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From:  
W-a-y West of Jewfish Creek

Dear Friend & Subscriber,

My head hurts, my feet stink and I don't love Jimmy Swaggert.

I don't want to be here at my desk writing this letter. I want to be on my boat. Writing sucks. I hate to write. Anybody who says they like to write is either a degenerate liar or a social leper. Let's face it: What kind of nerd wants to sit and struggle with a blank piece of paper when he could be 60 feet underwater slaughtering innocent fish... or... romancing his honey... or... going to a movie... or... playing golf... or... reading what somebody else has struggled to write...

Or anything!

Anything but writing. But alas, judging from the calls on my electronic mailbox, the numero uno subject my subscribers want me to write about is writing.

So I am. Now, the first thing I want you to know about writing (other than how much it sucks) is the best way to get good at writing is...

### **By Writing!**

I know that sounds like double-talk but, it isn't. The biggest secret to writing well is simply work. Just the act of doing it. For the moment, forget about getting it perfect, forget about grammar, forget about syntax, punctuation, etc.

Just sit down and start writing.

John D. McDonald was one of the best writers of all time. He died in December of 1986 but, fortunately, he left a legacy of some of the most memorable fiction ever penned. In fact, I became literally addicted to his Travis McGee series. (You will too once you read one of them.) Anyway, when he was first getting started, he read somewhere the average novelist didn't really hit his stride until he had written about ten books. And so, what did McDonald do? It's very simple: He wrote the equivalent of ten novels in one year!

Listen: Writing does get easier. However, starting to write does not. Therefore, if you've got a job of writing to do, just sit down and start.

Don't wait to get organized. Don't wait for ideas or inspiration. Don't wait until you "feel like it." (I never do.)

**Just Start!**

OK, enough of that. Now, it goes without say, (but let's say it anyway), the kind of writing we're concerned with here is, the kind that convinces people to buy something. And that's the hardest kind of writing of all. It's also the most profitable! You know, I routinely get more for writing a single letter than most authors get for writing an entire book.

Or sometimes, ten entire books.

So, let's get specific. To sell somebody something, you've got to do four things. (1) You've got to catch their attention. (2) You've got to capture their interest. (3) You've got to arouse their desire. (Sounds dirty, doesn't it?) and, (4) You've got to motivate them to action. This, as many of you know, is called the AIDA formula.

Attention

Interest

Desire

Action

Today, we're going to concentrate on getting people's attention by learning how to write what I call "killer" headlines. Hark unto me. Listen: If you want to capture the attention of someone in a crowd, what's the best way to do it? It's really quite elementary, My Dear Watson. What you do is...

#### **You Call Him By Name!**

And, if you want someone riveted to your sales letters, hook up with some outfit that can do Admark or laser printing (or else use your word processor) and put your reader's name in a headline printed at the top of the sales letter you send him. Like this:

**Ben Suarez Attempts Suicide  
After Realizing He'll Never Be  
As Good-Looking As Gary Halbert!**

or...

**Bill Bonner Fails To Hire The  
Prince Of Print And Loses Millions!**

or...

**Frank Cawood Cashes In Big  
By Mailing Unique  
"Concept Letter" Developed By  
California Madman!**

or...

**Jimmy Calano Changes His Will  
And Leaves All His Millions  
To Guru Gary!**

or...

**Alicia Evans Expresses Astonishment  
At Seeing Her Name In Newsletter  
Written By Demented Nerd From Ohio!**

And so on. What I have just described is the ultimate way to get attention in a sales letter. No one, not even someone as *blase`* as Feeney Griffith, will fail to perk up at seeing his or her name in print, especially if it's unexpected.

Of course, we can't always use our prospects' names in our headlines so, what are some other good ideas? Here are three of the most powerful:

1. Put news in your headline.
2. Promise a benefit in your headline.
3. Do both of the above in the same headline.

Here are some good words to use in headlines. Announcing... At last... Now... Now, at last... How to... Here are... 17-Ways to... The art of... The secret of... A startling fact about... Amazing... New...

And so on. Now, here's a headline that combines both news value and the promise of a benefit:

**At Last! Scientists Discover New  
Way To Look Younger In Just 17-Days!**

There's much to be learned in the 13 words above. At Last!: Boy, that sure suggests something we've been waiting for has finally happened, doesn't it? Goody! Goody! Scientists: Yeah! Not just anybody; not some know nothing bag lady living in the streets; not some ad man or copywriter. No. No. We're talking about a select, objective, hard-headed, analytical, totally honest group of folks who validate our headline. Discover: Wow! It seems to connote research laboratories and maybe a scientific breakthrough. New Way: Hussah! Hussah! We're all questing for new ways continually, aren't we? New ways to grow hair, get thin, make more money, etc. To Look Younger: Ah, who is there among us over the age of 30 that wouldn't welcome the achieving of this almost universally-sought after benefit? In Just 17-Days!: More validation because it's so specific. Claude Hopkins said it, "Generalities fall off your readers like water off a duck's back." Or something like that. Anyway, the specificity of 17-Days makes our headline more believable, more easily understood and somehow, more interesting. And, more real.

How important are headlines? I'm glad you asked. Some pundits say the headline accounts for 80% of the success of the ad. I, myself, have re-headlined ads and increased their pull by 475%. I have a client who pays me

\$195,000 per year to write headlines. Headlines are where I spend more creative effort than any other aspect of my work.

Good headlines are crucial.

Let's take a breather so I can ask you a question. What publication has the highest paid writers? Answer: the *National Enquirer*. Yep, it's true. And for good reason. You see, the writers for the *Enquirer* are among the best anywhere on earth. I'm not being sarcastic. They really are. If you doubt that, here's something for you to consider...

**More People Read Any  
Single Issue Of The  
*Enquirer* Than Have Read  
The Bible Since It  
Was First Printed!**

*Enquirer* articles are superbly written. They are clear, concise, crisp and, all in all, the most easily understood articles of any publication.

And what do *Enquirer* writers excel at above all else? You guessed it -- HEADLINES. Their headlines are so powerful, they have so much "grabbing power" that, every week, people who have sworn they'll never again buy such a publication, are almost forced to purchase it in spite of themselves.

So anyway, if the best way to get good at writing is by writing, what is the best way to get good at writing headlines?

That's easy... it's by writing headlines.

Here's what you do: Every week you get copies of the *National Enquirer*, *Star*, *Globe*, *Weekly World News* and so on. And, on a monthly basis, you get copies of *Reader's Digest*, *Cosmopolitan* and any other magazine you can find that has lots of good headlines. And you get yourself a large supply of 3"x5" index cards and you write all those good headlines on those cards, one to a card.

By the way, a superb source of good headlines is one of the reference reports included with my seminar tapes. It's called:

**349 Great Headlines  
152 Attention Grabber Words  
Sample Ads  
Sample Letters**

This is truly a "masterpiece collection" of headlines and other ammo that should be a part of every copywriter's library. Many of you (perhaps most) have my seminar tapes and all the related material and those of you who don't... should!

Call and order right now (323-851-8275) and all this invaluable info will be on its way to you in a matter of hours!

Forgive me, pitching is in my bones and I just can't help myself sometimes. Especially, if I have a strong belief in the product.

Whatever. OK, now we've got all these hundreds of headlines on hundreds of headline cards and, in a moment, I'm going to show you how to massage all this good stuff to produce maximum results.

But first, a true story. Remember that ad I sent with my newsletter a couple of months back? The one where I said, when it comes to advertising I was the best thing since sliced bread and, that to get me you had to shell out \$15,000 up front and offer me a substantial "carrot" (usually 5% of gross sales) on the back end?

Alright. I get a call as a result of that ad from a guy in Denver who says he would have no problem paying me my \$15,000 advance but the 5% part wouldn't work since he's a furniture dealer (3 stores) and furniture is sold at varying markups.

So I come back to him by asking what I'd have to do for him to be worth \$15,000 per month.

"Increase my business by 20%," he says.

"Send me my \$15,000 advance and \$15,000 more on the first of every month and I'll see to it you sell every stick of furniture possible to sell in Denver," I say.

He did and I did.

Here's the way we work: First, you need to know I now have these people on a schedule of 365 full-page (newspaper) ads per year. In a week or so that schedule will be bumped to about 400 pages per year and soon it will be 730 pages per year and later, when we hit 1,000 pages per year, we're going to slack off.

By the way, all this is supplemented with a steady stream of radio advertising and a little TV.

Now listen: There's no way in the world I'm going to commit to writing hundreds of ads per year and besides, I'll never now the furniture business as well as my client.

So the way we work it is, I "theme" the thrust of the advertising and I write headlines to go with those themes. Then, my client writes the ads and faxes them to me and I read them and make any necessary changes.

Does this M.O. work? Judge for yourself. In the first two weeks after I came on board...

**My Client Had To  
Hire 10 New Full-Time  
Employees!**

And now, after the first six weeks, their sales are up 40%. You know, that's quite a lot when you consider...

**They Were Already Doing  
\$14 Million Per Year!**

I'd like to take full credit for all this but I can't. In the first place, Sam and Leslie Fishbein know the furniture business inside and out and Sam is truly a superb copywriter.

By the way, all this seems to be working out so well I think we're going to "syndicate" our advertising by making our collective expertise available to one other furniture dealer in each metro area throughout the U.S.

Back to the salt mines. OK, so right now I owe Sam and Leslie some "themes" and headlines and, I'm going to create them right here before your very eyes. What I'm doing first is, I'm going to loosen up my mind by reading some gag headlines written by Sam and his staff. I'm not doing this just for laughs. No. I'm doing it to get my mind in gear and to see if...

**I Can Catch  
A Spark!**

Here are the headlines I'm looking at:

**Modern Day King Tut Furnishes  
Bizarre Backyard Burial Tomb With  
Kacey Fine Furniture -- "I Want Only  
The Best," He Explains, "Because  
You Can Take It With You!"**

**Two Headed Woman Shops Kacey  
And Gets Double Whiplash  
Looking At Bargains!**

**Pregnant Woman Has A Cow  
When She Sees Her Leather  
Sofa For Less At Kacey's!w**

**Scientists Reveal Elvis  
Lives -- Close Friends Confirm  
King's Plan To Redecorate  
Graceland With Kacey Fine Furniture!**

**Vampire Stooped With Back  
Pain Ditches Coffin For  
Kacey Bedding In Latest  
Attempt To Rest-In-Peace!**

**Siamese Twins Come Unglued  
Doing Double-Take at  
Kacey Blockbuster Sale!**

**Human Cannonball Blown Away By  
Kacey's Explosive Price Cuts  
And Soaring Selections!**

And so on. Hmn? This stuff is bizarre even by my standards. But, it does serve to get the juices flowing, doesn't it? Now, let's review some of the actual headlines we've already used. Here's a few:

**WARNING: Don't Hire Any  
Interior Decorator Until  
You Hear This:**

**Local Furniture Dealer Will Give Away Over  
One Million Dollars In Discounts On Her  
Entire Inventory (This July 4th Weekend)  
Because Of Bulldozers Tearing Up Her Streets!**

**Need New Furniture?  
5 Reasons Why You Should  
Local  
Not Shop At The Store  
Deemed  
Mentioned Below!**

**Extremely Low Prices From  
Furniture Store May Be  
"Unfair" To Competition!**

**Who Else Wants To Buy A  
Roomful Of Furniture  
Without Making Payments  
For At Least 6 Months?**

**Do You Make These  
Mistakes When You  
Shop For Furniture?**

**Are You Willing To Walk Up  
Under  
To 3 Blocks To Save As Much  
As 50% On All The Furniture  
You Need?**

**Local Businessman Swears  
Oath He Did Not Steal Any  
Of The Furniture He Is Selling  
So Cheaply!**

And so on.

OK, as promised a few pages ago, I am now going to reveal the simple way to "massage" all this data to come up with something new. First, I do what I just did. Namely, I review what's already been done. Next, I get to my own personal collection of "headline cards" and pick them up and fondle them (I'm getting excited!) and look at them and think about them and flip them out onto the floor like I would a deck of cards and I cogitate and I remember...

I remember someone once said (was it Justice Learned Hand?) that freedom of speech does not give you the right to yell "Fire!" in a crowded theater. I remember my headline must not only grab attention, it must also be true and relevant. I remember Kacey Fine Furniture really does have a problem with the street around their store being torn up. I remember they really do have great furniture (Paulette and I are buying a whole houseful from them) at extremely low prices. I remember... Hey, I've got it! Check this out:

**The Amazing Secret Of The Local  
Furniture Dealer Who Is Giving  
Away All Those Free Samples!**

See, what Sam and Leslie have is some really neat coffee tables they got such a deal on they can afford to give them away to all new buyers and their amazing secret is they've discovered by offering a free premium to induce you to come in and buy and then giving rock-bottom prices to keep you happy, you'll be a loyal customer forever and... and...

**The Competition Won't  
Have A Chance!**

And, as usual, when Sam Fishbein does his usual brilliant job of "fleshing out" this idea, we'll have, I believe, another winner.

And now that I've finished my newsletter for this month and developed another "theme" and headline for the Fishbeins, I ask you...

**Wasn't That A Nifty  
Way To Kill Two Birds  
With One Stone?**

Amen.

Sincerely,



Gary C. Halbert  
"The Hemingway of  
Headlines"

P.S. I just took on the marketing job of selling an album that contains the earliest ELVIS Presley concert ever recorded. Wait till you see that ad!

P.P.S. Damn, I'm good.



