

(2) Find testimonials clients have already given you for your own business. Can you identify: Which question the testimonial answers, is there any skepticism and bridging happening, and can you connect to the real person who gave the testimonial?

(3) Pick two of your FAQs, and go get testimonials for them.

(*) Extra credit: get as many testimonials as you can. :)

Bone 5: Urgency

Urgency is probably the one place in copywriting that is most susceptible to hype. Let's take a look at what it is, and why it's so important, so that you can use it, and not abuse it.

URGENT: CALLING FOR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION.

Everyone leads busy lives, with a lot of conflicting priorities. At any one time, someone just living their life can be facing a number of more-or-less urgent situations: the mortgage needs to be paid, their children are struggling in school, their spouse is ill, business is bad, their boss is riding them, and they still need to make dinner.

Many people, when faced with life like this, just deal with whatever pops up in their face. It's not common to find folks whose only system of dealing with urgent situations is "Whatever makes the most noise."

Your business helps people with one of those urgent problems they are facing. If you create honest urgency, sincere urgency, it's not about manipulation and hype. It's not about using fear to force someone in to action.

It's about supporting the reader prioritize something that's going to help them. And, if it doesn't resonate for them, they can ignore the urgency.

REMEMBER:

*Urgency is
necessary. Hype
is traumatic.*

The Three Types of Urgency

There are three different ways to create urgency, and each has a sincere way of doing it, and false way of doing it.

THE FIRST URGENCY: TIME

An approaching deadline creates urgency, in the same way that a bill is due by a certain date. When a date gets close, the urgency increases to deal with whatever it is.

REMEMBER:

There are legitimate deadlines that the reader needs to be aware of.

I've seen some dishonest ways people have used this kind of urgency. One that sticks in my mind (and my craw) is a website I visited that had a 24-hour clock ticking backwards down to zero, saying 'Less than twenty-four hours left to take advantage of this price!'

It was meant to look like I stumbled onto the website in the last twenty-four hours of a special offer. The reality is that whenever I visited the site, the clock would reset itself, so that I would always have twenty-four hours. It was a lying manipulation, plain and simple.

However, there are honest ways to deal with time. For instance, if you are offering a class, the class starts on a certain date, and once it starts that's it.

Having an early registration deadline is well worthwhile, and isn't insincere because, for me, if someone signs up early, it represents less and easier work for me and my team, and it allows me to help prepare that person for the class in a timely manner. Having someone sign up at the last minute is just more work.

Also, you can pre-sell a product before it's available for release, and offer a pre-release price. This rewards people who have trust that you are actually going to deliver, and it's also worthwhile to you to know if people actually want the product before it's produced. It's worth receiving a lower price to engage with people in this way, and they get to respond to the time urgency.

Because people put things off to the last possible minute, anything you can honestly do to give them a deadline in advance of the actual last minute serves both them, and you.

THE SECOND URGENCY: QUANTITY

A limited quantity also impels people to prioritize. If there is a limited quantity of your product, or a limited number of spaces in a class, people will respond more quickly to avoid missing out.

The dishonest way to use this is to announce a quantity limit, get many people to jump in, and then after it ‘sells out’ announce that more is available. That breaks trust.

There are all sorts of honest reasons that quantity may be limited. This serves to help them prioritize, to truly decide whether it’s important enough for them to act.

THE THIRD URGENCY: THE BENCHMARK

A Benchmark is different than the first two types of urgency. Those urgencies are what are called ‘external’ urgencies. External situations, like a time or quantity limit, impose urgency on the situation.

However there are plenty of situations where neither of those can legitimately be applied. And so the benchmark urgency is a great thing to bring in.

When I was a paramedic, if I asked someone how badly it hurt, they might say, “I’m okay,” grunting through their grimace of pain.

But, we were trained to ask someone who is hurt in a different way. We asked, “On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is the worst pain you’ve ever felt, and 1 is no pain at all, how would you rate this pain?”

“Oh, it’s a seven.”

Hmmm... How does a “seven” equate to “I’m okay.” When a patient would face the

REMEMBER:

*Limits are real,
and the reader
needs to know
about them.*

reality that he just said it was a seven out of ten, suddenly he isn't quite as reluctant to get help. He's faced the reality that he really is in pain, and needs help.

That 1 to 10 scale is a benchmark. What's more, it's a subjective benchmark. We're not trying to perform any scientific experiments here. Everyone feels pain differently, one person's "seven" is someone else's "three" is another person's "twelve." And that's okay.

Because you're not trying to prove them right, or wrong. You're simply wanting your visitor to see if the pain she is feeling really is urgent, and if so, that perhaps it deserves attention now, not later.

REMEMBER:

*It can be helpful
to provide a way
for the reader to
measure their own
urgency.*

That's why you create a benchmark.

Your reader is probably needing to decide on whether this is truly an urgent need or not. If it is an urgent need, your solution deserves space in her life. If it's not urgent, then she can make a clean choice to bypass whatever offer you are making.

The Elements of a Solid Benchmark

A really useful benchmark has three elements.

The first element is some action, situation, or feeling which is measurable or observable, either subjectively or objectively.

The second element is a scale of measurement of the action, situation or feeling, where one end is clearly preferable, and the other end is clearly not preferable to your visitor.

In my paramedic example, pain was the feeling I was using as an element, and the scale was 1 (no pain) to 10 (the worst pain ever). It's really clear that a pain that is closer to 1 is preferable, and closer to 10 is not preferable.

Other types of examples may be:

- Number of times per week that your energy dips in the late morning. (For an organic breakfast foods company.)
- Number of times per day where you tell yourself, “I’m too old to do that.” (For a company that helps elders feel more vital.)
- Number of times in a day when you find yourself frustrated at how slow your computer is running. (For a computer services company.)
- Number of times in a week that you get in an argument with your spouse. (For a relationship counselor.)
- Out of the last four times you paid bills, how many of them did you spend time in a panic over how they would get paid? (For a financial planner.)

The third element is a standard of measurement for comparison. If you can give them statistics that couples that have serious arguments more than twice a week run the risk of splitting up, then that becomes a strong benchmark. If you can show that elders who don’t pay attention to their age have fewer health conditions, that can be a strong benchmark. If you can show that after one year, 75% of computers run 20% slower due to lack of maintenance, wasting up to one hour of processing time a day, that’s an impressive benchmark.

Numbers, facts, details give your visitor something solid. If you bring these three elements together, then your benchmark provides your visitor with a clear and honest way to decide for herself how urgent her need is for your help.

REMEMBER:

*Consequences
of the struggle
make the
struggle real for
the reader.*

You Need a Spotter When Using a Benchmark

REMEMBER:

*Don't retraumatize
your readers with
worst-case scenarios.*

You must always be cautious in using a benchmark, because it's very easy to fall into a couple of traps. The first trap is being insulting or condescending.

When you are talking about someone else's painful situation, a lot of compassion is required. You don't have to walk on eggshells; you want to be very clear and honest with them. But make sure you get someone else who is in your target market to spot you by reading it, who can tell you honestly if they feel insulted or talked-down to.

The second trap is the hype trap. I already know you hate hype. You hate encountering it, and you certainly don't want to perpetrate it.

Let's be clear: what is hype? Hype is, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, "To put on, or deceive. To promote or publicize extravagantly."

Unfortunately, when you are the expert, it's easy to frame the comparison benchmark from a worst-case scenario that can scare someone in an unreasonable way. You can, and should, be honest and straight-forward with people about what can happen. But, listen with an empathetic ear, and make sure your visitor won't think he's being scared into accepting your help.

The third trap is the nigger trap. This is the opposite end of the spectrum from the hype trap. A 'nigger' is an extremely minor worry, something that is easily overlooked, compensated for, or just ignored. To an elephant, a fly landing on its back is just a nigger. It won't move the elephant to action, even if she notices the fly is there.

One way niggers happen is when you pick a situation that just doesn't matter very much to the visitor or isn't easily understood by them. A business owner who can't find the exact shade of blue pen they want, they probably don't care. An artist may care very deeply about

the exact shade of color for her paint, but the business owner and her pens... it's a niggle.

Another way niggles happen is when you aren't honest with your visitors about what really could happen. In trying to avoid hype, you pull your punches, and so you describe a situation that just doesn't matter that much.

Any way a niggle happens, your visitor reads it and ends up saying, "So what?"

It can sometimes feel like you are walking a tightrope between these three traps. And you are. But, if you stay in your heart, remain honest and authentic, and see things as much as possible from your visitor's point of view, it won't be hard.

Urgency Assignment in three parts

(1) Read the following page:

<http://www.heartofbusiness.com/training-programs/the-book/>

See if you can spot the benchmark urgency. Notice what it feels like to read it.

(2) Come up with at least one legitimate situation to use time-based urgency for your offer, and one situation reason to use quantity-based urgency with your offer.

(3) Create a benchmark urgency for your offer, including the action, situation or feeling that is measurable or observable, the scale of measurement, and the standard of measurement for comparison.

And don't forget to have fun, connect to your heart, and stay grounded to why you are making your offer: to help people.

REMEMBER:

*Know the
terrain you're
walking on.*