A Comprehensive Brainstorming Toolkit

as used and created by veteran copywriter

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Before you dig in...

Let me just give you a little background on what you’ll find here. The following is a simple “toolkit” I created, with the valuable input of some top-level copywriting colleagues, to help drive brainstorming sessions.

I highly recommend you bring a stopwatch and a recording device as well. If you’re computer-savvy, you can find software versions of both that you can run from a laptop at the links on the page at the end of this document (choose according to your operating system).

To understand how it works, imagine it like a toolbox. You’ll find each element of brainstorming tool presented, print out a copy of the toolkit itself, and then bring it to your next meeting with a new or current client.

To begin the toolkit explained in the pages that follow, familiarize yourself with each brainstorming tool and each element of the toolbox. You’ll find each element of brainstorming tool presented, print out a copy of the toolkit itself, and then bring it to your next meeting with a new or current client.

I share this with you because I’m certain you’ll find it equally useful when you sit down with your future copywriting clients. Share it with your clients or keep it to yourself.

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Enjoy!
The Power Brainstorming Toolkit

The Four Questions
Who's your audience?
What are you selling?
What's your offer?
Why believe you?

The Six Lead Types
Big Promise Lead
Problem/Solution Lead
Big Secret Lead
Story Lead
Invitation Lead
Prediction Lead

The Four P's
Promise
Picture
Proof
Push

The Four U's
Urgent
Useful
Unique
Ultra-Specific

The Power of One:
What's the one powerful idea behind your message?
What's your audience?
What are you selling?
Why believe you?

One Idea, Well Expressed
What's the one powerful idea behind your message?
What's the one deep emotion you hope to stir?
What's the one story nobody else is telling?
What's the one action you want readers to take?

33:33 Timer

The Power Brainstorming Toolkit
The "Tools" Explained...

Each of the "tools" that you'll find in this kit is something we use either to review copy or figure out how to shape a business.

However, what I've done is just turn the process upside down, organize them in one place, and suggest you use them at the start of the brainstorming process.

Used correctly, these tools will help you and your client dig deep into those details that will shape the sales copy.

Here are the tools, explained in more detail...

**TOOL #1: THE FOUR QUESTIONS**

These four questions, borrowed from Michael Masterson's great book, "Ready, Fire, Aim," are originally meant for entrepreneurs...

1. **Who is your audience?**
2. **What are you selling?**
3. **What's your sales offer?**
4. **Why should anyone believe you?**

Normally, you ask them to make sure you're focusing on the right things when you launch a business.

In our case, we can also use them to grill your client on exactly what he's selling, who he's selling to, and why he's the best one to sell it.

Of course, because you're digging for information, you'll want to ask each question in as many ways as possible, aiming for every shade of answer.

For example...

1) **WHO is my audience?** Not just what are their demographics, but what do they know, what are they afraid
of most, what do they desire most, what do they desire that
they're not aware of? Explain "extrinsic" (money and rewards)
vs. "intrinsic" motivators (sense of independence,
accomplishment, and member of something large and
important)

2) WHAT am I selling? What are the features and how do
they connect to one big promise, what are the lesser
promises, how does the product work, and what invisible
thing are you selling (what's the emotionally gratifying
solution?)

3) WHAT is my offer? What are the price, the premiums,
and other extras? What's the guarantee? What's the mode of
delivery? Is there a deadline on the offer or could their be?
How are discounts structured or described to sound like the
best possible deal.

4) WHAT do I need to win their trust? What makes these
customers skeptical or hesitant? And what proof do you have
behind your claims? (Track record, testimonials, the
company's back-story or other credentials, product
demonstrations, etc. -- anything that helps win trust).

TOOL #2: THE POWER OF ONE

Great ideas are focused and easy to express. To help you hit
that pinnacle of clarity, try asking yourself and your client...

1. What's the one powerful idea behind your message?
2. What's the one deep emotion you hope to stir?
3. What's the one story nobody else is telling?
4. What's the one action you want readers to take?

The closer you can get to one clear, powerful idea... instead
of a scattershot of many unrelated themes... the more impact
you'll have with your copy.
TOOL #3: THE SIX LEAD TYPES

I'm currently working on a book about Leads with top marketer and copywriter Michael Masterson.

It should be available soon and will show you not only how each of these lead types works but how and when to use it.

This is a rich topic area, and impossible to summarize completely in a short list. But here's a quick rundown you can use, at least as a starting point...

1) Big Promise/Offer - This is a direct appeal that goes straight to the biggest claim you'll make in the promotion. The promise is your headline, your first line, and often your last line too. Offer leads are a type of "big promise" pitch.

2) Problem-Solution - This is the classic "hot button" approach, where you lead off identifying the biggest, most emotionally charged issue for your target... and make promises to solve this problem, all tied to the product.

3) Big Secret/System - The "tease" of hard-to-come by knowledge, formula, or system leads the promo. The secret can either be a solution or hidden problem or, as in many financial promos, a 'system' for getting consistently good results. Usually, you get the best mileage when the secret is revealed by ordering the product.

4) Story - Everyone loves a story. What's more, stories can engage readers who don't know you or the product well or who might flinch at a more direct, unbelievable claim. Testimonials, guru bios, historical proof or track record -- all yield story leads. Just make sure to tell the story quickly and keep it in context of the bigger promise/core idea of the promotion.

5) Predictions - Decidedly indirect, predictions promos focus on irresistible forecasts grounded on assumptions about current events. The more bold the predictions, the better. The more interconnected the details, the better too. Ultimately, the forecast leads to the product as the favorite response to the inevitable.
6) Invitation - Often looking like an invitation and asking prospects to "R.S.V.P.," the invitation lead capitalizes on prospects' sense of common goals and community. The "velvet rope" or exclusivity effect can feature prominently. The target customer feels special for being invited to join the group.

Again, you'll want to dig deeper into the possibilities with each of these lead types. Some work best in some situations, some in others.

But until the book is available, you can use this list above as a kind of "idea starter checklist." Take what you've learned about your client's product and see if one or more of the lead types above might apply.

TOOLS #4: THE FOUR Ps

This is usually used as a way to describe a basic outline, start to finish, of a sales letter.

But with that in mind, you can also use the outline to work backward to getting the right details you'll need to flesh out the copy.

Try turning each of the "Four P" points into questions like this, while you're brainstorming with the client:

1. Promise - What's the biggest one your client makes?
2. Picture - How can we make the message vivid?
3. Proof - Dig for track record, studies, etc.
4. Push - How to best word the offer?
**TOOL #5: THE FOUR Us**

The "Four U" filter is a way to test copy to make sure it's as strong as it can possibly be. You can use this test on headlines, bullet points, even the entire sales letter when evaluated as a whole.

During the brainstorming phase, you can use the same "Four U" points to dig for the kinds of details that could appear anywhere in a sales letter and may form the core of the entire sales package.

Watch how these idea-generating questions derive naturally out of the "Four U" filtering points:

1. **Urgent** - Is there a deadline with the message?
2. **Useful** - How does the product help the customer?
3. **Unique** - What makes this product different?
4. **Ultra-Specific** - Dig for sharp, tight details.

**TOOL #6: THE TIMER**

This might be my favorite addition to the toolkit. I highly recommend you set a limited time for the brainstorming session, right from the start.

Why? Because brainstorming without a clear end or goal often never gets started. When the clock is ticking, however, you know you've got to work hard while you still can.

I've picked 33 minutes and 33 seconds because that's the time late great copywriter Eugene Schwartz used to punch into his egg timer, each morning when he sat down to write.

It's a good-sized clip of time, neither too long or short, to get a conversation started. If you can, I recommend you do at least two or three of these 33:33 timed sessions in each brainstorming event.
Avoid the temptation to do all the brainstorming in one longer go, simply because you then lose the advantage of the close-loom- ing deadline.

You'll also find links below where you can download free timers and recording software that will work on PC or Mac.

**Mac OS X:**

Free stopwatch/timer:
http://www.versiontracker.com/dyn/moreinfo/macosx/28165

*Or choose any other "freeware" application from here:*

Free audio recorder (built-in microphone required):
http://www.versiontracker.com/dyn/moreinfo/macosx/17392

*Or choose any other "freeware" application from here:*
http://www.versiontracker.com/php/q5.php?mode=basic&action=search&str=audio+recorder&srchArea=macosx%7Cmacosx-all&submit=Go

**PC - Windows:**

Free stopwatch/timer:
http://www.versiontracker.com/dyn/moreinfo/win/10968589

*Or choose any other "freeware" application from here:*

Free audio recorder (built-in microphone required):
http://www.versiontracker.com/dyn/moreinfo/win/10728301

*Or choose any other "freeware" application from here:*
Share These Secrets With Your Friends and Colleagues...

Thanks again for signing up for the Copywriter's Roundtable! I hope you'll enjoy the weekly issues, the website postings, and the special opportunities I hope to bring your way.

But now that you've come on board and you've had a chance to read this special report, I'd like to ask you a small favor in return. See, for the last seven years, I've been proud to send out the "Copywriter's Roundtable" -- named by expert copywriter Bob Bly as "the single best e-newsletter on copywriting" -- to anybody who wanted to read it.

But in that time, the only marketing I've ever done has been strictly word-of-mouth. No Google ads. No pop-ups or list shares. Just straight up good press and generosity from the best source anyone could imagine, my loyal readers and fans.

These days, we're looking to do a little more to spread the word. But my favorite strategy is still to turn to you and ask you, providing you like what you see, to just mention the newsletter to any friends and colleagues you think might benefit.

Of course, as you know, the e-letter is free. And you can either send people to the website URL (www.copywritersroundtable.com) or show them this page and they can click below to get started:

Click Here to Sign Up For the Copywriters Roundtable

In case they need a description to let them know what they're getting into, you can send them this:

Every week, we cover breaking trends and industry news, tricks, tips, and techniques, and all the nitty gritty you'll need to know. I also love to dig deep for you into the psychology of selling... into the big ideas that drive what we do... into the career insights and personal stories you'll want to hear...

And all in as personal, funny, and engaging style as possible.

Have something you want to read about or a question you want answered? Even now, I still try to answer every reader email. Lots of those answers show up as live articles in issues that follow. And not just from me, but penned by some of the top experts and contributors in the world.

Today, the CR has over 10,000 readers worldwide.

And you, my readers, did that. Of course I'd like to double, triple, even quadruple those numbers. And I'd love to be able to accomplish that with your help.

Who should you send this recommendation to?

Pros and beginners, business owners, marketers, and just plain hobbyists read the CR every week... anybody you like. Naturally, you can tell them confidently that their privacy is 100% honored and the e-letter itself is free now and will stay that way. Again, let them know they can always click the link below to head to the "official" Copywriter's Roundtable website for more details... Thanks!

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