



One Dozen Powerful Words for Marketers

WE HUMANS SEEM TO BE HARD-WIRED TO RESPOND TO CERTAIN WORDS AND THESE ARE THE WORDS THAT SMART MARKETERS INCLUDE IN THEIR ADS. IGNORE THEM AT YOUR PERIL.



You told me my car would be ready at 5! So where is it?

Nobody likes it when a car is late. Not the service writer. Not the service manager. Not the parts manager. Not the dealer.

And definitely not the customer.

Presorted First Class US Postage PAID Brooklyn, NY Permit #84

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In addition to using the “magic words” that I describe in this article, another good option is identifying pain points (as this ad does) that vex the prospect and addressing them in your headline.

Free, Now, You, Save, Money, Easy, Finally, Guarantee, Health, Results, New, Love, and Discovery—these are all words that I have used frequently in advertising campaigns over the years. They aren't in any particular order but the most powerful seem to be free, save, guarantee, and finally (along with its close cousin, at last).

Many of these terms correlate well with “fundamental human needs” as defined by Manfred Max-Neef, Antonio Elizalde, and Martin Hopenhayn. You've probably seen them before: Subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, leisure, creation, identity, and freedom.

These needs and wants tend to be constant through all human cultures and across historical time periods.

In 1943 Abraham Maslow created a hierarchy of needs that is a theory in psychology. Maslow's theories parallel many other theories of human developmental psychology, all of which focus on describing the stages of growth in humans.

Maslow's pyramid began with physiological needs (breathing, food, water, sex, sleep, homeostasis, and excretion) and proceeded through safety (security of body, employment, resources, family, health, and property) to love and belonging (friendship, family, and sexual intimacy) to esteem (self-esteem, confidence,

achievement, and respect of others) and finally to self-actualization (morality, creativity, spontaneity, problem solving, lack of prejudice, and acceptance of facts).

In 1954, Maslow's book, *Motivation and Personality*, summarized his studies of what he called exemplary people such as Albert Einstein, Jane Addams, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Frederick Douglas.

Courses in marketing teach Maslow's hierarchy as one of the first theories and as a basis for understanding consumers' motives for action. Marketers have historically looked towards consumers' needs to define their actions in the market. If producers design products meeting consumer needs, consumers will more often choose those products over those of competitors.

Whichever product or service better fills the void created by the need will be chosen more frequently, thus increasing sales.

Each of the powerful marketing words taps into an emotional trigger that originates from sub-cortical and limbic areas of the brain. These areas are more commonly known as the “Lizard Brain” where our deepest and most instinctive impulses originate.

Marketing guru Ray Jutkins loved the word “guarantee” and pushed his clients vigorously to include the world's best guarantee: *Money Back if You're Not Satisfied*. This is a guarantee that frightens a lot of people. It shouldn't. Offering it guarantees (sorry!) that some people will misuse it but most people won't. Think of your own reactions when you view an advertisement

and consider what is the most powerful statement a merchant can make. If there's a 100% money-back guarantee, the prospective buyer is likely to conclude that the merchant is sure of the quality of the product or service being offered and that means that the person is more likely to purchase if they are at all interested in what is being offered.

The merchant who sells without a money-back guarantee ("MBG") is swimming upstream.

What about the other words?

ONE OF MY FAVORITES IS *FINALLY*. IT'S A WORD THAT CARRIES ADDITIONAL MEANINGS: EFFORT! SUCCESS! TRIUMPH! THE READER UNDERSTANDS THAT YOU'VE BEEN WORKING TO SATISFY HIS

OR HER NEEDS AND THAT YOU'VE SUCCEEDED. IT'S AN UNCOMMONLY POWERFUL WORD THAT'S OFTEN OMITTED FROM LISTS OF THE MOST POWERFUL WORDS. *AT LAST!* IS SOMETIMES AN EVEN MORE POWERFUL INDICATOR OF SUCCESS.

Now is similar to *Finally*. Even though *Finally* seems to have more power, *Now* is shorter and easier to fit into a headline.

New and *Discovery* are clearly related and in many ways are similar to *Now* and *Finally*. We humans are always interested in what's new and what solves our problems.

These terms aren't magic, though. If they don't ring true, don't use them.

You is always a powerful word because it connects your product or service with the reader and the reader's problem.

Save and *Money*? Well, the allure is obvious.

When you're putting together a marketing message, it's important to keep these terms in mind but it's also important to avoid the temptation to toss them in, hoping that the magic words will charm your readers. Or because you read somewhere that they make your message more powerful.

Make your message believable, add powerful marketing words, and aim it at the right audience. Do that and your chances of success increase dramatically. Ω

Web Marketing: How NOT To ...

LET'S SAY YOU SELL BOXES AND MOVING MATERIALS. LET'S ALSO SAY THAT YOU HAVE A WEBSITE THAT TALKS ABOUT YOUR ABILITY TO MAKE ANY SIZE CUSTOM BOX AND A FORM THAT ALLOWS PEOPLE TO SEND YOU A QUESTION OR A REQUEST. SO FAR, SO GOOD.

Now let's say a potential buyer (let's just say it was me) visits your website on Tuesday morning, fills out the contact form, and describes a box needed to ship a bulky object. And let's say that your website confirms that the form has been successfully submitted.

What now?

IF YOU'RE SMART, YOU'LL FIND THE REQUEST WHEN YOU OPEN YOUR STORE AT 9:30 AM AND YOU'LL REPLY NO LATER THAN 9:45 AM.

Silence ensued.

So let's say that the potential buyer visits your website again in the afternoon, fills out the form, and submits it again. Should you reply or ignore the request.

Silence continued.

Now let's say that your potential buyer sends you a fax at 6 am on Wednesday morning, pointing out (in a most civil manner) that it might be wise to check for messages from your website and asking

(for the third time) for information about a box for a bulky object.

When might you reply?

REMOVING ALL THE HYPOTHETICALS: YES, IT WAS ME WHO MADE THE REQUESTS. I RECEIVED A RESPONSE TO MY FAX SHORTLY BEFORE 11 AM ON WEDNESDAY. NO EXPLANATION OF WHY MY 2 WEB-BASED REQUESTS HADN'T BEEN ACTED ON. NO APOLOGY. JUST *HERE'S THE PRICE FOR THE BOX WE HAVE THAT'S THE CLOSEST TO WHAT YOU NEED. WE CAN MAKE A CUSTOM BOX (FOR 3 TIMES THE PRICE) AND YOU HAVE TO PAY IN ADVANCE.*


I bought the box I needed from the merchant in question because:

- The price is OK.
- The store is only slightly out of my way on the trip home.
- Nobody else in Columbus, Ohio, the 19th largest market in the nation, seems to offer any comparable box.

Memo to store owners: If you run the only store in the metro area that offers your product or service, your business will survive less than stellar customer service. If you have competition, though, I wouldn't recommend it.

Postscript: The merchant in question is a nice guy and, when I stopped to pick up the box, he had it set aside with my name on it.

So if I need another box or packaging materials, I'll consider using this merchant again. The bottom-line lesson is this: Even if you make a bad first impression, you can rescue your reputation by providing excellent service. Ω



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