

Your Real Prospect is Closer Than You Think

By Will Newman

The most important person in your copywriting life is that shadowy person known as "your prospect."

In last week's *The Golden Thread*, we looked at the twin starting points for getting to know your prospect as a real person: demographics and psychographics.

Demographics are the basic statistics about your prospect's life ... How old is she? How much money does she earn? What education has she attained? Does she have kids or grandkids? Does she rent or own her home? I like to look at demographics as the bones of your 3-D image of the prospect.

Psychographics are the flesh on the bones of your prospect image. This is where you get to learn about your prospect's biases by tying into parts of his life that he chooses for himself: His hobbies, the books he reads, his political affiliations, that sort of thing.

Is this enough? Can you rely on data that really comes from a large group of prospects when you're trying to build a picture of an individual?

Not if you're writing a promo for a product, service, or fundraising effort that's new to you. Or if your client is trying to extend his customer base by selling to a new group of people.

Or if you're new to copywriting yourself.

In these cases, you must go beyond demographics and psychographics. How do you do this? By reaching out to *real individuals* who are prospects. This sounds difficult, but it's not. Here are three strategies for getting "up close and personal" with a potential prospect without getting in his face.

Your best prospect is as close as your computer ...

Good places to find real words from real people about your copywriting topic are discussion groups on the Internet.

I use Google, Yahoo!, or Bing and type in "topic" and "forum" (without the quotation marks). For example, if you're writing about a supplement that regulates blood sugar, you'd type in "diabetes" for the topic.

You'll come up with a wealth of sources about diabetes ... written by people with diabetes or whose loved ones have diabetes. These forums get to the heart of what people are worried about, what they hope for, and what they feel.

Here's an example:

Hi ... I am 24 years old. I am a diabetic patient. A few days back, I got knee injuries. Diabetes with knee injuries are so horrible. I'm taking joints supplements with diabetic remedies. Are there any side effects with this kind of medication?

This one entry gives new insight into what diabetics are thinking. Think what you could learn from digging deeper and reading more.

Your prospect has already spoken with your client personally ...

Ask your client's customer service department for letters from their customers. Ask for as many as they'll give you.

Your prospect is speaking directly to you in these letters. If you're in the COS Leads Intensive, you're familiar with a promotion based on a testimonial. Kent Komae read a letter from Maureen Carron and fashioned his long-running Mountain Home Nutritionals control around it.

Don't stop at reading the testimonials. Ask to see *all* the letters ... even those with complaints. These give you additional insight into what your prospect wants from the product as much as testimonials will.

The absolute best way to talk with your prospect ...

The absolute best way to get to know your prospect personally is also the way that's often ignored or forgotten. What is it?

Quite simply talk to him ... in person.

Last week I told you about COS member Jennifer who asked the question that prompted this mini-series. To remind you, she wanted to know how to connect with a 60-ish man when she wasn't one herself. Here's my brief answer to her ...

How do you connect with a 60-ish man? Talk to several of them in person. This could be a husband, father, friend, etc. Don't talk just about the product. Find out about things in general in their lives. Get to know them more personally without pushing them away by prying.

My longer answer is this. You already know people who are your ideal prospect. Take a look at your circle of family, friends, and acquaintances. Offer to buy them coffee or lunch.

Be honest with them. Tell them why you're taking up their time. But here's a secret: Do not ask them specifically about the product. Rather, ask about whatever problems or life circumstances the problem addresses.

So if you're writing an alternative health promo about joint pain, you could start this way. "You know, as I get older, I'm worried about not being able to do things I want to because of sore joints. Is this something that concerns you?"

Or let's say you're writing a fundraising piece about homeless teens. You know an acquaintance who's talked to you about her concern for these kids. You might ask her why she's so worried about them. And does she think these kids are salvageable.

In a short amount of time, you'll get more insight into your prospect's core complex than you could get from all the generalized demographics and psychographics you could lay your hands on.

Which way is the best?

When it comes time to develop your 3-D prospect image, which strategy is the best to adopt? Talking directly to them? Reading customer service files? Data cards?

You know what I'm going to say. Use all of them. The more insight you have on the real person who's your prospect, the easier it'll be for you to touch his core complex. And the easier it'll be to write a successful promotion to him.

Don't forget the one, most important secret to being a good writer ... Write!

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This Is An Amazing Insight....I'll Be Taking This Approach From Now On. Thanks A Lot Will!...

Antoni – over a year ago

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