



Inspiring thoughts

If we knew where inspiration came from, we'd bottle and sell it. But it's a flighty thing – here one minute, gone the next.

Catching the muse is tough. So it's just as well that there are ways to kick-start our creative processes. Otherwise nobody would ever get anything done in between sitting around and waiting for inspiration to strike. We'll run through some ideas with you in a bit.

First though, let's put this in perspective. Writing good marketing copy is not like writing a novel. While getting inspired to write is similarly vital, we have a lot of advantages over a novelist. We know exactly what our ultimate aims are, and who our target audience is; even what they want to hear. Novelists can't always rely on any of those facts. And some would argue that knowing any of those things wouldn't help them anyway.

Success is judged quite differently too. Marketing copy has to generate sales, not positive reviews. How many people read our work is not an acceptable marker of success; how many people act on it *is*.

But it'll be almost impossible to get started unless you've got a clear sense of where you're going. Have you got a clear proposition for your readers? Do you have all the facts to support it? What sort of a response do you want? Having all of that information to hand will make it almost impossible *not* to get something onto the page – even if it's just a plan of action.

Unsurprisingly getting started with too many possibilities for what to write is often just as terrifying as not knowing where you're going. It's a bit like a logic diagram. If you pursue intro option a, you then have to decide how that branches off into middle section b, c or d – and so on. So where you've got too many possibilities jostling for attention, you need to learn to streamline your information. To identify the key facts and discard the extraneous stuff.

Wake the muse

It'd be nice if you could capitalise on inspiration whenever it strikes, but given how that's often in the middle of the night, that's not always possible. However, if you do find it easier to write as soon as you get up, or as soon as you get to work, then set that time aside. Put off the emails and all the other distractions and write for as long as you can.

Also, it's surprising how, if you get into the habit of avoiding times when you never ever feel creative, you can train your brain into getting more inspired when you do put time aside for writing. The more your brain gets used to working in a regimented way at certain times and not others, the more willingly it will play along.



Last resorts

For all those times when nothing seems to be working, you're better off stopping altogether. Trying to persevere with copy that isn't coming too easily is counter-productive. While you're waiting for your breakthrough, you'll just be storing up even more anxiety about getting this thing written. Leave it, but let it sit in the back of your mind – pen and paper on standby so you can scribble down some thoughts as they come to you. And they will. Often it's only when you resign yourself to temporarily giving up that the inspiration really kicks in.

Lastly, a word of warning.... Good ideas don't always come out fully formed. So the writing process is as much about polishing as it is about having the good idea in the first place. Without wishing to end on a downbeat note, that good idea you were so worried about? That was just the beginning. Now the really hard work begins...