Motivation – Case Study

Analyzing the 6 best sales letters of all-time.

The purpose of this case study is to show that the effectiveness of copy-writing in advertising can now be measured and possibly even predicted, simply by analyzing in detail what works.

We have chosen to analyze with our technology 6 of the most popular and famous pieces of copy-writing of all-time, sales letters that have been and continue to be studied because of the amazing results they achieved, generating billions of dollars in sales.

In this case study we will not explore the set of rules that sales letters, or effective copy-writing in general, need to follow, but rather focus on the information that is hidden within the words used. We will look at what else there is that hasn't been already written about in advertising manuals, when it comes to these 6 examples of successful persuasion.

You can read the full letters here: Six Best Sales Letters of All Time.

1. Motivation

Sales Letter	Motivation Away From	Motivation Towards
Wall Street Journal	-1.8	1.7
American Express	-1.4	2.9
Newsweek	-0.9	1.4
Popular Mechanics	-2.3	3.6
Prevention	-1.6	0.8
The Kiplinger Washington Editors Inc.	0.6	1.3

One of the first things that stood out after we analyzed these 6 sales letters was the motivational language used to influence the reader to take action. All of the results showed much higher values for words that are commonly used when thinking in terms of goals, of determining a person to go for what he or she wants.
On the other hand, the results showed clearly a much lower value when it comes to words that motivate people by keeping them away from problems, or from what they don't want.
This shows a clear direction for the motivational strategy used by the authors to get the readers to take action, and it proved to be a very successful approach for their advertised products.

2. Communication Style

Sales Letter	Auditory Channel	Rational Channel
Wall Street Journal	-2.9	4.6
American Express	-3.5	2.6
Newsweek	-2.3	5.2
Popular Mechanics	-3.1	4.9
Prevention	-3.4	6
The Kiplinger Washington Editors Inc.	-0.9	3.1

Another thing that stood out from the first glance over the results was the communication style category. Here, in particular two of the subcategories – auditory and rational channels of communication – showed very impressive values.

If for auditory words the results showed values which are much lower than what is considered normal for most people, the rational type of words used had extremely high values for all of the six sales letters analyzed.

This can be a possible explanation of why they were so effective: the writers used clear and logical arguments, convincing the readers on a rational level, by using words which could naturally determine the reader's internal voice to accept the proposed reasoning. It is also clear that they didn't just "tell" their potential customers about the value of the offer, but instead preferred to focus on the other two communication channels to deliver their information (visual & kinesthetic).

3. Attitude

Sales Letter	Positive	Passive	Strong
Wall Street Journal	5	-2.4	1.3
American Express	4.9	-3.9	-1
Newsweek	3.4	-3.4	0.8
Popular Mechanics	5.2	-1.3	3.1
Prevention	7.7	-1.3	7.8
The Kiplinger Washington Editors Inc.	-0.4	-1.9	2.5

By reviewing the most important values from the results of the attitude category, it's easy to notice a similarity between most of these letters.

First of all, 5 of the 6 letters have very high values for positive language, which makes sense because they all use a "towards" motivational strategy to get their readers to take action. By using positive language, strong words and by avoiding the use of words that inspire a passive attitude, it's fair to say

that the readers would be naturally inclined to feel more motivated, and thus more likely to take the action proposed by the letter.

In the case of the Kiplinger Washington Editors' sales letter, the value for positive language is -0.4, much lower than for the other 5 letters. If we look at the motivational strategy used, we can also notice that it is the only one out of the 5 letters which has a positive value for "away from" motivation (0.6). We can understand from this that it makes use of both "away from" as well as "towards" motivational strategies, while keeping low values for passive attitude and high values for strong language. This makes it very likely to get a positive response from their readers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we would like to highlight the fact that it is possible to measure and even predict the effectiveness of copy-writing in advertising, and perhaps even more important, our technology now offers a way of analyzing advertising texts within specific contexts, and using the results coupled with data from sales and analytics, to determine what works and what doesn't within specific markets. Our software can become a powerful tool, essential in developing successful marketing and advertising strategies.

Information about the text analysis values presented in this case study.

The numbers displayed in the tables have statistical value, and show how the language used in each of the newsletters compares to what is considered within the standard (statistical) norms of the American population.

A category showing values lower than **-1.8** reflects a tendency or intention to avoid words of that particular type. For example, Popular Mechanic's newsletter has a value of **-2.3** in the **Motivation Away From** category and this means that they used, on average, less words of this type than a person would normally use in every day communication. In other words, they didn't want to make their readers think of negative things in order to feel motivated to take action.

The opposite is also true, and a category showing values higher than **1.8** reflects a tendency or intention to use more words of that particular type than you normally would. Let's take Popular Mechanics again as an example. Their newsletter had a **3.6** value in the **Motivation Towards** category. This means that they used far more words of this type than a person would normally use in every day communication.

A category with values between **-1.8** and **1.8** means that the analyzed text contains a number of words (of that particular category) which is considered within the standard norms of the American population. In this case, the context has to be well considered before reading more into the values, and additional information could prove very useful – such as contrasting the analysis results with those obtained in a similar or the same context.

References:

1. http://smallbusinesscopywriter.com/Six_of_the_greatest_sales_letters_ever_written_11-10-05.doc
2. http://www.copywritinglog.com/?p=65