

Writing good advertising copy (Part 4)

 By [Chris Brewer](#)

27 Jun 2016

[Last week](#) we covered using simple language, humour, how not to 'knock copy', as well as being honest and credible.

It seems a good place to start this fourth part with dishonesty then.

Plagiarism

Most schools of thought believe that it's a crime to 'steal' a good creative idea. But there are others who believe that as there is no copyright on a good idea, it's okay to use it again.

I can't remember who said this, but it's profound nevertheless. He'd been asked how he felt when people copied what he'd done and his reply was "it's easy for them to steal what I've done – but they can **never** steal what I'm about to do." Amen to that.

Personally, I've never really bothered either way. I also believe there's a very real possibility that a writer today may produce an idea that was used by someone else previously and that this idea just sat in his head waiting to be released. It's happened loads of times. It's especially rife in the music industry (think of the *Stairway to Heaven* case recently).

Every writer wants to produce his own unique and exclusive copy. I don't believe anyone sets out intentionally to steal an idea.

But sometimes I have to question my own naiveté. Take a look at these two ads. They're recreated from memory, but they're true nevertheless.

The first one was produced several years before the second one and appeared in different industry magazines and newspapers:

DOING BUSINESS
WITHOUT A
PROFESSIONAL
AD AGENCY
IS LIKE WINKING
AT A GIRL IN THE DARK

YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE
DOING – BUT NOBODY ELSE DOES

BREWER & JONES
Advertising Practitioners

DOING BUSINESS
WITHOUT THE STAR
ON YOUR SCHEDULE
IS LIKE WINKING
AT A GIRL IN THE DARK

YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE
DOING – BUT NOBODY ELSE DOES

THE STAR

We never did complain to *The Star* and I have a suspicion that I may have stolen the line from someone else, anyway!

Writing for the consumer

The magic word here is **empathy**. Your audience, following your clear understanding of them and what they want/need, should be jumping up and down saying “Yes! That’s what I want! This product was made for me!”



Winking at girls in the dark... © DÑ?Ñ?DµD¼D#D°Ñ?ÑÑ?D¼D² – 123RF.com

When you are writing copy, imagine you are talking to you consumer. **Talking** is a lot different to **writing**. Think about it.

How much more expression can be put into the spoken word than the written one? There's inflection, a laugh, a raised eyebrow, a pause... and so on.

It follows, therefore, that advertising copy should be talking to our customers – not trying too hard to sell them something but rather gently pointing them in the right direction.

Knowing your customer is not just researching his income and what car he drives etc., there is so much more to it than that.

This is quite a good quote from many years ago and it still holds true (it was about newspapers, of course). It was said by Jolyon Nuttall, then general manager of *The Star* and he talked about 'daily differences' – a fact we all often overlook.

“Advertisers and media owners accept the special nature of Saturday and Sunday reading environments... by appealing to the unique moods associated with those days.

However... the mood on a Monday is as different from Friday as the vibe on Sunday is to a humdrum Wednesday. There IS a big difference, not just in mood, but in work and family pressures and priorities.

“Monday is the day when the desk is cleared for a week's work. You're serious. By Tuesday you are locked into your job. Wednesday might be when you take the afternoon off for golf. By Thursday you might take your family out to dinner. By Friday the mood is upbeat – you're ready to unwind.

“There are different profiles for each day and advertisers looking for greater marketing efficiencies should be examining any and every factor, which increases response and recall.”

Nuttal was quite right and it underlines the fact that you have to talk to the consumer based on a number of issues **and** the mood he's in at that time.

Next time (part five) we'll be looking at consumers' own language.

In the meantime, don't waste your time winking at girls (or men) in the dark.

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