

GOOD NEWS & GREAT HEADLINES

-and why they were so profitable

WHY ARE YOU starting to read this advertisement? First, you must be interested in Advertising or in a closely related field, either professionally or as a layman. Secondly, the headline has promised you that reading this ad may prove rewarding to you.

These are the two principal attributes of good headlines. They select, from the total readership of the publication, those readers who are (or can be induced to be) interested in the subject of the advertisement. And they promise them a worthwhile reward for reading it.

What kinds of rewards do good headlines promise? How important a part does the headline alone play in the success of an advertisement? Let's tackle this second question first.

How Important Is the Headline?

Perhaps you have read somewhere that 50% of the value of an entire advertisement is represented by the headline itself. Or 70%. Or 80%. The truth is that you cannot possibly evaluate it in percentages.

For example, what percentage *better* is an automobile that runs beautifully as compared with one that won't run at all? It's the same with headlines. One can be almost a total failure in accomplishing even its primary purpose: to induce people to start reading the body matter (the copy) of the advertisement. Another headline can work almost like magic in enticing readers by the thousands into all who magic copy moves people to action and thus moves products off the shelves.

Yes, There's THAT Much Difference...

... in the power of headlines. It isn't enough to cram persuasives into the body matter. Some of the most tremendous losses among advertisements contain body matter filled with persuasive copy. But it just wasn't capitalized into a good headline.

And so the excellent copy did not even get a reading! For, obviously, it is the headline that gets people into the copy; the copy doesn't get them into the headline. In other words, the advertising copywriter's life in life should be to try to make it harder for people to "pass up" his advertisement than to read it. And right in his headline he takes the first, and truly "big," step on the road to that goal.

So much for the importance of headlines—and for the staggering costs and loss of effectiveness when expensive advertising space is devoted to displaying poor ones.

The Sole Purpose of a Headline

Now, before we tackle the second question (What kinds of rewards do good headlines promise?) let's get down to one fundamental. What is the sole purpose of a headline? To make it crystal clear we'll use a simple, and sufficiently accurate, analogy.

The headline of an advertisement is like a flag being held up by a flagman alongside a railroad track. He is using the flag to get the immediate attention of the engineer of an approaching train—so that he can give him the signal to stop. In the case of advertising, on the flag is printed the headline of an advertisement.

Let's carry the analogy further. The train consists of a fast-moving modern Diesel engine and one car. The engineer will (most often) be the mother and/or father of a family. The one dependent car contains the wife and the family. They are all speeding along on the track of their daily lives—moving fast in accordance with the hectic tempo of today.

The message on the flag (the headline of the advertisement) must be persuasive. Yes, and persuasive enough to compete with all the other distractions of life in these times. It must capture attention. And it must offer a "reward" for reading. This reward must be sufficiently attractive to induce the reader to continue reading beyond the headline. (In the case of a negative-type of "warning" headline—some of which are listed among our 100 best—perhaps even draw a further 100 or so far away to say that it is then away in the nature of a red flag.)

What Kinds of Rewards Do Good Headlines Promise?

"That brings us to the answer to this second question. Of course there are many types of headlines, too numerous for us to review here. So we will concentrate upon 100 examples of the two types which in toto unquestionably have the best record of results. (The criteria upon which the selection of the 100 headlines was based are explained in a panel on the second page of this two-page advertisement.)

Both types promise desirable "rewards for reading." One does it through a positive approach; the other through a negative one. Here is how they do it: a) By managing to convey, in a few words, how the reader can save, gain, or accomplish something through the use of your product—how it will increase this in mental, physical, financial, social, emotional, or spiritual stimulation, satisfaction, well-being, or security.

4. The Child Who Won the Hearts of All

This was a key-entitled ad which provided special appeal to which responded in women's magazines. The emotional-type copy described (and the photograph portrayed) the kind of little girl any parent would want his daughter to be: laughing, walking, running forward, with arms outstretched, right out of the ad and into the arms and heart of the reader.

5. Are You Ever Tongue-Tied or a Party?

Pinpoints the myriad of self-conscious, inferiority-complexed wallflowers. "That's me! I want to read this ad; maybe it tells me exactly what to do about it."

6. How a New Discovery Made a Plain Girl Beautiful

Wide appeal; there are more plain girls than beautiful ones—and it was all of them that want to be better looking.

7. How to Win Friends and Influence People

This helped to sell millions of copies of the book of the same title. Strong basic appeal; we all want to do it. But without the words "How To" the headline would become simply a trite wall motto.

8. The Last 2 Hours Are the Longest—And Those are the 2 Hours you Save

An ad which features a famous and powerful figure. Headline is a bullseye for an experienced advertiser who knows what those last two interminable hours that those last two tiresome hours that those last two nerves and patience have made the headline. It doubtless came right out of the personal experience of his writer.

This headline (and all the others discussed here) would have been good even if it had not been supported by any picture at all. But its effect was heightened by a photo of a wrist-watch with the hour-marks indicating 10 to 10 hundredth together—10, 11, and 12 stretched wide apart.

9. Who Else Wants a Screen Star Figure?

Who doesn't? Except—and this is successful and much-run ad is also addressed to them. "Who Else" is not a lack of "you" words; but "who else" wants to be him?" But "who else" wants to be him?"

10. Do You Make These Mistakes in English?

This old-timer still keeps going. A direct challenge. Now read the headline being explained that vital word "There." This word is the "hook" that almost forces you into the copy. "What are these important mistakes? Do I make them?"

It is this "hook" that "pulls" us to stop to inspect upon your mind how significant a part the "specific" plays in so many good headlines. It appears in many of our first ten.

And it will appear in a surprising number of the next ninety. You will see how magnetically it helps to draw the reader into the body matter of an advertisement.

So notice, as you go along, how many of these 100 headlines contain specific words or phrases that make the ad promise to tell you.

These, Which, Which of These, Who, Who Else, Here's How, Here's How, Where, When, What, Why.

Also note how frequently exact amounts are used: number of days, evenings, hours, minutes, dollars, cents, etc.

"The attraction of the specific" is so much of your special attention that you may want to encircle examples of it as you continue reading.

11. Why Some Foods "Explosive" in Your Stomach

A provocative "why" headline. Based upon the completely understandable fact that some food combinations virtually "explode" in the stomach. Broad appeal. Relevant picture of chemical retort shaped like a stomach, starting to explode.

12. Hands That Look Lovelier in 24 Hours—Or Your Money Back

Universal appeal with new results guaranteed. "Or Your Money Back."

13. You Can Laugh At Money Worries—If You Follow This Simple Plan

Something everybody wants to be able to do. A successful keyed ad upon which many thousands have been spent.

14. Why Some People Almost Always Make Money in the Stock Market

A profitable checked-out selling book written by a partner in a well-known and highly-regarded brokerage house. Important key words: "Some" and "Almost"—which make the headline credible.

15. When Doctors "Feel Follen" This Is What They Do

What's the secret of the "feeling" of this well-known book club has spent a great deal of money on this ad. Headline aimed squarely at the large market "people-who" mean "it" keep up with

this well-known ad? First the suggestion of paradox. We seldom think of doctors as being in a poor health themselves. And when they are, what they do about it is information "right from the horse's mouth"; carries a note of authority and greater assurance of "reward for reading the ad."

Also, the use of the frank colloquialism, "feel follen" (not "fallen"); sounds human, natural. Besides, it has "surprise value"—since the vocabulary of the advertising pages has a certain sameness and stilted quality.

This ad pulled only half the number of responses when a test was made changing *When Doctors "Feel Follen" to When Doctors Don't Feel Up to Par.* (Other examples of the use of common colloquialisms and "surprise" words are given in some of the 100 good headlines.)

16. IT SEEMS INCREDIBLE That You Can Offer These Signed Original Etchings—For \$5 Each!

Anticipates the reader's natural incredulity concerning such an exceptional bargain. The ad goes on to remove his doubt in advance, by acknowledging the likelihood of it.

17. Five Familiar Skin Troubles—How Do You Want to Overcome?

"Let me keep reading"—is the thought that runs through the mind of the five. "The old 'Which of These' 'do you want?' 'but which do you want?' (Interrogative) headline helps entice readers into the copy. Note how many of these 100 are interrogative headlines.

18. Which of These \$2.50 to \$5 Best Sellers Do You Want? For Only \$1 Each!

This keyed ad sold hundreds of thousands of books. Strong comparative-price bargain appeal.

19. Who Ever Hears of a Woman Lost in Weight—Enjoying a Delicious Meal at the Same Time?

Another example of a headline which anticipates incredulity in order to help overcome it.

20. How I Improved My Memory in One Evening

This is the famous "Addison Sims of Seattle" ad which claimed that household papers. Could you expect wanting to read it?

21. Discover the Fortune That Lies Hidden in Your Salary

One of those "discover what lies hidden" headlines. (None other than a proven puller or a proven driver of offering stock securities on a "pay out of income" basis.)

22. Doctors Prove 2 Out of 3 Women Can Have More Beautiful Skin in 14 Days

Women want it. "Why 2 out of 3?" An eye-catching headline. Statistics proved 10 Quick results are what I want... only 14 days!"

IN THIS SECOND "discover" we want to point out, once again, how many of the headlines already quoted (and others to follow) are, by definition, "interrogative" headlines. They are, in effect, a question. They are, in effect, a question. They are, in effect, a question.

23. How to Do Any of These Ten Embarrassing Things?

Bull's-eye question. "How to do any of these ten embarrassing things?" This is one of our special headlines. The "interrogative" headlines are, in effect, a question. They are, in effect, a question. They are, in effect, a question.

24. How a Fortune Was Made in 24 Hours

Paradox excites interest. Broad appeal: almost anyone has once had a pet money-making idea that others have thought foolish and impractical. Sympathy for the underdog; "what's the story of this man who turned the tables on the people who ridiculed him?"

25. How Often Do You Hear Yourself Saying: 'No! I haven't read it, I've been meaning to!'

A well-known book club has spent a great deal of money on this ad. Headline aimed squarely at the large market "people-who" mean "it" keep up with

26. Whose Fault When Children Die?

What parent wouldn't be stopped cold by this headline? "To the blame" is probably to blame. It's a disturbing condition—and, most important, a reflection upon one. Maybe this ad tells me what to do about it.

27. How a "Foot Sling" Made Me a Star Salesman

"What is the 'Foot Sling'?" Why did people call it that? How did it transform this fellow? I'd like to be able to sell myself and my ideas—even though selling may not be my vocation. (A large appropriation was spent on this ad. Its use of its resultfulness had been proven.)

28. Have YOU These Symptoms of Nerve Exhaustion?

Everyone likes to read about his "Symptoms." The appeal is broad: the condition of "Nerve Exhaustion" is common.

29. Guaranteed to Go Thru Ice, Mud or Snow—or We Pay You the Toll

If you offer a powerful guarantee with your product, play it up strongly and quickly in the headline. Don't relegate it to minor display. Many products are usually backed up by definite guarantees—but their advertising does not make the most of them.

30. Have YOU a "Worry" Stock?

"Perhaps this ad will tell me why I need not lose any sleep over it—or how I can replace it with that will zoom."

31. How a New Kind of Clay Improved My Complexion in 30 Minutes

Promises a desirable "reward for reading." And the true experience of another person (with something relevant to our own desire) is always interesting.

32. 141 New Ways to a Man's Heart—in This Fascinating Book for Cooks

If you have read this far, the particular merits of this headline will be obvious to you.

33. Is the Life of a Child Worth \$1 to You?

Trenchant headline for a brake-lining service. How the life of a little child may be snuffed out by an accident due to your ineffective brakes.

34. Profits That Lie Hidden in Your Farm

Wideley run in farm papers, with exceptional results. The "hidden profits" idea and the suggestion of "retaining a loss."

35. Everywhere Women Are Raving About This Amazing New Shampoo!

The colloquial "Raving About," "The success" word, "Amazing" (Nothing succeeds like success.) And the "everywhere" word—still seems to have some power left.

36. Do YOU Do Any of These Ten Embarrassing Things?

Bull's-eye question. "How to do any of these ten embarrassing things?" This is one of our special headlines. The "interrogative" headlines are, in effect, a question. They are, in effect, a question. They are, in effect, a question.

37. 37. Six Types of Investors—Which Group Are YOU In?

This ad produced inquiries in large quantities. Investors reviewed the characteristics of each of the six groups, as described in the ad; then inquired about a program designed to meet the investment purposes of their particular group.

AND NOW WE COME TO "BREATHERS" #3. It's a short one because you already know its "essence" very well. But to stress its importance, let us point out this to you: *as these actual headlines contain one of these actual words—You, Your, or Yourself!*

In many of the other 88 headlines the "you" is implied, even though it may not actually appear.

Even when the pronoun is first person singular (for example, *How I Improved My Memory in One Evening*) the reward promised is so unpersonally desired that it is, in effect, really saying "You can do it too!" That's all for that. No use adding more than a little "let you forget" to the thousands of words already written about the "point of view."

38. How to Take Out Stains... Use (Product Name) and Follow These Easy Directions

An example of a good "service" ad—one which, besides being relevantly tied up with the product, also provides helpful information useful in itself. (Such ads often have considerable longevity because they are cut out and used for future reference.)

39. Today... Add \$10,000 to Your Estate—For the Price of a New Hat

Who wouldn't want to do that? Doubt as to the promise is offset by the fact that the advertiser is a large and reputable insurance company.

40. Does Your Child Ever Embarrass You?

Direct; challenging a common circumstance. Brings up a food of recollections. How can such unpleasant experiences be avoided in the future?

Based upon a strong self appeal. Parents are, first, individuals; second, parents. The kind of reflection that children, when they are in the presence of their parents is a useful copy to remember. (This headline is the negative opposite of #4, *The Child Who Won the Hearts of All*.)

41. Is YOUR Home Picture-Poor?

A rib-sticking question hitting thousands of readers. Illustrated by photo of an otherwise attractive living room with blank areas in its walls; with X's indicating where pictures would improve the room's appearance.

42. How to Give Your Children Extra Income—These 3 Delicious Ways

It opens the wide maximum of newspaper responses. Starts where the headline is. In other words, the headline already accepts the fact that children's blood should contain plenty of iron. So the headline goes on from "three delicious 'Extras' for you and 'Our' Dish-Wash" to get it.

43. Te Papa Who Want to Write in Half the Time

Univerally sells its audience, which is large—and stylish.

44. This Almost-Magical Lamp Lights Highway Turns Before You Make Them

The word "Almost" lends believability. Headline promises an automatic no-effort method of relieving an annoying condition or avoiding a dangerous emergency.

45. The Crimes We Commit Against Our Stomachs

Another "start where the reader is" headline—because most people already believe they often give their digestive systems some pretty rough treatment. This rapport, between the theme of the ad and the common belief of its readers, makes the "What" and "Our" practically equal in effectiveness to "You" and "Your."

46. The Man With the "Grasshopper Mind"

An immediate appeal. "Grasshopper" with himself leaps to the mind of the reader. He wants to check on the personal aspect. What are the symptoms? Starting things one never finishes? Jumping from one thing to another?

"How much am I like him? It's not a good trait. What did he do about it? What can I do about it?" (An example of a negative headline that strikes home more effectively and dramatically than would a positive one.)

47. They Laughed When I Sat Down At The Piano—But When I Started to Play!

Another one that has entered our language. Sympathy with the underdog. Particularly interesting, structurally, as an example of a headline which "turns the corner" by using a final tagline to make itself positive instead of negative.

48. Throw Away Your Ours!

When Ole Evinrude, the outboard-motor king, ran a small ad with this headline he took the first step toward building his one-room machine shop into a big business. (A similar headline, *Throw Away Your Aerials*, was also once responsible for building a business in the radio field.)

49. How to Do Wonders With a...

This type of headline is *who wouldn't want to do that?* Doubt as to the promise is offset by the fact that the advertiser is a large and reputable insurance company.

50. Who Else Wants Lighter Cokes—in Half the Time?

Strong appeal. Another good "Who Else" headline. (#5, *Who Else Wants a Screen Star Figure?*)

51. Little Links That Keep Men Poor

A key word "retaining a loss" ad whose checked results justified frequent repetition.

52. Pierced by 501 Nails... in Half the Time!

Who wouldn't be interested in reading more about a tire like this?

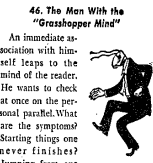
53. No More Back-Breaking Garden Cakes for ME—Yours Is Now the Show-Place of the Neighborhood

A good example of a before-and-after headline which "makes the turn" from negative to positive.

"BREATHERS" #18 ABOUT Negative Headlines.

"Annoyance" the positive headline "eliminate the negative" advised a popular song of a few years ago. For years that has also been the popular refrain of the advice often given to copywriters. Discussion about negative headlines has sometimes quoted more fire than enlightenment.

Yet our 100 headlines include 21 which are completely negative and 10 others which start with a negative approach and then become positive. So the negative approach



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—continued on page 38

Brace Yourself...

this is only the first page of a two-page "article" about advertising. Since every one's reading-speed is different we don't know how long it will take you to read these almost 7,500 words. But we hope you will find the two pages sufficiently interesting and informative to justify reading them in full; that you will consider the time well spent; and that you may even want to keep them for future reference.

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