

How To Write Classified Ads That Sell!

Classified ads are very simple to write... and... can be very powerful if done correctly. I'm sure you've seen them before. Classifieds are often only a few lines in size and have limited space. Usually you're only able to run a headline and contact details.

Classifieds are ideal for testing headlines because they're cost effective and the response time is quick.

Some of the most successful marketers test their headlines in local sections of their daily newspaper.

In this way, when you commit to large advertisements you're utilising a strong headline – that is, a headline that's been proven to attract responses.

The Pluses

- Affordable – often you can place a classified for as little as \$30.
- You can target your market – as you know, classifieds are broken into the sections. For a general circulation newspaper, you can choose anything from plumbers, landscapers, television repairs, home security systems, education, healthy living, and so forth.
- Easy to track – ask your prospect to mention a dept #, a person (the name can be fictitious) or call a designated phone number.
- Most of your competitors won't have an idea how to make these little babies work. This is good for you because you'll derive a greater benefit.
- Quick responses – lead time is usually no more than a week.
- Easy to write – often classifieds are only a few short lines in text. You'll spend almost all your time writing the headline.
- You can increase your readership by including a photo of yourself or your product

The Negatives

- Limited space – don't make the rookie marketing of going for a sale directly from the classified. Have prospects call for a free special report.
- It won't pull as much as a display – pound for pound, classifieds are often your best bet. But, if you're looking for brute strength in numbers, a display ad will out pull a classified every time (the downside with display ads, of course, is their price tag)
- It can get lost amongst other classifieds – here's where you need to shine. You can have the most striking headline in the game, but if your ad is immersed amongst dozens of other ones,

it may not be seen. Keep this mind. To overcome this, consider a border; include a photo of yourself or reverse block the headline.

- You may be given a rotten location

How To Make Your Classified Stand Out From Your Competitors!

Offering a free special report immediately makes your classified stand out from the competition.

As the prospect is 'heading down the list', comparing you with your competitors, offering a free special report will virtually guarantee you'll receive a call.

You may not be the first, but you'll certainly be one of the company's that is called.

Remember, just like the yellow pages, often people turn to the classifieds with a specific purpose...

They're Looking For Somebody To Buy From!

You need to grab the prospect's attention... before the competition does. And one of the best ways to do so is by offering free information that helps answer their questions.

How To Write Winning Classifieds

1. Isolate Your Market

As with all advertisements, you first need to decide 'who' you're communicating to.

A detailed profile of your customers comes in handy here. To ascertain the precise best location for your classified, ask your existing customers: *"If you wished to locate us in the classifieds which section would you turn to?"*

2. Decide What You Wish Your Prospects To Do

This will almost always be a request for more information. Why?

Simply, there isn't enough space to sell your product or service. Don't make the mistake many other business owners make. Go for a two step instead.

3. Determine The Best Publication

If you sell a dog training service, the best publication for your classified will, in all likelihood, is a DOG one. This would have the highest concentration of potential customers than any other.

In addition, you should test a locally circulated newspaper, under dog training services (or similar).

If you do choose a general circulation newspaper, you must understand only a percentage of readers fall into your target market. As such, you'll always overpay to advertise in a general circ. Publication.

This is because...

**You're Also Paying To Reach People Who
Have NO Interest In What You're Selling!**

See the difference? At any rate, you should always test your responses... no matter what you do. Let the figures speak for themselves.

If you're uncertain which publications are the best for classifieds... well... ask your existing customers for help. They'll tell you the precise ideal publications to run the classified in.

I've explained to you the conventional way of using classifieds work. However, this methodology is not set in stone.

If your results speak otherwise, then throw out what I've said here and go with the figures. Remember, after all...

It's Only A Numbers Game!

The most important secret to a successful classified is the headline. As with all advertisement, the headline accounts for 80% of the success. With classifieds, this figure may even be higher. Ensure the headline offers a blazing benefit – something that causes the prospects to pick up the phone and call you.

Let's Look At Some Examples

Check out the following examples of powerful classifieds. Notice their simplicity!

**How To Improve Your Memory”
Call a FREE recorded message for a FREE
confidential special report. Call 1800 XXX-XXX
24 hrs (ask for report M1)**

Other headlines to test for this product would be:

- How I Improve My Memory In Evening
- How To Improve Your Memory In As Little As 3 Hours
- Finally! A Guaranteed To Improve Your Memory In 3 Short Hours!
- Who Else Wants A Photographic Memory?

There's no need to change the body copy. As I've said repeatedly, the headline is most important. In fact, the only thing I'd change in the body is the report designation number. This way I'm able to track the effectiveness of the headlines.

Let's have a look at another example:

**“Tighten Your Buns and Look Great
For Summer – Guaranteed Or Money Back!”**

Call a FREE recorded message for a FREE
confidential special report. Call **1800 XXX-XXX**
(ask for report M1)

A classified can also be line by line. For example:

- ***Learn a new language in 10 weeks with your eyes closed.*** Just released! Free special report reveals a new, guaranteed method that's fun, easy and gets results! Call (02) 95XX XXXX (ask for Debbie)
- ***How To Make \$1200 A Week Working From Home Part Time!*** Call (02) 95XX XXXX for a FREE special report that reveals all! (mention dept A1C4)
- ***The Blackjack Secret Of A Mystery Sydney Man!*** Make big \$\$\$ right now. Free special report. Call (02) 95XX XXXX (ask for BJ 21 report)
- ***Authentic Spaghetti Bolognese From The Old Town FREE For All First Time Customers!*** Joe's Restaurant. Offer expires on 18th August. Be quick, call (02) 9XXX XXXX

Throughout all these examples, the body is essentially the same. All I've done is altered the headline to suit the product.

The free report is nothing more than a sales letter.

With the exception of the Italian restaurant example, these classifieds use a two step sequence. That is, prospects see the ad and then ask for more information.

A one step is going for a sale directly from the classified, which, in almost all cases is a no-no.

With two steps, it's very important to send the information immediately. The prospect will NEVER be as hot as the day she calls you. So ensure you get that report out quick! With each passing day you fail to send it out, the odds of conversion fall dramatically.

What Mode Is Your Prospect In?

This is especially important and something you need to be mindful of. If the prospect is in panic mode, sending a free report will not be of any use. For example, a single mother locked out of her car needs a locksmith urgently.

By the time you send out the free report, her need for your services has expired.

She Needs Somebody Now!

The classified needs to reflect this urgency... and... it needs to stand out from the competition.

Consider placing a larger ad. Utilise a thicker border... a larger photo... and... certainly a more striking headline which screams out a benefit.

You may even ask her to call a 90 second recorded message where you articulate (albeit briefly) your USP... and... extend a strong offer.

Here's a classified that may work well:

**You're Locked Out Of Your Home And Car.
Don't Panic Here's A Quick & Easy Way
To Get In Fast!**

Warning: Don't call ANY locksmith until you
hear this amazing 90 sec. recorded message.
Call now on **95XX XXXX** and discover the simple
solution to your problem!

When the prospect calls the recorded message, there is a 90 second window of opportunity to state your case and extend your offer.

With this example at the end of the message, you'll have to provide the prospect with a 24 hour emergency phone number.

If you're short of space, do not reduce the size of the headline. I'd prefer you take up less space in the body copy and just run the words 'free special report. Call XXXX-XXXX... or... 'free sample. Call XXXX-XXXX'

The headline is far too important to muck around with. Take space away from the body copy... and maintain your headline.

With the classified you all you really have to work with is the headline.

If you're in a classified listing along with many of your competitors, you'll need to stick out. A simple strategy is to do the opposite of everybody else. The human eye is attracted to contrasts.

Finally, if you have the \$\$\$, you may try running a display ad in the classified section. In this way, you'll have the far and away the largest advertisement... and... hence more readily noticed.

Only do this however when you've identified a strong headline. There's no use committing large sums of money if you're 'shooting in the dark.'