

Most small businesses can write better sales letters

As a freelance writer and marketing consultant, I am frequently asked to prepare company proposals, brochures and other written materials for organizations of all sizes. Regardless of the project, one question never fails to come up: "How can we write better sales letters?"

Unlike letters addressed to individuals, sales letters are designed to reach large numbers of current and potential customers at the same time. They must capture readers' attention and interest while further convincing them to do whatever it is

you have asked. As a result, writing better sales letters requires much more than a unique writing style to be effective. The following guidelines will help those who want assistance in this area.

Before you start, put yourself in the right frame of mind. Anyone who receives promotional material expects to be sold on something and will throw your letter out if they have to waste time trying to discover what it is that you want. The purpose of any sales letter is to sell the



focus: small business

Mary DiPaolo

audience — and to sell them right away.

Next, the opening of the letter can make or break its overall effect. It is at this point where recipients decide

to keep on reading or file your letter into the wastebasket. Any opening remarks, headlines or introductory paragraphs must get attention and arouse interest if you want your au-

dience to read one.

Little-known facts, "startling" statistics and quotable quotes that pertain directly to the point of your letter would be appropriate to use in this section. And whatever you do, don't start off your letter with salutations such as "Dear Loyal Customer," "Dear Neighbor," or another meaningless greeting. It's already obvious to the reader that a sales letter is not a personal letter.

Maintaining reader attention until the letter ends is a trickier proposition, yet it is possible when you make your point immediately, expand upon it and wrap it up. Don't waste words or include additional information that causes you to stray from your original point. If you want your material to promote a particular product or service of your business, don't confuse your readers by

mentioning everything else that you offer. Your company brochure is meant to be used for this purpose, not your sales letters.

Also plan your letter so it will be written from the readers' point of view. Why should readers call you for an appointment, visit your shop or buy your product/service? What makes you any different (and better) than the competition? How reputable are you? The answer to these questions explaining the benefits of doing business with you ensures that your sales letters will be written from the proper perspective.

Mary DiPaolo is the owner of MarkeTrends, a Northville business consulting firm. She is also producer and host of the cable television series, "Chamber Perspectives."

datebook

LEGAL ASSISTANTS

Friday, Oct. 26 — "Bankruptcy Law and the Legal Assistant" 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. near Rochester. Fee: \$95. Info: 370-3120. Sponsor: Oakland University.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Friday, Oct. 26 — "Time and Resource Management" 8:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in Troy. Fee: \$160. Info: 689-8282. Sponsor: Walsh College.

BUSINESS WRITING

Friday, Oct. 26 — "Organizing and Composing Letters, Memos and Reports" 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. near Rochester. Fee: \$95. Info: 370-3033. Sponsor: Oakland University.

ALTERNATIVE MINIMUM TAX

Friday, Oct. 26 — "Corporate Alternative Minimum Tax" 8:30 a.m. to noon in Troy. Fee: \$70. Info: 689-8282 Ext. 260. Sponsor: Walsh College.

ACCOUNTANT REVIEW

Saturday, Oct. 27 — Certified Management Accountant examination review Part I (economics, finance and management) 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. near Rochester. Fee: \$95. Info: 370-3120. Sponsor: Oakland University.

GRE WORKSHOP

Saturday, Oct. 27 through Dec. 1 — Graduate Record Examination preparation workshop 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. near Rochester. Fee: \$135. Info: 370-3120. Sponsor: Oakland University.

SELLING

Monday, Oct. 29 — "The New Psychology of Selling" begins at 2 p.m. in Southfield. Fee: \$39. Info: 362-2424. Sponsor: Yes... A Positive Network.

SUCCESS

Monday, Oct. 29 — "The Psychology of Success" begins at 7 p.m. in Southfield. Fee: \$36. Info: 362-2424. Sponsor: Yes... A Positive Network.

ACCOUNTANTS ASSOCIATION

Monday, Oct. 29 — National Association of Accountants meets in Bloomfield Hills. Info: Douglas Joslin, 244-9090.

BUSINESS PLAN PREPARATION

Mondays, Oct. 29 through Nov. 12 — "Business Management II: Business Plan Preparation" 6-9:30 p.m. in Troy. Fee: \$135. Info: 689-8282 Ext. 260. Sponsor: Walsh College.

BUSINESS ADVICE

Tuesday, Oct. 30 — Business advisory services conference for CPAs 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in Troy. Fee: \$105. Info: 555-2258. Sponsor: Michigan Association of CPAs.

MANAGING CHANGE

Tuesday, Oct. 30 — "Change Management" 7-10 p.m. in Birmingham. Fee: \$35. Info: 433-2083. Sponsor: MasterStream Technology.

IMPROVING PART-TIMERS

Tuesdays, Oct. 30 and Nov. 6 — "Part-Time Professionals" 7-9:30 p.m. in Troy. Fee: \$125. Info: 679-7595.

ANALYTICAL PROCEDURES

Wednesday, Oct. 31 — "Analytical

Procedures, SAS No. 56" 8-10 a.m. in Troy for CPAs. Fee: \$35. Info: 489-8282 Ext. 260. Sponsor: Walsh College.

JOB FAIR

Wednesday, Oct. 31 — Job fair 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Southfield. Info: 225-9888. Sponsor: United Way for Southeastern Michigan.

Information for this column should be sent to the business editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

Information must be received by Monday to be published in the Thursday issue. Publication cannot be guaranteed. Information should contain a daytime telephone number where information can be verified.

marketplace

Jim Mair Oldsmobile/GMC Truck will give away a 1990 Oldsmobile Cutlery to benefit Toys for Tots. Tickets are \$50. Sales close Nov. 2 or when 100 tickets are sold. The dealership is at 42955 Can Dyke.

Ross Roy Productions was presented a Business TV (BTV) Award for producing a live satellite feed that introduced Chrysler Corp.'s Guaranteed Rebates program to its dealers.

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- Distribution of your estate
- Looking ahead at funeral arrangements
- The role of a trust
- Charitable giving and estate planning
- How changing tax laws impact your financial planning

SPEAKERS:

P. MARK ACCETTURA is a partner in the law firm, Daguanno, Nemes & Accettura and professor at the University of Detroit School of Law.

JOHN L. KRIEMAN is Vice President & Trust Officer of Comerica Bank. Mr. Krieman has over 21 years of banking experience in trust and estate administration.

JOHN G. FIKE is Director of Planned Giving for the Salvation Army, Eastern Michigan Division. Mr. Fike has served a variety of not-for-profit groups in the Midwest.

THOMAS F. ROST is President of R. G. & G. R. Harris Funeral Homes, Inc. He is president of Preferred Funeral Directors International and also president of the Detroit Executive Association.

GERALD HOFFMAN is President of Hoffman Accounting & Tax Service. He has over 20 years of experience in taxation and estate planning.

KAY E. BRUNS is a Life Underwriter Training Council Fellow (LUTCF) for Century Companies of America and a member of the National Association of Life and Health Underwriters.

WILLIAM MONTGOMERY is an attorney and candidate for District Judge in Garden City. He is President Elect of the Garden City Kiwanis and former chairman of the Garden City Planning Commission.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 30
3:00-5:30 P.M. OR 7:00-9:30 P.M.

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