



But is it any good? How to spot good marketing copy

What are the hallmarks of good marketing copy? What distinguishes truly effective copy from the run-of-the-mill stuff?

At first glance, it isn't always easy to tell. A deft turn of phrase and a winning style can hide a whole host of problems: spelling errors, grammatical inconsistencies and waffle! Fortunately for all of us - it's not a subjective issue. There are clear, objective, easily identifiable ways for you to spot the phonies.

And here's the biggest culprit: the copywriter who writes well, but doesn't meet your brief.

Plenty of people can write good copy, but not all of them can write good *marketing* copy. And that's what you're paying for after all. So just remember, if it doesn't meet your objectives, it's bad copy.

That's why you can't rely on online portfolios to find a good copywriter. Yes, they'll give you a sense of a writer's flexibility, (and they might highlight any spelling or grammatical problems) – but they won't tell you how well they've met their clients' objectives. If you want to find that out, you really need to put them to the test...

First, check out their website; then get them on the phone. Make sure you find a copywriter who asks all the right questions – because good copy gives all the right answers.

Here's a simple way to test that out. Think like a customer – take a piece of marketing material and ask yourself if it addresses *your* questions. Does it give you enough information to keep you reading, but stop short of telling you too much? Does it tell you how it'll make your life better / easier / more enjoyable? If it does, that's good copy!

Do make sure your copywriter takes care of the basics too. If they're a **professional** writer then they'll have professional standards when it comes to spelling and punctuation. They'll be consistent in their use of US or UK English. And they'll keep to the point...

Be wary of sales letters that exceed a page, or websites that are crammed so full of key words they read like an industry lexicon. Good copy is persuasive; gets to the point quickly and delivers a compelling 'call to action'.

Hopefully you'll be able to build up a long standing relationship with your copywriter; in which case it'll get easier to assess their effectiveness. You can subject every piece of work to the acid test – does it work for your customers? They're the ultimate arbiters of quality after all.