

# The 7 Deadly Sins of Web Copy

By

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Your website can be the hardest working salesperson you could ever hire—persuading prospects to sign-up for your newsletter, buy now, or contact you for an appointment 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

*(For the sake of simplicity, I'm just going to talk about buying and sales, but I mean all these other actions as well.)*

Or it can be merely an online brochure that costs a lot more than it makes.

And it's the words on the page—or “copy” as they're often called in marketing—that can make all the difference.

**Copy is what actually MAKES the sale.** No one buys based on pretty pictures or a flashy design. They buy because the words on the page (or screen) convince them that you offer what they want or need.

And even if you have to close the sale by phone, your website can have them revved up and ready to say “yes” before they even pick up the phone...

...unless you've unknowingly committed one of the **7 deadly sins of web copy**.

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## *THE 1<sup>ST</sup> DEADLY SIN*

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# LOSING THEM AT HELLO

With less than 10 seconds to convince a visitor to NOT hit the back button, your headline may be the only thing they read. But too many fail to give them a compelling reason to keep reading.

Businesses often slap up some vague headline...or worse...something “clever” to provoke curiosity. No one has time for clever.

Heck, with all the multi-tasking we do these days putting our IQ on par with someone who smokes marijuana...no one may even “get” clever.

The one sure-fire way to grab their attention is to answer that timeless question, **“What’s in it for me?”**

*“The best headlines are those that appeal to the reader’s self-interest, headlines that offer the reader something he wants.”*  
-- John Caples  
*Author of the copywriting classic Tested Advertising Methods*

Otherwise, there’s no point spending their time reading your web page.

## The Long and Short of It

There's actually a lot of debate about headline length. (As if the reader is sitting there counting words, "Oops you're one word over buster--I can't read this!")

But the issue isn't really length. It's how compelling the headline is.

*Let me ask you this...*

Would you rather have a long headline that grabs 'em by the collar and reels them into your page...

OR

A short one that makes them shrug their shoulders and say "Who cares"?

Your **MESSAGE** should determine the length of the headline—not the other way around.

Decide the point you want to make and then say it as concisely as possible. When you can't take out any more words without changing the meaning then you've got the right length.

Still, headlines can be tricky to write. So the next time you're stumped, flip through a magazine (some copywriters swear by the *National Enquirer* for headline ideas) or stick to a tried-and-true template such as...

"How to...."

OR

"# of Ways/Steps/Secrets"

And finally, a few **DON'Ts** for formatting your headlines:

- DON'T use ALL CAPS—Use Title Case for Your Headline to Make It Easier to Read
- DON'T use *italics*, which are also harder to read on a computer screen
- DON'T use more than one “!” (unless you’re selling to teenage girls!!!!)

*Once you’ve managed to grab their attention, you then need to worry about...*

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## ***THE 2<sup>ND</sup> DEADLY SIN***

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# **BEING A COPY NARCISSIST**

I hate to say this...but what YOU want doesn't matter.

When you're writing anything to market your business, it's should be all about THEM.

But far too many business sites reek of copy narcissism. Because it's all about what the company wants to say and how the company wants to say it.

Boring.

They'll definitely jump ship first chance they get.

But even worse, it shows you don't really care about what your prospects want and what they're looking for.

And while you may identify with your clients in many ways, the truth is...

## You are NOT your ideal client.

In fact, there are at least two HUGE differences—

1. You know how to solve their problem AND
2. You know that you'll provide a top-quality solution

So put aside what you want to say or think you should say and **get inside your customers head....**

- ✓ What problems do they need to solve?
- ✓ How will solving this ultimately improve their life or business?
- ✓ What are the most important deciding factors?
- ✓ What questions or objections would they have?
- ✓ What would really motivate them to buy right now?

The best and easiest way to find the answers is to ask your clients and your prospects.

### **Want a quick test to see how narcissistic your site is?**

Count the number of times you see “I,” “we” or the company’s name on a page. Then do a tally for “you.” If the first number is bigger than the second, your site needs an attitude adjustment.

**Quick Tip:**

*There's a cool online tool called the [We-We Calculator](#) that will count the words for you and give you a score.*

Of course, focusing on your prospect is about a lot more than just counting pronouns. The copy needs to address their pains...their problems...their desires.

Because **the more in tune your copy is** with your audience...

... the more likely they are to **know, like, trust—and ultimately—buy from you.**

*But copy narcissism can express itself in another way...*

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## ***THE 3<sup>RD</sup> DEADLY SIN***

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# **SPEAKING THE WRONG LANGUAGE**

I don't mean English or Spanish (although having *that* kind of wrong language would certainly be bad too). I'm talking about using words and phrases your prospects wouldn't use. In fact, research shows...

*The number one mistake companies large and small make is....**assuming their customers care about what they care about and "speak the same language" they do.***

**And if you're NOT making the effort to speak *their* language instead of *yours*, you are definitely throwing away sales.**

For three reasons...

1. **A Confused Mind Always Says No.** If they have to stop and think about what you're trying to say, they're gone. Either something will ring or ding to lure them away or just decide to come back to it "later." And how often do you think later comes?
2. **You Kill Your Know, Like and Trust (The KLT factor).** It is genetically programmed into our DNA to like and feel more comfortable with people who are similar to us. And research shows we're much more likely to buy from them. In fact a recent study revealed that **68% of people said they'd be more likely to trust a company if the message is coming from "a person like me."**
3. **You Lose a Competitive Edge.** The more a client understands how your service will benefit them, the more they will value and be willing to pay for it. And the more you stand out from other companies—who don't seem to "get" them. But you throw all that away by using language that's not natural to them.

Essentially, what you need to do is **translate** what you want to say about your products and services into the words your prospect is looking to hear—the **words they would use themselves** as well as **the benefits and results that would motivate them to buy**.

Because they won't "do the math" themselves.

This is such a critical but overlooked topic I've written a guide that identifies 5 sales-killing types of "Greek" speak we unknowingly use that drives the reader away—and how to make sure you use language that will resonate with your prospects.

So she "gets" what you're offering and why she needs it. And since she feels like you understand her, it's **much easier for her to trust YOU** to offer the right solution.

For more information, check out [7 Steps to Creating Copy that Speaks Your Prospect's Language So You Land More Clients and More Sales](#).

*Which leads us to...*

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## *THE 4<sup>TH</sup> DEADLY SIN*

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# SELLING TO MR. SPOCK

When you're writing to sell, logical reasoning has its place—as a supporting actor. But you can't load up a page with a bunch of facts and figures and think that will do the job. Unless you're selling to Mr. Spock on *Star Trek*, you need the other part of the other part of the equation—**emotion**.

*That's because—*

## EVERY Buying Decision We Make Has Some Type of Emotion Wrapped Up In It

Ever bought a brand at the grocery store just because your mom used to buy it?

But even marketers who know better sometimes fall back on logic-based copy because it's how we were trained to write in school. Plus, it takes more time and effort to think about the emotional impact and convey it effectively.

Yet doing so makes a HUGE difference in the response you get.

And yes, this is true for **EVERY** market—whether you're marketing to consumers or Fortune 50 businesses. Because in the end...

**It's a human, not a company that makes the buying decision.**

So if you don't take the time to weave emotions into your copy—you won't engage your prospect enough to make the sale.

Guaranteed.

***Quick Tip:***

*Stories and testimonials are two other ways to powerfully tap into your reader's emotions*

*A lack of emotion isn't the only danger though. You also have to be careful to avoid...*

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## **THE 5<sup>TH</sup> DEADLY SIN**

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### **YOU'RE UNBELIEVABLE (NOT IN A GOOD WAY)**

P.T. Barnum said there's a sucker born every minute, but I promise they're not visiting your website.

They're too busy transferring millions of dollars for the "desperate" Nigerian guy who emailed them.

In fact, **most website visitors today are flat out skeptical**. Many have been burned before by offers that turned out to be too good to be true or didn't come close to the hype used to sell them.

And the skepticism has only gotten worse in this crazy economy.

Remember—the vast majority of people who visit your website don't know you from Adam...or Eve.

So it doesn't matter how nice your site looks or how great your offer is—**the biggest fear a prospect has is that you won't deliver what you promise and they'll have wasted their money.**

So you'd better make credibility a top priority.

Yet every day I visit sites that have **wishy-washy testimonials**, from sketchy sounding people like “J. Doe, California” ...

...web sites and sales pages that provide **little information** about the person behind the business (you don't want them having to click to an About Us page if they're busy reading about your service....

...and **NO guarantees** to minimize the buyer's risk...

And I would bet \$1,000 they're not getting nearly as many clients or sales as they could.

To build credibility, you **MUST** give website visitors:

- ✓ A sense of who you are
- ✓ Evidence that you can do what you say
- ✓ Reasonable assurance they can get their money back if they're disappointed

Or they'll keep looking for someone who will.

*Of course, it's also important that you don't commit...*

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## *THE 6<sup>TH</sup> DEADLY SIN*

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# MAKING AN OFFER THEY *CAN* REFUSE

The best copy in the world can't overcome a weak offer. It just puts you are on a one-way train to procrastination land. Good luck getting those prospects to come back.

Unfortunately, there are several all-too-common ways you can end up making a RESISTIBLE instead of an IRRESISTIBLE offer.

### 1. Making Too Many Offers

We're the land of the free and the brave—and a million and one cereals in the breakfast aisle.

We're supposed to love choice—the more the better, right?

Wrong.

### **One page = One call to action**

Researchers did a study where people were allowed to sample and buy gourmet jam. When they had 24 flavors to choose from, only 3% bought jam--but when there were just six flavor choices 30% bought.

Why? The more options you offer, the more customers get overwhelmed trying to figure out which is the best one. The result—they decide to choose later and end up choosing none.

Also, it helps to tell people EXACTLY what to do to take you up on your offer.

Pretend you're leaving a note for a fourth grader. (As much multi-tasking as we do these days, we probably have the attention span of one anyway!) So *never* assume what they need to do is obvious.

## 2. Talking Price Instead of Value

You see it's not really about price. (*Which is a good thing unless you're eager to race Wal-Mart and Elance to the no-profit bottom.*)

It's about what your product or service is **ULTIMATELY** worth to them—including both the physical and emotional value.

- ✓ **Physical value** is tangible—such as money they can make or save, or time and effort they can save.
- ✓ The **emotional value** is the state of mind that they'll achieve from using your product or service. As I mentioned before—people buy on emotion and justify with logic. So **DON'T** forget the emotion when it comes time to make your offer.

But far too many websites are paying the price of focusing on price.

Think about the tire commercials you see on TV. They aren't talking about treads—they're zooming in on the security and peace of mind you'll get from having your family riding around on their trusted tires.

The further down you can dig to find out why they're REALLY buying and what they're REALLY hoping to get, the more compelling your copy will be.

**Quick Tip:**

*Always tell them WHY you're giving them this incredible deal so they aren't worried that there will be "a catch."*

### 3. No Urgency to Buy NOW

There's always something else they can do with that money. And some will take all the time they can to make that decision.

But once a prospect leaves your web page, who knows if they'll remember where it is again. Or if they'll run across a competitor's site 5 minutes from now.

**So they need to know your deal may not be available again.** Because no one likes to miss out.

So you need to give them some element of **believable scarcity**—such as a limited time offer or only a certain number of seats—to propel them past the procrastination.

*But there's one last sin—and it has nothing to do with the words you choose...*

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## ***THE 7<sup>TH</sup> DEADLY SIN***

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### **Committing CRIMES AGAINST COPY DESIGN**

Confusion and distraction are the fastest way to repel sales and clients—especially when you're reading on a computer screen. So this copy sin is all about the formatting.

- ✓ **Cluttered pages** chock full of multiple columns, distracting graphics and links trying to lure visitors away from your sales message.
- ✓ **Half-page headers** that bury key items the visitor is looking for below “the fold.”(The fold is essentially where you have to start scrolling to see what's below.)
- ✓ **Long, dense blocks of copy** that just look like they'll take forever and a day to read—and will be get the gist of while scanning (which is what most website visitors do.)
- ✓ **Hard to read text**, because it's on a dark background or even reversed (white font on dark background) will slow readers down—and not in a good way.

- ✓ **An overabundance of accents.** Like Peter calling wolf too many times, too many bold, colored fonts and other emphasizing formats says everything's important...and nothing's important.
- ✓ **Hidden contact information.** Most people don't have the patience to play hide-and-seek.

Doing the reverse of what's listed above is the best way to start fixing your copy crimes.

## Wrapping It Up

In short, your website has the potential to be a money-maker instead of a money-drainer.

The potential to sell FOR you...whether they can buy your products and services through an online shopping cart or need to contact you for an appointment.

*(You may not know this, but most people won't bother to contact you until they're pretty sure they're going to hire you. So if your website doesn't convince them, they probably won't call or email at all.)*

IF it isn't suffering from any of the 7 Deadly Sins...

1. **Losing Them at Hello**
2. **Being a Copy Narcissist**
3. **Speaking the Wrong Language**
4. **Selling to Mr. Spock**

5. **You're Unbelievable (& Not in a Good Way)**
6. **Making Them an Offer They CAN Refuse**
7. **Committing Crimes Against Copy Design**

So rid your website of these sales-killing copy sins today!

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*And now that you know what NOT to do...*

## Discover How to Maximize YOUR Website's Client-Attracting, Sales-Boosting Potential

- ✓ Get more mileage from a sales page or sales letter
- ✓ Increase the number of visitors who become subscribers
- ✓ Create a more effective home page
- ✓ Ensure your copy will get the results you're looking for

It's not easy to convince people to part with their money—especially when they can't "see" what they're buying...and especially NOW.

But that's exactly why your website needs to sweep visitors off their feet. It's often the first introduction someone has to you...and the first place they look when they want to know more about you. So it's more important than ever to have a website that...

- **Grabs a prospect's attention** and keep it amid a constant barrage of distractions
- **Presents a compelling case** for *you* AND your offer (because people buy from people and not companies)
- **And persuades them to take the next step NOW...** instead of putting it off until later

Because later hardly ever comes.

The good news is now it's easier and more affordable than ever to make sure your copy is working hard to land you more clients and more sales...

**“My opt-ins doubled and conversion rate went up 55%”**

*I had been studying several experts who teach how to write web copy, and had developed a landing page I thought was pretty good. But then I hired Tracy to re-write the copy, and the results blew me away!*

***The number of people opting-in to my list doubled, and my conversion rate went up 55%...with the same traffic!*** She has spent years studying all the nuances and details of good copy, and clearly knows what she's doing. I highly recommend her copy services and am getting ready to have her do more.

*--Jackie Kelm*  
Author of *The Joy of Appreciative Living*  
[www.appreciativeliving.com](http://www.appreciativeliving.com)

With a [Compelling Copy Critique](#), I'll review and give you detailed suggestions for making your copy more powerful and effective within three to five business days. I'll tell you exactly how to...

- ✓ **Make sure your headline magnetically draws them in and your opening keeps them reading**
- ✓ Connect with your prospect and build the all-important know, like and trust factor— so they're MORE likely to buy (and become loyal customers)

- ✓ **Subtly engage your prospect on an emotional level...and avoid accidentally triggering the one emotion you *never* want them to feel**
- ✓ Take your benefits to the next level so they more powerfully motivate your readers
- ✓ **Tweak your language into your prospects' language and point out any spots that could confuse them or lose them**
- ✓ Make your offer more irresistible and strengthen your call to action
- ✓ **Emphasize key points and make it easier and faster to read**
- ✓ Add in any missing elements (it's easy to forget one—even when you've read your copy a million times!) and fix typos

Plus, I'll...

- ✓ **Explain *why* I'm making certain changes, giving you valuable tips for future copy**
- ✓ Share marketing ideas to maximize your results

Good, compelling copy is ESSENTIAL to maximizing the results of your marketing.

But I know you may not want to invest in all-new copy right now. Or maybe you just can't wait a few weeks to have it all written for you from scratch. With a [Compelling Copy Critique](#) you can save several weeks and save more than **70%** from having me write the piece for you.

Even if you took **just one** of my suggestions...

...you could **dramatically** boost response...AND your bottom line.

**"I thought I nailed the Home page...  
Man, was I wrong..."**

*"Wow, I have to tell you that you have convinced me to stick to something that I know--and it certainly isn't writing!"*

*I thought I nailed the Home page and didn't think there would be much done to it. Man, was I wrong and boy am I glad I found you!*

***I found myself saying exactly what you wrote as I was reading it and remembering just how I felt when the first college bill arrived--YIKES!***

*You have quite the gift and I consider myself fortunate that you are sharing it with me."*

*-- Marc Hill  
Reduce My College Costs, LLC  
[www.reducemycollegecosts.com](http://www.reducemycollegecosts.com)*

[So find out more and reserve your Compelling Copy Critique now](#)...you could be enjoying more clients, sales and subscribers by this time next week!

To your success,

*Tracy*

**P.S.** How many visitors are you getting to your site each week? The sooner you reserve your spot, the sooner those visitors will be greeted by your more powerful copy—and **the sooner you'll be enjoying the results!**

## Meet Me



Hi, I'm Tracy and for more than five years I've been helping entrepreneurs market their business.

I specialize in **writing web copy and marketing materials that do the selling for you**--by getting your prospects' attention, showing them you have the perfect solution for their problem, and persuading them to take the next step.

I can also show you ways to attract more clients and sales using marketing strategies that make better use of your time and money.

I founded Compelling Communications, LLC, in 2003 after more than a decade in marketing communications --following a brief and rarely glamorous career in politics working for a Congressman, presidential candidate, and group of lobbyists. (But the stories I could tell...)

The one common thread throughout my years in the “real world” was writing and editing. I had my first article “From Graduation to a Job on Capitol Hill” published in *Cosmopolitan* magazine in 1995. It was actually a journalism class assignment while getting my M.S. in Public Relations from Boston University College of Communication—which I submitted on a whim.

I am also a co-author of [\*Conscious Entrepreneurs\*](#), published in summer 2008. My chapter, “Good for Profit—Your Social Conscious is an Asset to Your Business,” reflects my fascination with companies that do good while doing well for their business.

After living most of my years in the Northern Virginia area, I decided to leave the traffic, terrorists, snipers and other crazies behind by moving to Raleigh, North Carolina at the end of 2006. (OK, it was more about being closer to my sister and her kids, but escaping those things were definite perks!)

Two rescue mutts named Lexie and Roscoe, as well as a rescued lop bunny named Austin, share the company headquarters/home with me.

### Where to Find Me...

Websites: [www.compellingcomm.com](http://www.compellingcomm.com)  
[www.kickstartmarketingprogram.com](http://www.kickstartmarketingprogram.com)  
 Blog: [www.compellingmarketingblog.com](http://www.compellingmarketingblog.com)



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