

# The **ENTREPRENEUR'S** Guidebook Series™

Next  
Page

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# PERSONAL PLANNING

## Guidebook #61:

### *Collecting Product Info to Help*

### *Write & Design Ads* ..... 3

### What to Collect ..... 4

### Organizing Your INformation ..... 6

### Getting in the Right Frame of Mind ..... 10

#### Developing Your Powers of Creativity ..... 10

#### Subjecting Your Work to Outside Criticism..... 11



***“LOOK BOZO! What’s Cindy Crawford in a bathing suit got to do with selling pet supplies?”***

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## ***COLLECTING PRODUCT INFO TO HELP WRITE & DESIGN ADS***

**BEFORE** you sit down and begin to write even one line of ad copy for a particular product or service, you need to gather as much information and materials as you can about that product or service.

After you have accumulated and exposed yourself to this material – i.e., have sufficiently saturated your mind with facts, sights, sounds, smells and even feelings that relate to your product or service – you must then organize and group all your ideas and notes for easy access and reference.

It is through this organization and continuous brainstorming that you will then begin to see patterns and combinations of meaning that will help inspire and direct your efforts.

## WHAT TO COLLECT

START BY collecting all previously published and manufactured material relating to your product or service. This includes any information about people and things in general that relate to the product or service.

More specifically, collect the following:

- audiovisual scripts
- back issues of newsletters
- business, advertising and marketing plans
- competitors' ads and literature
- competitors' products
- copies of sales materials including fly-

*The creative person is unique in that during the initial stages he prefers the chaotic and dis-orderly and tends to reject what has already been systematized.*

**RALPH J. HALLMAN**

ers, posters, brochures & catalogs

- copies of speeches or announcements
- engineering drawings
  - illustrations and photos of product prototypes
  - internal memos
  - letters from users of the product
  - letters spelling out technical information
  - manufacturers notes
  - notes from telephone conversations with manufacturer's, customers, experience users, or other copy writers
- press kits or press releases

- product appraisals especially ones exhibiting high emotional content
- product specifications & blueprints
- product labels
- prototypes, mock-ups, and real-life goods, that can be touched, handled, smelled, operated and generally observed, examined and used
- publicity articles from newspapers, magazines and TV editorials
- reports, articles or research on the market and scientific developments
- repro quality pictures from your suppliers (most suppliers are happy to help you make their products look good.; almost all companies have a media rela-

tions or publicity department that can supply halftones, PMTs transparencies, slides or glosses)

- tear sheets (copies of previous ads)



*Collect publicity articles from newspapers, magazines and TV editorials.*

## ORGANIZING YOUR INFORMATION

ONCE YOU have gathered all the materials you can get your hands on, start organizing this information into the following five categories:

### Product & Service Features and Benefits

– This is the starting point of all copywriting. The fact is advertising focuses more on words and simple images, rather than complex, logical sentence and paragraph construction. You need to dig up every selling point and benefit you can.

**NOTE** Organize the list from most to least important.

*About the most originality that any writer can hope to achieve honestly is to steal with good judgment.*

**JOSH  
BILLINGS**

**Key Words** – Go through all your literature and select words that keep recurring. This will not only help you in developing headlines and slogans, but also will focus your attention and consolidate your message.

Your goal should be to come up with three or four essential, descriptive and ultimately, product identifiable words.

**Copy Objectives** – Make a list of all reasons your are writing the advertising. This list might include:

- Build brand recognition & preference
- Build company image
- Generate inquiries and sales
- Generate store traffic



- Introduce a new product or an improvement of an old product
- Keep in touch with prospects and customers
- Provide marketing tools for salespeople
- Qualify prospects
- Transmit news or product information

**QUESTIONS about your target market that need to be answered before you begin writing ad copy** – Some of these questions might be:

- Who is most likely to buy my product or service? Whom am I selling it to?
- Can I picture my typical customer? What does he or she look like?

*Who is most likely to buy your product or service? Who are you selling to?*

- What type of person is the product or service selling to right now?
- How can I aim my copy at the most likely prospects rather than at the world in general?
- What am I going to do to make the copy, especially the headlines and lead paragraphs, specific to the selling proposition?
  - What emotions motivate my target buyer?
    - Can I make a promise to my prospect, then prove that I can deliver it? Can I make this all-important promise right away?
- Does my advertising have to appeal to more than one audience at a time (a toy ad, for example, must appeal to both

the parent and the child)?

## QUESTIONS about your product or service that need to be answered in your ad copy –

Some of these questions might be:

- What are all the things my product or service promises to do for the buyer? Which of these are the most important?
- In what ways is my product or service used?
- How is my product or service different from the competitions? What does it offer that is either exclusive or better?

- If my product or service isn't significantly different from the competition,

## Using a Sensory Deprivation Chamber to Spark Inspiration

SOME ADVERTISING firms have been known to send their copywriters into sensory deprivation salt-water think tanks. In these think tanks, one is deprived of all sensory input. Floating around freely inside, you see no light, hear no sound, and experience no sense of touch (your skin is strangely numbed by the surrounding salt water heated to body temperature). It is in here, once all influences from the outside world have been eliminated, that you can not only hear your heartbeat as loud as a ticking clock, but you can dig down deep into your creative soul as your enormous sub-conscious starts to meld and mix in freely with your conscious mind.

- what attributes can be stressed that hasn't been stressed before?
- Does my product or service make use of any special technology?
  - What problems does my product or service solve in the market place?
  - What service and support does the manufacturer of my product offer? Who will guarantee the product, the manufacturer or I?
  - How is my product or service currently being advertised or marketed as compared to competing products and services?
  - How does my product or service work? How reliable is it? How long will it last? Is it easy to use and maintain?
- How is your product or service currently being advertised or marketed as compared to competing products and services?*
- How efficient and economical is my product or service?
  - What materials, sizes, and models is my product available in?
    - How and where can consumers buy my product or service?
- \*

## GETTING IN THE RIGHT FRAME OF MIND

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GETTING IN the proper frame of mind for copywriting is more a combination of preparation and organization rather than following specific rules and strategies. However, if you believe in your own creativity and are not afraid of subjecting your work to constant outside criticism, then you will find that copywriting becomes less intimidating and more of a chance to let your imagination run wild.

### Developing Your Powers of Creativity

Everyone has the potential for being creative and innovative. Creativity is not learned, it's instinctive. Unfortunately however, society, with its standards and rigid

educational systems, has a tendency to stifle our natural creativity or instinct for it, making us less creative as adults than we were as children. In fact, many theorists have suggested that the higher ones level of formal education, the less room there seems to be for creative thought.

Thus, to regain your powers of creativity, you can't just twiddle your thumbs and hope for the best. You need to actively strip yourself of years of indoctrinated conventional wisdom.

Specifically, you need to take steps to:

- awaken your inner child
- build your confidence to think independently
- develop the ability to see the big picture not just the parts

- have the vision to perceive new truths
- maintain faith in your ideas even if everyone else around you tells you your nuts, as long as you believe them to be fundamentally sound
- understand that there are no truly new ideas (all new ideas are actually old ideas that have been adapted and/or modified in some manner or another to make them more suitable for newer generations)

*The art of being wise is the art of knowing what to overlook.*

**WILLIAM JAMES**



writing process, especially just before beginning, and just after you have finished. In fact, many copywriters team up with art directors, other copywriters, photographers, and even their spouses to keep their work fresh and focused.

## Subjecting Your Work to Outside Criticism

Realize that although you may do most of the actual work yourself, copywriting is never a solitary pursuit. You constantly need feedback at all stages in the copy-