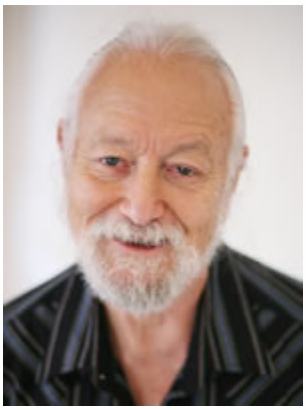
Ignore This Essential Copywriting 'Rule' From Mark Ford and Risk the Success of Your Copy

By Will Newman



Will Newman

Denise Ford gave me exciting news! She's asked me to teach the next session of the *Circle of Success* class called "The Power to Persuade."

I'm excited for a couple of reasons.

First, I had the pleasure of developing this course a year ago as part of the revamped *Circle of Success* Targeted Learning Program structure.

Denise and I felt there was a need to teach essential secrets behind *all* persuasive writing before launching into the secrets of headlines, leads, and the rest of a successful promotional letter.

This is the second time I've taught this program. I had so much fun last time, I was looking forward to teaching it again. I think the members in the class had fun too.

The second reason I'm excited is Denise's invitation gave me an idea about what to write this week.

So today, I'm going to give you one of Mark Ford's foundations for successful writing of all kinds … a secret we delve into in great detail in The Power to Persuade. Then, over the next three days, I'll give you three other crucial secrets of successful copywriting.

A shotgun doesn't work in copywriting

A common misconception beginning copywriters hold — and many experienced as well — saps all effectiveness out of their writing. They make this common blunder thinking they're providing as many reasons to buy as possible.

But they're really confusing their readers with too many messages … and muddying all the reasons for buying.

This 'shotgun' approach to copywriting violates one of Mark Ford's foundational principles of persuasive copywriting … The Rule of One.

The way Mark puts it:

> *"To create blockbuster promotions time after time, you must understand the difference between good copy and great copy. The Power of One is the driving force behind great copy."*

Simply stated, the Rule of One means you use *one, big central idea* to build your promotion around.

You see the Rule of One at work in the most successful advertisements of all time.

Coca Cola built a hugely successful advertising campaign around the slogan "The pause that refreshes." When that slogan grew stale, they switched to "Always Cool."

Each slogan gives a very clear picture of one central idea. They would have lost this focus with a slogan like "The pause that refreshes and always cool."

Here are some others that follow the Rule of One:

- Avis: "We try harder."
- Apple Computer: "Think different."
- Pork Advisory Board: "Pork. The other white meat."

Don't let your ideas compete with each other

Veteran advertising consultant James Loftus has worked with Anheuser-Busch, Holiday Inn, McDonald's, and many other clients. He's invoked the Rule of One to power his very successful career …

> *" … keep in mind that the more points you try to cover, the less effective each point, and therefore your ad, will be. An effective ad will actually have only one central focus, even if you discuss it from two or three perspectives. If your points are too diverse, they compete with each other, and end up pulling the reader's attention in separate directions."*

Celeste W. — a *COS* member in a Targeted Learning Program I taught — summed up the Rule of One perfectly:

> *"When I do all the research and have all those ideas, it makes my head spin trying to make sense of it. How do you think your reader feels when he's confronted by all of that? His head has to be spinning just as badly."*

There are three other parts to Mark Ford's Rule of One. But they really demand in-depth study such as we go into in The Power to Persuade program.

But if you hold onto one core idea from this *Writer's Life*, it should be this …

If you've picked *one* strong, main idea — one that touches your prospect's core complex — that's all you need. That's enough to carry your reader to the decision to keep reading … And to buy.

Even if your product has three great major benefits, concentrate on just one. Use that one as the driving force in your promotion. You can touch on the others later in the promotion — maybe in a sidebar or a P.S. But make your main idea and the big benefit your promotion's driving force.

If you don't, you'll lose focus. Your prospect will lose focus. Your promotion will lose focus … and fail.

Looking ahead for more secrets …

I really hope to see you back tomorrow. I'll be sharing one of the biggest 'lies' in copywriting.

Until then, please let me know what you think of Mark Ford's Rule of One and if you've noticed examples where it has been used successfully. Comment below and let us all know.

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11 Responses to "Ignore This Essential Copywriting 'Rule' From Mark Ford and Risk the Success of Your Copy"

Great article! My favorite slogan of all time is "Just Do It". It's so effective I don't even have to mention the company's name!!

Guest *(Carla S)* – over a year ago

Mark Ford's "The Rule of One" must absolutely LOVE >> "Schaefer: The one beer to have when you're having more than one." I sure do. And I don't even drink.

Guest *(Chris Morris)* – over a year ago

Thank you for this!
I've never written any copy. However I've read plenty of it. Mr . Ford has reenforced what I've been thinking (for a long time) When I do write copy,it won't be over the board, it has to be focused!
Looking forward to hearing more on the subject. Thank you

Guest *(D Mauritz Karl)* – over a year ago

Looking for new avenue of educating self, in need to learn the basics again. Just for i guesswork,and experience. Hope to forfill the fundamental asspect of copywriting. One word work, and hope.

Guest *(Ronnie Hooks)* – over a year ago

Thanks this article Will.

As I evolve as a copywriter and marketer, I see need in reminding myself of the little things I've learned. I feel the little things like the 'Power of One' make a huge difference where it comes to campaign success.

I just wrote a salesletter over the weekend and started editing it yesterday. I had a feeling there was something amiss in the body copy, but I did not edit it out.

After reading this, it dawned on me that I introduce three competing ideas in my body copy and now I know exactly what to do. :)

Thanks Will, and have a brilliant day!

[FROM WILL: Your comment made my day. I love knowing that something I've written has helped a fellow copywriter.]

Donald C Obii – over a year ago

Thank you all for taking the time to leave comments on this article. I greatly appreciate your taking the time to do so.

Good luck, best wishes, and much success, Will

Will Newman – over a year ago

I like Hillary's slogan, " Fighting for us "...The "us" invokes an image of the United States, the word ' fighting " our armed forces , and proves without a doubt she means business!
Mr. Newman, your newsletters are always so informative - Much appreciated-

[FROM WILL: Are you suggesting that there's hidden imagery in political messages? Very perceptive. Maybe you should consider political writing. Nice comment.]

Guest *(Mardor)* – over a year ago

I noticed that you uaed the rule of one when talking about Ford's rules, isn't that a recursive discussion?(Yeah, I'm a nerd. But your tenacity on sticking with the rule of one discussion, while mentioning other rules, enticed me to "stay tuned" Sort of like Churchill's speech advise. It was long enough to cover it, but short enough to entice.

[FROM WILL: I love recursion! I guess that makes me a nerd, too. One important consideration when discussing the Rule of One is that details in favor of your argument that fall under the main topic are not a violation of the rule of one. So while Mark Ford's Rule of One might seem limiting, it is anything but. I feel it is actually liberating as it sounds like you do as well.]

Guest *(Walt Fair)* – over a year ago

Hello to all,

My name is Fatima Camelo,an automation and control engineer who got in love by writing.
I want to work because I wish to buy the away copy writer course.

If possible can you give me your opinion about the slogan :

Together we will.

With this I'm going to get more new clients.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

FC

[FROM WILL: My concern about the slogan is that it doesn't express any benefit for the reader. It sounds like an impassioned political slogan. In that regard it is good. But as a marketing slogan because it lacks any sense of what the product does or what benefits it provides, I feel it is weak. I hope that helps.]

Guest *(Fatima Camelo)* – over a year ago

Fatima'

Let's read on together.

vic-the-click – over a year ago

Hi will,

well conceived article. the idea of one is the most valuable idea which persuades. In India you Must have heard about 'vimal sprees' a big brand in sarees. for more than thirty five years they used the power of one and became the most sought after brand. there slogan was and still is 'only vimal'.

this made a significant effect on the minds of consumers and vimal sarees progressed day and night.

[FROM WILL: Thank you, Mahesh.]

Mahesh Seelvi – over a year ago

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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