

Bullet Blaster:

A Review of the 4 U's Plus Exercises to Improve Your Bullet-Writing Skills

You've seen them sprinkled throughout direct mail promotions time and time again. The ubiquitous bullets. Short lines of benefit-oriented copy attached to big bold dots.

They appear so simple, so straightforward. And that's precisely what makes them such deceptive – and potentially dangerous – copywriting devices.

Unless bullets are very good, they have the potential to derail the interest of the prospect and damage the success of the promotion. That's because bullets are easy to read. Easy to read means quickly read. Quickly read can mean superficially reviewed. Disconnected. Distracted.

Writing great bullets is one of the more challenging tasks a professional copywriter can face. Think of them as little haikus. Or as carefully crafted verbal gems. Or as worker ants – small but able to carry a lot of weight.

Michael Masterson and Bill Bonner came up with four ways to make your bullets stand head and shoulders above those of your competitors – what we at AWAI call "The Secret of the 4 U's."

The 4 U's are designed to create bullets that hook the prospect's interest, tempt him with a promise or benefit, establish credibility, and encourage him to read on. A good bullet will leave the prospect thinking, "Boy, that's really interesting. I'd like to know more about it."

The 4 U's that your bullets should have are ...

1. **URGENCY.** Give the prospect a reason to desire the benefit of the product/service sooner rather than later.
2. **UNIQUENESS.** Make the prospect feel that there is one particular thing about the product/service that is different – in at least one small way – from every other product/service of that type. Uniqueness also suggests that you are talking about something real and concrete.
3. **ULTRA-SPECIFICITY.** Be as precise as possible, stating facts and figures
4. **USEFULNESS.** Promise the prospect something that has value for him.

Now let's get to work. (You'll need a piece of paper and a pen to do the following bullet building exercises.)

First, look at each of the five sample bullets below and determine whether or not it is using the 4 U's. Write down which of the U's (if any) the bullet is using and think about which of the U's the bullet is not using.

Then, try your hand at rewriting each bullet, making it stronger by applying the missing U's.

When you're done, compare your rewrites to ours. Keep in mind that there is no one "right answer" for each bullet. Our versions represent only one possibility – but they should give you a pretty good idea of how the 4 U's should be used.

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Bullet #1. Save \$1,560 a year dining out! Just flash one of these cards and you'll automatically save up to 30% at 1,870 fine restaurants worldwide

(Is this bullet Urgent? Unique? Ultra-Specific? Useful?)

•

Bullet #2. The easiest way to make \$10 million while learning to improve your health

(Is this bullet Urgent? Unique? Ultra-Specific? Useful?)

•

Bullet #3. A virtual cure for arthritis that stops the soreness and pain – and rebuilds new cartilage at the same time

(Is this bullet Urgent? Unique? Ultra-Specific? Useful?)

•

Bullet #4. Much better sex after age 40

(Is this bullet Urgent? Unique? Ultra-Specific? Useful?)

•

Bullet #5. Apply this Nobel Prize-winning method of futures investing – and turn \$500 into \$4,820,000 in 30 days.

(Is this bullet Urgent? Unique? Ultra-Specific? Useful?)

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Following are our assessments/rewrites of the above five bullets. (Don't peek at what we did until you've finished your own)

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- Bullet #1. Unique, Ultra-specific, Useful. Could be more Urgent. How about: Save \$1,560 a year dining out! Just flash one of these cards and you'll automatically save up to 50% at 1,870 fine restaurants worldwide, while supplies last!
- Bullet #2. Useful. Could be more Urgent, Unique, and Ultra-specific. How about: How to make \$10 million, improve your health, and have a really good tan ... all before dinner tonight.
- Bullet #3. Unique, Useful, Ultra-specific. Could be more Urgent. How about: A virtual cure for arthritis that stops the soreness and pain – and rebuilds new cartilage in less than 30 minutes.
- Bullet #4. Unique, Useful. Could be more Urgent and more Ultra-specific. How about: Starting tomorrow, you can have better sex at 40 than you did when you were 21. "These simple exercises can increase sexual performance," says Dr. Smith.
- Bullet #5. Has it all. It's Urgent, Unique, Ultra-specific, and Useful.

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2 Responses to "Bullet Blaster: A Review of the 4 U's Plus Exercises to Improve Your Bullet-Writing Skill"

Very useful - clarifies the application of the four Us.

Ros – over a year ago

I like what you've written here.

But apart from the 4U's, the copy needs to be believable.

Bullet #2 is not believable. And it's not clear what is expected to happen before dinner tonight. Is it make \$10 million, is it 'improve your health', or is it 'have a good tan'? Presumably it's 'have a good tan'.

Similarly with bullet #3 rebuilding cartilage in 30 minutes is not believable.

However, with all that said I do get the points you've made.

Thanks

Tony S.

Guest (Tony) – over a year ago

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