

Media Selling, 4th Edition

Appendix B - Writing Copy

By Charles Warner

Every ad or commercial should have four major appeals or powers, according to ERISCO (Emotional Response Index System Company), a research firm specializing in testing advertising copy:ⁱ

1. *Stopping power*, which is an ad's ability to grab attention immediately.
2. *Holding power*, which is the ability to keep attention throughout the body of the message.
3. *Going-away power*, which is the ability to leave the listener, viewer, reader, or user with a memorable image or impression of the main selling point.
4. *A promise* about the product.

Stopping Power. The elements that produce *stopping power* should be attention grabbing and dramatic and should be related to the major selling point. Attention grabbers not related to the main idea in an ad or commercial can be counterproductive and confuse the issue. Consumers might remember the attention-grabber rather than the product name.

Holding Power *Holding power* is necessary to get the main selling message across. The selling message, or content, must be stated in terms of benefits to the consumer and must lead up to and connect to a specific or implied promise about the product that satisfies a pressing consumer need or want. Holding power combines the concepts of Interest and Desire in the Advertising Ladder/Sales in Chapter 17 – Advertising.

When writing radio or television commercials, repeat a store's or product's brand name frequently. This information is an important part of an ad's content and it makes sure the viewer or listener remembers the advertiser. Commercials should use simple language and short, uncomplicated sentences to get the message across. There is not time to build a long, difficult, logical argument for a product (print does this well), and viewers and listeners are unlikely to follow it anyway. Keep to a simple style; read the copy out loud and have someone else read it to you as well. Does it sound comfortable? Does it create the mood and elicit the emotional response you want?

Commercials are best when they are written to appeal to consumers' emotional needs. People tend to buy what they *want* and not necessarily what they *need* in a practical sense. To connect between needs and emotions, commercials must create an emotional involvement and an attitudinal harmony with the product and stimulate an emotional response.

There are four basic emotional appeals, according to ERISCO: money, affection, status, and security. Like leverage, each of these four appeals has two sides, positive and negative. The positive side is the desire to have more of the appeal; the negative side is the fear of losing it or the threat of not having it.ⁱⁱ

1. Money. Virtually everyone wants more of it and feels insecure about being without it. People also want to get money with as little effort as possible. The word *free* has the

strongest appeal of any word in advertising. Following are other powerful words associated with money:

<u>Positive</u>	<u>Negative</u>
Bargain	Expensive
Profit	Deficit
Economical	Extravagant
Savings	Loss

2. Affection. The desire for love, friendship, attention, belonging, and sex is common to all people. The affection appeal is almost as strong as the money appeal and, for some, even stronger. Fears involved in the affection appeal are as strong, if not stronger, than desires for affection. The attention-holding element in the affection appeal is more in the *promise* than in the *fulfillment*. Affection is a particularly strong appeal for young people.

<u>Positive</u>	<u>Negative</u>
Attraction	Rejection
Understanding	Misunderstanding
Friendship	Dislike
Love	Hate

3. Status. Status is the recognition appeal. It reflects the feeling many people have about being perceived as important. The status appeal can be quite powerful, as people seek approval and appreciation for their work, appearance, attitudes, and actions.

<u>Positive</u>	<u>Negative</u>
Advancement	Demotion, stagnation
Superior	Inferior
Exclusive	Common, run-of-the-mill
Suave	Sloppy
Beautiful	Ugly

4. Security. Security is the emotional appeal of self-preservation. Generally, the older people get, the more important security is to them.

<u>Positive</u>	<u>Negative</u>
Comfort	Pain, discomfort
Family, together	Alone, isolated
Healthy	Sick
Time-saving	Time-wasting
Secure, safe	Vulnerable

Going-Away Power. Ads with *going-away power* stay in people's minds. The memorable aspect of a commercial should be related to the main selling point.

The Promise. To be effective, all advertising must contain a future promise: "Get clothes whiter than ever before," "Builds strong bodies twelve ways," "The ultimate driving machine." Even retailers who are promoting a sale can include a promise in their commercials: "Up to 40 percent off on all items," "Best savings of the year," "No credit

refused.” The promise is the benefit to the consumer, and the best way to present it is to link it strongly to the advertiser’s name: “Always the lowest prices.”

When you write advertising for customers, craft it to make sure it has stopping power, holding power, and going away power. Make sure it has at least one strong emotional appeal. Emotional appeals have two dimensions, positive and negative—people want it or fear losing it. And finally, all good advertising has a strong promise—explicit or implied. Always include a powerful promise when you write advertising.

ⁱ Charles Warner and Joseph Buchman. 1991. *Broadcast and Cable Selling*, 2nd Edition. Belmont, CA. p. 263. Adapted from ERISCO (Emotional Response Index System Company) Promotional material.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.