

The Ultimate A-List Copywriter's Promo Checklist

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A Fast Track to A-List™ Production

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These specific promo elements aren’t just essential for attracting attention, getting your copy read, and closing the sale. They’re what set sizzling hot, A-list copy apart from lackluster, “ho hum” copy.

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These are the relentlessly nit-picky but crucial edits that eliminate any confusion or “speed bumps”. They’re what allow your prospect to glide through your copy seamlessly as if it were a “greased chute”.

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Once you’ve put your final draft of copy through the previous checklists and you think it’s reached the ultimate point of perfection, use this checklist to make it even stronger before it goes out the door.

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#1: The Ultimate Start Kit Checklist

When you're getting ready to start on work for a new project—especially if it's a large project or a long-form promotion, the research phase is key. It's where you may end up spending at least 50 to 70% of your time. The more work you do in this phase, the *easier* it will be to write your copy—and the greater your chances it'll be a huge winner.

As the famous former Oakland Raiders coach Al Davis once said, “*We don't take what the defense gives us...we take whatever we want!*” This needs to be *your* mantra as well.

Here's a list of things you should ask your client for before you begin work (you may not get all of them, but it never hurts to ask—and what you don't get you should try to dig up on your own):

- [] PDFs of or links to their current/past controls as well as any past tests (& how they did).
- [] Testimonials they've collected from customers (see if you can use Amazon ones too).
- [] If there's a spokesperson or editor, ask for an opportunity to interview them (record it!).
- [] Media mentions/appearances and endorsements plus bio of the product or spokesperson.
- [] Customer service letters they've received—both good and bad.
- [] Any surveys they've done (tip: if they don't have anything recent, you can offer to write up a quick survey they can send to their current buyers—can often get testimonials, too).
- [] If it's for a direct mail promo, data cards for the mailing lists that work best for them—and, if you can get them, the promos the people on those mailing lists responded to.
- [] If it's a supplement, ask for a list of repeat buyers of the product that you can call and interview (get at least 75-100 names/phone numbers to complete 10 interviews).
- [] If it's a nutritional supplement, ask if you can interview the formulator and/or someone from the manufacturer to discuss the research/mechanism of action/what makes it unique.
- [] Opt-in to their email list if they have one so you can start seeing what kind of online promos they run again and again and determine what's working best to their list.
- [] If you're writing for a book, get a copy of the book (or manuscript if it's a launch). If you're writing for a newsletter, get at least one year's worth of the most recent issues; for a financial newsletter the current/past portfolio picks (you'll likely get full online access).

- [] Get pdfs or print copies of all premiums/ reports they have available as potential bonuses and find out if they're open to creating any new ones you come up with ideas for.
- [] If it's a supplement, get all available studies, formula justification and notes, and other research. If it's a financial publication, get all of the recommended portfolio(s) data and track record on the publication's recommendations (you can often get via online access).

If this STILL isn't enough, it's really up to you to DIG IN and do the research. Think about what you'd most love to know, or what kind of proof element you'd most love to use in your promo, and google that specific search term. Sometimes you'll be amazed what kind of golden nuggets come up! **S/HE WHO DOES THE BEST RESEARCH WINS!**

#2: The Ultimate Research Checklist

Before beginning any new project, it's important to interview your client about their market and customers, making sure to record the call. Even if you are recording it one way, always put the call on speaker and record the call on your phone as a back-up.

I like to use the Rev app, which allows me to easily record calls—and then, if I like, submit them to be transcribed with a simple click (there is a charge for this service).

This “discovery call” will give you priceless information you need to really nail the project. You can (and should) do additional research to pull together the answers...plus valuable “fodder” that will come in handy as you write your promo. You should also gather as many relevant swipes as possible on your own that you can study for ideas.

Avatar questions:

- [] Who are your best customers for this product/service? Describe for me what a “perfect client” looks like.
- [] What are the demographics of the core market—age, gender, income, educational level, home ownership, geographic location, financial assets to invest, children/grandchildren?
- [] What are the biggest mistakes that prospects are making...and that this product can help prevent?
- [] What are your prospects' greatest fears? What keeps them up at night?
- [] What are their biggest mental and emotional pain points?
- [] What are the top frustrations they have, living life WITHOUT your solution?
- [] What would be a “dream come true” solution to their problems?
- [] What is the number one pressing problem, pain or fear they want to solve most?
- [] What are the top 5-10 most common objections you get about this product or service?
- [] Are there any common enemies we can “throw rocks at?”
- [] Are there any news stories or current events that relate to this product?
- [] What books do people in your market read? Which ones are most popular/well-known?

- [] How do prospects describe their problems? Are there any special phrases or kinds of language they use in particular?
- [] Who are your direct and indirect competitors? What are some of their websites I can look at for competition research?
- [] What angles have you (or others) tried in this market that have failed? What's worked best?
- [] What are the results this market wants to achieve in their life?
- [] What do your best customers do for fun?
- [] Are your best customers trying to impress anyone?
- [] What do your best customers do for a living and about how much money do they make?
- [] What do they complain or worry about? What keeps them up at night? What's the 3am conversation they have with their spouse at the dinner table?
- [] Who (if anyone) are they trying to get revenge on?

Product/Offer Questions:

- [] I've never heard of your product or service before. Describe it for me.
- [] What is the "Creation story" for this product? What problem was it designed to solve?
- [] Why did you found your company or get into this business? Any interesting stories here?
- [] How aware are your ideal prospects of you, your business, and this offer?
- [] What other offers are working successfully in this market?
- [] Why does this purchase make sense? What kind of ROI (return on investment)—either financially or in other terms—can they expect if they buy your product?
- [] Imagining there are no limits, what is the most far-out, fantastic implication of your sales proposition or the problem you're proposing to solve?
- [] What is your Unique Selling Proposition? What makes this product different from all the other products out there?

- [] How is this product made? Any unique ingredients, processes, or mechanisms of action if it's a supplement, skin care product, or other food or beauty product?
- [] Can you describe this product's benefit statement in one or two sentences?
- [] What's the hottest issue on my prospects' minds right now, and how does this offer fit or help solve that issue?
- [] What's the story *nobody's* telling about this?
- [] What does this product DO for the prospect? What problems does it solve?
- [] What's the biggest, most instant or noticeable benefit they'll notice, and how quickly?
- [] What happens to someone if they decide to NOT buy your product? Will they still live in pain? What's that like?
- [] Why should someone buy RIGHT NOW, instead of putting the decision off until later?
- [] How much does the product cost? Why is it that price?
- [] What alternatives can the prospect use to solve their problem/get the result they want... and what are the downsides of each of them? How much do they cost?
- [] Are there any special savings or bonuses you're offering (or willing to offer?)
- [] Is there a deadline?
- [] Are there any shipping and handling costs involved?
- [] What is the guarantee? Do they need to return the product, if physical? Do you cover return shipping costs?
- [] If AutoShip is part of the offer, how does it work? What special savings or free shipping do they get? How often will they get shipments? Can they hold orders or cancel anytime?

#3: The Ultimate Strength of Promo Checklist

Once you've written your first rough draft of copy—or better yet, *as* you're writing it—use this checklist for each major section of your copy. Go back again once you've flushed it out some more, and put your draft through the same microscope once more to make it even stronger.

I. The Headline and Deck

- Does the headline attract attention and compel the prospect to read on?
- Does it make a promise, or offer a benefit?
- Does it promise a speed of result, if you're able to promise one?
- Does it contain a unique mechanism and/or contain exciting news?
- Does it offer proof or sound believable?
- Does the headline avoid combining too many different ideas, keeping to just 1 or 2?

II. The Lead

- Is the opening sentence or paragraph concise and high energy?
- Does the copy flow seamlessly from the main headline and deck copy?
- Does it immediately develop and build on the main promise in the headline?
- Does the opening arouse curiosity or tell the reader what's in it for him or her?
- Does the lead grab the reader by the throat and make it impossible to stop reading?
- Is the opening consistent with the reader's existing beliefs, wants, and desires?

III. The Body Copy

- Does the copy maintain high energy throughout without slowing down in spots?
- Have you included subheads throughout to break up the copy, with each one like a “mini-headline” to get your prospect to continue reading the copy that follows?
- Do your subheads form a synopsis, in sequence, of your basic proposition or story?

- [] Have you introduced who the sales letter is coming from early on, and demonstrated his or her authority and expertise?
- [] Does your copy follow this flow: "Problem, Agitation, Solution"?
- [] Is there a proper transition between every sentence and every paragraph?
- [] Does it flow, i.e., each sentence meets the expectation set in the previous sentence?
- [] Does each individual sentence present only one idea, or two at most?
- [] Are similar ideas grouped together—without jumping around?
- [] Are all of the ideas, or groups of ideas, presented in the correct order? Does the order seem logical?
- [] Are you leading with your strongest idea or argument, with the subsequent ideas or arguments presented in descending order of importance?
- [] Is the “bucket brigade” used, with connectors that subtly lead the reader from one paragraph to the next? (i.e., “And”, “But”, “So you see”, “Of course”, “Better yet”, “But that’s not all”, “As I mentioned”, “Now here’s the important part”, etc.?)
- [] Is every claim you make backed by proof? i.e., a statistic with a reputable source; a study result, ideally from a well-known institution; or other credible proof?
- [] Have you provided testimonials or other social proof of the results one can expect?
- [] Have you included as many credibility-enhancers as possible, like quotes from well-known people or institutions, and/or from media your prospect respects?
- [] Does the copy address possible skepticism/objections by raising and answering them?
- [] Does the copy speak in actions and specific word pictures, metaphors, similes, and/or analogies—and not abstract concepts?
- [] Does the copy avoid clichés?
- [] Have you given your reader all the benefits and details they need to make a buying decision?
- [] Do any stories used only contain vivid details that add interest or bring the story to life, leaving out any extraneous details that simply distract or confuse?

- [] Are any stories used presented in a linear and chronological fashion so they're easy to follow?
- [] Do any stories used include unanswered questions that compel the reader to keep reading to see how they unfold?
- [] Have you gone through and broken up any long sentences into shorter sentences? Are they varied in length to lend rhythm and pace?
- [] Have you eliminated any "speed bumps" in your copy that trip you up or confuse you?
- [] Have you gone through and replaced any weak words with "power" words? (A good source for these "power" words is the book *Words That Sell* by Richard Bayan)
- [] Are you hitting your prospect's emotional hot buttons by tapping into greed, fear, anger, envy, vanity, guilt, flattery, pride, exclusivity, salvation, lust, or love?
- [] If your copy includes any sidebars, have you ensured there is "mini-close" copy in each of them that provides a call to action?

IV. The Close

- [] Are you using future-pacing to demonstrate what life can be like with your product?
- [] Have you told the prospect what he or she will lose if they don't act?
- [] Is there a reason given for the prospect to take action now? (i.e., deadline, scarcity, etc.)
- [] Is the price justified? Are there equivalent tangibles you can use to compare the value?
- [] Have you included and dramatized the guarantee, removing risk as much as possible?
- [] Have you highlighted savings, free gifts, free shipping, or other aspects of the offer?
- [] Have you told the prospect exactly how to order, putting emphasis on the action you most want them to take? (i.e., click a button or call a toll-free number)
- [] If it's an online promo, have you indicated in your copy where CTA (call to action) buttons should go?
- [] Is there a P.S., and does it add a note of urgency, remind the prospect of the offer and guarantee, and restate the key benefits, future pacing, and/or speed of result the product or service provides?

#4: The Ultimate Editing Checklist

Nothing can confuse or lose a prospect by tripping them up with common copy mistakes. Taking this extra step of fine-tuning your copy makes it read *much* more smoothly...and delights your clients, too! Put it through the wringer with each of the following points...

- [] Is the copy at or below eighth grade reading level? (Check Flesch-Kincaid score)
- [] Can any big words be replaced with simpler ones? (65-75% should be 5 letters or less)
- [] Is the copy in the first person and conversational in tone, written the way you might actually talk?
- [] Is there any needless changing of subjects between sentences within a paragraph?
- [] Each time you use a pronoun (i.e., he, she, they, it, etc.), is it absolutely clear who or what the pronoun refers to?
- [] Is each word spelled correctly? (Do NOT rely simply on spell check, as words misspelled as other words will slip by; example: “the” instead of “them”)
- [] Are at least 90% of the sentences in active tense versus passive?
- [] Are most sentences under 20 words and fewer than 150 syllables long?
- [] Are your paragraphs a maximum of 6 to 7 lines each, but varied for visual appeal?
- [] Have you deleted as many “I” statements as possible and replaced them with “you”?
- [] Have you avoided using redundant words within the same paragraph or section?
- [] Have you been specific in any figures you’ve used, and not rounded off?
- [] Compliance check (supplement promo): Have you eliminated any names of specific diseases, and the words “disease”, “prevent”, or “cure”?
- [] Have you footnoted all sources for statistics, studies (with links), and other proof?
- [] Have you included the “answers” to each fascination in a footnote with references?
- [] Have you used italics, all caps, and/or underlining for emphasis on key words and phrases—without overusing, but wisely and sparingly?

#5: The Ultimate Final Promo Checklist

Now it's time to give your copy a final read-through before sending it off. Do this final step *after* your copy passes the “Ultimate Strength of Promo” and “Ultimate Editing” Checklists:

- Have you put the copy aside for at least 24 hours since working on it last, so you are looking at it with “fresh eyes”?
- After writing it—and then again after seeing it designed—does the main headline, email subject line, and/or front cover make you STOP and pay attention?
- When you read through it, does it make you want to buy the product? When you give it to someone else to read, does it make them want to buy the product?
- Does the “big promise” you’re making seem believable? Have you offered enough proof?
- Is there a sense of urgency and/or scarcity? Are there reasons and/or incentives for the prospect to act now?
- Does the tone or voice of the copy sound likeable? Authoritative?
- Does the copy breathe enthusiasm? Excitement? Conviction? Like you really believe it yourself?
- Is your offer crystal-clear as presented and the next step to take clearly explained?
- Has no stone been left unturned in order to get the hardest-to-sell prospect to act?

CONGRATULATIONS!

If you've been able to check off all (or as many as possible) of these boxes on these checklists, then odds are you've just written a promotion that will be highly successful...and perhaps even hand you a new control. These are the *same* checklist items the best copywriters in the industry go back to and review again and again to ensure they maximize their promos' success.

This tool is great and will help you elevate your writing skills, but there's still a lot more to learn. If you really want to go deep into how to write A-list level copy and understand my complete process—from doing research and coming up with a “big idea” to writing killer headlines, leads, fascinations, and closes, plus see breakdowns of control promos and much more, check out my **Copywriting Velocity Complete Virtual Program** here: www.CopywritingVelocity.com.
USE THIS EXCLUSIVE CODE TO SAVE \$200 AT CHECKOUT: **CHECKLIST200**

ABOUT KIM KRAUSE SCHWALM



KIM KRAUSE SCHWALM was always a marketer who could write copy. She spent more than 13 years in the corporate world in various marketing positions—from Brand Manager to Publisher to launching and running the Healthy Directions supplement business and growing it to more than \$23 million in sales within 3 years—before she started her freelance copywriting career in 1998.

Now more than two decades later, Kim has built a reputation as one of the top A-level direct response copywriters in the country. She's racked up dozens of successful direct mail and online controls, beating legendary copywriters like Jim Rutz and Parris Lampropoulus and becoming the first female copywriter to get a Boardroom control.

Kim writes winning copy and creates breakthrough marketing strategies for leading companies such as Soundview, Bottom Line, Agora, Green Valley Natural Solutions, and many others both in the United States and from England to Germany to Singapore.

She holds a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics and Statistics from Miami University in Ohio, and earned her MBA in Marketing from Loyola University Maryland. Kim credits her creative and analytical mind and marketing know-how for giving her a must-needed edge in today's increasingly competitive copywriting world—and wants to help others gain the same “marketing-savvy” advantage.

She's one of the few top-level copywriting veterans who's still writing copy for clients...while being willing to share her success secrets to help up-and-coming copywriters go from “good” to “great”.

You can learn more about Kim's copywriting training programs and services plus read her blog at www.KimSchwalm.com.