

Monthly Copywriting Genius #58

This Proven Technique Will Help You Perfect Your Conversational Tone...

...And Dramatically Boost Response

Dear MCG Reader,

The copywriting genius I'm going to introduce you to this month knew the term "junk mail" long before she knew the ins and outs of direct response marketing.

That's because her father was a USPS postmaster in the small town where she grew up. On top of that, her sister was a catalog writer for Walter Drake & Sons in Colorado Springs and was the one who encouraged her to enter the world of direct response copywriting.

Lucky for us she took her sister's advice. You see, today she is considered one of the industry's finest writers.

In this month's interview, she's taken the time to share with us a special technique she developed that helped her master writing with a conversational tone.

She calls her technique the "Alice Wiens Approach to Writing Copy." I'll tell you what that is in just a minute... but, for now, let me tell you more about this month's copywriting genius.

Direct Response Marketing Runs in the Family

Before she became a highly sought-after copywriter, Pat Friesen taught freshman English composition for 2 years while attending graduate school. She also worked as a night proofreader for two newspapers.

But, as I mentioned earlier, it was her sister who suggested she give copywriting a try. Pat interviewed for the first-ever full-time copywriting position at Current Stationery. Pat wasn't sure she'd get the job when the HR director told her she was one of 250 candidates applying for the position. She landed the job, but it took her six months of building a portfolio of writing assignments.

Even the person who hired her wasn't sure it would pan out. As Pat says, "When Jon Medved hired me, he said he was taking a huge risk hiring such an inexperienced person to be their only copywriter." But he also admitted he thought Pat had potential.

Fifteen years later, when Current Stationery asked her back to consult and train their staff of copywriters, Jon told Pat the risk he had taken paid off in spades.

Pat says, "He laughed when I pointed out he had just paid me more for one week of consulting and training than he paid me the entire first year I worked at Current."

Refining Her Skills by Working on a Diverse Range of Projects

Pat's copywriting career has given her the opportunity to work on a wide variety of assignments. These include Esolis Asian skin care products; gourmet foods, such as See's chocolates; Cushman honeybells; Jack Stack Barbecue; Five Herds bison; insurance clients – including Old American Insurance, Blue Cross and Blue Shield and the American Academy of Family Physicians – and service contractors, such as Benjamin Franklin Plumbing and One Hour Heating and Air Conditioning.

I could go on and on listing her different clients. And she's used this diversity to gain an edge over other copywriters. It's one reason she's produced as many controls as she has over her 30-year career.

This ability to produce controls is what really hooked her on copywriting. Her first major control-beating letter was an assignment for Fingerhut. It focused on Fingerhut's offer to let men wear-test their shoes – FREE – for 14 days. Send no money now, wear the shoes everyday, everywhere... then, if you don't like them, send them back.

Pat explains, "It was entirely offer-driven, printed on a yellow sheet of "legal pad" paper (not white like the existing control) and won hands down. After that, I was hooked on wanting to beat the control wherever I worked, whatever I was writing about."

Copywriting Is an Endless Journey of Learning

You've probably heard us mention before that most copywriters are naturally curious people. By nature, they seem to want to learn a little about everything.

It's that continual learning process that Pat loves most about copywriting. Pat explains, "I've tracked my time, and 80% I spend on any writing project is invested in learning about the product/service, the audience, the offer and the competition. About 20% of spent writing."

While you know that research is critically important to the copywriting process, you may never have looked at it as a continual learning process. Of course, that's just one benefit of being a copywriter.

You get the opportunity to work wherever you want, when you want and – if you're good enough – pick the clients you want.

Throw on top of that the fact you can make a very good living – six figures isn't out of the question – and copywriting is one of the most lucrative and fulfilling jobs in the world.

But it takes an investment of your time and effort to get there. You might make a few mistakes along the way... but that's all part of the learning process.

Even the best of 'em can slip up every now and then. Take the time Pat learned it's possible to "oversell" a product. Overselling is when you make the product sound and look "too good." The result is that you sell a lot of product... and then you get a lot of returns, because the product doesn't live up to the pitch.

But, as Pat explains, "Only a direct response copywriter would have the benefit of seeing the numbers to draw the conclusion I did and learn from it. It was an important and valuable learning experience."

In addition to "learning the hard way," Pat has also figured out a few things about copywriting – including a technique she uses to boost response every time.

How the "Alice Wiens Approach to Writing Copy" Can Turn Your Next Assignment Into a Control

You know the importance of writing in a conversational tone, but you're may still trying to figure out exactly how to do that.

Well, here's Pat's secret technique that her sister helped her invent. When Pat was interviewing with Current Stationery, she wrote some copy for them. But before she turned it in, Pat had her sister take a look at it.

Pat's sister said everything was grammatically correct, but it sounded like "it was written by a machine to a sea of nameless, faceless people." Pat's sister, Ann

suggested that she write as though she were talking to Alice Wiens about the Current Stationery products.

Who is Alice Wiens? Alice was Pat's next-door neighbor when she was growing up... and she fit the description of the Current Stationery customer.

Pat says, "When I started writing as though I was talking to Alice, my copy sounded more genuinely conversational and compelling... and thinking of Alice eliminated any threat of writer's block."

So let me ask you this question: When you sat down to write your last sales letter, did you write it to one person? Or did you do what most still-learning-to-be-great copywriters do and have no one in mind?

Big mistake if you did. You see, you'll never get that conversational tone unless you write to one specific person. Plus, as Pat points out, it's a great way to get over writer's block.

Pat has several more secrets for producing winning controls. But I'm going to let you read about them yourself in the interview. Once you're done, go right to her control for the *Daily Word*. You'll see immediately how the conversational tone in that letter comes through effortlessly.

Then, when you're done reviewing Pat's letter, I have an assignment for you. Why not take a few more minutes to identify who you're going to write to on your next copy assignment? You'll probably need a few names to fit different audiences.

Perhaps you have an uncle who buys a lot of supplements. Then he's your target for alternative health. Does your best friend follow the stock market and read a couple of investment newsletters? There's your pick for financial products. Etc.

Write these names down on an index card, and put the card next to your computer. Then, pick the appropriate person from that list when you start your next assignment. I bet if you do that, your next project will be a winner.

Until next month,

Sandy Franks
Editor, Monthly Copywriting Genius

P.S. Here's another good tip Pat shared with us that she's found helps produce strong results: "Make sure to include a compelling reason to respond as early as possible in the copy."

Monthly Copywriting Genius #58

From Skin Care Products to Barbeque Sauce – This Copywriter Knows More Than a Thing or Two About Producing Winning Packages Here’s Your Chance to Learn Her Secrets

MCG: What was your job prior to becoming a copywriter?

Pat: I taught compulsory English composition to college freshmen at 7:30 in the morning for 2 years while I went to graduate school. I also was a night proofreader for two newspapers while I was in graduate school and immediately after (not much you can do with a degree in English literature!). My first writing-related job was as the assistant to the editor of *The Numismatist*, a numismatic collector's publication.

MCG: Did you know what copywriting or direct-response mail was before you became a copywriter?

Pat: I did, because my sister had been a catalog writer for Walter Drake & Sons in Colorado Springs, and she was the one who told me to interview for my first direct response copywriting job at Current Stationery. We also have direct mail in our genes; our father was a USPS postmaster in the small Kansas town in which we grew up. I first heard the term "junk mail" at a very tender age.

MCG: So you were no stranger to direct mail at all. And don't you hate the term "junk mail"? So how did you move from proofreader to copywriter?

Pat: I had a degree in English literature, loved writing (and reading), and was having a challenge finding a job that paid better-than-minimum-wage that also allowed me to do what I loved. My sister and I were both living in Colorado Springs when she heard that Current Stationery was looking for their first full-time copywriter.

When I went to interview, the HR director told me I was one of 250 people to apply for the job... then asked me what made me think I was more qualified than the other 249. Not having a portfolio, I spent the next 6 months interviewing for the job and building a portfolio of writing assignments they gave me.

When Jon Medved hired me, he said he was taking a huge risk hiring such an inexperienced person to be their only copywriter... but he thought I had potential. Fifteen years later – when they asked me back to consult and train their staff of copywriters – Jon told me the risk he had taken with me had paid off in spades. He laughed when I pointed out he had just paid me more for one week of consulting and training than he paid me the entire first year I worked at Current.

Learning Her Trade from the Industry's Best

MCG: Now that's coming full circle. Since you didn't have a lot of experience writing copy, would you say you are self-trained or did someone help you? Did you have a mentor?

Pat: I've been fortunate to have several very generous mentors, starting with my sister, Ann Buzenberg, who began her own direct marketing career (she had been a journalist) as a writer with Walter Drake & Sons. I also learned a great deal from my first direct-marketing boss at Current, Jon Medved.

As far as fine-tuning my writing skills, I had the good fortune to take a direct-marketing college course from Bob Stone (one of the all-time greats). He later hired me to write a couple of assignments for his clients... one which beat a 20-year control. Before Bob died last year, he sent me his copy of the coveted *The Robert Collier Letter Book*. He was an inspiration and advocate... I think of him often. I also was hired by and wrote for George Schlaegel, Fingerhut's copy chief and creative director in the 1980's. Bob and George taught me how to sell the offer, not the product and write about benefits, not features.

MCG: So, Pat, just how long have you been writing copy?

Pat: About 30 years.

MCG: Wow, that's a long time! What was the first project you worked on as a copywriter?

Pat: My first direct marketing copywriting job was at Current Stationery where I wrote catalog, letter, and outer envelope copy. My first project was writing a letter signed by Miriam B. Loo, founder of Current Stationery. I also wrote reams of copy about cute note cards with animal designs and product names like Frisky 'n' Frosty and Sunny 'n' Silly.

MCG: I love to ask this question: What was the first success you had as a copywriter?

Pat: The first major control-beating letter I wrote was at Fingerhut, and was signed by Fingerhut president and founder, Manny Fingerhut. It focused on the Fingerhut offer to wear-test their men's shoes, FREE for 14 days. "Send no money now, wear the shoes everyday, everywhere... then if you don't like them, send them back." It was entirely offer driven, printed on a yellow sheet of "legal pad" paper (not white like the existing control), and won hands down. After that, I was hooked on wanting to beat the control wherever I worked, whatever I was writing about.

MCG: In a career that spans 30 years, is there one project that stands out as your favorite?

Pat: I've had many favorites. I can honestly say I've never met a product I didn't enjoy writing about. The *Daily Word* package is a favorite because of its simplicity. I also wrote a control-beating solo for Esolis Asian skin care products that I enjoyed writing, in part, because I have Korean-born children and I enjoyed learning about the science of Asian skin care. It beat their control created by a New York agency specializing in branding – but clueless about driving response.

I've also written a number of fun projects focusing on gourmet food (See's chocolates, Cushman honeybells, Jack Stack Barbecue, Five Herds bison) that I enjoyed because

I got to sample the products and talk with their brand managers, professional chefs and food chemists. And I've had several favorite control packages for insurance clients including Old American Insurance (the one I wrote for Bob Stone and Martin Baier), Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas and the American Academy of Family Physicians.

Oh... and I thoroughly enjoyed creating dozens of CRM letters for Benjamin Franklin Plumbing and One-Hour Heating and Air Conditioning. I love writing for service contractors because they are so appreciative of the results I generate and they don't have a lot of preconceived ideas. I also have enjoyed writing online copy for Jeanne Jennings and her clients, such as Hasbro toys.

MCG: What an incredibly diverse range of products! I don't think I've met someone with such a variety of projects. I'm assuming that over the years, you've built a good client base. But let me ask, how do you drum up clients?

MCG: A good number of my clients find me through referrals, reading my column in *Target Marketing* magazine and the speeches and workshops I give. While my clients are nationwide, I have a strong base of professional support in Kansas City, where I am a past president of the 600-member Kansas City Direct Marketing Association. I also have a website – PatFriesen.com.

Why Copywriting Is a Never-ending Learning Experience

MCG: What do you like most about copywriting?

Pat: I love learning about new products and services. I've tracked my time, and 80% of the time I spend on any writing project is invested in learning about the product or service, the audience, the offer, and the competition. 20% of my time is spent writing. I also like the fact that no two days are the same. While I learned a lot as an in-house staff writer working for companies like Current, Fingerhut and Fidelity Security Life Insurance, the last 13 years of being a "free agent" have been a perfect fit for me. Every day is different. It's fun, challenging and very rewarding.

MCG: What one thing did you learn (or take away) from a package you wrote that didn't work as well as you had expected or hoped?

Pat: It's possible to "oversell" a product by making it sound and look "too good." The result is that you sell a lot of products... and then you get a lot of them back as returns. This was a huge lesson I learned at Fingerhut when an art director and I oversold a polyester pantsuit! I'd written about MANY polyester pantsuits during my Fingerhut career, but this one had more bells and whistles. The art director and I got excited... and we made it look and sound better than our customers found it to be when they received and opened the package. Both front-end response rates and back-end returns were record setters! Only a direct-response copywriter would have the benefit of seeing the numbers to draw the conclusion I did and learn from it. It was an important and valuable learning experience.

MCG: Certainly sounds like it. You've had so many different projects – and successful ones at that – I'm curious if there was a moment in your career where you knew you had made (or could make good money) writing copy?

Pat: I'm not sure how to answer that. I just know that it's great to be able to make a good living doing something I love.

A Methodology That Produces Winning Packages

MCG: Let's talk about your methodology. What's the first thing you do when you get an assignment?

Pat: I start by trying to get as much information as I can about (1) the product or service and features and benefits, (2) the offer, (3) the audience, (4) old controls – both samples and results, (5) the media being used, (6) the competition and (7) potential buying objections. I also like to talk to a customer or two, so testimonials are always helpful.

MCG: What do you need the client to supply you with?

Pat: (1) Product info, (2) offer info, (3) as much info about the audience as possible, (4) old controls, (5), mailing list or other media info, (6) competitive pieces, (7) any information available from customer service and sales people regarding buying objections. Many times, I also ask to talk with several customers. If I can't talk to customers, I like to read "white mail" – unsolicited testimonials. Customers are the BEST source of breakthrough ideas.

MCG: Ever had an incident where the client supplied you with too much information... enough that it bogged the project down or was too overwhelming?

Pat: Nope. I've learned how to pick out what I need or want. For me, too much is much better than not enough. I'm intrigued by writers who say they would prefer not being given "too much" information. I wonder what they use as the basis for their writing.

A Special Technique to Avoid Writer's Block

MCG: So we know what you need to start the project, but how do you get to know the target audience?

Pat: I get as much info as possible from the client or the marketer. Then, when possible, I do phone interviews with several customers. While I was interviewing for my first job, I learned the value of being able to put myself in my customer's shoes. I call it the "Alice Wiens Approach to Writing Copy."

When I was interviewing with Current, I wrote some copy for them, but first had my copywriting sister take a look at it. She said everything was grammatically correct, but it sounded like it was written by a machine to a sea of nameless, faceless people. Ann suggested that I write as though I were talking to Alice Wiens about the Current products. Alice had been our next-door neighbor when we were growing up and, at the time, she fit the description of the Current customer.

When I started writing as though I was talking to Alice, my copy sounded more genuinely conversational and compelling. And thinking of Alice eliminated any threat of writer's block. So, whenever I write a project, I always try to think of an "Alice" to write to. If I'm writing to lab directors, I try to think of a lab director I know... or I talk to one supplied by the client.

MCG: Oh, I love how you realized that writing to someone – in this case Alice, eliminated writer's block. I think that is the first time I've heard a copywriter say that. Good point. So now let me ask you, how do you come up with the theme or idea for the promotion?

Pat: It depends. I start by asking the client what makes their product or offer different or better than the competition's. Then I look to see how well they've explained that point of differentiation in past promotions. Normally, that's where I find a missed opportunity that becomes my central theme.

MCG: Do you develop the headline first or start with the body copy?

Pat: If it's a letter or email, I start writing body copy. Then later, I go back through what I've written to find my lead, my subject line or my outer envelope teaser. The key for me is to just start writing. Somewhere in what I write, I normally find the hook. But rarely is it in the first paragraph or sentence I write.

MCG: After you finish a draft, do you let it rest for a day or so and then re-read and make edits?

Pat: Absolutely. The ideal situation for me is to write... set aside... rewrite... set aside... go back and fine tune. As with many writers, my best ideas come in the shower, during my daily 4-mile walk or when I'm in the car driving and nowhere near my computer.

MCG: Do you ever show your copy to another copywriter for comments and suggestions?

Pat: I don't normally show it to another writer, but I do show it to others on occasion. My husband and I both office at home so he's a good sounding board, especially for B-to-B copy.

MCG: Would you say you specialize in writing for certain products? If so, which ones?

Pat: Go to my website, click on Clients and you'll see that I write for a broad variety of consumer and B-to-B products and services. When I do workshops, I tell people I've written about everything from hog sperm and blood-letting chairs to burial insurance, gourmet chocolate and designer sweaters handmade in Peru.

I have a lot of experience writing for insurance and gourmet food, but I'm equally excited to have recently landed my first gardening-related project. I'm an Extension Master Gardener and I'd love to get more gardening-related assignments. If this became a specialty, it would be great... but I never want to get categorized as a writer who only writes about one or two categories of products. I love the cross-pollination that comes from writing about a variety of products and services.

MCG: How would you characterize your style of writing?

Pat: Clients tell me I write compelling letters because it's easy for me to put myself in my customer's shoes. And I do love writing conversational copy. (I could never write annual reports; I tried it once at the client's request, and it nearly killed me.) I'm also a huge advocate of the power of the offer, so having a solid offer makes writing compelling copy much easier. I think my strength is being able to write copy that connects with the reader because it comfortably builds rapport and credibility.

MCG: Do you make suggestions on what things the client could test on your package, such as alternative headline, lead or offer?

Pat: Absolutely. Right now I'm working on a direct mail package and I'm going to suggest we test several outer envelopes... size, appearance, graphics and copy. I am a firm believer in testing. Testing is what makes being a direct response copywriter

interesting, rewarding and totally different than being a general advertising writer, journalist or PR writer.

MCG: How involved are you in the design?

Pat: I am a creative team member. I believe the closer a copywriter and designer work together, the better the results. For example, some of "my" best headlines were written by designers and I give them full credit. I frequently provide writer's a rough layout for general positioning of copy, but I leave the real design work to a real designer. I'm one of those writers who "know it when I see it."

MCG: If you could divide your work up in parts, how much time do you devote to research, to writing, to editing?

Pat: 80% researching or brainstorming ideas, 20% writing, rewriting and editing.

How to Find Every Benefit the Product Offers

MCG: How do you figure out all the benefits a product offers? Do you list them out, do you talk with the client or do you use the product yourself?

Pat: I create a list of features and benefits based on client or customer input and using the product myself (when applicable, like eating See's chocolate. I had to go through many pounds of that stuff to make sure!). After I make this list, I prioritize the benefits for the targeted audience to which I'm writing. The same product can have different benefits for different audiences. I learned this writing about fume hoods for Labconco. The same fume hood had different benefits for the lab director than it did for the lab technician.

Special Tips and Techniques for Boosting Response

MCG: Do you have any special tips or techniques for boosting response?

Pat: Start by looking at what's worked in the past, then look for missed opportunities. Make sure to include a compelling reason to respond as early as possible in the copy. The headline isn't too soon if it's appropriate. Also ask for response more than once.

I've learned from experience that no one reads every word of my copy and few, if any, read it in the order it's written. Readers scan copy – whether it's online or in print. You've got to write and design for the scanner or you limit your chance for success. So you can't assume everyone sees your call to action if you include it only once.

Last but not least, people respond to strong offers that answer the question, "What's in it for me?"... not product proclamations. Having a strong, targeted offer is one of the best ways to boost response and beat the control.

MCG: Very good advice. You mentioned headlines. Is there a special thing you do to come up with headlines for your projects?

Pat: I look for them in my body copy... whether it's the body copy of an ad, letter or brochure. I rarely start by writing the headline... with the exception of a headline I used in a newspaper ad I helped create for Cushman Fruit (that's now run for 14 or 15 years). The headline was actually in copy that had been used for years in Cushman letters; I recognized its value as a headline, "What the devil is this? *Then Ed bit into one and the plot thickened...*" This full-page ad still runs every January in newspapers across the country.

MCG: That's so neat that your ad still runs to this day. We've talked about special techniques for boosting response. Is there ONE thing that every package you write always has?

Pat: Well, if it's direct response (which all my copy is), it's going to have a strong, offer-driven call-to-action with a compelling reason to respond.

MCG: How do you build credibility for the product?

Pat: There are many tools for doing this – testimonials, test results, charts, graphs, competitive comparisons, third party endorsements, free samples and free swatches. It depends a lot on the product, the competition, and what will convince the targeted audience. Free samples are extremely powerful at overcoming the buying objections of people unfamiliar with the product. That's one of the reasons I included an actual product sample in the *Daily Word* mailing.

MCG: How do you stay in touch with the marketplace (subscribe to products the audience reads, buy the same type of products, read newspapers regularly, go to polling sites)?

Pat: I read a lot... I read a lot of different publications. For example, when I'm writing to brides, I pick up every bridal magazine I can get my hands on and visit every related website I can find. I listen to brides I know, their mothers and friends talk about what matters to them.

When I'm writing to business owners I may spend more time with my husband's *Wall Street Journal* and our son's *Fast Company*. The Internet has been a big boon for doing research and staying in touch with obscure markets.

Of course, you have to be careful. You can't believe everything you read on the Internet. As I said earlier, doing the research and staying in touch with different markets is one of the best (and most important) parts of my job.

About Your Current Control

MCG: What can you tell us about the target audience – what type of people are they, their concerns, etc.?

Pat: The *Daily Word* is an ink-on-paper outreach publication and service of Silent Unity, a 24-hour-a-day prayer ministry. *Daily Word* is published by the *non-denominational* Unity School of Christianity. The Unity audience cuts across all denominations

including Baptists, Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, "New Age" and those with no church affiliation. Its readers are of all ages, from all walks of life and in dozens of countries around the world. What *Daily Word* readers share is the bond of prayer.

MCG: What emotion were you trying to drum up in the target audience?

Pat: The concept of this package was to introduce *Daily Word*, a 4-1/16" x 5-1/2" magazine, as a comfortable pocket-size companion to inspire, guide and comfort the reader in his or her daily living. "Like a good friend, it's there for all times." (That's the last sentence in the letter.)

MCG: How long was this the control? Or is it still the control?

Pat: This information is unavailable. I was told it remained the control for a number of years.

MCG: Was it tested against a prior control and what kind of results did it achieve?

Pat: This package was part of the first-ever subscription mailing for *Daily Word* – a 7-way direct mail test to establish a control. This package significantly out-pulled six other less expensive test panels by 6-to-1 to become the new control. None of the other panels included a sample magazine, some were two-way postcards. I don't think anyone (other than the writer!) believed this package had a prayer of winning... no pun intended.

MCG: Very cute. How many pieces of this package did the client mail?

Pat: Again, that information is unavailable.

MCG: Why did you choose to put only an image on the carrier and no teaser copy?

Pat: Actually, there is teaser copy. "FREE MAGAZINE INSIDE" is above the image and "Dated Material: Please Deliver Immediately" is below. This *is* teaser copy. I thought the combination of the unique size of the outer envelope (just 5" x 7-1/4") plus the teaser copy would be intriguing enough to get the targeted reader to open the envelope.

About the image... among fans of this little magazine, *Daily Word* is known for its magnificent photography, especially its cover images. I had the good fortune to be able to influence the selection of the image for this particular issue's front cover that we then used as the image on the outer envelope. I specifically liked the peaceful quality of the blues in this photograph.

MCG: Does enclosing a sample issue increase response rates?

Pat: In this case it did, dramatically. When I first decided to include a sample magazine, I knew it was risky because of the added cost of the sample and the outer envelope. However, I also believed that once our targeted audience had a copy of this little magazine in his or her hands, the closure rate would be high.

However, I had no idea this package would out-pull much less expensive formats – such as two-way postcards – so significantly... by 6-to-1 (and that's after factoring in the added cost). I believe this package was the only solo mailing. As much as I believed in the importance of the sample issue, I also felt this mailing needed a letter to help tell the magazine's story, and this meant creating a classic "solo" package.

MCG: How well known is *Daily Word*?

Pat: Because *Daily Word* is not sold on newsstands – and at the time I created this package subscriptions had not been promoted by mail – most people we were mailing to were not familiar with the little magazine. The subscription base had grown through

word-of-mouth and gift subscriptions. That's why I thought it was extremely powerful and important to put a *Daily Word* sample issue into the reader's hands.

MCG: How did you build credibility for *Daily Word*?

Pat: For starters, we gave the audience a sample issue of the magazine. Seeing is believing. In the third paragraph of the letter, I also mentioned that since *Daily Word* began publishing in 1924, *millions* of people had read it around the world and it had a strong following. One more thing. On the back of the letter, I included 5 compelling testimonials. In fact, testimonials like these helped me develop the content for the letter.

MCG: The tone of the letter is very conversational... easygoing. How were you able to achieve that?

Pat: I wanted the copy to reflect the simplicity and sincerity of the magazine. I also wanted the package to both look and sound sincere. No hype. No overstatement in words or visuals. To do this, I kept editing and re-editing... and breaking long sentences into shorter sentences.

I also worked at keeping paragraphs short and used margins that kept the line length in the letter short. I wanted the letter to look and sound conversational. In a couple of cases, I wrote single sentence paragraphs. You'll also notice that starting with the first sentence, I used the words "I" and "you" just as you and I would in a one-on-one conversation. In fact, I used "I," "our" and "we" much more at the beginning of this letter than I usually would because it helped create that personal, conversational tone.

MCG: How would you sum up the USP of *Daily Word*?

Pat: The USP of *Daily Word* is that it's a pocket-size companion for those who believe in the inspiration, guidance and comfort of prayer. And although it's not available in bookstores, on newsstands or at checkout counters *anywhere*... *Daily Word* has a

growing audience with millions of readers around the world. And it has for over 80 years. For many, that says a lot about the power of prayer.

A few fun questions...

MCG: What's it like to work with you on a project?

Pat: I am a Virgo... I make lists, focus on details, and over-organize. I also take my commitments seriously and I rarely miss a deadline that's within my control. In other words, I try not to set expectations I can't meet. When I'm talking with potential clients, I tell them up front that to maximize our success together, it needs to be a good match for both. Based on this philosophy, my clients and I tend to work extremely well together... which greatly reduces (if not eliminates) revisions and rewrites.

MCG: If you could choose another career besides copywriting, what would that be and why?

Pat: Hmm... I've always wished I were a visual artist. I'd love to be a painter, photographer or an architect.

MCG: What advice would you give up-and-coming copywriters to help them learn this trade?

Pat: Start by writing for someone from whom you can learn. That probably means taking an in-house or staff job in a company, not in an agency. While I did a stint at an agency, I didn't start my career there and, for me, that was good. I learned a great deal by being a staff writer at Current, Fingerhut and Fidelity Security Life Insurance. Writing for a great copy chief or creative director is a valuable way to learn. Also, don't let your nose get out of joint when people critique your work.

MCG: Excellent point. Ever dealt with an outrageous client? And, if so, how did you deal with it?

Pat: I honestly cannot remember ever writing for an "outrageous" client. I try to eliminate those possibilities before they get started. Probably the most outrageous assignment I ever got was to write a major control-beating solo over a weekend. Start to finish. It was a huge assignment for a new company and I was writing about a new product category with which I had limited familiarity. While I would never do it again – toooooo stressful – I did take the project on, and we ended up with a big winner. Beat the control big time.

There was another time that a Fortune 500 company asked me to write an extensive email campaign (dozens of audience segments with dozens of offer versions for each segment) OVERNIGHT. Yes, overnight. I did it, charged accordingly, then learned that it never was sent because of an inventory problem.

MCG: Of course, the opposite of that question is the funniest copywriting experience you've had...

Pat: This wasn't actually a copywriting experience; it had to do with proofreading. When I was a night proofreader at a newspaper (long before spell check), I proofread a large ad that ran in the Sunday paper selling digital clocks. The only problem with the ad headline as it ran was the second letter in the word "clock" was missing and I didn't catch the error.

But after the ad ran, sales were extremely strong, so I took full credit for it. Needless to say, I do not pretend to be my own best proofreader. Being responsible for proofreading your own writing is very dangerous. I learned that at Current the season I wrote AND PROOFREAD 163 versions of the same basic letter signed by Miriam B. Loo. This was at a time when I was still using a typewriter and Liquid Paper to make copy corrections. Needless to say, I now have a strong appreciation for spell check and the ability to copy, cut and paste. Plus, I ask clients to take final responsibility for proofreading whatever appears in print.

MCG: Great story... and to think the ad still did well with that typo! Pat, thank you for taking the time to talk with us. We appreciate your insights.

Monthly Copywriting Genius #58

Copywriting Comments

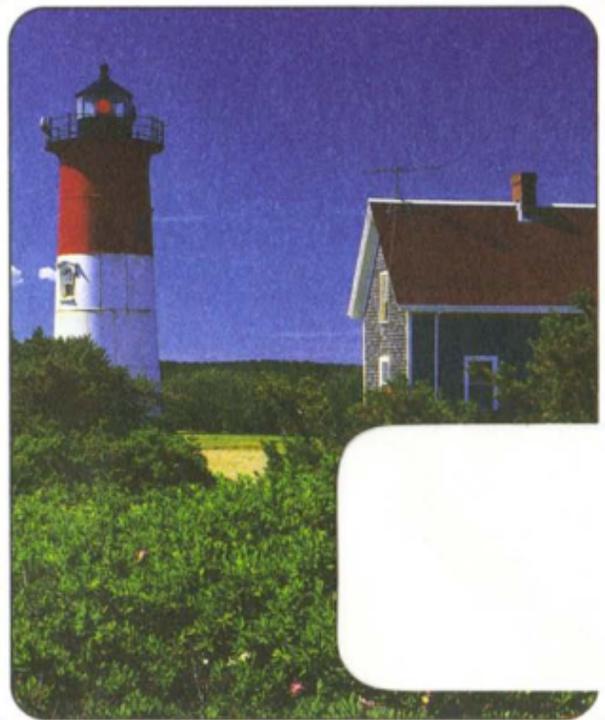
1. Secret of Reason for Urgency: Give the reader a reason to act now.
2. Secret of the Hare Krishna Principle: Use this technique to create a sense of gratitude in the reader by giving him something valuable.
3. Secret of the Velvet Chord: Appeal to the reader's insecurity – "not everyone can get this" – or make them feel as if they'll become part of an exclusive group that would normally be out of their reach.
4. Secret of the Velvet Chord: Appeal to the reader's insecurity – "not everyone can get this" – or make them feel as if they'll become part of an exclusive group that would normally be out of their reach.
5. Secret of "I Am Like You": Find testimonials that say, "I am like you," or make the author of the letter have a common bond or shared feeling or experience the reader can relate to.
6. Secret of Show, Then Tell: Show the reader using analogy, stories, examples... then tell him about the product
7. Secret of the Product USP (Unique Selling Proposition): This is where you state what makes the product different from all others. Turn the USP into a strong benefit.
8. Secret of Accentuate the Positive: Focus on the positive aspects of the product benefits
9. Secret of Call to Action: A paragraph or sentence written in a way that makes the reader feel compelled to take action right now. It "pushes" the reader to pick up the phone, fill out the reply form or make a donation
10. Secret of Testimonials: Use testimonials to add credibility to your sales letter. Choose testimonials that demonstrate the benefits of your product or act as proof to claims you made in the letter.
11. Secret of Benefit Statement: On the reply device or order form, remind the reader of the reasons they should be buying this product by highlighting one of the product's benefits in a paragraph.

Design Comments

1. The picture conveys a peaceful, relaxing image that fits the theme of the package... and the benefit of the product.
2. The handwriting font draws attention to the copy. It makes it feel as if someone took the time to personally write to the reader, even making hand-written notes on the letter.
3. Notice the typewriter font used throughout letter. Again, this is meant to convey that it's a personal message, typed out by hand.
4. Note how even the initials of the person typing the letter are included.
5. All the testimonials are highlighted by the closed box. They are meant to stand out to the reader.
6. The response device is easy to read and understand, making it simple for the reader to use.

FREE MAGAZINE INSIDE

1



1

Dated Material: Please Deliver Immediately

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
UNITY SCHOOL OF
CHRISTIANITY

Daily Word[®]

Silent Unity's Magazine

*12 monthly issues
only \$5.00!*

2

Dear Friend,

2

I've enclosed the September issue of *Daily Word* as your invitation to join our family of regular readers. This sample issue is free. And it comes with our blessings and high hopes.

3

Our highest hope is that YOU—like many others who already read *Daily Word*—will use it as a very special source of daily inspiration, guidance, and comfort.

3

If this is the first time you've seen *Daily Word* and you're wondering why, it's because *Daily Word* is not on any newsstand. It's available exclusively as an outreach service of Silent Unity, our 24-hour prayer ministry. Millions have read it faithfully since 1924.

4

Who is in our family of *Daily Word* readers? We have people of all ages, from all walks of life, and from many countries around the world. Because *Daily Word's* message is nondenominational, our list of faithful subscribers includes individuals

5 from all denominations and many others who have no church affiliation, but share our bond of prayer.

If you're like our other readers, you'll find the daily entries can play a powerful role in your everyday life. Each thoughtful message provides practical, positive insight that focuses on the empowerment of prayer. People tell us the daily reading of this little magazine is a faith-building exercise, a positive habit.

6 Perhaps you currently face a challenge—an opportunity or a problem. You need guidance or inspiration. I invite you to read today's message. See how it applies. Many people come to *Daily Word* at a time of crisis or decision and find healing reassurance.

7 *Daily Word* provides nondenominational readings emphasizing the positive power of prayer—your own prayers and those of Silent Unity.

8 For many, *Daily Word* is a lifeline to Silent Unity. And it's a faithful, pocket-sized companion that goes anywhere. I read mine between meetings, waiting in airports, wherever and whenever it fits into my day.

Because it easily slips into a pocket calendar, shirt pocket, or purse, we hope *Daily Word* will comfortably fit into your everyday routine and become a lifeline for you too.

9

Please read and use your September issue as if you're "trying it on for size." Then when you're ready to subscribe, it's simple.

Just mail the enclosed R.S.V.P. Card with your payment. Twelve monthly issues of inspirational writings, poems, articles, and colorful photos cost only \$5.00. And your complete satisfaction is guaranteed.

In the meantime, please make the enclosed issue your companion for the month. Like a good friend, it's there for all times.

4

Blessings to you,



Chris Jackson
for *Daily Word*

FL:cj

P.S. Please turn the page and discover why so many others turn to *Daily Word* for daily inspiration and prayerful renewal ...



Kind Words

From New Subscribers & Faithful Readers ...

"Many times it has amazed me how *Daily Word* knew just what I needed at a specific time. What a great feeling at a time when it is needed more than words can express."

—CF, Arizona

"I often see a *Daily Word* sticking out of a pocket or purse at the Family Court where I work."

—SM, New York

"What a blessing my *Daily Word* has been to me! Not only in bad times, but in good times as well."

—DLP, Ohio

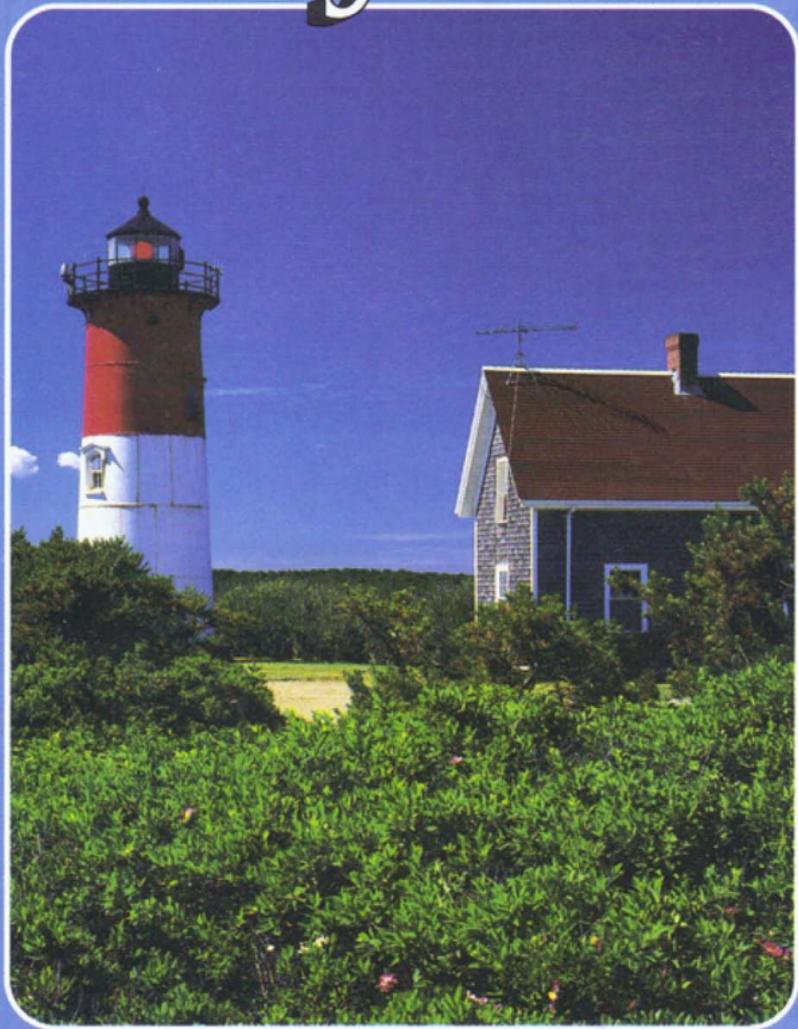
"By the end of the month my *Daily Word* is so dog-eared and bent up because I carry it with me everywhere!"

—PR, Iowa

"To this day, I have no idea who gave you my name and address. All I can say is that *Daily Word* came at a most difficult time in my life. Someone somewhere knew I needed this beautiful little prayer book. I thank God for that mystery person."

—RF, California

Daily Word[®]



Daily Word[®]

Unity Village, MO 64065

R.S.V.P. Card

Thank you for the free sample issue of *Daily Word*. Yes, I would like to subscribe for one year. Enclosed is my payment of \$5.00 for 12 monthly issues. (Please make checks payable to *Daily Word*.)

FOF-93

Please make corrections needed to the above mailing label. Your first issue will arrive at the above address in 6-8 weeks.

