

One Big Idea: Copywriting Tip #1

By Will Newman

Will Newman here, with the first of five blogs I'll be writing this week about the five most important secrets for being a successful copywriter.

So let's start out with the second most important secret of copywriting. (I'm saving #1 for the last day.) This secret comes from [Mark Ford](#) ... you may know him by his pen name, Michael Masterson.

One Is Enough

About a year after Mark Ford started writing ETR, he noticed something. All the articles that got the highest ratings from his readers covered one, and only one, idea. Those articles that covered more than one topic never scored as well.

He realized readers were looking for a single, useful suggestion or idea that could make them more successful.

After realizing this, Mark formulated his "Rule of One." To be successful, to create blockbuster promotions, your copywriting — as well as all of your persuasive efforts — should have ...

- **One and only one Big Idea driving it**
- **One core emotion**
- **One single, desirable benefit**

It's a simple rule. But as with many "simple" ideas, it holds a great deal of depth. Let's start with the first part.

One and only one Big Idea

Let's say you're writing a promo for a nutritional supplement that regulates blood sugar, eases joint pain, and increases energy.

Pretty remarkable supplement! So, it's tempting to try to convince your prospect of its wide-ranging benefits.

Don't do it!

If you try, you'll end up diluting the power of your copy.

Your readers who don't have issues with blood sugar — for example — will skip over those parts. This gives them permission to stop paying attention in general.

And to cover all the benefits, you'll have to mount tons of evidence to support your claims.

A lot of work for you to write. And worse, it's too much work for your reader to wade through.

One core emotion

AWAI programs teach that your prospect has many emotions. Shouldn't you try to hit as many of those as you can when you're writing to him?

Think about it in your own life. When facing a particular situation, you experience more than one emotion. You might be angry, sad, and frustrated at the same time. However, one emotion dominates. How would *you* feel if they're all competing equally? Disoriented. Out of control. Even more frustrated. That's not how you want your prospect to feel when he's reading your promotion.

One single, desirable benefit

You want your reader to get excited about the biggest benefit your product brings to his life based on the one idea you're focusing on. In your lead and the first part of your promo, you want him to be able to see and feel *that* benefit.

If you're writing longer-form copy, you can bring in other benefits that support the biggest one later on. For the supplement, your big promise might be relief from joint pain. So your desirable benefit is doing daily activities more easily and without pain.

Later on, you could say something like, "Now that your joints are feeling young once again, you can get back to knitting for your grandchildren ... or playing a pick-up game of basketball with younger friends." But notice how these more detailed benefits are really extensions of your major, targeted benefit.

The Rule of One: Straightforward — yes. Simple — yes.

But you'll be tempted to add "just one more."

Resist that temptation.

Because when you follow Mark Ford's Rule of One, your writing will be clearer. The response to it, stronger. And your work will be easier and quicker.

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American Writers & Artists Institute

220 George Bush Blvd, Suite D

Delray Beach, FL 33444

(561) 278-5557 or (866) 879-2924