

Bonus Chapter 2

Ten Advanced Ad Writing Tips from the Pros

In This Chapter

- ▶ Brainstorming unusual and compelling ads
 - ▶ Breaking the rules to differentiate your ad
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In Chapter 6, you can read the best practices for writing compelling and effective AdWords ads. Sometimes, though, you need to break the rules in order to follow a higher directive — such as *don't be boring or stand out*. AdWords and copywriting experts Perry Marshall, Don Crowther, and Bob Bly share some of the techniques they use when everyone else in their market is following the best practices.

Appealing to the Senses

Perry Marshall of www.perrymarshall.com reminds us that AdWords ads are very much like poetry, distilling complicated thoughts into a few words and sounds. You want to write ads that allow readers to create their own sensory responses, instead of just reading vague and abstract concepts. See which ad comes alive more:

- ✓ Wide selection of colors
- ✓ Plum purple, lemon yellow, & more

Successful AdWords ads evoke an immediate emotional response in addition to rational appeal. Neurolinguistic Programming practitioners identify three modalities by which people take in the world: auditory, visual, and kinesthetic (body). Ads that appeal to multiple modalities can trigger interest in a wider range of readers.

```
Street Fighting Secrets  
Smack. Slam. Splat.  
Your Fist Against His Jaw  
www.StreetFightingSecrets.com
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This ad evokes sound in the second line and a body feeling and visual image in the third line. (This ad might be disapproved by a Google editor because of the violent image in the third line.)

Creating Ads that Stand Out Visually

Our eyes naturally focus on anything that breaks the prevalent pattern. If you look at a tiled ceiling, it won't take you long to find the one or two broken or stained tiles, even without effort. For many generations, survival of our species depended on noticing the unusual in our environment.

You can use this tendency to your advantage by creating ads that look different from all the other listings on the page. Perry Marshall points to an ad that uses lots of white space to attract the eye:

```
Get Love Back  
-  
-  
www.GetLoveBack.com
```

The two description lines are blank, and draw the viewer's attention more powerfully than any words could. The remaining two lines repeat the same sentiment, echoing and amplifying a powerful desire.

You can also use quotes, commas, hyphens, parentheses, question marks, and other punctuation to add space and visual flair to your ads. Just remember to follow Google's editorial guidelines (summarized in Chapter 6).

Testing Geographically Specific Ads

Don Crowther of www.greatresults.com suggests writing ads and landing pages that speak directly to a geographic market. You can run geographically specific ads in either of two ways:

- ✓ **Create a geographically targeted campaign** (see Chapter 7) and write ads specific to that region. For example, your headline might read, "Milwaukee Weight Loss."

✔ **Use cities and states in your keywords.** For example, create an ad group devoted to Milwaukee Weight Loss, with keywords like

- Milwaukee weight loss
- Lose weight Milwaukee
- Wisconsin diet clinic

In either case, Don Crowther advises, “Write a landing page specific to the challenges of weight loss in Milwaukee (cheese, beer, can’t walk out your door six months of the year).”

Don notes that this is a great way to test expensive keywords where you don’t want to put down \$2,000 a day. When you restrict your campaign reach to a couple of markets — Kansas City, Orlando, Portland OR, Burlington VT — you can see meaningful results without having to pay thousands of dollars for an onslaught of clicks. If this limited campaign proves profitable, you can open it up to larger markets.

Naming Your Offer to Imply Value

When your call to action names the thing your visitor will get, make sure you give it a name that implies value. Copywriter Bob Bly of www.bly.com offers the following examples:

A product catalog becomes a product guide. A software catalog becomes an international software directory. A collection of brochures becomes a free information kit. A checklist becomes a convention planner’s guide. An article reprinted in pamphlet form becomes “our new, informative booklet — HOW TO PREVENT COMPUTER FAILURES.” And so on.

Bly focuses on the benefit the customer will receive, rather than the usual name of the piece. Perry Marshall recommends that his industrial clients create one-page Cheat Sheets that promise to simplify a complex subject quickly. By split-testing different names for your offer, you can discover the one that has the most appeal for your market.

Trying Something Crazy

Don Crowther advises AdWords advertisers to split-test, learn, and tweak ads based on results. No amount of creativity can make up for listening to your market. But Don also recommends that once a month, you put all that knowledge aside and create a totally new ad from scratch. At the very worst, you’ll

learn something new about what your market *doesn't* respond to. At best, you'll discover a new hook or appeal that improves your conversions. Ad testing is a closed environment: You write an ad and part of your market says Yes or No to that ad. You can't interview the people who didn't click to find out what they didn't like and why. So the closest you can come to an open-ended market survey using AdWords is to throw jokers into the mix every so often.

Don notes:

Most of the time, ten months out of the year, your new ad will fail. But two months of the year, your ad will perform reasonably. Then, you can go and apply all the other techniques you have learned and start kicking that ad up to a higher level. You sometimes can end up with an ad that is way above anything you have been able to test in the past.

You can think of ad testing as drilling for oil. After a while, you have a pretty good idea where the big oil deposit sits, and you keep drilling holes in that vicinity looking for the easiest access. That's equivalent to detailed testing based on prior results. What this type of testing doesn't tell you is whether there's an even bigger oil deposit a thousand miles away. So every so often you bring your drill to an area where you have no reason to expect success and stick it in the ground. The speculative drill is your totally new and different ad. You might strike it rich, and writing another ad is certainly quicker, cheaper, safer, and more environmentally friendly than prospecting for fossil fuels.



If you're having ad writer's block, type random keywords into Google and model an ad for a totally unrelated market. Write a short poem. Create an ad that sounds like a Valley Girl or a Hell's Angels rider or Arnold Schwarzenegger. Parody an ad from TV. Get your creative juices flowing and see what happens.

Fighting the Hype

Searchers are looking for the shortest distance between their desire and its fulfillment. Much of the time, they want impartial expert advice before making their purchase. If your competitors are screaming about how great they are, your understated ad automatically makes you seem more trustworthy. If you model your landing page after review sites, you can promise to compare, review and educate your visitors about their options in your ad.

You can use questions:

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Do stop-snoring gizmos work?  
Ask me - I've bought them all.  
And forced him to try them...  
www.SnoringMansWife.com
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I just made that one up, but I like it so much I'm going to create a Web site and AdWords campaign just to try it (as soon as I finish this book).



If your ad promises useful and impartial information, make sure that your landing page *delivers*. Don't begin to sell your solution until you've openly shared the pros and cons of various options. You can use the consultative sales approach in AdWords and your Web site to build trust and guide people — honestly — about which solution most closely fits their needs. Your referral traffic may exceed your AdWords traffic once you become known as a trusted and credible source.

Using Jargon

A general rule of direct-marketing communication is to write and speak as if you were trying to get an eight-year-old to understand your message. That tactic is useful in some circumstances, but you will often get better results in AdWords by speaking directly to the people who know as much about the industry as you do. Bob Bly explains:

A major error is writing AdWords copy that speaks on a layman's level when your mailing is targeted to industry professionals. For example: DP professionals know what CICS, MVS, and ISDN are. You don't — so the natural tendency is to want to explain them in your copy. But being too elementary turns readers off and signals that you're not really in touch with their business.

You don't have to be selling to engineers or other professionals to employ jargon. Every hobby, every business, every niche uses its own patois (wow, I learned that word for my SAT prep in 1982 and this is first time I've ever used it) to speed up communication and make it more precise — among those in the know.

Do you know what glow and ribbon poi are? If you were a serious juggler, you would. And you would respond more favorably to this actual ad:

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Need Juggling Balls?  
Devilsticks, Diabolo Balls, Clubs  
Glow, Fire & Ribbon Poi. Free Del!  
www.oddballs.co.uk
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than this one that I just made up:

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Need Juggling Balls?  
Balls, Bean Bags, and Other  
Stuff You Can Throw in the Air  
www.JugglingStuff.com
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People want to do business with people just like them. Jargon, acronyms, and abbreviations function as social glue by eliminating people who don't understand them. If you spell out a phrase instead of using an acronym, you're subtly signaling that you aren't talking to the in crowd. If you're selling to engineers, the more clearly you *don't* talk to non-engineers, the more appealing your ad to your target market.

Pointing Out What Your Product Is Not

Sometimes the best way to explain what you are is to contrast it to what you're not. Perry Marshall points to a line in a coffee ad, "Want Cheap Coffee? We're Not It." Another favorite of Perry's uses sarcasm to differentiate:

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Spanish? Oh, Please.  
Just What You've Always Wanted:  
Another Dopey Spanish Program.  
www.LoserSpanish.com
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Especially if the thing you're not is a point of irritation for your market, you can score points and compel clicks on the basis of curiosity alone.

Being contrarian in your ads works if you can pull it off on your Web site as well. Jon Hinds advertises his Monkey Bar Gym as the alternative to ordinary gyms: "100% Natural, Functional Training for Performance, Not Cosmetics." Everything about his site (www.monkeybargym.com) contrasts his training methods with the big gyms: "We focus on movement, not on muscle. We don't have machines or mirrors. Anyone can kick your butt in a workout. Our workouts heal you." Every industry has problems, and if you can articulate a fresh solution that eliminates or minimizes those problems, you can create an AdWords ad that hints at the difference in a compelling way.

Using Popular Culture

We live in a culture of mass media and celebrities. If you can quote a famous person (real, fictional, or even animated), song, or movie line, you can get people's attention and stand out. Perry Marshall cites the following examples:

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The California Hotel  
Can Check Out Anytime You Like  
But You Can Never Leave  
www.HotelCalifornia.com
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Spiral Staircases
"Climbing the Stairway to Heaven"
(She Bought It From Us)
www.SpiralStaircase.com/Zeppelin

"Go Ahead, Make My Day"
Dirty Harry's Streetfighting Manual
For Hard, Leathery, Remorseless Men
www.DirtyHarryManual.com

Forgot Your Oil Change?
Homer's Engine Locks Up - D'OH!
We Fix It
www.ApusCarRepair.com

Citing an inside joke like Homer Simpson's tag phrase or a line from a famous 1970s song or movie serves to create some warmth in the relationship between advertiser and customer; a way to bond rather than simply transact. Also, like in the use of jargon, a reference that feels a little obscure (even if it isn't) can draw people together inside a circle of knowing. If your ad brings a smile to someone's face, that's as good a reaction as you can hope for.

Making Your Content Ads Shocking

The easiest way to learn about content network, or AdSense ads, is to sign up for a Gmail account at www.gmail.com and start sending yourself messages. I'm not suggesting anything weird, like pretending to be yourself writing from the future with warnings and advice. Instead, write a couple of words like *cookie dough* or *exercise equipment* or *Andalusian horses* and send it to yourself. When you receive the e-mail, look to the right for the sponsored listings. These AdWords ads are the most successful ones for those keywords in the content network (at least, they are the ones that make Google the most money).

Perry Marshall points out that AdSense and search ads need to accomplish totally opposite tasks: AdSense ads must interrupt the reader, while search ads have to continue the thought that prompted the search. In your Gmail experiment, you may see some ads that have nothing to do with the keywords in your e-mail. Those ads are so successful at interrupting attention that they compel clicks in just about any context.

Make your content network ads more audacious. Two ever-present ads I see in Gmail are the www.realage.com ad with the headline “Prepare to be Shocked” and the www.coffeefool.com ad with the headline “Coffee Exposed.” These ads show up next to e-mails having nothing to do with health, aging, or coffee, so they must be very good at interrupting lots of trains of thought.

Perry Marshall recommends learning Interruption Marketing from the headlines at the supermarket checkout counter. When you have a cart full of groceries and a screaming toddler pawing at a box of chocolate cereal you could swear you put back on the shelf about five times, it takes a mighty good headline to interrupt your life and get you to open the magazine. Whether it’s a *Cosmopolitan* headline tantalizing you with the ten things women wished men knew in bed or the *Star*’s description of the Italian Prime Minister’s three-headed alien love child, it has to arouse curiosity and at least some sense of urgency.

Bob Bly of www.bly.com speaks about the Four U’s of good ad copy:

- ✓ Unique
- ✓ Urgent
- ✓ Ultra-Specific
- ✓ Useful

He recommends rating your ad on each U on a scale of 1–4, with 4 meaning the ad is very strong for that characteristic. While each of the U’s are important, the first two are more important for content ads, while the last two typically produce strong search ads.