

WORDS

T H A T

SELL

THE THESAURUS TO HELP YOU PROMOTE
YOUR PRODUCTS, SERVICES, AND IDEAS

“I love it, I love it. A must for
all in business, *it's a treasure.*”

—Joe Girard, author of
How to Sell Anything to Anybody

RICHARD BAYAN

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RICHARD BAYAN

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This book is dedicated to my parents.

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Preface

Like magicians with their props, or fishermen with their time-tested lures, advertising copywriters rely upon a handy assortment of contrivances for seducing an audience. A copywriter's tools are words, and the most effective tools are words that *sell*. Infallible adjectives like *superb* and *irresistible*. Ageless phrases like *a lifetime of satisfaction* and *right at your fingertips*. And, of course, that sturdy old standard, *FREE!*

This volume represents an attempt to gather the most potent of these words and phrases into a single sourcebook. To compile this material I rummaged through mountainous stacks of magazines, newspapers, brochures, and catalogs. I kept an ear open for compelling phrases heard over the radio and television. I raided my own copy files, consulted more than one thesaurus, and, after organizing the entries into lists, added still more words and phrases as they came to mind. I rejected those entries that seemed to fall flat in print, and shunned any slogans closely identified with specific products.

Think of this book as your personal magic kit—or, if you prefer, a bottomless tackle box filled with glittering lures. Use it whenever you require inspiration on short notice. Browse through its lists at leisure to expand your repertoire. With this book at your side, you'll be able to go straight to the words and phrases that suit your needs. Instead of groping for

words, your mind will be free to focus on the real task of promotion: shaping a message that generates an enthusiastic response from your audience.

Acknowledgments

During my formative years as a copywriter, I thought it might be a wise idea to compile a notebook of words and phrases to help me in my work. I toyed with the notion and let it pass.

Then a strange thing happened. Somebody offered to *pay* me for compiling such a notebook. Motivated by the prospect of fame and riches, I set to work, filled a boxful of note cards, and produced this book (which I still plan to use in my work).

I would like to thank the people who helped bring this project to fruition: Ed Werz, for having the vision to publish a book so much more ambitious in scope than my original idea; Ginny Christensen, my friend and catalyst, who (as usual) knew how to get things done; and Judy Makover, my editor, whose patience and wisdom are a continual source of inspiration. I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge those nameless writers of advertisements, brochures, catalogs, and sales letters, whose collective opus furnished me with so much of my raw material.

How to Use This Book

At some time in your life you've probably used a thesaurus—a reference book filled with lists of synonyms. This book is a thesaurus of words and phrases used in advertising and other promotional writing.

As in any standard thesaurus, the entries in this volume are organized by topic. Look up **Stylish**, for example, and you'll find terms like *elegant* and *smashing*. Under **Convenient** you'll encounter *easily adjustable* and *take it anywhere*, among others. But look again: this thesaurus departs from the usual format in several respects.

- This book is organized into sections that correspond with the natural progression of sales literature from beginning to end.
 - 1. GRABBERS**—the heads, slogans, opening statements, and provocative questions that catch the reader's attention.
 - 2. DESCRIPTIONS AND BENEFITS**—the words and phrases used in body copy to convey the qualities of your product or service.
 - 3. CLINCHERS**—the closing statements that can push an undecided reader over the response threshold.
 - 4. TERMS AND OFFERS**—the “bottom line” that can make or break an advertisement.

The fifth section, **SPECIAL STRATEGIES**, provides you with lists of aggressive phrases for specialized purposes—from **Flattering the Reader** to **Knocking the Competition**.

- Each section is in turn subdivided into topics. If you want to expand upon the idea of “big,” for instance, go to the section **DESCRIPTIONS AND BENEFITS** and find the topic **Big/Many**, which provides you with a list of words and phrases conveying that concept. If you're looking for an intriguing question with which to lead off your copy, turn to the section **GRABBERS** and find the topic entitled **Opening with a Question**.

The Table of Contents gives you a complete listing of sections and topics. If the topic you have in mind is not listed there, you will probably be able to find it in the Key Word Index at the back of the book. In fact, you might find it more convenient to check the index first, then refer to the appropriate list.

Note: In **DESCRIPTIONS AND BENEFITS**—by far the longest section of the book—the topics are arranged alphabetically for quick reference.

- The words and phrases supplied for each topic are not necessarily synonymous—they're simply useful expressions gathered in one place to help you express the idea you have in mind. Under **Sensory Qualities**, for example,

you'll encounter words as disparate as *spicy* and *windswept*. Yet you'll probably notice that similar expressions tend to clump together within a given list.

- Many of the phrases contain blanks or trail off in an ellipsis (...) where the phrase breaks off. For example:

The first _____ to address the problem of...

Here you've been supplied with the *pattern* for a phrase, which you can easily adapt to your needs by filling in the missing words or extending the phrase as you see fit.

Some further words of advice: for best results, familiarize yourself with the format of the book. Once you do so, you'll find that the arrangement by "natural progression" is a real convenience.

This book does not pretend to be exhaustive. I fully expect, in the coming months and years, to stumble across words and phrases that would have made first-rate entries. No doubt you will, too. When you find them, why not write them down under the appropriate topic and expand the collection. In time, my book will become *your* book—and that's the way it was meant to be.

Note: We invite you to participate in the next edition of *Words That Sell*. If you discover any additional words or phrases that belong in this book, send them to Caddylak Publishing, 201 Montrose Road, Westbury, New York 11590.

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A Copywriting Primer

The copywriter uses words as tools to persuade and motivate an audience. You *persuade* your readers that you have something valuable to offer; you *motivate* them to acquire it for themselves. This is the essence of effective copywriting—whether you opt for the hard sell or the subliminal suggestion.

The following guidelines, distilled from my own experience as well as that of other professional copywriters, should help you avoid some of the hobgoblins to which members of our tribe too often fall prey. At the same time—and with a minimum of trial and error—you’ll gain the perspective you need to start writing “words that sell.”

Before You Write

1. *Analyze your product or service.* Do a little research to get your facts straight. Assemble your data from current sources of information (marketing reports, evaluations, product managers, existing copy); then, for best results, examine the product first-hand from a consumer’s point of view. Define the nature of the product and enumerate all the features that would be of interest to a prospective consumer.

2. *“Position” your product or service.* How is it different from or superior to the competition? What do you offer that the competition doesn’t? Positioning is criti-

cal if you want to develop a successful marketing strategy in a competitive situation.

3. *Assess your audience.* Always gear your copy to the needs and tastes of your readers. Are they everyday consumers? Upscale young professionals? Hard-boiled buyers with a bottom-line mentality? Executives in your field? Find out by checking the demographics of the media in which you’ll be advertising, or (in the case of direct mail) by obtaining a breakdown of your mailing lists.

4. *Plan your attack.* Decide how much copy will be necessary to convey the message. (As a rule of thumb, the length of your copy should vary in direct proportion to your company’s investment in the product. But not always. If your product is simple and its virtues self-evident, you don’t have much explaining to do.) Other points worth considering: Do you want to develop a focal point or a running theme? Do you want to advertise a line of related products? And be sure to coordinate your plans with the designer so that you’re both working with the same concept in mind.

When You Write

1. *Don’t lose sight of your primary goal: to sell your product or service.* Your writing should be more than a flat presentation of the facts. (Remember that a copywriter must persuade and motivate.)

On the other hand, don't let runaway creativity bury the message. The most brilliant efforts will be wasted if your audience can't remember your company's name. Write to sell.

2. *Don't fill your copy with empty overstatements.* Too many words like *fabulous* and *extraordinary* within a brief space will destroy your credibility. You don't want your audience to dismiss you as a propagandist. Instead, try to *convince* the audience that your product is fabulous. Make *them* say, "That's really extraordinary!"

3. *Be accurate.* Be sure you get the facts straight. Don't leave yourself open to claims of false advertising by making statements that can't be substantiated. Above all, be *truthful*. Resist the temptation to distort the facts for an easy sale. (Your sins will find you out, anyway.)

4. *Be specific.* Don't use vaporous abstractions or vague approximations when you have a chance to create vivid images with simple, observable details. Would you rather eat a "frozen dessert" or a "raspberry ice"? And try to avoid the notorious "than what?" comparisons: for example, "lasts longer" (than what?) or "gets the job done faster" (than what?).

5. *Be organized.* Your message should progress logically and inexorably from the headline to the clincher. Don't bury essential information in the darkest recesses of your copy or lead off with

trivia that stops the reader cold. Like an old-fashioned short story, your copy should have a beginning, a middle, and an end.

6. *Write for easy reading.* Your style should suit the audience you're addressing, but certain rules apply to *all* copy. Cultivate a style that flows smoothly and rapidly, a style that's clear, uncluttered, involving and persuasive. Avoid long, convoluted sentence constructions. Affect a crisp but friendly and extraverted tone. *Communicate.* You want to do everything possible to insure that your message gets read.

7. *Don't offend.* Humor is a controversial issue among advertising insiders. A good many experts preach against it, but there's no denying that humor can be an effective tool—if it suits the subject or situation. (You don't want to joke about insurance or funerals.) Sarcasm, cynicism and other extreme forms of individuality are not likely to meet with mass approval. Don't criticize your audience's taste in clothes, music, pets, or anything else. Don't preach. Be of sunny disposition, and aim to please.

8. *Revise and edit your work.* Cut out all dead wood; every word should pull its weight. (Copywriting is like poetry in this respect.) Be your own critic. Check your facts, your syntax, your spelling. Make sure you haven't left anything out.

PART 1

GRABBERS

Making the Reader Sit Up and Take Notice

Heads and Slogans

Switch to _____

Success starts with _____

The _____ that works as hard as you do

It's time for _____

_____ spoken here!

_____ means business

How do you turn a _____ into a _____?

The legend lives

Some straight talk about _____

_____ doesn't have to be expensive

_____ fever!

A little _____ can go a long way

Get comfortable with _____

Break away from the pack with _____

Not just another _____

Your partner in _____

Why your first _____ should be a _____

The _____ advantage

The _____ edge

A _____ for all seasons

Taste the difference!

Only _____ gives you...

Seeing is believing

The best-kept secret in _____

For the finest in _____, look to _____

They don't call us _____ for nothing

Always go to an expert...

We don't cut corners

It takes talent and we've got it

The _____ experts

The _____'s best friend

You'll swear by us—not *at us!*

At _____, you're #1

Get hooked on _____

Go with a winner

It's easy to spot the winners

It's easy to see...

It's elementary...

Meet the newest addition to our family

The price cutters

There's no substitute for _____

The dependables

Train for the future

America's leading _____

America's favorite _____

The _____ pledge

A major breakthrough in _____

State-of-the-art _____

_____ is our middle name

Built to last

The fun begins with _____
Instant _____
_____ in your pocket
The smart choice
Don't get stuck with...
The _____ guys
Announcing the first...
Celebrate with _____
_____ where you want it, when you
want it
Go all the way!
_____—for those who insist on the best
Finally, there's a better way to...
Nothing sells like a _____
Nothing's built like a _____
In a class by itself
_____ is our business
Don't gamble with...
Don't take chances with...
Take a chance with...
A _____ from the word "go"
The answer to your prayers
Who says you can't win 'em all?
The only way to...
Say "Yes!" to _____

Check us out
For those special times
For those special people in your life
How our _____ stacks up
Food for thought
Now, more than ever, you need _____
_____ reasons why you should...
So easy a child can do it
Everything you always wanted to know
about _____
Can you afford *not* to...?
Don't wait for success to come to you!
Take a minute to...
An investment in your future
Your shortcut to...
Amazing medical breakthrough!
Turn your life around!

Other heads and slogans can be found under
individual topics.

Salutations and Invitations

Dear Friend:

You have been selected...

Dear Neighbor:

Join us...

Dear Customer:

We want you to...

Dear Preferred Customer:

Try this on for size:

Dear Valued Customer:

Dear Buyer:

Dear Patron of the Arts:

Dear Reader:

Dear Shareholder:

Dear Classmate:

Dear Fellow Alumnus:

Dear Subscriber:

Dear Retailer:

Dear Member:

Dear Citizen:

Greetings!

Attention!

Welcome to...

Come with us...

You are cordially invited...

A special invitation...

A personal invitation...

You are about to join...

Get ready to enjoy...

We request your presence...

Opening with a Question

Isn't it time you...?

Did you know that...?

Are you still...?

Want to keep in touch with.. ?

Want to stay abreast of...?

Are you interested in...?

Are you curious about...?

Are you intrigued by...?

Will you be ready for the...?

Who could say no to...?

Do you want a better job?

Could you use an extra \$_____ each month?

What's the best investment you could make?

How secure is your job?

Why postpone your future in...?

What would you say if we offered to help you...?

Will you risk just \$1.00 to...?

Have you ever stayed awake at night thinking about...?

Did you ever ask yourself...?

How many times have you said to yourself, ...?

Don't you need...?

Don't you wish...?

Wouldn't you like to...?

Why pay full price for _____ when you can buy for less at _____?

Confused about which _____ to buy?

Why should you use _____ when you can...?

Tired of empty promises from...?

Tired of the same old _____?

Why trade a _____ for a _____?

Why sacrifice _____ for _____?

Who can put a price on _____?

Are you ready for...?

Do you want to stretch your purchasing power?

How can you cut the high cost of _____?

How much is your company spending on _____?

Are you drowning in a sea of _____?

Have you ever thought about...?

What's the most effective way to...?

What's the most profitable...?

What's the safest...?
