

Copy Corner

Quick tips, tools and strategies to make your copywriting rock!

One of the world's greatest living copywriters – Gary Bencivenga – has said that if you can improve yourself by just 1% per week, you'll quickly become an expert in your field.

And what better skill to master than copywriting. If you can create juicy, compelling, must-read, action-generating articles, emails, capture pages, and sales letters, it doesn't matter what you're selling, what company you're representing, or what the economy does.

Welcome to Copy Corner -- a new feature of What's Working Now -- designed to help light the fire under your butt that's going to help you improve your copywriting by that 1% a month. Each month we'll feature one (or more) aspects of great copywriting to help get you moving...one step after another...so that by the end of this year you won't even recognize yourself.

So let's get started!

Make 2012 the Year You Demolish “Writer's Block” -- Once and for All!

I don't know what education system you grew up in. Homeschool...public school...private school...parochial school...doesn't really matter. What does matter is that most so called “education” axe-murders effective writing in its crib.

We grow up learning that you've got to be “educated” to write. That you've got to know your pronouns from your adverbs. That you shouldn't dangle your participles or end a sentence with a preposition (whatever that means). That your writing should be formal, proper, and somehow more “elevated” than the way you talk naturally.

We innocently turned in our essays, term papers, and homework...only to have them come back bruised and bloody with red ink and “corrections.”

Hell, that would intimidate anybody into never writing again!

Many of us were so scarred by the encounter with our 5th grade English teacher that our writing muscles have withered. There's no circulation. There's “toxic buildup.” And we just “know” our writing sucks. So we don't.

But here's the thing. Writing is just communication. That's all. If you can talk, you can write. All you really need to do is slay the demon 5th grade English teacher that still lives in your head -- and write.

Write every day – no matter what!

You've got to get your withered writing muscle moving again. You've got to lubricate the joints. You've got to unclog the neural pathways between your brain and the page so the communication can flow again. The **only way that's going to happen is with exercise.**

One of the most powerful and effective exercises you'll ever do for yourself is to **write three pages first thing every morning** – before your coffee, before you get the kids up, before your “inner English teacher” wakes up. Julia Cameron, author of *The Artists Way*, calls this exercise “Morning Pages.”

The purpose of “Morning Pages” is just to get the muscle moving. Nobody is going to ever see your Morning Pages. You're not going to share what you've written or subject it to criticism. You don't even have to read the pages yourself!

All you need is a notebook or journal, and a pen. You want to get your nervous system used to making the connection between your brain, your heart, and your hand on the page. While you can certainly do your Morning Pages on the computer, it's more “cerebral” – more like “regular work.” You don't want to reinforce the idea that writing is “work.”

The only thing to do is write. As soon as you wake up in the morning (doesn't really matter what time). Every day. The process helps you capture deep thoughts, feelings, ideas, and perceptions while they're still swirling close to the surface. You're writing before your conscious mind has even had a chance to wake up and interfere.

What should you write? You're not trying to impress anybody (including yourself). Write whatever's there. The object of the game is to just keep your hand moving on the page. If you get stuck, write that. If you're bored, write that. If you have no clue what to write about, write that. If the neighbor's dogs are barking, write that. If you're distracted, write that. Just keep your hand moving and write until you've filled up three pages. Then stop, put the notebook away, and get on with your day.

What writing every day will teach you that you won't learn any other way

Just like recovering from any other injury, you might experience some pain and discomfort as the scar tissue breaks down and the “circulation” in your writing muscle improves. You'll start looking for excuses to put off the exercise (write about that!). You'll “forget” to write (then pick up the notebook and write about that!). But if you're committed to the process of Morning Pages, over time you'll start to experience some interesting changes in the process as your “writing muscle” begins to recover.

You'll discover subconscious psychological “patterns” of thoughts and feelings that have been “running you” behind the scenes. You'll start to notice yourself complaining over and over again about the same kinds of things. You'll start to recognize hopes, wants, and drives you'd long forgotten you have. Ideas and insights will start to pop up. And your creativity will start expressing itself as you unblock the flow.

You'll be in more intimate contact with your own truth...your own unique “voice” as a writer.

And as you train yourself in the habit of writing every day (about whatever's there), you'll find your writer's block dissolving, almost like magic.

How writing every day makes you a better copywriter

Using a process like Morning Pages can have a profound impact on your ability to write good, persuasive copy. Why? Because the process helps you connect very intimately with -- and express -- your own authenticity.

Your writing will become a more natural expression of who you are. More real. Less formal, less "stunted," and much less awkward. That's the only kind of writing that even stands a chance of being persuasive anyway. And besides...if you don't know a semicolon from an apostrophe, that's what copy editors are for!

Today you and your business are standing on the brink of the vast uncharted landscape that is 2012. When you return to this place a year from now, will you be able to see progress in your writing? Let us know how you're doing...and how we can help you reach your goal of improving your copywriting by 1% every month.