I bought this book a couple of weeks ago after hearing rave reviews of it. If you decide to buy it, make sure you get the 4th edition or earlier – apparently subsequent editions had a lot of the text changed to make it more ‘modern’. I couldn’t find the 4th edition on Amazon. I ended up buying a secondhand copy from AbeBooks.

The book is written with direct response marketing in mind – you create an ad that in some cases looks like a min-story, put it in a magazine or newspaper, offer some kind of product in exchange for the customer filling out a coupon and track your success.

Whilst this kind of marketing is considered by some people to be old-fashioned, it still works today. Importantly, you can apply a lot of these ideas to your blogs – use them for article titles, email newsletters, any PPC advertising you do, product creation etc.

I’ve got a lot of good ideas from the book so far that I’m able to implement in my business. These are my personal notes from the first half of the book.

Hope you enjoy them.

**Headline**

The most important part of an advertisement is the headline.

The best headlines are those that appeal to the reader’s self-interest i.e. ‘Retire at 55’.

The next best headlines give news i.e. ‘New features of the Ford truck’.

The third best arouse curiosity i.e. ‘Lost : $35,000’.

Another option is to suggest there’s a quick and easy way to get results (does this sound familiar in the internet marketing world!).

Caples analysed a number of successful headlines and his analysis showed that there are four important qualities for a good headline to possess:

- Self-interest
- News
- Curiosity
- Quick, easy way
Another factor is ‘believability’. One way to make an ad more believable is to use specific numbers. For example, you could say ‘This course made me $24,385 in the first year’ or ‘Over 5 days you’ll learn ...’.

**Five rules for writing headlines**

1. Try to get self-interest into every headline you write.
2. If you have big news i.e. a new product, get that news into your headline.
3. Avoid headlines that only provoke curiosity – these are proven to be low converting.
4. Avoid headlines that promote a negative or gloomy side of the picture.
5. Try to suggest that there is a quick and easy way for the reader to get what they want.

Long headlines are ok. One option is to highlight certain words in the headline. You could capitalize these, make them bold or put the key words in larger print.

**Twenty-nine formulas for writing headlines** (this is an actual chapter title, and it’s a pretty good attention-getter).

1. Begin with the word ‘Announcing’
2. Use words that have an announcement quality
3. Begin with the word ‘New’
4. Begin with the word ‘Now’
5. Begin with the words ‘At last’
6. Put a date into your headline
7. Write your headline in a news style
8. Feature the price in your headline
9. Feature reduced price
10. Feature a special merchandising offer
11. Feature an easy payment plan
12. Feature a free offer
13. Offer information of value
14. Tell a story
15. Begin with the words ‘How to’
16. Begin with the word ‘How’
17. Begin with the word ‘Why’
18. Begin with the word ‘Which’
19. Begin with the words ‘Who else’
20. Begin with the word ‘Wanted’
21. Begin with the word ‘This’
22. Begin with the word ‘Advice’
23. Use a testimonial-style headline
24. Offer the reader a test
25. Use a one-word headline
26. Use a two-word headline
27. Warn the reader to delay buying
28. Let the advertiser speak directly to the reader
29. Address your head line to a specific person or group

Finally, Caples talks a lot about the importance of testing your advertising. He seems to like direct response advertising because it was easy to track results by using different coupon codes. This is so much easier in the online world where you could use Google PPC advertising to test out a number of headlines to see what gets the best click-through rate.

There’s much more to this book. It’s a good companion to Scientific Advertising (also part of the Bloggers Toolbox) and provides a lot of good practical ideas.

It’s hard to get, but worth it. I’ve only made a very broad summary here. The real value is in seeing the actual ads that he uses as examples.

Hope you find this useful. If you do, send me an email at allan@bloggerbusinessplan.com and let me know what you enjoyed.