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## Guerrilla Headlines

Headlines are used in ads, commercials, telemarketing calls, direct mail letters, websites, sales presentations and more. Can you write great ones?

Every guerrilla destined for marketing victories knows very well that if you have ten hours to spend creating a marketing weapon, you should spend nine of them creating the headline. It's the first impression you make, often the only impression, and the rest of your marketing weapon will live or die by the quality of that headline.

Don't think that just because you don't run print ads your headline is not important. Another way of thinking about a headline is to think of it as the first thing you say to prospects. Wise marketing people have said that you should picture yourself knocking on someone's door which is then opened by a very busy person. You can say one thing before that person slams the door in your face or opens it widely and invites you in. You have the opportunity to tell your whole story in one line or to say something so intriguing that the prospect will want to hear more.

You'll have this opportunity in print ads to be sure, but also with first lines of TV spots and radio commercials, with opening lines of letters and postcards, with first statements made by sales reps or telemarketers, in brochures and on websites, in yellow pages ads and sales videos, in classified ads and infomercials, at trade shows and catalogs. People will decide to read or hear your message or to ignore you completely. It all depends on your headline. If your headline is a loser, you have three strikes against you when you step up to the plate. Lotsa luck!

All guerrillas on earth are delighted that technology now makes marketing easier than ever, that websites enable them to market with even more fervor, that new software lets them create dynamite marketing materials right in their own offices -- but they never lose sight of the fundamentals and headlines are the cornerstone. It's the headline that dictates your positioning in your prospects' minds and it's the headline that will attract either attention or apathy. Nothing you say to a prospect is more important.

In print, you have one line to get that attention. On radio or TV, you have three seconds, and you have those same three seconds with any sales presentations or telemarketing calls. Win attention and interest during that brief period or you won't win it later. There will be no later. Now that I've alerted you as to the importance of headlines, here are 20 hints to help you create winning ones:

1. Know that your headline must either convey an idea or intrigue the reader or listener into wanting to learn more.
2. Speak directly to the reader or listener, one at a time, even if 20 million people will be exposed to your message.
3. Write your headline in newsy style.
4. Use words that have the feeling of an important announcement.
5. Test headlines that start with the word "announcing."

6. Test headlines that use the word "new."
7. Put a date in your headline.
8. Feature your price, if you're proud of it, in your headline.
9. Feature your very easy payment plan.
10. Announce a free offer and use the word "free."
11. Offer information of value right in your headline.
12. Start to tell a fascinating story; guerrillas know that marketing really is the truth made fascinating.
13. Begin your headline with the words, "How to."
14. Begin your headline with "why," "which," "you," "this" or "advice."
15. Use a testimonial style headline.
16. Offer the reader a test.
17. Use a huge one-word headline.
18. Warn the reader not to delay buying.
19. Address your headline to a specific person; every day there are specific individuals who want exactly what you are offering.
20. Set your headline in the largest type on the page and start your verbal presentations right with the headline.

If the reader or listener isn't stopped by your headline, they'll move onto something else that does stop them. After all, they're looking to be stopped by something and if it's not your message it will be someone else's. Headlines and opening lines are your initial bonds to your prospects. And never forget for one second that what you say is the manner in which you say it. Bend over backwards to be believed. Boring and indirect headlines sabotage thoughtful copy and brilliant graphics every day of the year, including Christmas.

Stupendous offers are not accepted by a ready public because the headline or opening line fell down on the job. There are far more terrible headlines than great ones in every edition of every newspaper and magazines. In such an atmosphere, guerrillas thrive. They love when others run headlines that are cutesie pie and off the point. They are enthralled when competitors run ads that draw attention away from the prime offering because a copywriter wanted to make a pun or get a laugh.

But you can be sure their own headlines always get noticed, generate readership, attract responses, and result in profits. Although a company cannot achieve greatness solely based upon their headlines and opening lines, without solid first impressions, its growth will be seriously impeded. Your job may be to create headlines or to judge them. It is one of your most important tasks.

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