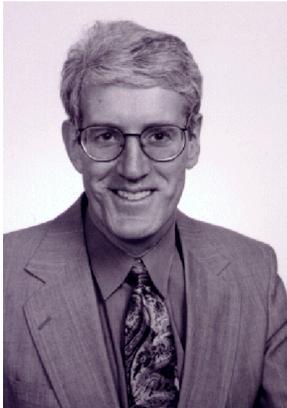

Ron Davis

How to Write a Sales Letter That Brings in Sales Leads

Ron Davis is President and Founder of Milwaukee Direct Marketing, a direct marketing agency. In the past twelve years his company has worked on literally thousands of campaigns most of them to generate leads. He has worked in direct marketing since 1975.



Ron Davis

ABSTRACT

What makes a good sales letter? Here are some thoughts on that and several formulas to consider when composing a sales letter. You need to think about what will appeal to your prospects and how to get his attention quickly, then move into action and seal the deal.

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Introduction

Let's suppose you have a list of residents of mid sized companies that you want to make appointments with to sell them life or health insurance.

What do you say to them to reply to you, saying, "O.K., I want to hear what you have to say."

Let me back up a bit to give you my thought process for writing letters. I now write sales letters for a living. Little did I know that I was being trained for this when I started selling cutlery in Madison in 1974. It was an easy job to get. I soon found out why. You had to find your own leads.

So I went banging on doors. When someone came to the door - hopefully a young student girl - I learned pretty quick, I'd better have a nice smile and something to say.

I learned I had to promise them something they wanted, fast, otherwise the door would begin to close.

Now, when I sit down to write a sales letter, I picture myself walking into my prospect's office. What do I say to get this guy's attention? I have only one shot, about two paragraphs at most, before he closes the door on me.

It would sure help if I knew something about the prospect. Then I could say something I know would interest him.

My list tells me he is the president of a company with ten employees. I can probably assume he thinks he's paying too much for his coverage. So if I can sell on price, I'd make

sure that would be up front in the letter.

So I write a personal letter, with a date, on my business stationary. It is mailed in a closed face envelope with a first class stamp. It looks important and personal. It has to get past a secretary. It will do that if it looks personal, like it was written specifically for him (See FIGURE 1).

Notice a couple of things about this letter...

* It's a personal letter. Not only is it personally addressed, but the text is also specifically relevant to the prospect. The thought of other companies similar to his own paying less than him would hopefully get under his skin enough to say, "I'm going to check this out."

* The 'sales service' and the '10 employee' text lines can be inserted by the computer according to codes in the list to be relevant to each name on your list.

* Notice how much we DIDN'T say. No mention of the type of coverage. I want curiosity to hit him hard enough to get him to act. If I tell too much, the prospect may think he knows.

* I didn't ask for an appointment. I would have to tell him more to get an appointment. Right now I've told him enough to get him to inquire, if he is interested in saving money. When he calls in for the free report - which can be a simple two page fact sheet, along with your company brochure - you can qualify him and see if it's worth delivering the information personally and moving the sale forward.

* The letter gets off to a fast start. When you write a letter, look very critically at the first

two paragraphs. If you haven't hooked the reader's interest by then, you may have lost him. Frequently, I can cut the first two paragraphs out of a letter, and give it more immediate punch.

Now what if your selling proposition is something other than a lower price? Then we need to find a different hook. The introductory paragraph would have to fit what you have.

If you have nothing in particular, try a very direct approach (See FIGURE 2).

Not real strong, is it?

But, if you reach the right prospect at the right time, you may get a lead back and a good one at that. You are being invited to come in and give a quotation. It's a tighter lead than the first letter which simply says, "I'm curious. Send me the information." You still have to get an appointment from it.

Again, you don't have to say much to get an inquiry. Just enough to make your promise and build curiosity.

Good selling!

Formulas For Writing Sales Letters. . .

Here is a collection of formulas that have stood the test of time. Notice the similarities of starting off with a powerful, relevant statement, and moving through to action.

1. AIDA

Attention
Interest
Desire
Action

2. Robert Collier

Attention
Interest
Description
Persuasion
Proof
Close

3. Henry Hoke, Sr.

Picture
Promise
Prove
Push

4. Earle Buckley

Interest
Desire
Construction
Action

FIGURE 1:

February 14, 1992

Mr. Clayton Wright
Wright Company
246 E. Main Street
Kenosha, WI 01234

Dear Mr. Wright:

I recently worked with two companies to cut the cost of their health insurance by an average of 16%. Both are sales/service companies with 10 employees...very similar to your own company.

Not only did they save thousands of dollars a year, but they kept the same quality of coverage.

I have a simple description of this program. If you want a copy, call my office, and I'll have one sent immediately.

If you prefer mail the enclosed card.

Sincerely,

Ron Davis
President

FIGURE 2:

February 14, 1992

Mr. Clayton Wright
Wright Company
246 E. Main Street
Kenosha, WI 01234

Dear Mr. Wright:

When the time comes for you to choose if you will continue with your present health insurance coverage, may I submit a proposal?

I can promise you a proposal that is carefully chosen for your company.

Our research tells us which companies are today offering the greatest value, and also which to avoid. This careful study has allowed us to build a reputation for service in Kenosha and throughout Wisconsin.

I have enclosed a reply card. Please circle the month I should call.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Ron Davis
President
