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5 keys to leaner, meaner copy

Florida writer Robert Warren suggests five techniques that will help muscle up the effectiveness of your advertising copy:

■ **Shun word clutter**

If a word does not help produce the results you want, it hurts.

Analyze your copy word for word. Mercilessly — because any word that does not strengthen your writing weakens it, Warren says.

■ **Strip your copy down to its essential parts**

Try to reduce your entire message to a single sentence, Warren urges. It clarifies things for you and your sales prospects.

Split long, complex, multi-thought sentences into one-idea-at-a-time statements.

If your topic demands complex statements, he states, use paragraphs consisting of several one-concept sentences.

■ **Eliminate lazy words**

Every word of copy should contribute to the structure of your advertisement, Warren says.

“Every word should be doing real work, conveying necessary information and supporting other parts of the piece.”

It is probably more economical to draw catalog stock from your printer's paper inventory than to buy from a paper house and risk ordering too much or too little stock.

■ **Avoid modifiers**

Modifiers are words — usually adverbs and adjectives — that affect the meaning of verbs and nouns. For examples, “run quickly” and “the shining sun.”

Weed them out of your copy as much as you can, Warren advises.

Instead, use solid nouns and punchy verbs. They work harder to get your points across.

■ **When in doubt, cut it out**

All writers tend to fall in love with the beautiful phrase they have just written.

Often, unfortunately, it does not do its selling job.

If you cannot figure out how to fit an immortal piece of poetry into your communication, “cut it completely and don't look back,” Warren says. “Hemingway was right — kill your darlings.”

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