... The first 3 seconds of your script should be:

- * Less than 5 words.
- * A sound effect.
- * A lack of sound effect.
- * A music bed start.
- * A Jingle start.
- * OR... A familiar top/start or introduction.

This then is the main part of your script that you should focus on, AFTER the rest of the script has been written.

Now radio gurus Dan O'Day and Dick Orkin used to say that no matter what you write as the first line of a radio script - you should cut it and start halfway through the action - and I used to live by that when writing any script.

That means that you are either starting in mid-action, or mid conversation, mid story, or starting someway that can demonstrate that we are already in the thick of it.

Now getting that right can be hard to do, and you can agonize over it, write it again, re-write and re-write again and again until you think you have it.

The thing was... I was having this 'first 3 seconds rule' constantly being reinforced in my daily script writing, but I hadn't paid any attention to it until that point.

It was like a lightbulb going on once I realized what was happening.

Suddenly I noticed how much time I was devoting to writing the script, then re-writing and re-imagining the opening of every commercial I was writing. I was spending more than 50% of my time just on the first line, after I had written everything else.

To give you an example, I was writing a script yesterday for a local specialist Battery company.

After some research on the topic, they wanted covered, I had written what I thought was a clever script. I think I had nailed the copy brief, ticked off every component of the clients wants and needs, had a call to action, was clearly defining the one core message, but... it didn't feel right to me, it sounded odd when it was spoken out loud.

I recorded myself reading the line (I sometimes do this to hear what it might sound like in a commercial). But, no, it still was not right.

So, I checked it with the other copywriter who agreed, it was missing something, and it was something that we both couldn't identify, no matter how many ways we tried to rewrite it.

I went back to an earlier version of the script, and I started tweaking more and more, then, I started to get frustrated and in desperation I decided to move 1 line to the top of the script, how would that look and sound?

I moved what I thought was a clever line from near the bottom of the script to the top... as it contained a great question in it.

I sat back and read it out loud to myself, and BANG!

There it was. It suddenly worked!

I had set the scene correctly and suddenly the whole commercial fell into place and made more sense to me.

A few more tweaks and I was happy to send it to the client for approval, which they did straight away.

So, while Dan and Dick were correct, I think that you should focus on grabbing the attention of a listener with the single most important and best produced part of your commercial in the first three seconds.

From the most elaborate sound effect to best line in the commercial - it should be at the top of your script, every single time.

20 PROMPTS FOR CREATIVE RADIO COMMERCIALS

((10 April 2023))

I was spit-balling some ideas with another copywriter the other day about creative writing prompts, some of the ideas were came up with were very silly - others made this list:



1. Create a commercial using a fictional product or service that promises to transport you to a different era or time with each use.
2. Create a commercial for a fictitious mobile app that allows you to speak to pets in their own language, and then talk to them about the client's product or service.
3. Create a commercial for a fictional brand product or service that promises to make you invisible to everyone around you when used.
4. Create a commercial for a fictitious online retailer that specializes in selling items that were once owned by famous historical figures, then have them use a client's product or service.
5. Imagine a fictional product that allows you to experience your dreams (or someone else's dreams) in a virtual reality setting.
6. Using a client's product or service turns the consumer into a superhero.
7. Using a client's product or service suddenly lets you relive your favourite childhood memories.
8. Using a product or service over promises to make you immune to stress and anxiety, and the results are...
9. Given a client's product or service suddenly provides you with a personal genie.
10. Suddenly, hearing a client's commercial on the radio transports a character to a different country, location, or situation each time it is played.
11. Using a client's product or service suddenly lets you speak in any language, fluently.
12. A client can time-travel to any era, they go back in time to tell themselves about their product or service.
13. Eating a food, or using a product gives the listener superhuman speed, the

commercial is then played faster so they know what the world will be like when they do it.

14. A personal assistant is assigned to you when you use a product or service, but they are very literal. Chaos ensues.

15. You can suddenly hear the voices of a product as it is being used - what are they saying?

16. Famous names are parodied and are ready to use the clients' products or services - what are they saying?

17. Imagine that you are immune to all kinds of weather, how will that affect the use of a product or service?

18. Create a commercial for a fictitious service that allows you to communicate with aliens.

19. The listeners are invisible and walking around a client's workspace - what do they hear or see?

20. We hear the internal monologue of a client as they talk about a product or service to a customer.

COMMENTS:

"Could we have some more of these please? I like the ideas that they generate!"

UlfricTheBored

"More! More! MORE!"

FBox

10 More Writing Prompts (some weird ones!)

((17 April 2023))

I had some good feedback about the writing prompts last week - so here are some more - these ones are a bit weirder!



1. Write a commercial where the 'world of the commercial' has a law that doesn't apply, e.g.: where the laws of gravity don't apply.
2. Imagine a world where everyone has a superpower, but your client's business supplies a product or service that makes everyone normal - how would everyone react?
3. Imagine your client has just discovered that they can talk to animals.
4. Imagine your client's products or services are representations of emotions, so they can be bought, sold, and traded.
5. Your client's customers are stranded on a deserted island and must survive using only the products that your client sells.
6. Your client's staff all have a number tattooed on their forehead, that determines their worth to the boss, but that number is more important to their customers.
7. The sales team at your client's business see into the future but are powerless to change it.
8. A client's product has a secret hidden ability, using it in the correct way unlocks that ability and transforms the product into something else.
9. In the radio ad the main character discovers that they are a fictional, they escape the ad, but now must navigate the real world.
10. Dreams are controlled by an agency and the client's business advertises in those dreams - how would listeners react?

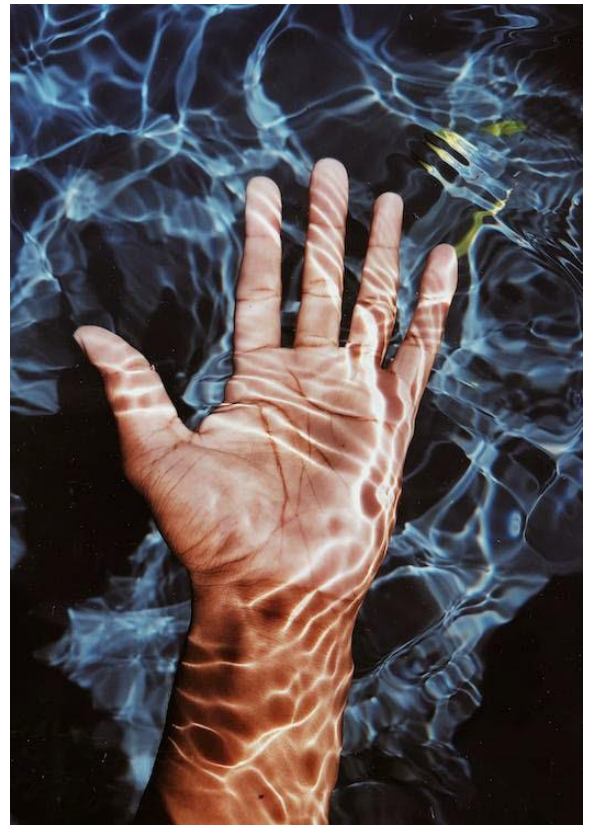
5 Ways to Write a Radio Script

((27th June 2022))

I had cause to pause the other day and reflect on the different ways that I sometimes approach scripts for all our clients.

That then got me to thinking about the different ways that radio scripts can be approached, mainly... so there was always something for everyone in the listening audience.

As I nearly always write several different versions of each script before I send them off to be approved by a client, I thought I would share how this process is done, and what better way than producing several scripts to show you (YAY!)



So, here are 5 ways to write the same information for a very fictional client, a hotel here in Mandurah (that's a provincial town south of Perth, in Western Australia), it is located on the water and offers some very interesting activities, and other fun stuff...

Which one will appeal to you?

#1: Designed to appeal to people who just want the facts, males 30+.

"Mandurah Lodge, a 20-room villa, minutes from Mandurah on the Murray River. With 31 acres of bushland at your disposal for casual walks or cycling, plus a paintball park right on our doorstep. No hassles, no fuss, and you can catch the bus to Mandurah Lodge."

#2: Targeted at families, and groups of people, both sexes and people's feelings.

"It's an exquisite place, miles from town where you and your family and friends can put your feet up in front of the fire.

On day one, cycle through the expansive bush, on day two ride horses, on day three try paint balling across the road, on day four, soak in the Jacuzzi and on day six, plan to stay forever.

Mandurah Lodge, the place that you come to, to fall back in love with life, all over again."

#3: Action packed, spontaneous people - weekdays, males 20+.

**"Got plans for the weekend?
Why wait?"**

**Make tomorrow the day you wake up at Mandurah Lodge to a view that shouts adventure, horse riding, paint balling, cycling, fishing, hiking, or simply soaking up the atmosphere in the Jacuzzi, or around the log fire.
Let tomorrow be the day that you wake up to the place, to fall back in love with life, all over again."**

#4: For thinkers and planners, people that plan, usually women 25+

**"Take a moment... you've had a busy week, your family too, you're all tired, you need a break.
Time to reconnect.
You need space to remember what it is to hold hands, to hear the wind through the trees, watch the wildlife on the water, and space to let your dreams become plans. That's what Mandurah Lodge is for. It's the place you come to, to fall back in love with life."**

#5: Cheapskates, people looking for bargains. Anyone.

**"If you want luxury, go to the Savoy, if you want cheap, go to your local motel. If you want both, come to Mandurah Lodge, a five-star experience for a two star price!
For amazing deals Tuesday to Thursday, with the best views, the best service, and adventure at your doorstep, it's Mandurah Lodge.
Because loving life doesn't have to cost you your life savings."**

There is probably another 5 ways I could write this, but to keep this post short I picked the simplest ones to show you.

With your target audience and demographic in mind, your ad can appeal to anyone, providing you know who they are, so make sure you let us know who you are targeting.

COMMENTS:

"Very interesting take on writing different scripts for different audiences – thanks for sharing this."

87BeerSales

"Thanks for this, trying it out with some scripts later today"

Mandy

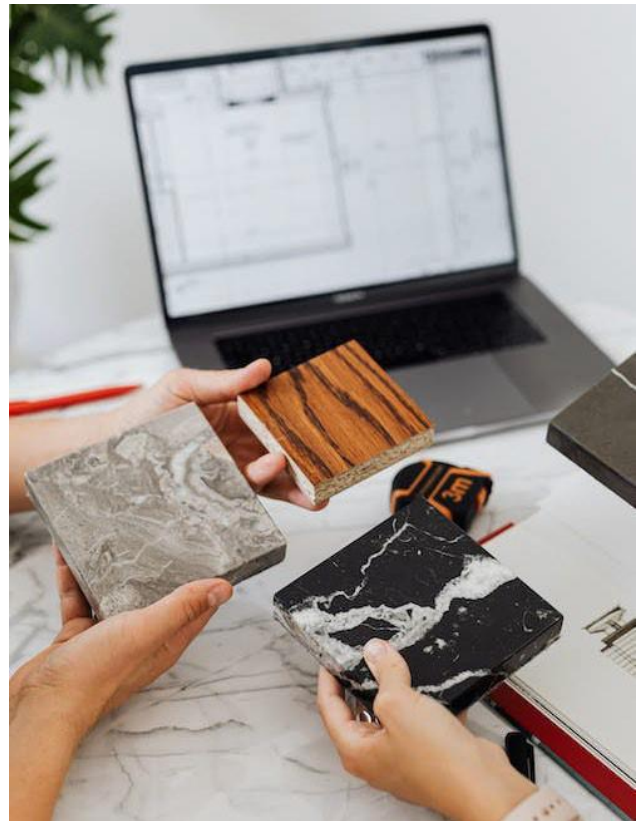
Some Script Samples

((5 September 2022))

I've been asked by a couple of people on email to give some samples of my favourite creative scripts that I have written - I am happy to oblige - but I want to make it clear that The 2 samples below are just that... samples, AND are not meant to be used as a cut and paste template - but for you to play around with and change up to suit your client.

They are for a Battery Wholesaler and a Butcher - yes, 2 very random scripts indeed.

I have replaced the business name with the same style in my e-book, i.e.: <BUSINESS NAME>.



Let me know in the comments if you would like me to give you more of these...



#1 Battery Wholesaler 'COUNT' - 30 second commercial script

((ANNOUNCER)) **Count the number of Batteries you think you use every day... Have you included the batteries in your... Remote Control, Security Alarm, Watch, Car, Motorbike, Boat, N-B-N, Truck, Toys, G-P-S, Torch, Mobile Phone, UP-S, game controllers, laptop, calculator, tablet, scales, and...**

((CROSS FADE INTO BUSINESS JINGLE - PHASES INTO HOME EFFECTS - COUPLE LISTENING TO RADIO))

((FEMALE)) **"Harry? Did you get those hearing aid batteries today?"**

((MALE)) **"What? ((pause)) No? Maybe?"**

((FEMALE)) **"I just heard the <BUSINESS NAME> radio ad. You! Need! New! Batteries!"**

((JINGLE BACK UP))

((ANNOUNCER)) **If you need batteries, advice, and solutions, think <BUSINESS NAME>.**



#2 Butcher - 'HEAR THAT?' - 30 second commercial script.

((SFX: LOUD SIZZLE OF FOOD COOKING ON A HOT PLATE - UP THEN UNDER NEXT LINE))

((MALE)) **Hear that?**

((SFX: SIZZLE CONTINUES - TURN OVER SIZZLE))

((MALE)) **That's a one hundred per cent Australian grown, grass-fed steak from <BUSINESS NAME>...***((as if listening to the sizzle to decipher the type of meat))*

Hmm... It's a Premium cut too!

((SFX: SIZZLE CONTINUES))

((off hand)) **...Or it might be a rib-eye?**

((as if getting back to the topic at hand)) **<BUSINESS NAME> offer a large range of fresh, locally sourced meat and free-range poultry.**

There are premium cuts. Cuts for the barbecue and a variety of pre-marinated, or pre-crumbed cuts to suit every taste.

Add a little sizzle at mealtime, with <BUSINESS NAME>. <ADDRESS>. Open 7 days.

Let me know if you want me to include more - comment below or send me an email via the usual contact point.

COMMENTS:

"More please – I like your ideas, and to see how you write. Could we see the entire process? Video? Audio Recording?"

RachL

"Ask and you shall receive Rach – I am working on a full walkthrough of some client's scripts now and will post them soon."

EarlP

Let's Write a Radio Ad: Something Creative

((25 May 2023))

(This is a transcript of a recording made while creating this script – the clients name has been changed).

Yes that's right today I am going to write a creative ad – the dreaded **“the client wants something creative”** and you will see how I tackle such a project for a business segment that you would not have thought of before.



First, the brief from the sales rep at a regional country music station was – and I quote **“something creative for a water cartage firm – they supply water to fill pools, for work sites, to wet down road construction and do private, corporate and local government work”**.

Okay – and contact point? Their website – that's it.

Right, that's not much to go on at all – but I am sure I can do something with it.

So, I looked at their website – it's just a landing page with contact details.

Okay, let's work out how to tackle this...

Let's begin with the solution – what does the solution look like in this case – wet roads – boring, full pool – that could be done, wet work site... sounds like I could have fun with that idea or driving the truck around delivering water.

How about a reason why you would need water delivered? The levels going down? Isn't there a Johnny Cash song **“How High is the Water Momma?”** – I'll have a listen to that and see if it inspires me... ((PLAYS SONG)) Nope! not really.

What about “water works?” that's got some possibilities.

I could write something about the truck driver... nah boring.

Or a work site getting a delivery and the people there getting soaked in water, sounds a bit silly when I say it out loud.

Talk about tanks? No, they just deliver water... what about filling an army tank with water? Nah.

Someone inside the tank talking to us as the water sloshes around – that sounds like a good idea... hmmm.

Let's move on – now that I've got a couple of ideas.

Now: Is there an emotion or feeling I could make work for water delivery?
Happy when a delivery occurs, or sad that you need water – nope that doesn't work. "Happy" or at least "upbeat" it is for the feeling then.

What person would be interested in this product?

Well, there would be homeowners to fill a pool, businesspeople for water cartage to building site, local government officials – so I have to write to appeal to at least one, but preferably 2 of those.

Now I want the ad to stand out, let's see I want it to be different, if I make it sound like it is someone inside the tank as it being driven around – that will sound different, with water movement and with the person struggling to stand up – I like that idea – so who is this person and why are they inside a tank?

Hmmm... it could be a character someone from the business? Or a salesperson? A voice artist?

I like the idea of a voice artist being put into the tank so that he knows what they are talking about – we can add effects for the tank to make the reverb sound plastic/small room, with water sloshing and if 'acted' right this could work. That should stand out a lot.

Now because this is only one ad for the client, it's one core message should be to contact them for details – so I must make sure I have that in there too.

So, let's start writing now (I will change the name of the business for the purposes of this script) ...

((PRODUCTION NOTES: all of script is to be performed like the voice artist is inside a water tank as it is being driven around, then backed up at a destination – so we want lots of splashes, sloshes and other effects, plus discrete muffled sounds of truck driving and indicating, brakes, reverse beeping from the truck, etc))

"Wayne's Water Works asked me to pop inside one of their Water Tank Delivery Trucks as they drive to a client's house to fill their pool – it's the middle of summer and I agreed, so whoop, here I am.

Wayne's deliver water for... whey-hey! Pool filling, local council water requirements, and building site water need, neeeeeeds!

If you go to "Wayne's Water Works dot com" you'll find their contact details, and... ah, we're here, you can book your delivery directly with Wayne himself.

By the way, being inside one of these tanks is not a good idea."

Okay – it's a very rough first draft – and I don't like the end, the start needs some work and the message in the middle seems muddled.

The production notes are all okay – so I will leave those as is for now.

Let's re-write:

“Wayne's Water Works have put me inside one of their Water Tank Trucks as they deliver to a client's house to fill their new pool – whoooo! It's the middle of summer and I agreed.

Whey-hey! Wayne's deliver water for filling pools, for local councils, building site water need, neeeeeeds!

If you go to “Wayne's Water Works dot com” you'll find their contact details, and... ah, we're here, you can book your delivery directly with Wayne himself.

By the way, this is not very safe, luckily, it's only an ad for Wayne's Water Works.”

That's a bit better, but its 94 words – so I need to do some trimming.

Let's edit it...

“Wayne's Water Works have put me inside one of their Water Tank Trucks as they deliver to a client's house to fill their new pool.

Whey-hey! Wayne's deliver water for filling pools, for local councils, building site water need, neeeeeeds!

If you go to “Wayne's Water Works dot com” you'll find their contact details, and... ah, we're here, you can book your delivery directly with Wayne himself.

By the way, this is not safe, luckily, it's only an ad for Wayne's Water Works.”

83 words – much better, now I need to trim a wee bit more because of the massive amounts of sound effects – so, do I really need the disclaimer? Probably not – let's tweak it some.

“No one was actually inside a Wayne's Water Works tank for this commercial”.

That brings us down to 80 words – as we put it together, I might be able to trim it some more.

So altogether, with the production notes:

((PRODUCTION NOTES: all of script is to be performed like the voice artist is inside a water tank as it is being driven around, then backed up at a destination – so we want lots of splashes, sloshes and other effects, plus discrete muffled sounds of truck driving and indicating, brakes, reverse beeping from the truck, etc.))

((MVO)) “Wayne’s Water Works have put me inside one of their Water Tank Trucks while they deliver water to a client’s house to fill their new pool.

Whey-hey! Wayne’s deliver water for pools, for local councils, building site water need, neeeeeeds!

If you go to “Wayne’s Water Works dot com” you’ll find their contact details, and... ahh, we’re here... You can also book your delivery with Wayne himself.

((FVO)) “No one was inside a Wayne’s Water Works tank for this commercial”.

79 words – now it's up to production to build the picture in people's minds – and have the voice artist capture what I was after.

And that's it for today – a creative script from start to finish – before I hand it off to the producer.

COMMENTS:

“Very cool to see the way your mind works (ouch that must sting!). Interesting to see how you swing back and forth between different parts of the script too. Thanks for giving us an insight into the way you work.”

RachL

“Cheers Rach.”

EarIP

Let's Write a Script: Butcher

((11 May 2023))

Today we are putting together a demo script for a butcher.

Let's start with the basics from the Copy Brief for a 30 sec spot for a new client "Faber Brothers Butchers" (not a real butchers name):

1. Target Audience: Young Families looking for a bargain and people who want value for money.
2. Focus on the 2 for \$70 meat packs – there are 5 available – (with over \$100 to \$120 of value depending on the pack, but total to \$70 RRP each)
3. Location, want to say their name as many times as possible, but not name the location – because they want people to hit their website and Facebook to drive online activity. (NOTE THAT THIS IS A FAKE WEBSITE NAME)
FaberBrothersButchers.com
4. Home delivery can be mentioned if there is space.



OK – the rest of this post has been transcribed from a recording I made of me doing this activity:

Let's start the way I start writing all my scripts – with the last bit first: the company contact point! So, we will have... "See Faber Brothers Butchers dot com or find us on Facebook" (that's 11 words from our absolute maximum of 87 giving us 76 left to play with).

Let's next try out some different ways to present the basic information:

"It must be good, it must be fresh, and great value with cuts for everyone to enjoy"

"Everyone enjoys different cuts of meat, chicken, and pork, so..."

"5 choices of meat packs available and get 2 for seventy dollars!"

"Value for money meat packs, choose from 5 varieties with guaranteed savings in all of them!"

"Home delivery options available within 15 kilometers, see online for details"

"See our website or Facebook page about our home delivery, or direct to boot options."

"Fifty dollars of meat these days won't go far... that's probably enough for a Saturday barbeque."

"If you are a fan of value for money, you'll find a lot of value in this offer from Faber Brothers Butchers."

"Meet Patty she loves hamburgers, her husband Porter loves steaks, and their kids love cold cuts."

That took about 5 minutes to come up with those – let's look and see if any of them fulfil our requirements from the copy brief... a couple of those lines do, sort of – they will require some tweaking, let's put it roughly together as a script:

"Have you joined the fans of Faber Brothers Butchers? Patty, she loves fresh burgers; Porter, her husband, loves his Diane steaks; and the kids, love selected cold cuts. For the freshest cuts from nose to tail see "Faber Brothers Butchers dot com." We do home delivery, or direct to boot options... Get 2 meat packs for seventy dollars, 5 choices available! Fans of the freshest cuts, shop online at 'Faber Brothers Butchers dot com' or find us on Facebook".

That's not a bad start and is 79 words – a very good starting point for a 30 second commercial – not sure I like the start though – so let's do some tweaking...

"Have you joined the 'only' fans of Faber Brothers Butchers? Our fans include: Patty, she loves fresh burgers; Porter, he loves Diane steaks; and who doesn't love selected cold cuts? For the freshest cuts from nose to tail see "Faber Brothers Butchers dot com." Choose home delivery, direct to boot, or pop in store to find out more... This week get 2 meat packs for seventy dollars, 5 choices available! Fans of the freshest cuts, shop online at 'Faber Brothers Butchers dot com' or can find us on Facebook".

...wow that's now 89 words – but I kind of like where it is going – so now I am going to start using some of the tricks of the written word to put it together – and I will try to point out where the ideas come from as I put them down:

"Have you joined the 'only' fans of Faber Brothers Butchers? ((I like this and won't change it))
Our fan's ((I need another word for Fan – it's too close to the other word – so let's try...))
Our followers ((that's better)) include: Patty, who loves fresh burgers; Porter, loves Diane steaks; and who doesn't love selected cold cuts? ((Not sure about the cold-cuts bit, I will leave it in for now and come back to it)) For the freshest cuts from nose to tail ((I just checked with the butcher, they do, do nose to tail, and they definitely want that in there, but they are not including cold cuts in the meat pack, so let's rework that)) For the freshest cuts from nose to tail see "Faber Brothers Butchers dot com." ((Good)) Choose home delivery, direct to car boot, or pop in store to find out more... This week's special: get 2 meat packs for seventy dollars, 5 choices available! Fans of the freshest cuts, shop online at 'Faber Brothers Butchers dot com' or can find us on Facebook".

So that is now... 83 words – well that's not so good – I added some – so now it is time to trim...

"Have you joined the 'only' fans of Faber Brothers Butchers? Our followers include Patty, who loves fresh burgers; and Porter, loves Diane steaks; From nose to tail fresh cuts see "Faber Brothers Butchers dot com." Choose home delivery, direct to

car boot, or pop in store to find out more... This week's special: get 2 meat packs for seventy dollars, 5 choices available! Fans of the freshest cuts, shop online at 'Faber Brothers Butchers dot com', find us on Facebook".

That's 80 words... I am happy with that for now... I will leave it to sit for 10-15 minutes and come back to it... ((ON HOLD MUSIC PLAYS)) ...and I am back.

I have had a think about it and want to make a couple of changes...

"Have you joined the other 'only' fans of Faber Brothers Butchers? Like: Patty, who loves fresh burgers; and Keith who's over the moon over our drumsticks; For nose to tail fresh cuts see "Faber Brothers Butchers dot com." Choose home delivery, direct to car boot, or pop in store to find out more... Until Saturday, get 2 meat packs for seventy dollars, 5 choices available! Fans of ours shop online at 'Faber Brothers Butchers dot com', find us on Facebook".

That's still 80 words – it feels better... I wanted to change it from just having 2 meat mentions to one meat and one chicken, if I could have had one pork in there with a lamb one too, 2 out of 4 is okay, I guess. I also put in a daytime limit in there to motivate sales before then.

Let's do a final polish on it before I send it to the client and see what they think of it... making sure I have ticked off all the elements from the Copy Brief...

"Have you joined the other 'only' fans of Faber Brothers Butchers?
Like: Patty, who loves fresh burgers; and Keith who's over the moon over our drumsticks.
For nose to tail fresh cuts see "Faber Brothers Butchers dot com."
Choose home delivery, direct to car boot, or pop in store to find out more...
Until Saturday, get 2 meat packs for seventy dollars, 5 choices available!
Fans of ours, shop online at 'Faber Brothers Butchers dot com', find us on Facebook."

I next made a recording of this script and would then send the recording and the script to the client explaining the choices I had made, and that the demo recording attached was a rough cut only and it was to just give them an idea of how the commercial might sound. And asked if they wanted a male or female voice read? And a preference for music style for the music bed?

Making some slight tweaks if needed from the client, then getting them to sign off the final script – I would then send it off to be voiced and produced.

That then is a complete demo of writing a script for a butcher, based on a 4-point copy brief. There are many other ways I could have gone with this, from a serious point by point mentioning price, or a fully creative script – I would class this one as a semi-creative script.

Let's Write an Ad: Travel Agency

((1 June 2023))

I was just thinking to myself the other day... "Gee I haven't had a travel agency commercial for a while" and within twenty minutes a rep came in with a copy brief in their hands for a new travel agency... spooky???



Right so let's get started with the brief... it says "tired of the hustle and bustle of life? get away from it all with XYZ Travel"; "Call us to book an appointment on <NUMBER HERE>"; "Want to push the Ocean Cruises with <COMPANY NAME>"; "Do the best you can in 30 seconds, if you get stuck call the client, because I'm off on holidays!!!"

Riiiiigggh!

Well believe it or not that's enough detail to get started and I think I can hear an idea for a script in my head, so I'm not going to waste any time at all and just jump straight in.

"You're either here..." ((SFX: TRAFFIC JAM HORNS BLASTING/ENGINES)) "...or here..." ((SFX: OFFICE PHONES RINGING, MESSAGES PINGING, PEOPLE TALKING/SHOUTING)) "...or here..." ((SFX: BABY CRYING, KIDS SCREAMING)) "...that means that you are not... ((PAUSE)) ...here" ((SFX: RELAXING MUSIC, CHAMPAGNE CORKS POPPING, GENTLE LAUGHTER IN THE BACKGROUND AND SHIPS HORN OFF IN THE DISTANCE)) "...but you could be!" ((MUSIC UP))

Now that, if I have to say so myself is a great start, we don't say 'hustle and bustle' but get the image across quite well, I might just time that out and see how long that would run with just very basic sound effects... it's roughly 20 seconds... oooops! Too long.

So, let's cut back drop the "...or here..." ((SFX: OFFICE PHONES RINGING, MESSAGES PINGING, PEOPLE TALKING/SHOUTING)) that gives me back 5 seconds.

So now it runs a very rough 15 seconds. We might trim it more, but let's now look at the other details we MUST include. The business name and a contact number... oh joy! that's 3 words for the business name and 9 words for the contact phone number. Let me fix that as I call the client and explain why phone numbers don't work in radio ads and instead suggest we have a special landing page on their website.

Please hold... ((5 mins later)) ...Success!!! So now we must mention the business website name and "Slash radio". Excellent!

Now – the other details they wanted included...

“You're either here...” ((SFX: TRAFFIC JAM HORNS BLASTING/ENGINES)) “...or here...” ((SFX: BABY CRYING, KIDS SCREAMING)) “...that means that you are not... ((PAUSE)) ...here” ((SFX: RELAXING MUSIC, CHAMPAGNE CORKS POPPING, GENTLE LAUGHTER IN THE BACKGROUND AND SHIPS HORN OFF IN THE DISTANCE)) “...but you could be!” ((MUSIC UP))

...DETAILS TO ADD IN...

“See '<BUSINESS NAME HERE> slash radio' for details on this exclusive radio only offer.”

That last line is too long at 14 words – I will trim it now to:

“See '<BUSINESS NAME HERE> slash radio' for this exclusive offer”.

That's better, 10 words now.

Giving me an approximate 7 seconds to fill with the offer in the 30 sec script.
OUCH!

Okay, I will put those details in now and might have to edit some more.

So, the offer is: “10-day super cruise around the coast to Sydney, staying in absolute comfort, and access to all ships amenities, flying back in business class.”
...and that's almost 7 seconds – YAY!

Let me put all of that together in script format:

“You're either here...”

((SFX: TRAFFIC JAM HORNS BLASTING/ENGINES))

“...or here...”

((SFX: BABY CRYING, KIDS SCREAMING))

“...that means that you are not... ((PAUSE)) ...here.”

((SFX: RELAXING MUSIC, CHAMPAGNE CORKS POPPING, GENTLE LAUGHTER IN THE BACKGROUND AND SHIPS HORN OFF IN THE DISTANCE))

“...but you could be!”

((MUSIC UP))

“10-day super cruise around the coast to Sydney, staying in absolute comfort, and access to all ships amenities, flying back in business class.”

“See '<BUSINESS NAME HERE> slash radio' for this exclusive offer.”

Almost 53 words with around 8 seconds of sound effects. I might be able to squeeze in the business name and tag line at the end – but I don't like my chances – let's see how it times out:

“See '<BUSINESS NAME HERE> slash radio' for this exclusive offer. Dreams come true with <BUSINESS NAME>”

That's an extra 6 words, bringing us up to 59 + 8 seconds of sound effects – I don't know – it sounds like in 30 seconds it's going to be tight.

I'll just take another swing at the opener and check that I haven't missed anything, and see what I can cut out:

“You're either here...”

((SFX: TRAFFIC JAM HORNS BLASTING))

“...or here...”

((SFX: BABY CRYING, KIDS SCREAMING))

“...that means you're missing out on...”

((SFX: RELAXING MUSIC, CHAMPAGNE CORKS POPPING, GENTLE LAUGHTER, FAST POOL SPLASH, SHIPS HORN IN THE DISTANCE))

((SAME MUSIC NOW UP THEN UNDER))

“10-day super cruise on the <OCEAN CRUISE NAME> to Sydney, in absolute comfort, with all ships amenities access, and flying back in business class.”

“See ‘<BUSINESS NAME HERE> slash radio’ for this exclusive offer. Dreams come true with <BUSINESS NAME>”

That's 52 words and some minor sound effect changes to 7 seconds – bringing us in at 30 seconds!

Now let's just double check I have done everything in the Copy Brief.

“Tired of the hustle and bustle of life? get away from it all with XYZ Travel!”; CHECK
“Call us to book an appointment on <NUMBER HERE>”; CHANGED TO WEBSITE
“Want to push the Ocean Cruises with <COMPANY NAME>”; AND CHECK!

I will record a rough demo of the script read and send it to the client with the script, explaining that it needs sound effects added in (I ended up performing those SFX myself – they sounded bad, but gave the client a laugh, and drove the point home about the amount of time they take up).

Were there any changes? Yes. The client couldn't add in the extra RADIO page to their website – so they put it on the landing page. So that worked out well, giving us 2 extra words back! Fantastic!

And for the record, the client's web traffic went up by 300 hits the first day the campaign started on-air. They sold out their allotted cabins (1 whole deck on the cruise ship) within 5 days, and although the campaign was due to run 2 weeks, it only ran one – but the client instead used the remaining spots on a different ad to push another product – so we did that too.

Amazing – and the sales rep?
They came back with sunburn and a rash!

8. EDITING COPY

Now that you have written your scrip – let's have a close look at editing that copy down to something that is useable...

- We first look at editing and re-writes using tools from some book sources that I have found useful.
- Then we look at editing and the choices we make – using the Cadbury 'Bus' campaigns as a touch point.
- Next, we look at 10 editing tips for your next script.
- Finally, we look at how to edit your work ruthlessly.

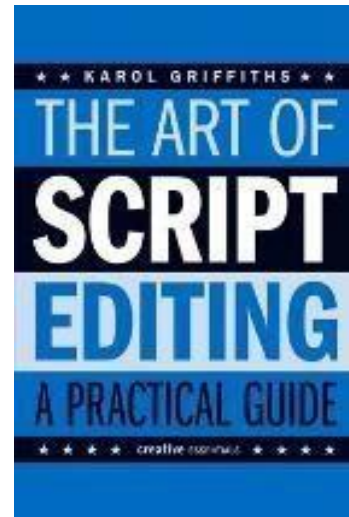


Editing and Re-Writes

((24 October 2022))

I have been recently reading Paul Chitlik's book "RE-Write: A step by step guide to strengthen structure, characters and drama in your screenplay" to try to get some ideas about different ways to re-write and edit my scripts... yes, I know - I am weird!

The book has some great ideas and insights.



Click on the covers to go to the Amazon Links

I then followed it up with Blake Snyder's "Save The Cat" and the classic Karol Griffiths "The Art of Script Editing: A Practical Guide for Script and Story Development"... because, you know - I am a sucker for punishment.

So, what I gleaned (or is that gleaned) from these books is the following 12 tips for writing a basic script - and I thought I would share them with you to aid in your script copywriting.

This is mainly for creative scripts - but can equally be used for all radio commercial scripts.

1. Write down everything to start with, just to get your ideas down on the page.
2. Give a rough edit to trim for size.
3. Leave the script for a bit, then come back to it.
4. Does it fall into any of the [Copywriting formulas](#) - does it need to? If so, fix the script.
5. Next check for typos, business/product names and contact points are correct, etc.
6. Now the hard work starts... Question every single line. Does it sell the story, does it need to be there?

7. Re-Write each line if needed.
8. Leave it again, then come back to it.
9. Speak your script out loud - into a recording device (PC or phone) and play it back... does it work?
10. Tweak the script again to fix any problems or issues, including any weird pronunciations that need to be noted.
11. Make a final check of the script, does it cover everything in the Copy Brief or what the client wants?
12. Finally... make sure it runs to time.

Sure, there are other steps I could have included - especially when writing a creative script - for example: Do you have an action or scene set, a conflict, and a resolution? - but I think that really is covered in tip 1 with getting all your ideas down on the page.

I am sure there are other steps that other copywriters have - and I would love to hear them.

For example, I know of one copywriter who only starts to write AFTER they know which voice talent they want to use - why? Because they know the cadence and voice range that the talent has, so they can write to their strengths.

Another Copywriter I know writes a generic script, a creative script and one in between the two, so the client is presented with 3 scripts to choose from - but they don't send them the scripts - they send a rough recorded mock-up of each script for the client to hear and choose from.

It's all in your processes, the steps that you take, and how much time you have up your sleeve.

COMMENTS:

"As always, insightful – I have ordered 'Save The Cat' and 'The Art of Script Editing', thanks for everything."

LisaMA

Editing, and the Choices We Make

((28 November 2022))

I will state it from the start that I am a BIG fan of Cadbury and their advertising, from the old Cherry Ripe ads to some of their latest efforts (and who doesn't love the Phil Collins 'In The Air Tonight' [APE](#) commercial?).



But some of their choices in their brilliant and award-winning British made, 'BUS' campaign, left me wondering about their editing choices, why did they do things this way, and not that.

First of all... If you haven't seen the full long version (it runs 1 minute) see it [HERE](#):



<https://mmo.aiircdn.com/202/60e510eccfcda.mp4>

The second cut-down version which we see on Australian TV is [HERE](#):



<https://mmo.aiircdn.com/202/60e51100d5fce.mp4>

It's a little old now (but it keeps on popping up because... it is that good and was even replaced by the 'baby sister coming home' commercial and others since then) but I still hear conversations around it on a regular basis, hence this post today.

This campaign by agency V.C.C.P. London is directed by Frédéric Planchon and assisted by a very talented production team who also worked on the MUMS BIRTHDAY campaign with the little girl buying a bar of chocolate for her mum while she waits at a bus stop, with her precious toys, and gets a unicorn for change.

The star of the BUS campaign is, by far, the little boy who achieves a lot in his screen time, with very few words - the commercial is supposed to inspire the viewer to be generous and act kindly to others... because small acts of kindness make a difference... fair enough.

But the questions it raises in the viewer make me think that the editing choices that were made were put there deliberately to spark conversations.

For example, two of the comments I have heard are:

1. Does the crying upset girl take a piece of the offered bar?
2. Is the mother punishing her son by just saying "...go on then, just one"? Because if that is the case then that cancels out any message of the milk of human kindness. *Is there a glass and a half in everyone... but not everyone?*

As commercial producers, when we write and produce material, we really do try to make people stop, think, and remember the commercial.

Even in radio we make conscious decisions about what was in the script, and what worked when the voice did their recording in the studio.

The editing choices we make in the scripting process dictate a lot of the production.

But sometimes during the production process, decisions are made to tweak, or improve what the original concept was.

For example, compare the 1-minute commercial to the 30 second version and the crucial time when the chocolate is offered, there is quite a difference in shots and pacing.

In radio that may be an extra word, a sentence, a sound effect, or a repeated line, or in some cases, a different feel for the music because the original doesn't match the read style we get. All of it tweaked to make it sound better and get the message across.

We may even, rarely, change where a line is presented to earlier, or after it is supposed to.

But 90% of the time, most commercials are exactly as the script is written.

Could the Cadbury commercial be improved by moving the shot of the crying girl (who is nodding/smiling near the end of the commercial) to just after she is offered the chocolate? Arguably yes. But, by not doing that, the nod from her is supposed to convey "thanks for offering, but no thank you".

Instead, it sparks conversation amongst viewers. And that's why the decision was made to cut the commercial that way.

As a Copywriter, I would have fought for the other edit. But with my Director hat on, the right decision has been made to drive a conversation after the commercial has gone to air, and to stick in people's minds... well done Cadbury and V.C.C.P.!

Producing a commercial is not so cut and dried as people might expect (I speak from almost 12 years of commercial TV and 13 years of commercial radio experience). Our editing choices when creating commercials are often agonized over, as I am sure this one would have been. That extra word, sound, or image, it

all comes together to tell a story, to spark interest and to drive customers to act. And that is why we do what we do, try to make customers act. To engage with the product and then purchase it.

Something this campaign does well.

Cheers, until next time... now, I need some chocolate!

BONUS FACT: The BUS campaign is actually a follow on from (or at least a nod to) a previous BUS commercial from Cadbury, showing the journey through life with a couple as they eat chocolate offered by one to the other, while riding a bus, and their relationship growing, breaking apart, coming together, on through to marriage, child birth, and old age, all in 30 seconds. Amazing editing and storytelling in that one - it's a pity I can't find a copy to show you. Plus, Cadbury have their JOY DOUBLE DECKER BUS campaigns yearly in the UK. Cadbury really do love their bus campaigns!

COMMENTS:

*"Is there anything you haven't done?
Seriously you must have a mountain of experience – why work in radio?
Also, surely editing is just following the rules of grammar?"*

MiaL

"I know Mia, I have done quite a few different jobs over the 40+ years in media – but I do LOVE radio above everything else.

I hope you can see from this, and other posts that I don't hold onto the rules of grammar – or at least try to shy away from them as much as I can because, grammatically speaking – because as humans, we don't speak grammatically correct.

I try to write like we speak – edit like I am a storyteller and produce like a Hollywood director.

I want to spark a listener's interest, share an experience, convince them of the action they should take, and make them do it.

If I must break a few rules to get there – I will.

Re-ordering my lines in an edit (or in production) can sometimes make things better (or worse) so I always try to experiment and aim to do the best I can for a client – and I hope that is something all copywriters should do too."

EarIP

10 Editing Tips for Your Next Script

((13 March 2023))

Here are 10 very simple editing tips for you to use when you are next writing a radio commercial script.

I would normally read the Copy Brief, write some notes, do some research, then start writing - sometimes writing 3-4 scripts - just to get the basic ideas down - then I start to edit - then I decide which one or two I like then I edit them some more.



These are my 10 tips for editing along the way...

- 1. Keep it concise:** Radio commercials typically have a limited amount of time, so make sure your script is concise and to the point. Cut out any unnecessary details or information.
- 2. Focus on benefits:** Highlight the benefits of your product or service, rather than just the features. This will help to capture the attention of your target audience.
- 3. Use active voice:** Use active voice to make your script more engaging and dynamic.
- 4. Use simple language:** Keep your language simple and easy to understand. Avoid jargon or technical terms that might confuse your audience.
- 5. Avoid repetition:** Avoid repeating the same information repeatedly. This can be boring for your audience and may cause them to tune out.
- 6. Use vivid language:** Use descriptive and vivid language to create a strong mental image in the mind of your audience.
- 7. Use sound effects:** Incorporate sound effects into your script to create a more immersive listening experience.
- 8. Focus on one key message:** Focus on one key message or call to action in your script. This will help to ensure that your message is clear and memorable.
- 9. Read it out loud:** Read your script out loud to make sure that it flows well and sounds natural.
- 10. Edit ruthlessly:** Be prepared to edit and revise your script multiple times. Cut out anything that doesn't add value or support your message.

By following these editing tips, you can create a compelling and effective radio

commercial scripts that resonate with your target audience and drives results for your client's business.

COMMENTS:

"Great list, and tips – but tell me... how do you edit ruthlessly?"

ToniC

"You will have to wait until next week Toni"

Earl.P.

"How many times do you edit Earl? Do you only do it once? Twice?"

LisaMA

"Hi Lisa – I tend to edit as many times as I need to do so. Put it this way – the bare minimum I have ever done is 3 times, sometimes I have edited a script up to 20-30 times. I just keep on going until it works – or I start again if I am not happy with the way it is turning out."

EarlP

How to Edit RUTHLESSLY

((20 March 2023))

After last week's post on editing scripts went out - the first email back was from a reader who asked how do I edit a script ruthlessly? - I thought that I had better address that this week:



To edit a script ruthlessly, follow these steps:

- 1. Take a Break:** After you've written the first draft of your script, step away from it for a while. Take a break for 5 minutes - write something else or go for a coffee and come back to it with fresh eyes.
- 2. Identify the Key Message:** Determine that you have addressed the main message or the call to action of your script. Make sure that every sentence supports this message. If it doesn't... cut it, which leads us to...
- 3. Cut Unnecessary Information:** Eliminate any information that doesn't directly support your key message. Be ruthless and cut out anything that doesn't add value. We all have our favourite lines, but if it doesn't help - it's got to go.
- 4. Simplify your Language:** Use simple, straightforward language that's easy for your audience to understand. Flowery language won't work on an AC station, but on a classical - it will. Choose your words to match your audience.
- 5. Eliminate Repetition:** Avoid repeating information or ideas. This can be boring for your audience and may cause them to tune out. But it can work if it is subtle - mentioning the same thing more than 3 times - is painful, not funny and irritating for listeners.
- 6. Read it Out Loud:** Read your script out loud to make sure that it sounds natural and flows well. Make note of any awkward phrasing or areas that need improvement.
- 7. Get Feedback:** If you are truly stuck with what needs to be cut - Have someone else read your script and provide feedback. Ask for honest opinions and be open to making changes based on their feedback.
- 8. Revise, Refine and Polish:** Use the feedback you receive to make revisions and refine your script. Keep editing until you've created a tight, focused script that delivers your message effectively.

By editing your script ruthlessly, you can create a powerful and effective message that resonates with your target audience and drives results for your clients, bringing them back to radio again and again.

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9. BOOKSHELF REVIEWS

On the site we did many a review for magazines, books, movies, TV series and more.

In this section I have cherry-picked the best book reviews for you to fill your bookshelf with some great training aids.

And the ones to avoid adding to your bookshelf.

- Is 'Sell Your Story in a Single Sentence' useful for radio copywriters?
- Why 'Writing Copy for Dummies' should be avoided.
- Why 'Words that Sell' and 'More Words That Sell' are must buys!
- This is why 'Copywriting Is' should be on your bookshelf!
- Avoid 'Teach Yourself Successful Copywriting in A Week'
- Get 'Ben Settle's Copywriter's Crib Sheet', you won't regret it.
- '100 Great Copywriting Ideas' is another Andy Maslen must buy.
- If your team is into brainstorming, then consider 'Caffeine for the Creative Team'.
- 'Copywriting 101' by Neil Hedley is a hard-to-find gem.
- The single most important book you should own and read repeatedly is 'The 7 Secrets of Creative Radio Advertising'.



Remember: I have not received any payment/inducement or any sponsorship deal for any of these reviews they are 100% independent.

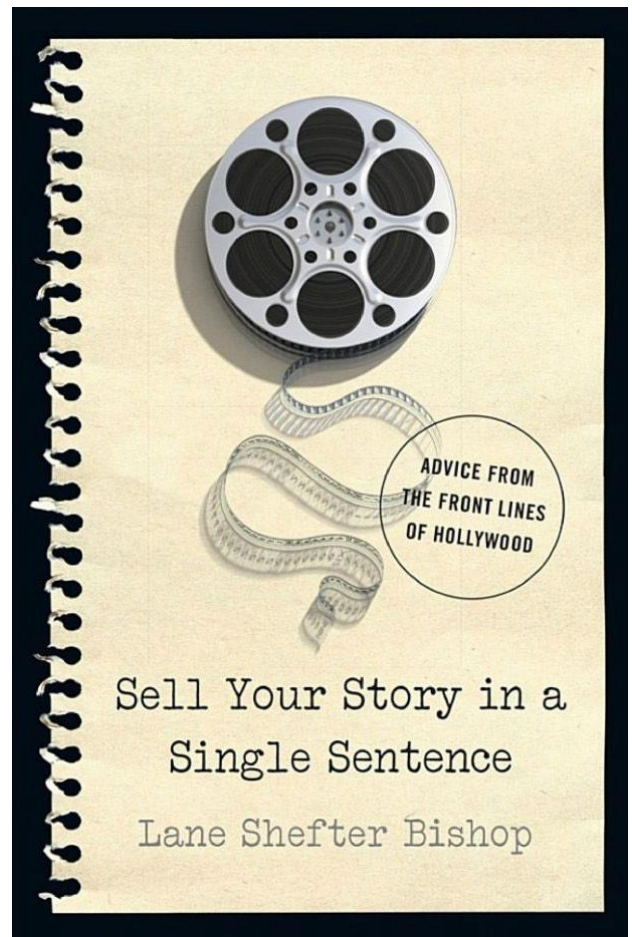
'Sell Your Story in a Single Sentence' – Perfect for Radio Copywriters?

((21 April 2023))

"Sell Your Story in a Single Sentence" is by Lane Shefter Bishop and it contains some interesting tid-bits of information that every radio copywriter could use – and I am not kidding about that at all.

This book shows you how to condense down your work to a sentence – and yes – before the grammar and spelling pedantic readers of this post jump all over me – I am using the American spelling as that is what is used throughout the book.

It is pitched at people who work in film and in publishing – and yet I found it highly entertaining and relevant to our industry.



How? It has valuable advice for any serious writer, especially on breaking your book/film/story down into a single sentence pitch.

With practical advice on creating a log line and editing that makes a lot of very logical sense.

For example – if you are a writer of a book, and are trying to pitch it to a publisher – or someone you know – how would you talk about it?

The process of simplifying the message down to basic salient points, AND, still being able to make sense of the story – is something that is useful in radio ads – where sometimes, in a creative script – we forgo a part of the story in order to focus in on the action – and this book can help you do it in a way that will still keep your story and action in a format that is useable.

In its 224 pages with more than twenty short chapters there are many workbooks with some sample loglines from the simple to the complex (and the complex ones were where I took a lot of inspiration from) and you can work on these to create your own.

I took inspiration from this and simplified a long 60 second script down to a 30 second one – then simplified it down even more to 20 seconds and was able to still tell the story in a relevant way and fit the details in for the business.

I thought to myself that it couldn't be that simple – so I grabbed a different 60 sec script and tried it again... guess what – it was!

This was especially helpful when the 60 sec ad was running in rotation with the 30 sec version – so listeners would hear both and still be able to follow the action and story.

The editing process was the final part, but using Lane's techniques to discover the core of the action you want to tell, the protagonist and using drama to tell your story in a complete way – was for me the perfect fit.

I can highly recommend "Sell Your Story in a Single Sentence" is by Lane Sheffer Bishop for any copywriter who is doing creative work and wants to hone their script craft some more.

If you want to know more before you part with your hard earned cash to buy the book – here is an interesting podcast interview with Lane Bishop on "The Heart Of Show Business" podcast with Alexia Melocchi. AND here is LANE's WEBSITE where you can see some of the projects she has worked on.

By the way: I have to say though that I did read this straight after reading "Save The Cat" by Blake Snyder – so maybe my brain was in the right place for this one to make a lot of sense to me.

'Writing Copy for Dummies' by Jonathan Kranz

((24 February 2023))

I was given this as a joke by a friend for my birthday a couple of weeks ago and although I saw the funny side in it – I wondered if it did have any insights inside its bright yellow cover.

I have purchased a few of the 'Dummies' books over the years and found them well researched and well balanced with factual and useful information – I was not holding out great hopes though when I looked through the contents page though...

Direct mail, website copy, and hold on – there's a section on radio copy in the "Writing High-Powered Ads For Your Business" chapter!

You could have knocked me over with a feather!

So, I quickly turned to it and read through it, okay...

Agency or Station produced – fair call and comments from Jonathan.

In "Composing your radio spot's copy", I must disagree with some of the things that he says, but I understand where he is coming from and if you are a business owner (who the book is really pitched at – not someone in the industry who is already a Copywriter), then sure – it's a great place to start with.

Yes, yes, yes with 'Use short words and short sentences', "Read your work aloud" and "Time yourself".

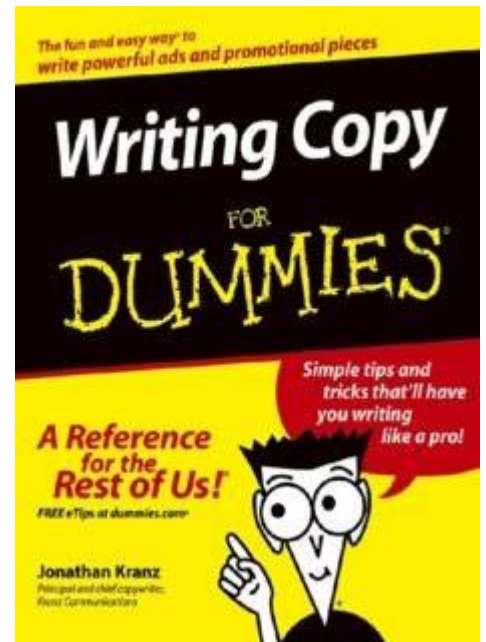
That's some good, very basic advice and something that I have even said to clients at one time or another.

And then... wait?

That's it – 5 pages for radio?

I went through the book and the word radio is said some 53 times – most of those in passing when talking generally about radio AND TV, or radio AND Newspaper or Radio and... blah, blah, blah.

Okay, to be fair – this 'Dummies' book is very general and trying to cover everything from web copy to press releases, and while Jonathan Kranz is a



repeated guest on NPR's 'All Things Considered' I feel that radio got the short end of the bargain (but TV didn't even get 5 pages, so I suppose I can't complain too much).

It is pitched at people who own a business or run an organization that needs to get some coverage and copy 'out there'.

It is not pitched at someone who works in the media industry and avoids drilling down on a lot of the technical aspects and the legal issues that may be part of what they are trying to do.

So yes, if you are a business owner and want some very basic ideas about how to write copy, any copy from postcards to brochures, web copy to radio ads – then this book is a good basic start – but I advise you to read it, then talk to someone in those industries who knows EXACTLY what you can do.

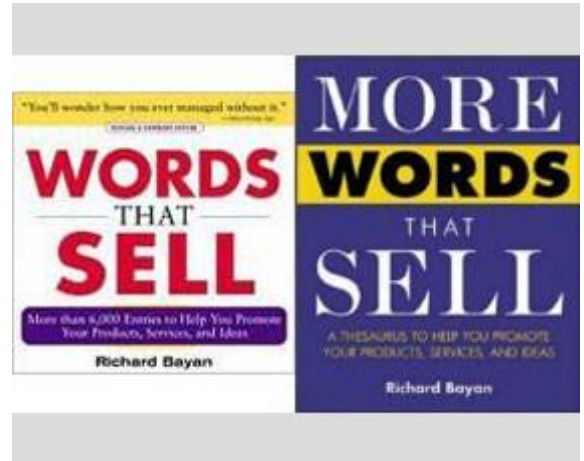
This will give you a good foundation to start building your skills up from.

But avoid it if you work in any media outlet – unless you want to know what clients could already have been told, if they have bothered to do any research before, they reach out to you.

'WORDS THAT SELL' & 'MORE WORDS THAT SELL'

((25 November 2022))

I raided my bookshelf for some inspiration this morning and thought – *wait a second* – I've never covered these books in a post – so let's correct that today – 2 of my absolute favourite books for copywriting are both by Richard Bayan and I can honestly say that there is not a week that goes by where I don't make use of either of these books.



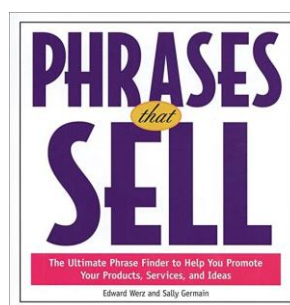
Richard Bayan's **WORDS THAT SELL** & **MORE WORDS THAT SELL** are by no means the only reference material I use as you will see at the end of this post – but they are the ones that I use the most – closely followed by Edward Werz & Sally Germain's **PHRASES THAT SELL**.

WORDS THAT SELL really has improved my writing skills with lists of powerful, persuasive words and phrases – plus it includes a very basic crash course in copywriting techniques, and I often recommend this one book to Real Estate Agents who have trouble writing copy for their listings, and people new to the industry.

From attention grabbing words, lines, and phrases to descriptions (which I love), but my favourite parts of **WORDS THAT SELL** is the **SPECIAL STRATEGIES**, **CLINCHERS** and **SEALING THE DEAL** – there are so many lines that I have used, written around, used to jump off from and be inspired by that I can seriously say that the price of this book alone is worth these three sections.

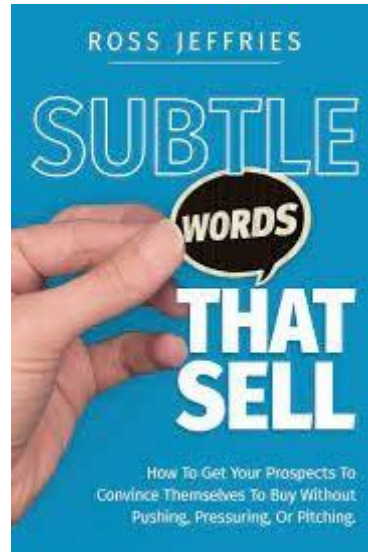
MORE WORDS THAT SELL is a teeny bit different in that the categories of the lists really do 'add muscle' to your copy, especially for niche markets and products. Take for example the choices in **UPSCALE WORDS**, and **MAGIC RESPONSE WORDS** – Even though it is different – it is as equally valuable and takes up the prime position with **WORDS THAT SELL** on my shelf right next to my computer monitor.

As I said at the start, these 2 books are by far my most used in an average week – but I do have others that I use too – but not as much...



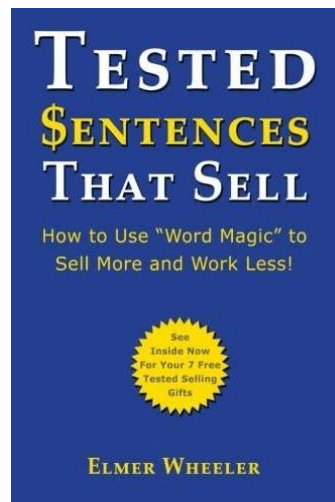
Edward Werz & Sally Germain's **PHRASES THAT SELL**
Click the image for the **AMAZON** link

SUBTLE WORDS THAT SELL by Ross Jeffries:



Click the image for the AMAZON link

And finally, Elmer Wheelers TESTED SENTENCES THAT SELL:



Click the image for the AMAZON link

If I was starting out and had limited money to spend – I would choose WORDS THAT SELL, and MORE WORDS THAT SELL as being the 2 single most important books in my collection – get them today and start improving your writing straight away!

'COPYWRITING IS...' By Andrew Boulton

((4 November 2022))

I had a couple of people on Linked-In recommend Andrew Boulton's book "Copywriting Is..." and I thought I would secure a copy myself and have a read through – I am SOOOO glad I did.

The canary-yellow cover fairly shouts '30-or-so thoughts on thinking like a copywriter,' from the number one best seller – and I can see why.



It is a fun book – not a book that is full of itself – nor takes itself too seriously and does a great job of inspiring you to do your job and do it well – but to have fun along the way – AND THAT IS IMPORTANT!

It is an amusing book – full of eclectic copywriting witticisms and observations. And for me, the best part is that it is also one of the most quotable books I've ever read. And unlike some books I have read lately – the layout is a joy to read.

For example, when you turn the page to discover a white double page with a hold up happening in a 1920s style photo and the text **WAITING** (*Or, slow down dear, it's a commercial*) – I hear myself as it is something I do and say to my wife when we are listening to the radio in the car – I listen to the commercials, she listens to the songs.

And Andrews advice on the next page "*Go read a job advert, any job advert, for a copywriting role. (Don't read too many at once though, that stuff is just bad for you)*" I couldn't agree more.

I love the fact the Andrew's chapters are short – to the point, have great stories behind them and tell you and sell you on this job that we have.

More of a philosophical take on copywriting than a how-to-manual – there are gems that are hidden, ones that smack you in the face, and others that dawn on you an hour after reading them – I LOVED IT!

Do yourself a massive favour, clear a space on your bookshelf, and then order a copy – [HERE](#) is the AMAZON link if you need it.

After you have brought a copy of this book and devoured every page – then I suggest you head over to Andrew's blog [HERE](#) and check out some of his somewhat sporadic posts – they are in the same vein and totally enjoyable.

And that's it – catch you next time – and remember that I have received no payment, nor endorsement from Andrew or his publisher for this review – I did genuinely enjoy it and can highly recommend it.

'Teach Yourself Successful Copywriting in a Week'

((21 October 2022))

A co-worker gave me a copy of this book (I think as a joke – I hope) and for someone in radio – honestly it was not worth the cover price they paid for it.

Review rating (if I ever gave one) would be 2 STARS!

I know now that the co-worker was trying to be funny, and I get that... but this book is one of the many things that truly get my goat and get me very angry, especially books that claim to cover everything about copywriting.

The thing is that they never, EVER, consider commercial radio copywriting. Okay, very, very rarely do they consider our industry – and I want to know why?

A search through the entire book uncovers the word 'radio' 3 times: 2 other times, in the same table talking about media types and benefits.

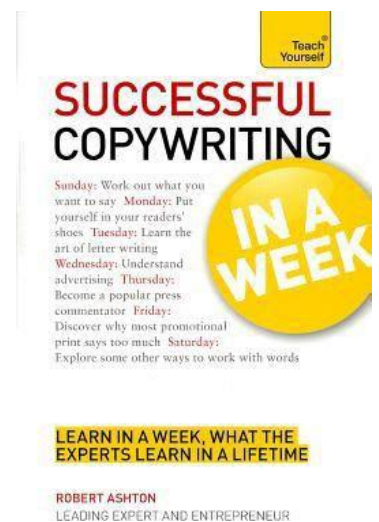
And once in the summary of one of the chapters where it isn't even mentioning writing a commercial, but press or news releases... *"This means that if you are quick, you can have your comment on the morning's big story in the journalist's inbox before he arrives at work. This speed of response benefits both you, as the promoter, and the paper, for it enables printed media to, in some ways, keep up with more spontaneous media such as radio."* ARGH!!!!

Okay, I am going to take a breather, and a moment to consider – maybe this book has some good ideas in it still, even if not directly related to radio copywriting.

I know that the author Robert Ashton has written some very good books (20 so far), some of which I own and can highly recommend ('Sales for Non-Salespeople' is very good, as is 'Life At 50 for Men').

But (if I must) back to the book – it sets out to teach you the basics built around a week, starting on Sunday through to a Saturday – and while it is obvious that this book is targeted at someone who does not work in the industry as it seems to be more based on creating copy content and press releases than copywriting for commercial purposes. The fact is that he gives this much away on page 5 of the book with "effective business writing captures attention, arouses interest and prompts action."

So, he is not writing advertising or copywriting, but writing copy for business promotional purposes.



As it says on the cover: **SUNDAY:** Work out what you want to say. **MONDAY:** Put yourself in your readers shoes. **TUESDAY:** Learn the art of letter writing. **WEDNESDAY:** Understand Advertising. **THURSDAY:** Become a popular press commentator. **FRIDAY:** Discover why most promotional print says too much. **SATURDAY:** Explore some other ways to work with words.

Look, I will be honest – I got so angry reading this that I didn't make it past chapter 2, and skim read the rest of the book looking for anything that would redeem it in my eyes – but I found nothing that couldn't be written down in a couple of pages for a radio copywriter to consume and possibly use.

I mean, apart from the basics that every copywriter that has existed knows to focus on your end results, know your intended audience, and have a call to action.

In fact, the best part of the book (and the part that I did find myself reading) was the FACT CHECK questions at the end of every chapter – some of which were spot on and where great questions to ask yourself when writing. This is why in my fictional star rating it is 2 stars not 1!

Look, I honestly can't recommend this book for a radio copywriter to read and skill themselves up in – but if you have never, ever written a press release or web copy – then this might help you.

This brings me to my final whinge: *Why is it that there is so few books for people in the radio industry to help to upskill themselves and write copy?*

This is one of the major reasons why I started this website and started to put up these posts.

But maybe this is just my own narrow view of the industry and books available to us.

Ben Settle's 'Copywriter's Crib Sheet'

((7 October 2022))

If you are writing a lot of call to action and direct response ads – then Ben Settle's "Copywriter's Crib Sheet" will fast become one of your go-to books on your bookshelf.

The claims on the back of the book made me stop in the book shop and look, I turned it over and read the cover, and without even opening it – I bought it – now that's a powerful statement about good cover design, and short sharp copy. The words on the inside were just as good.

Each chapter is to the point – there is no fluff, no long-winded explanations, and only tried and tested examples and ideas.

Yes... Ben does talk a LOT about long copy, sales letters and he does spend some time pitching his own site to join his mailing list – but there are gems here too – diamonds in his text that could have been written specifically for radio copywriting.

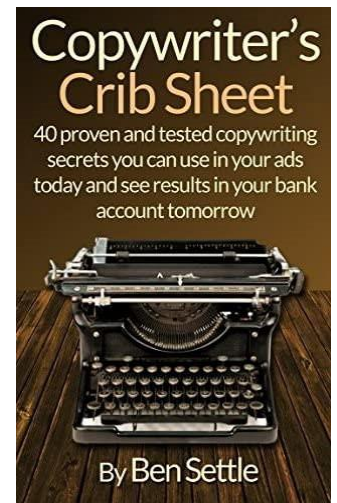
For example: **Chapter 5 – How to use negativity to multiply your sales?**

In this chapter he talks about using the lack of knowledge in ad copy such as "10 tips to make your car run smoothly during winter" and change it to a more dramatic "The 10 biggest car mistakes people make in winter".

I used this myself to write an ad that had an announcer and an average Joe character in it- the announcer ran through a short list of mistakes that people make in X industry – and then the Average Joe responded with the clients name – the response, according to the client was great – he had many people coming in and saying that they didn't know that the client did X, Y or Z? Even though they had always done it.

I'm not going to give too much away – but if you can get your hands on Ben's book, it serves as a great guide and even blueprint for direct call to action style ads – directing people to act, to search to buy.

I was lucky to pick up my copy when it was on sale – but you should seriously grab a copy when you can. You won't regret it.



'100 Great Copywriting Ideas' by Andy Maslen

((30 September 2022))



I will be upfront about this – I have several of Andy's books and I do like them a lot (from WRITE TO SELL, to PERSUASIVE COPYWRITING, and WRITE COPY, MAKE MONEY) so this review might be a teeny bit biased, and I make no apologies for that.

This book is for copywriters who work in every industry, and specifically Andy doesn't really give you the exact medium in many of the ideas that they are meant for – so they can be bent to your own use, which is useful.

I have picked out four from the hundred that are my personal favourites, but this list could have easily been my top 10... they are, in no order of preference:

- 1. Is Your Copy FAB?**
- 2. Another Headline Idea: True or False**
- 3. I Object**
- 4. Tap Into People's Aspirations**

- 1. Is Your Copy FAB?** (That's "Is your copy highlighting the 'Features, Advantages and Benefits'?)
This is a prospect's self-interest or F.A.B. (Thunderbirds references aside):
Features are what things are.
Advantages are how those features make a product better than a competitor.
Benefits answer the customer's questions, "What's in it for me?"

I like what Andy says about this, "If you can hear your customers saying, 'So what?' you're not talking benefits."

In radio we are often told that this trio in any Ad copy will help to sell – personally I think that you should focus on the BENEFITS only – but I like how Andy breaks this down in the book – and if you are new to copy – it's worth buying just for this ONE idea alone.

- 2. Another Headline Idea: True or False** (A question that you ask your listeners)
We all know that writing that first line of your copy along with writing a headline is tough. And although not directly referencing writing radio copy – Andy acknowledges that "Writing good headlines is tougher".

So, following on from my train of thought, writing the first line of your radio ad should be, and is, tougher than what you might think to write and grab a listener's attention. AND writing one that is unexpected – now THAT is, and can be, a real challenge.

Andy's solution – ask a true or false question – and when I am truly stuck – I do this in my script copy.

Simply ask a question and then give the potential listener the benefits in the rest of the ad.

For example, for a weight loss product, “You can lose weight without giving up cream cakes, true or false?” Then, in the rest of your script copy, follow up with your reasoning for the answer you want.

AND, If the first line is all that a listener hears, then they are still likely to remember the answer that you want them to – so should you do it? Yes, you should.

3. **I Object** (or how to make them act)

Because listeners can be skeptical by nature, you have to either raise—and overcome—objections that prevent them from taking action or sell them on the benefits alone. The simplest in a short 30 second ad is to address one objection alone, rather than do a shopping list of benefits – which you won't have time to cover.

So, Andy suggests that while objections may vary from industry to industry and from product to service. There are three objections, though, that are more common than others, which Maslen addresses in his book.

First, there's “*It's too expensive*” If a listener says this, you need to demonstrate the value of your product by showing how much they will save or make, compared to the cost.

Second, there's “*I need to talk to someone else.*” If heard, Maslen urges you to show the prospect what they could lose by hanging back and waiting, so share testimonials to show people using the product or service to win them over.

Third, and this one is not useful for radio copy but could be a great starting point for an ad if done right – there's “*I'm not sure I really need this.*” If you hear this objection, it's for one reason: you haven't sold well enough. Maybe your benefits aren't strong enough. Maybe it's the wrong product for the wrong prospect. Whatever the reason, update and improve your copy until it's no longer a concern.

4. Finally, there's **Tap into People's Aspirations**

Andy gives the example from the UK that HM Revenue and Customers (HMRC) at the end of each financial year, taxpayers received a letter reminding them to

return their declarations on time. Yet, despite penalties for late returns, few returned their declarations on time.

To reduce delays, the HMRC contacted the authors of the book (interesting that a government department would do this but read on) after hearing about an experiment that helped hotels reduce towel usages. The results were remarkable. When the authors added an additional sentence in the letter referring to the large number of people living in the same postcode paid their taxes on time, tax returns increased by 12 percent.

To quote the author, “The more similar the person giving [a] testimonial is to the new target audience, the more persuasive the message becomes.”

You can apply a similar technique when writing ad copy to sell luxury goods. Andy suggests focusing more on who is already benefiting from your product, and what they are saying or doing because of using that product or service.

Conclusion:

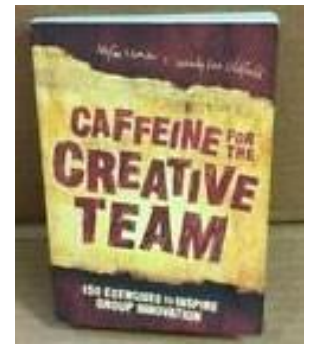
As you can see with these 4 ideas alone in a book of 100 – they can all be bent to radio if you think about twisting them a little. Sometimes the ideas are enough to not only start your copy, but also build a whole campaign around.

Buy a copy and have it on your desk – it's a very useful book, amongst the many that Andy Maslen has written.

'CAFFEINE FOR THE CREATIVE TEAM'

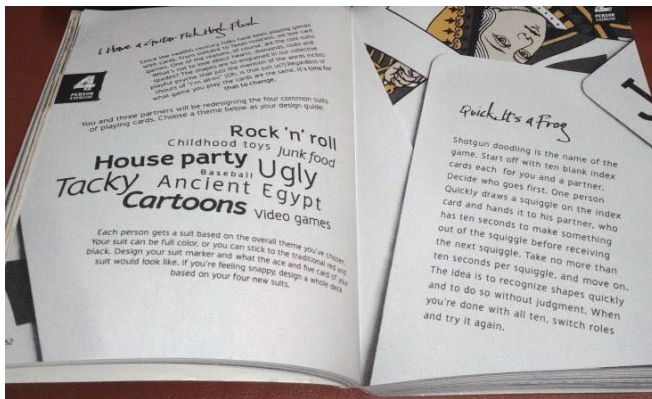
((2 September 2022))

We have been brainstorming A-LOT around the office lately, and I thought I would seek some help in a good book on the subject – I found that this book “CAFFEINE FOR THE CREATIVE TEAM” by Stefan Mumaw and Wendy Lee Oldfield – was some help – but only to a point, and it depends which version you get your hands on, and on how creative your group is...



There are some great creativity boosters in this book (150 exercises to inspire group innovation – according to the cover) but it has been ruined by the “clever” layout and typography which at times makes the book unreadable for some people and in their word's “...it's a bit of a mess!”

Some people in our group had trouble with type that was off-centered and curved around images in the book.



I first saw this book at local library, then a bookstore, then online in the kindle store – by this point I thought that the universe was trying to tell me something, so I ended up going back to the bookstore and buying a copy (I did also get the Kindle version thinking that the text clarity issue might be solved – but, alas, no).

Yes, it does contain many interesting, quirky and team inspiring exercise's, ranging from simply drawing in pair to creating videos in groups of four – that type of thing. There are individual exercises too – but not many – it's all about teamwork.

Usually, each exercise has a main goal; for example, create something purposeful out of a turkey carcass – I KNOW!

Each exercise is clearly labelled for the appropriately sized group: two people, three people or four or more, and they allow for creative thinking to flow and help teams perform better together.

Because everyone in your group will think differently, doing the exercises will indeed lead to fresh insights, which can be inspiring.

There are also interviews with some of the brightest creative leaders in the industry who have first-hand experience with brainstorming in teams. However, I found that these interviews were sometimes more interesting than the exercises they suggest.

We used the book as a group for promotion idea generating, sales idea generating, and I even used it for copywriting idea generation – so we did give it a good shake at doing what it said.

Caffeine for the Creative Team offers a solution to those dry, boring, unproductive brainstorm sessions you might be used to in radio. BUT: Have someone go through the exercise first and possibly re-write it so it can be read by everyone – honestly the 'design' is so heavy it almost renders the book unreadable by the less creative types in a group.

But, as far as the book goes to inspire and brainstorm – *it works!*

What I didn't know at the time was that this book is a companion one to "Caffeine for the Creative Mind", which may explain why I felt a bit confused at times reading it.

Overall – a good book if you have never run a brainstorming session – I cannot recommend the Kindle version though – text issues, graphic splits, and other problems with it just drove me crazy – the book version was great, but like I said earlier – have someone go through the exercise first – and possibly create a cheat sheet for it for those who can't absorb design heavy text.

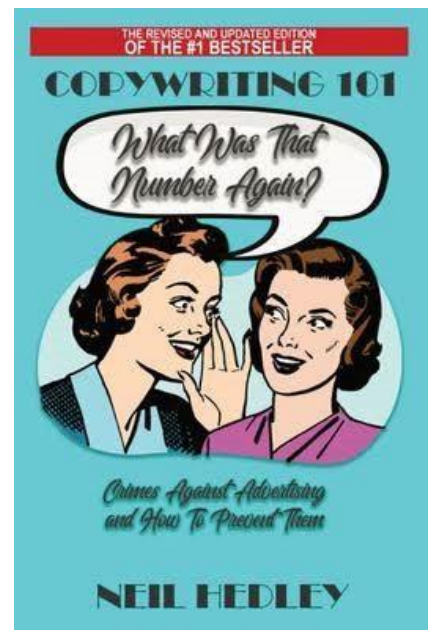
'Copywriting 101' by Neil Hedley

((8 July 2022))

Neil Hedley's book (to give its full title) "**Copywriting 101 What Was That Number Again – Crimes against Advertising and How to Prevent Them**" is a great short read.

Brief and to the point, Neil hits the nail on the head about so many areas of radio advertising that it is hard to just pick a few to talk about here.

So, I will instead point out the 2 bits that I rushed out to share with the sales team at the station I work at...



A great book, that started as a 150-page business card and became a manifesto of sorts!

1. Direct Response ads (pages 56 to 60) – often referred to as radio coupons – “mention this ad and get X for a discount” – Neil's take on it had me running to our sales team and saying to them – you have GOT to read this and have this response ready to roll when a client wants to do it! They did and it paid off!
2. Chapter 17 – the whole chapter is “How to Write Funny Commercials” and the content of the chapter “DON'T” – why did I tell my sales team about this – because it seems that every client want's a ‘funny ad’. But what is funny to them, won't be funny to everyone else, and when you have heard that ad 3 times in a day – then it is no longer funny. So, it's simple – don't do it – unless you are a comedian, can hit the middle of the road comedy easily, and are prepared for a LOT of copy changes (every day!)

My recommendation – get yourself a copy of Neil's book, have a read through and besides agreeing with him on a lot of the topics, you may discover a solution or two along the way to scripts, clients and even sales issues.

“Copywriting 101 What Was That Number Again – Crimes against Advertising and How to Prevent Them” by Neil Hedley – is a recommended read!

'The 7 Secrets of Creative Radio Advertising'

((17 June 2022))

I reviewed the Tony Hertz audio book version of this book on Audible. I have to say it was a great decision as the ad's that Tony talks about get played in their original form – and they sound amazing – I did eventually get a hard-copy of the book – and it is just as good!



Tony's history is advertising and radio, and you can tell he is passionate about the subject. The best thing for me was that the audiobook was narrated by Tony, and you could really tell the parts he was passionately focused on.

The book came out in 2013, and yet it feels like it was just written yesterday, because the ideas, problems and solutions are all still highly relevant today.

His "7 Secrets of Creative Radio Advertising" has changed the way I write someone of my ads – so much so that while listening to it I started to tweak my style, and some of the results and responses from clients and listeners were incredible.

But then, some clients just don't get good radio – they want the same style ad that you will hear anywhere in the world – and Tony agrees with me on that. *BORING!*

The "7 Secrets" – in broadest terms are (and I won't give away too much because you should purchase this book if you can – or spend a credit on audible for a great listen):

- 1. Find a feeling.**
- 2. Begin with a picture.**
- 3. Think about the person.**
- 4. One ad one message.**
- 5. Stand in a different place.**
- 6. Characters not voices.**
- 7. Produce with passion.**

My review on Audible pretty much sums up exactly how I felt about this book: *Brilliant! As a radio copywriter I highly recommend this to all other copywriters! Amazing! If I could give more stars I would. 5 Stars! I would have given it 7! Out of 5 it was that good!*

Here is a bonus, just for you: I enjoyed Tony's book so much I have created my own A4-1 page cheat sheet (It follows here after this article).

And finally, we have a link to Tony's website – [HERE](#) – enjoy.

CHEAT SHEET: THE 7 SECRETS OF CREATIVE RADIO ADVERTISING

By Tony Hertz

1. **FIND A FEELING** – Set out to find an emotion, show the audience that you get them and connect with them.
2. **BEGIN WITH A PICTURE** – Visualize your radio script – show the richness of the scene and use space/gaps to build a picture.
3. **THINK ABOUT THE PERSON** – People are interested in themselves, understand who you are talking to, and connect with them.
4. **ONE AD = ONE MESSAGE** – Obviously!
5. **STAND IN A DIFFERENT PLACE** – Make your ad sound different by the choices that you make.
6. **CHARACTERS NOT VOICES** – Use characters to convey the message, not cliché voice overs.
7. **PRODUCE WITH PASSION** – Craft and create production that stand out.



The
7 Secrets
of
Creative
Radio Advertising
Tony Hertz

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10. A FREEBIE

Yes – you got this book for free as a download from my site – but would you like another book for free?

Of course, you would.

Read on and download your copy of **31 Classic Copywriting Formulas** the free e-book – that's right it's totally free! No catches!



Free E-Book: 31 Classic Copywriting Formulas

((12 September 2022))

I first released a version of this e-book in 2015 in an online forum (it's so long ago now that I have forgotten the name of it), I then updated it in 2017 for users on the now defunct Radio Daddy Forum, and updated it early this year for a someone I was mentoring at the time, who now works full time as a Radio Copywriter (well done Nic).

So, I thought, why should you miss out?

You can download a copy for yourself, right now, for free - that's right, it's a **TOTALLY FREE 30+ page e-book in pdf format**, and you can get it on the [FREE TOOLS & RESOURCES](#) page - where it will always be free.

Why?

Because not every bit of knowledge we have should be hidden behind a paywall - at least in my opinion.

The book not only contains the 31 classic copywriting formulas, but also examples of each one in practice.

The classic **AIDA** (Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action) is on page 14.

There are **Open Loops, Parody, The Readers Digest Blueprint, Star Chain and Hook** Plus... more - 31 of them in total.

I plan to keep on updating this document over the years and when I do, I will put it up here - at no cost at all to you - it's my guarantee that I will never, ever charge you for this e-book.

Seriously.

Enjoy.

Earl Pilkington



A CAN OF COPYWRITERS WORMS

Contains posts on the topic of
COPYWRITING FOR RADIO
from the [www.radiocopywriters](http://www.radiocopywriters.com) site
published on-line in 2022-2023.

This free e-book also contains
bonus articles not posted on-line,
including comments and feedback.

For more free e-books go to:
www.radiocopywriters.com



Earl Pilkington is a radio
copywriter, author, and
artist with over 40 years'
traditional media
experience.

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for more e-books.