

All About ROI (formerly Catalog Success)

Ways to Use Copy to Build Customer Relationships

By Denise McGill

Does your marketing copy, no matter the channel, talk *to* or *at* your targeted customer base? Are you writing blindly to a customer base you know very little about?

Before you begin your next product description, direct mail piece or email promotion, know who you're writing to — and strike up a conversation. Get to know your prospective audience intimately enough to write to its specific desires, concerns, fears and needs. If you don't take the time to research your audience, you could be left wondering why your promotion fell flat.

A Little Data Goes a Long Way

Whether you're in-house, off-site or a freelance copywriter, understanding the customer profile of the company you're writing for is crucial. Most companies have this information on hand and are more than happy to share it with you.

Every so often, ask for updates to the profile to see if there are changes or new trends evolving. The more you know about customers, and write to their needs, the more likely your promotion will make it through the door (or inbox) of their homes and businesses. And you start to build that coveted relationship.

Here are five things you'll find on a typical customer profile:

1. Age group: What age group are you catering to? Typically age is stated like a statistic — 0 to 20, 21 to 35, 36 to 45, 46 to 60-plus. But I prefer to take it a step further (and put a personal touch to numbers):

- children;
- teens;
- young, single adults;
- couples with small children;
- couples with older children;
- empty nesters;
- retirees; and
- a mix of the above.

Each group has its own special dynamics. Couples with small children have different needs and concerns than retirees, who may very well be ready to hit the

road in their new RVs after years of dedication to jobs and family.

2. Gender: Which gender typically purchases most of the product you're selling – male, female or both? Gender affects the tone in your writing. Be sure to appeal to both men and women if purchasing power is shared equally between the genders.

3. Marital status: Single, married, divorced, widowed? Take into consideration the similarities and the very different needs and wants of consumers.

4. Education and income level: Will the consumer be predisposed to buying quality, reasonably priced goods or higher-end products?

5. Homeowners: Homeowners love to remodel, accessorize, furnish, decorate, landscape, entertain and more. Look for ways your product can enhance their lifestyles.

This list is a start to gaining a good idea of who your ideal customer is. You know the general age group, income, education level and gender of this targeted group. Now, start to form a visual of just who this consumer is. To broaden this basic knowledge, check out the list below to see if you can come up with even more insight:

* **Average order value:** How much are customers spending? Is this amount meeting company goals? Can discounts be offered for purchases of more than one of the same product?

* **Average number of items purchased:** Do customers have a tendency to buy single items, or are they multibuyers? If they're single-item purchasers, can you suggest complementary items to go with that product? Is your copy engaging enough to keep consumers interested in other products sold by the company? Are you promoting the attributes of the company itself by providing testimonials?

* **Interests/hobbies/lifestyle:** Most people want to share with others their interests and hobbies, whether a love for animals, a health-conscious lifestyle or the fact that they're avid anglers, to name just a few. This information alone provides a tremendous amount of insight into what matters most to your consumer group.

When you have the necessary background information on your consumer group – i.e., putting a face to the data – your writing becomes as easy and natural as talking with a neighbor or friend.

By building rapport, you keep consumers coming back to your product line because you've acknowledged their needs and desires. Long-standing relationships are built over time, so be sure to stay in touch with your customers.

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