

Alan Forrest Smith The UK's Greatest Sales Copywriter!

The Amazingly True Story of How One Simple Sales Letter Pulled 33% Response

Every now and then something real weird happens with a sales letter. I can't explain it. I am not over sure why it happens. But, it does happen. It can happen and it'll keep happening.

The weird thing is this. When the average sales letter converts a figure of less than 1% how is it one letter can pull in a massive 33%? Why did it happen? What made it happen? Was it an accident? Was it planned? Can a clear explanation be given?

Once you learn the TRUTH about how outrageous responses like 33% can easily be achieved YOU WILL be able to apply these very same profit crunching yet simple principles to your own sales letters.

Without question Alan is the UK's hottest and most sought after Direct Response Copywriters in years! With a track record of record breaking results most other writers would die for. If you want to hire Alan his diary is full for nearly 12 months. His fee's are BIG. The returns on your investment can be GIGANTIC.

Interviewed by Singapore copywriter Jerry Yeo of www.Adwriting.com

BEFORE YOU READ FURTHER: To get the best of the interview do this. Print out the actual sales letter and go through it as you read the interview. This way you can scribble lots of notes. Okay, enjoy and please let me know what you think after.

THE INTERVIEW

JY: Hi, this is Jerry Yeo from AdWriting.com, and today, my guest is Alan Forrest Smith, from AlanForrestSmith.com. Alan specializes in writing sales letters, and his sales letters have brought in millions of dollars in sales for his clients. He has worked with the leading marketers in the world, such as Andrew Reynolds, who is UK's number one marketer, and also the Jay Abraham Group, and Marlon Sanders, and Michel Fortin and many other very successful marketers. And, Alan

Want To Hire Alan For Copywriting That Sells? Go To <http://AlanForrestSmith.com> To Find Out How.

Alan Forrest Smith The UK's Greatest Sales Copywriter!

has also lectured throughout the world, in countries such as Russia, UK, Ireland, and he even has upcoming lectures in Milan and Japan. So, welcome, Alan.

AFS: Okay, Jerry, thanks, it's good to be here.

JY: Great. so today, we're going to be breaking down a sales letter that brought in an amazing 33% response, which is quite amazing. I'm just doing the math here, and it seems you're making about £16 for every letter you mail.

AFS: Yeah, well, Jerry, I don't know, because I write for the client, and the client mails it out, and he sets his own price, his own figures, his own breakeven. But, yeah, on this particular letter, the guy did very, very well with it, very well. And, he's still running this letter. In fact, he ran this letter last week, and he sold 155 products with the letter, so he was very pleased.

SIDE NOTE: His last mail out pulled in just over 60% from the list he used for the same letter!

JY: That's a very good response. So, I'm going to just jump right in, so Alan, how do you prepare yourself before you sit down to write copy?

AFS: OK, well, to be honest, I don't think I do anything in particular, or anything special, but I will tell you what I do do. When I have a first contact with a client, I get as much information as I possibly can about the whole project. The next priority beyond that is to find out about the target market of the client. My client is looking to sell to someone in particular. I try and find out as much information about that individual or that target market. I then read everything I can on that particular market, and I research as much as I can. When I've done that, that takes a couple of days, I don't do anything, probably, for about two or three weeks. I think about the project. So, while I'm writing one project, I'm usually thinking about the next one.

So, that's how I do it, Jerry, I just turn it over in my mind for about three weeks, two or three weeks. I then sit down and write, and it takes me probably a day to write the whole letter. This particular letter was probably about 20 pages when it was written. I sit down, write the letter. That will probably take me about 12 to 14 hours, non-stop, I'll just go right through. And then, when I've done that, I go back to it in the morning, I just re-read it, I take some copy out, and then, I'll leave it for a few days. Then, I go back after a few days, polish it, and send it to my proofreader, then.

SIDE NOTE: The thought process is crucial for me. I honestly believe the more thought that goes in to the sales copy before it is written the better a results it will pull. I can spend weeks just thinking about headlines!

Alan Forrest Smith The UK's Greatest Sales Copywriter!

JY: Okay, I see, so let me back you up a little bit. You mentioned researching your target market, so what are some ways you would recommend that we go about that?

AFS: Well, we'll come, as an example, the letter I sent you.

JY: Okay.

AFS: And, I can tell you how I worked that particular one. First of all, this actual letter is for the business opportunity market, so it's for the kind of guys that go on many courses, buy many how to do it books, how to succeed, how to pack in your job, so you've got to tune in to the mentality of that market. In other words, you've got to try and think the way that target market would think. So, these guys are thinking, I want to get away from my job, I'm fed up with 9:00 to 5:00, I'm sick of sitting in the car all day. What would be a good way for me to earn a month's wages in a few days? So, basically, research the mindset of that market, where they've been, where they are now, and where they want to be. And, that's it, really, Jerry.

JY: OK, great, so when you're writing copy, do you use any kind of a formula?

AFS: I don't really, to be honest. I mean, there's loads of people talking about formulas, and you know, you can buy this electronic software now where you know, like Push Button Letters, or so on, which, actually, they're not too bad. But, for me, it's too formularized. I just believe that copy, I mean, I do like formal copy. For example, if I wrote a letter for a bank, it wouldn't be in the style of the letter that I sent you. It would have to be more formal. Well, I don't really use any fixed formula, but what I try and do is, I try and have a conversation through the copy to one individual, rather than talk to a big target market of 10,000 people at once. So, just try and keep it conversational, really.

SIDE NOTE: Conversational tone is absolutely crucial if sales copy is to succeed. When copy is put down I want that one reader to know I am talking to him individually, to him personally. I want him to imagine it's me and him talking in a bar, simple, it works!

JY: Yeah, and you've really done that in this letter.

AFS: Yeah, I think this is a good example of that, yeah.

JY: Okay, so I'm just going to go through the copy, and ask you questions along the way.

AFS: Yes, fire away.

Alan Forrest Smith The UK's Greatest Sales Copywriter!

JY: So, let's start the headline, so I believe you've put a lot of thought in this, just this headline, so could you kind of break it down, how you created this headline, and what's the psychology behind it?

AFS: Sure, well, just for the sake of the listeners, Jerry, I think what I'll do is I'll just read that headline out, shall I?

JY: Sure.

AFS: At the very top, in very small font, probably about a 10 or 12 font. It just says, "Important," in bold, "if you are serious about creating a life free from 9:00 till 5:00 restrictions, you'd be nuts not to read this incredible story of..." "How Ex-Landscape Gardener turned Web Entrepreneur banked 2,540 UK pounds," which is about \$5,000 U.S. dollars, "in just 9 days from his 'NEW' First Venture." Now, the psychology behind that headline, was first of all, it's tapping into the target market, because the target market, they want to be free from a life of 9:00 till 5:00 restrictions.

So, first of all, you're tapping into the way those people think, straightaway. So, if they want to be free from those 9:00 till 5:00 restrictions, well, you say to them, "Well, you'd be nuts not to read this incredible story of how..." And then, what we're going to do is, we're going to tell them a story of somebody who's really done this, and we have an average guy, ex-landscape gardener, who if he's always going to be a gardener, he's not going to be earning great money. Notice how he's turned Web Entrepreneur, and he banked this massive \$5,000 in just 9 days. And, the point is, it says, "From his "NEW" First Venture.

So, in other words, all that headline does is, it says to the target, "Look," it says, "you are the target market," because that's the way they're thinking subconsciously, and then, it says to them, "Here's an average guy, nobody special, who's done this in 9 days, on his very first venture." In other words, it's easy, anyone can do it. You just need a system, and if you want to know the system, read his story.

SIDE NOTE: Sales copy should be "search-driven" What do I mean? I mean that you must imagine what your targets are looking for. The problems they have and the solution that would want. They search and when they find your sales copy ... it hits them with the answer they were always looking for.

JY: And that will lead them to read the story.

AFS: Hopefully!

JY: So next to the headline, you have, actually, a picture of a guy with a shovel...

AFS: Yeah.

Alan Forrest Smith The UK's Greatest Sales Copywriter!

- JY:* And, is there any reason why you decided to put the picture there?
- AFS:* Yeah, just to show, first of all, the eye will be drawn to the right.
- JY:* Yes.
- AFS:* Just naturally, your eyes are always drawn to the right, so the photo's on the right for a reason.
- JY:* Right.
- AFS:* And also, just to show that this really was an average guy. And, this is an actual picture of the guy at work, so I just said to the guy, I said, "I need a photograph of you doing your daily, average job, digging a hole, filling a wheel barrow, and working in the cold," because, if I put a man right at the beginning, sitting behind a desk with a big wad of dollars in his hand, well, the average person can't relate to that. That's what they want to be, but they don't relate to it. Where, on this photo, it's the average guy, doing an average job, average wage, and they can relate to that. So, they'll automatically say, "Well, you know, if this average Joe has done this, I can do it, as well." So, that's the psychology behind the photograph.
- SIDE NOTE: Ask yourself this. If you are chasing the market that we are talking about above will they relate to a guy on a yacht in the middle of the Caribbean? Or will they relate to the guy with the shovel working hard? Yes you can use those pictures later on but not this early. Give them something they can relate to, don't confuse it with arty-farty graphics!*
- JY:* Okay, I see. So, now, moving along in the letter, I'm not going to read out the letter. The listeners are going to have a copy of this letter.
- AFS:* Yeah.
- JY:* OK, so, but I see the first two-thirds of the letter is basically a personal story.
- AFS:* Yeah.
- JY:* So, is there any reason why you chose this approach?
- AFS:* Yeah, there is, I mean, you know what, Jerry, if you read a newspaper, what you read in a newspaper, is you do get some editorial. But, the really interesting stuff that people want to read is the stories.
- JY:* Yeah, that's right.

Alan Forrest Smith The UK's Greatest Sales Copywriter!

AFS: So, people want to know what's happening to someone, what's happening to a country, what's happening to a nation, what's happening to a product. People want to know stories. But, when it's a one-on-one story, a real guy doing a real thing, he's at home with his wife, he's got all this stuff, all this junk piled up everywhere, and he's suddenly become a success, people want to know why, because it's intriguing. Because, just on a purely human level, people are always interested in reading about people who've achieved things that they've never achieved, because they think, yeah, well, I would love to do that. I want to be there, as well. If this guy can do it, I can do it.

So, stories are great. For me, stories out-pull anything, and what you're doing is you're sitting...it's like one guy sitting on one side of a table, another guy sitting on another side of a table, both drinking a coffee, and you're having a conversation. So, you sit there, and you're telling this guy, "This is my story, listen to this." And, people love stories, people just love hearing about people. So, that was the reason for the story, Jerry, on that.

SIDE NOTE: People love to read about people. Look at the magazine covers out there today that are selling like hot potatoes. People are drawn to real-life stories, if you have one use it to its fullest potential.

JY: Okay, I see. And so, you're sending a business opportunity product letter, and most people selling such products, they try to position themselves, like they say that, "I'm a guru, and I just discovered this new way to make money."

AFS: Yeah.

JY: But, your letter takes quite a different approach.

AFS: Yeah.

JY: And, in fact, kind of self-deprecating.

AFS: Yeah.

JY: And so, why did you choose this kind of approach?

AFS: Because, I think the reason...I might be wrong on this (*but look at the response rates!*), Jerry, but I do believe the target market for this stuff has been absolutely destroyed, really, by online copywriters, because I think there's too much of the same going around. And, when I first had this project, he wanted to go down that first approach, this is a guru, etc., etc., and I said, "What is the point," because we knew that other projects exactly the same are drawn out to different mailing lists in the UK, and he would have been happy with a 2% response rate. But, for him

Alan Forrest Smith The UK's Greatest Sales Copywriter!

to have a 2% response rate, meant to have a 98% fail rate, and I didn't really want to go down that path, because I just felt we've seen it all before, we've heard it all before. People are becoming numb to the word, "guru," the word, "expert." People just don't believe it now, and we do live in a very skeptical society, because we're being fed so much junk.

I wanted to make it as real as possible. And, it was a little story. I just wanted to tell this guy's story, exactly how it happened, so I avoided the guru thing on purpose, because I think it's been hammered to death. But, Jerry, just let me say, I might be wrong on that. But, I wanted to take a different approach, and I think the response rate proved it was the right way to go in this particular case.

SIDE NOTE: This is the age of the skeptic, no question. To make sales copy work it has to be as real as possible. The story has to be a story that can be related to. The guy in this real story has failings. We talk about them. People don't want to read about the perfect guy doing it perfect from a-z. They want it real. Adding the failings make it real.

JY: Yeah, I think it really made a difference.

AFS: Yeah.

JY: And, so as I read your letter, I find it very disarming and, in fact, it seems that there's some emotional bonding going on.

AFS: Yes.

JY: So, how did you achieve this effect with your letter?

AFS: Well, I think the best way to say it is as others said before, really. What I'm trying to do is, I want the audience, or the one individual I'm talking to, to be able to relate to the guy in the letter, so, eventually to say, "Well, yeah, I've made those mistakes, and I've wasted that money, I have tried this, I have tried that." He's tried it, as well. So, if he's tried all this, and he's wasted all that money, and eventually, he's been able to make a complete success of it, well, maybe I can do the same, because, I think people like to think of themselves, and probably including myself, people like to think of themselves as I'm successful at what I do, I'm doing really well, you know, and nobody can teach me anything.

And, what I wanted really to do was to bring down every single barrier, which I think the letter did well, and just have a conversation, just sit and chat to someone, and just again, say, "This is my story. Anyone can do it." And, I think the point was, it was to disarm the reader, to pull him into the copy, so that it'd take down every single barrier that he may have, and to keep him reading through the copy.

Alan Forrest Smith The UK's Greatest Sales Copywriter!

I mean, I think we have to remember that the whole purpose of a sales letter, initially, is to get read. You know, because if it doesn't get read, we don't get any response.

JY: Yeah, that's right.

AFS: So, you have to pull them in, and it's a little bit like grabbing the end of a rope, and the individual is 100 meters away at the other end, 100 yards, and you're pulling them in slowly. And, that's what you have to do with a sales letter, you have to pull them through. People don't want to read. People don't want to read, I mean, in this case, it's a 12-page letter. People don't want to sit and read a 12-page letter, so you have to give them a good enough reason to pull them through the copy. And, you have to keep pulling them through, because as soon as they get...it's a big boring, they'll just burn it, it'll just go straight in the trash.

SIDE NOTE: Every day we are bombarded with sales messages. I think its around 2,000 per day now. Just look at your own mail box in the mornings. If you want someone to read your sales message it has to pull them through a step at a time. Each word, paragraph etc has to be a constant move toward getting them to read the next step.

JY: Okay, so...and, I see that along the way in your copy, you sprinkle in lots of seemingly meaningless details, like, for example, the part about waking up the wife in the middle of the night.

AFS: Yeah.

JY: And, imagining himself on the beach, and all those...is there a reason why you included these details?

AFS: Yeah, there is, because I think I try and pinch some of my ideas, again, from newspapers, and from things like kids' books, as well, because I have four children, and we read all the time. And, I like the way that they actually build pictures in peoples' minds.

JY: Uh huh.

AFS: So, people can...see, Jerry, the thing is, I didn't want to just tell the story. I wanted them to be able to look into this guy's house, and I wanted them to see him unloading everything from under the stairs. I wanted them to see him having this great idea, and running upstairs, and waking up his wife with excitement. I wanted them to actually see that, and to feel that, because what it does, it creates a little bit of adrenaline, as well. Along that stage, you can feel the pace of that letter actually picks up, then, because, he says, "In the morning, I didn't want to

Alan Forrest Smith The UK's Greatest Sales Copywriter!

go and do my landscape gardening, I didn't want to cut the hedge. I needed to do this..."

So, it goes from kind of a story, and the pace picks up then, and becomes a little bit more exciting. And so, yeah, they're meaningless details, but it builds a picture of the guy's life, and that was the point, really. See, because a lot of these guys that do these biz opportunities, you know, they've already spent thousands, and you know what it's like if you're a married man, and you're going to say to your wife, "Listen, I want to spend another \$3,000," she says, "You spend another \$3,000 and I'm going to throw you out the window."

SIDE NOTE: Want more sales ... build a picture and make it real. Graphics that apply work. Build in seemingly mindless details he is scared of his wife's reaction. He wont be the first man to relate to that!

JY: Yes.

AFS: So, I was just trying to make it as real as possible, really.

JY: And, along the way, I see you have pictures along the way, and also, there's hand-written notes.

AFS: Yes.

JY: About hand-written notes, aren't they kind of untidy? Why don't you just type in directly to the letter?

AFS: Because, one, the hand-written notes are supposed to look a little bit like an afterthought, so it says, we're going through the letter. And, again, going back to newspapers, if you look at newspapers, they will have many headlines just stuck right in the middle of copy. Now, in this particular case, to be quite honest with you, I would normally put hand-written notes in the margin. In this case, I wanted to try it within the copy, so that was why I put the hand-written notes right in the copy because I wanted it to stand out, and we have to remember, when people read...if somebody gets a 12-page sales letter through the Post, they're going to read the headline, they're going to flick through the pages without reading them, and look at the sub-headlines.

But, the stuff they will read, they'll read the copy that's underneath the graphic, and they'll read any other copy that stands out, that was different. For instance, on Page 7, you just see, "I've banked a monster 2,540 in only 9 days." Well, as they flick through the copy, they'll read that, and it's exactly the same in a hand-written note, because it stands out. As they flick through the pages, before they decide to read the whole letter, they will read those little notes. And, I think the one that you're talking about is the one that says, "I hate computers."

Want To Hire Alan For Copywriting That Sells? Go To <http://AlanForrestSmith.com> To Find Out How.

Alan Forrest Smith The UK's Greatest Sales Copywriter!

JY: Yeah, that's right.

AFS: Yeah, the one that says, "I hate computers," again, that was to get onto their level, because I want these guys who do these biz ops with people like, I don't know, Internet marketing opportunities and so on, a lot of them are not that good with computers, and one thing that holds some of them back is, they're terrified. "Well, I have to build a Website, I have to...I don't even know what auto responder is, how to use e-mail." You know, because I deal with a lot of these guys, and they're a bit frightened of using this stuff. So, it was just, again, it was just to get onto their level. You know, it says, "I hate computers," well, they're thinking, well, that's good, because I hate computers, as well. So, it was just to get right on their level, again there, Jerry.

JY: Yeah, and I can see you repeat that point many times in that letter.

AFS: Yes, that's right, yes.

JY: Okay, and so, since we are on the topic of cosmetics, so, could you explain like how do you pick out these sub-heads and all these phrases that you underline and emphasize?

AFS: Okay, well, again, this has got to go back to the second the target opens the envelope, he will take the letter out, and he will see the headline. Beyond the headline, he'll flick through the letter, and he'll pick up the sub-headlines, and he'll pick up anything that's unusual in the boxes, the hand-written script, copies, or the offer or the P.S. at the end. So, what you do is, I'm just going through the letter now. You see, you've got this big headline at the beginning, and the next thing the guy would find interesting is, "Here's what I did to make 2 months' wages in just 9 days, flat." Then, this other one, "Check out my private sales ledger from my first crack at changing my working life below." And, then there's one under there, I think it's Page 8, it says, "Steve, can I copy what you have done and earn some serious cash?"

So, again, the headlines, the sub-headlines, they're usually to emphasize a point, and I think it's important to remember, as well, Jerry, that most of these little tips and techniques are grammatically incorrect, and incorrect grammar within a sales letter can work very, very well, because if you have a letter that's too grammatically correct, people generally, as a sales letter, wouldn't read it. They think, oh, no, just another letter, tear it up, in the trashcan. So, when it's grammatically incorrect, it tends to draw the eye, because it's a bit different, you see? And so, really, most of the sub-heads and the cosmetic stuff are there for a reason, and the reason is to catch their eyes in reading through it, because most people will scan read it first.

I think you mentioned the bit about the how to, why was the how to boldened up.

Alan Forrest Smith The UK's Greatest Sales Copywriter!

JY: Uh huh.

AFS: Well, in the bullet points, in fact, Jerry, do you want to move on and I'll step back in line.

JY: Oh, it's OK. So, let me back up a little bit.

AFS: Sure.

JY: You mentioned one point just now about grammatically correct.

AFS: Yeah.

JY: Yeah, I noticed this letter has a very folksy tone, and it just seems like someone just scribbled a note to his friends and pasted a few pictures in it, just sent it out without any editing.

AFS: Yes. That was the whole idea.

JY: Yeah.

AFS: Because, it had to feel as real as possible. You see, the purpose was not to look as if it's been written by a copywriter.

JY: Uh huh

AFS: The purpose was, to look as if it was just a letter from a friend...to a friend, as if that was the whole purpose behind the whole thing. If this was going to directors or CEO's of big companies, it would have to be absolutely right. But, you're sending to a similar mentality, and you have to tune into that mentality, so it has to feel and appear as if it's from a friend, simple as that.

SIDE NOTE: A fool will let his grammarian write his sales copy. Joe Average WONT read it. He cant relate to it. He'll hate it. There are many out there that will spend days, weeks, months and many meetings trying to get it right. Don't bother. Remember the principle is write to targets. When in Rome ...

JY: Yeah, and along the way, there's a lot of places where you ask yourself a question, and then, you answer the question, yourself...

AFS: Yes.

JY: ...many times in the copy, so is there a reason why you're doing that?

Alan Forrest Smith The UK's Greatest Sales Copywriter!

AFS: Yeah, the reason for that is, that target audience for that letter would generally ask themselves those questions, so what you did is, you're actually raising a question, that the target would have in their minds, and you're giving them the answer. So, as they read through it, they might be thinking...can you give me an example in the letters, and I'll try and go through it, any one in particular, Jerry?

JY: Yeah, so, for example, "Steve, can I...", there's a big sub-head on Page 8, "Steve, can I copy what you have done, and earn some serious cash?"

AFS: Right. Okay, so, and then, Steve says..."I say a big yes. I should know, I have done it." And so, it's raising the question and giving the answer. So, the point is, maybe at this stage in the letter, maybe they're saying, "Well, I wonder if I could copy what he's done?" So, really, what you're doing is, you're pulling out the thoughts in the mind of that individual, so you know at this stage of the letter, the individual may be thinking, Steve, I wonder if I could copy what you've done? And, Steve says, "Well, I say a big yes! I should know, because I have done it, and if I can do it as an ex-landscape gardener, believe me, anyone can do it, it's that simple." So, yeah, so, the questions are raised, on the basis that the target may be thinking the same thing, and then you offer the answer. All that really does, Jerry, is it really shows that individual that they're making the right decision to buy, that's what it does.

SIDE NOTE: Remember ... this is the age of the skeptic. They will be throwing up mental questions all the way through reading your sales copy. If you answer them they keep reading. If you don't and they cant ... the sales letter gets trashed!

JY: Oh, so it's kind of like if it was a face-to-face selling situation, the prospect would be asking that question at that moment.

AFS: Exactly, that's it, yeah.

JY: Yeah, okay, I see. And, I see, I'm looking at the bullet points right now, and it seems your bullet points...do you actually target your bullet points at different objections that the prospect may have?

AFS: Right.

JY: Like, the prospect may say, "I don't know how to create a product," so one of your bullet points is, "How to create or find a product that Web users are looking to buy."

AFS: Which page is that on, Jerry?

JY: Uh huh. And...

AFS: Just give me the page number, and I'll put that one in.

Alan Forrest Smith The UK's Greatest Sales Copywriter!

JY: Page 8.

AFS: Oh, Page 8, okay, yes.

JY: So, do you do that intentionally, like to answer...?

AFS: Yeah, again, it's just the answer, because for some, I mean, if you've read through to Page 8, they're going to start raising questions in their own minds. So, you have to start giving them just solid, simple answers now. And, when you say, "How to, how to, how to," because they could be thinking, well, how am I going to do this? How am I going to find this perfect thing? How am I going to find a product? How do I build a Website? I hate computers, I hate the Internet. I don't have thousands of pounds to invest. You know, how am I going to drive people to this Website, or this product? There's all sorts of ways at the end of it, it says.

So, you've got to draw out the mind of the individual and pull them into the copy. So, really, what you're doing, Jerry, is you're answering the questions that they're thinking, and again, it's just...you know, you said before about the face-to-face, it's just, it's face-to-face selling in print, that's what it is, just on a one-to-one level.

JY: Yeah, and since we're on the topic of bullet points...

AFS: Yes.

JY: Do you use formulas when you write bullets?

AFS: I do not at all, really, it just depends on the product, to be honest. I mean, I'm not sure exactly what you mean, so I'll tell you what I do with bullets.

JY: Okay.

AFS: The format with bullets, I do like bullets on the how to, how you can see the first how to is bold, and then, it stops. Well, I think that makes it easier to read. And also, what I tend to do with bullets...I don't think I've done it in this letter, but on other copy, what I'll do, is I'll take the one word from the paragraph in that bullet point that sums up the whole paragraph. And, I will put that bold, at the beginning of the bullet point. Because, some people, and again, I base it on newspaper writing, some people do not want to read the whole bullet. So, if you can say it in one word, well, say it in one word. And then, you can break down that one word in a few more details through the bullet.

And, I also like the way John Carlton does bullets, and kind of use that effectively. John Carlton uses a technique called, "double punch." And, the way John does it is, he uses a very powerful headline, but a sprinkle through his

Alan Forrest Smith The UK's Greatest Sales Copywriter!

bullets, he'll use another powerful headline alongside the bullets, so you have your bullet point. Then, in your brackets, you would have another headline. So, you would have a double headline in each bullet. So, I think the way he does it is really good, really.

JY: Yeah.

AFS: Yeah, he does that very effectively, yeah.

JY: Yeah, I love John Carlton's bullets.

AFS: Yeah, it's good, yeah.

JY: And, let me back you up a little bit. You mentioned you tried to sum up the whole bullet into a short phrase, and then you put it right in front of the bullet...

AFS: Yeah.

JY: ...in bold. Do you have a few examples of that, like, offhand, can you think of a few?

AFS: The one I can think of, offhand, is not actually a bullet point, but what I did is...I mean, as you know, I have two Websites, there's OrangeBeetle.com, which is my main Website, and I've just launched a new Website, which is AlanForrestSmith.com. But, with AlanForrestSmith.com, I tested loads of headlines, but I've wanted to do something a lot simpler, on the basis that I wanted it to be more like a classified headline, rather than a story headline, just wanted to try something different, really. So, if you look at that Website, the only word it says in the headline is, "**I M P A C T.**" It doesn't say anything else, apart from impact. So, we have impact, and then you have three smaller words underneath. I can't remember exactly what it says, Jerry. I don't know if you can bring it up in front of you. I've not got a computer where I am.

JY: Let me bring it up. It says, "Impact, results, response, profit."

AFS: Right, and then you've got a few results underneath. I tested loads of headlines before I came to that, and the reason we used that is one, that Website, at the moment, is just under 30% conversion rate from visitors. And, when I say, "conversion," that is not conversion to sale. That's a conversion to responding the form at the bottom. So, at the moment, it's doing really well, and that headline, I think...what you could say is, "How would you like to build your business by 67% in 5 days?" And, if you build your business by 67% in 5 days, well, obviously, that's high-impact advertising.

So, what I wanted to do is, I wanted to do a classified-style headline, which, basically, you know, you have to say as much as you can, with as few words as you can. So, the word I settled on in the end was, "impact," and then the other

Alan Forrest Smith The UK's Greatest Sales Copywriter!

three words underneath, which, hopefully, sum up why they get the impact. So, that's the best example I can think of at the moment, which is working very, very well for me.

SIDE NOTE: Classified advertising has to use as few words as possible but make EACH word count. This was my aim with that headline. People don't want never ending fluffed up copy. They want YOU the salesperson to get to the point fast!

JY: Okay, so, now, going on to Page 10.

AFS: Yeah.

JY: Just the point about ask for the order, and you say...there's a little sentence that says, "Do me a favor, though, just don't expect hidden secrets from the Pharaohs or any other miraculous program." So, is there any reason why you decided to put that sentence there?

AFS: Yeah, there is, Jerry, because I think what's happened...I mean, let's be honest, advertising and copywriting has been around for decades, hundreds of years. So, what we're doing is nothing new, really. But, I think...one thing I don't like at the moment, is I think a lot of online copy is destroying the credibility of copywriting, to some extent. There's some brilliant copywriters, like Michel Fortin, I mean Michel does fantastic stuff. His copy's great, and there's loads of copy out there that is really good. But, there's a lot of this really, really bad stuff, and what's happening is, these copywriters are selling absolute junk through words, and I think what's happening is people just don't believe it.

So, you know, it's saying there, "Do me a favor, don't expect hidden secrets from the Pharaohs or any other miraculous program." What we're just saying to them, "Look, I've told you exactly what it's done for me. Don't just buy this product and expect to be a multi-millionaire overnight, because it's just not going to happen." And, that was the reason that paragraph was put in, just to make sure they know that it was just a real live product that anyone could use, but it's not a miracle cure, you have to work at it, simple as that.

JY: Yeah, and I do agree that it really adds to the credibility.

AFS: Yeah, I mean, that is the word, Jerry, credibility. It makes it credible, yes.

JY: And, also like, in this company, like Steve, the client, he says so many...when I'm reading it, he says so many bad things about himself, that he *has* to be telling the truth.

AFS: Yeah, that's right, yeah. And, that's the point, I mean, you know, we're not all Supermen, are we? You know, we're just all average people doing average

Alan Forrest Smith The UK's Greatest Sales Copywriter!

things, and every now and again, we all do something a little bit special, but all this mess on line, that if you buy this product, you'll make a million, it's absolutely rubbish. I mean, I wrote with a big company in the UK, these guys sell fantastic marketing stuff, you know, the Terry Dean stuff, the Corey Rudl, Declan Dunn, all the good stuff. They're only something like 25% of the people who attend their seminars, actually do anything with it. And, these guys are paying 5,000 UK pounds to go in the seminar.

You know, but I think what they expect, Jerry, is they expect to take it home, put it in the house and think now I'm going to make a lot of money. It's not like that. You know, just buying a pair of scissors, doesn't make you a great hairdresser. You've got to pick the scissors up and practice, and practice, and practice, and then you become a great hairdresser. And, the principle's the same with this stuff.

And, you know, I think when I write copy, I'm really zeroing away from the fact that I don't want to tell anyone it's a miracle cure, I don't want to tell people they'll make millions, I don't want to tell people to do anything with it. I want to tell them real life examples, and I want them to say, "If this guy can do it, you can do it, but you must follow the system."

JY: Yeah, okay, and right now, I'm on the last page, and there are three P.S.'s, so could you kind of explain what you try to achieve through the P.S.?

AFS: Well, the P.S., I'm not sure about P.S.'s, really. I've never really tested them to the limit, myself, but a lot of other people have tested them, like Dan Kennedy, and Michel Fortin goes on about his P.S.'s, and quite a few others go on about the P.S. Very honestly, what I do is I just copy what other people are doing, as far as testing goes. You know, the current line of thinking of testing with a P.S., is three P.S.'s work better than one, and that is the reason I used three P.S.'s.

I just want to say, looking at this letter now, because this was done quite some time ago, I think these actual P.S.'s are quite weak, but P.S.'s can work very, very well. And, again, what I've started doing, and I've been doing for a while now, is on my last P.S. is I think, a pinch from John Carlton, on my last P.S., using a testimonial in it, or a couple of testimonials. I think just doing a testimonial in P.S.'s, it's interesting what John Carlton does, because sometimes, what we all tend to do, if somebody sends us a testimonial, we tend to use the whole thing, but what John Carlton does is he says, "Just take out the three or four words of it that does the work, which are really powerful, and glue them together, and use it that way." So, I think that's a better way to use a testimonial, especially in a P.S.

JY: Okay.

AFS: Just remember, with a P.S., as well, you know, going back to the beginning, when people scan read a letter, they scan the headline and the subs, and then, they

Alan Forrest Smith The UK's Greatest Sales Copywriter!

always go to the P.S.'s, as well as the offer. So, it's important to keep the P.S. very strong, and give them a reason to buy in, or to read the copy.

JY: I see, and you spoke about testimonials. Is there any reason why there are no testimonials in this letter?

AFS: Well, there is because...with the actual product, the actual product is a Terry Dean video and some other stuff, Marlon Sanders, and so on. This particular product has been hammered to death, so I really didn't want the letter to read like anything anyone else had seen already. In fact, I think what's interesting about this letter, it doesn't actually talk about the product.

JY: Yeah, you're right, it just talks about the end results.

SIDE NOTE: That's the key to YOUR copy ...sell results not products. I believe this is the one crucial factor in the outstanding response from this letter. It is talking about a guys life changing and the results. They actual product is never mentioned!

AFS: Right, it talks about Steve and his experience.

JY: Uh huh.

AFS: And then, at the very end, the product gets a slight mention. You know, "This is what I use, order it, and I'll send it to you." So, I didn't really want to use testimonials in it because I really...all I wanted to do with this letter was to tell everyone an experience, what happened to someone that worked well. And, this guy's basically saying, "Look, this letter is my personal testimonial. It's worked for me, it could work for you, but you have to do it." So, testimonials, although we have loads of testimonials from people we didn't know, I didn't want to use them, really. I just wanted to keep it very personal.

SIDE NOTE: The letter itself is one long testimonial!

JY: Okay. Now, Alan, I'm really going to put you on the spot, now.

AFS: Go ahead, fire away.

JY: This is the Alan Forrest Smith Challenge, okay.

AFS: Yes.

JY: Okay, so, suppose you had a time bomb planted into your body, and you're given an assignment, a piece of copy to write.

AFS: Yeah.

Alan Forrest Smith The UK's Greatest Sales Copywriter!

- JY:* And, the copy has to succeed, or the time bomb will explode in your body.
- AFS:* Yeah.
- JY:* So, what are the three most important things you would do to make sure that the letter succeeds?
- AFS:* Right, well, the first thing you have to do is get their attention. So, the headline is crucial. The second thing you have to do is give them enough information, that they could be thinking about in their minds. And, the third thing is to give them the biggest desire to act that they could ever possibly want. I think David Ogilvy, famous copywriter, sums this up really well, because he talks about subway advertising. He talks about how subway advertising fails really badly, and it's because they try and write a long piece of copy while people are stuck in the subway, hoping that people are going to read it. And, actually inside the tube on the train, itself, you know, the boards that you have, and what David Ogilvy said of this, you've got to say it quick, you've got to say it fast, and you've got to give them a good enough reason to act.
- And really, I think that's the whole thing, really, great headline, great reason, and a great reason to act. So, basically, the usual thing, you've got to attract, inform, desire, and get them to act on it. I think that just goes back to the classified-style copy, as well, Jerry. You know, if you can say in one word, say it in one word. You know, a lot of copy...especially new copywriters, think, well, I'm going to have to think of this great headline, and they think of these headlines which are about 20 words long, or whatever. If you can say it in two words, three words, five words, say it in that amount, because if you don't catch them with the headline, they won't read the rest.
- JY:* Yes, okay.
- AFS:* Has the bomb gone off?
- JY:* No, okay. Alan, you've given so much great info on this interview. I know my listeners are going to want to know like what other resources or any services you have that can help them?
- AFS:* Okay, well, the funny thing, Jerry, since I've been copywriting, I've been...my work in life, I started working very early really, was a bit of a young Entrepreneur, but my first job, I was a landscape gardener for a few years, and I used to wash cars, and I used to do all sorts of things. And then, I became a hairdresser, and I had a chain of hairdressing salons, and due to that business, I started doing my own copywriting. So, probably for the past 10 or 15 years, I've been writing stuff for myself. But, for the past three or four years, I've been doing it as a living, and this is what I do all the time now.

Alan Forrest Smith The UK's Greatest Sales Copywriter!

So, for copywriting, I think the best thing you can do with copy is, first of all, you've got to learn from the masters. Now, when I say the masters, I tend not to read a lot of the modern day guys, because I think what they do is they dress up a lot of the old people, you know, like the John Caples and David Ogilvy, and Leo Burnett, just all the real old masters. I think if you can get into them, that's great, and of course, Claude Hopkins' "Scientific Advertising," which everybody talks about, but I just wonder how many people read it. You know, I've read it...I must have read it 10 times, at least. But, I wonder if people buy it and think, it's a little bit too simple, so they don't read it. But books like that are brilliant books.

Also, find someone you can copy, so if you can find a mentor that you can actually...if you can get his advert., his sales letters and so on, and you know he's successful, you just copy it, and I'm not saying blatantly copy it and use it as a working piece. I'm on about copy the style and everything else. And, when you've got his style right and you know it's working, well, what you start to do is you start to develop your own technique, your own thoughts, your own thinking, and you move forward from there.

SIDE NOTE: This is a good point for me to **publicly thank Copywriter Michel Fortin** for giving me a break. Although a wanna be writer at the time and not that good Mike pulled me in. The guy is a class act copywriter. He took me under his wing and taught me truck loads of stuff that would have taken me a long time to learn. Find someone like this and you'll grow quickly. Mike Fortin ... B.I.G. Thanks.

But, the most important thing, I think, is to just start writing because just even this letter that we've gone through this morning, or this evening in your country, this letter that we've gone through now, I've not read that letter, probably for 12 months, and I'm reading it, and I'm seeing a lot of mistakes in it, really. And, I'm thinking, you know, oh, I should have changed the P.S.'s, I should have done the headline different, I don't like the sub-heads. And, the point is, the more you write, the better you become, because you can start chopping out a lot of junk, and you start to understand that people don't read certain things you write, you know, so there's no need to do that.

And, just keep writing, really, Jerry, keep on going. Try to copy someone. Can I just tell you what really winds me up these days?

JY: Sure.

AFS: I think...now, don't get me wrong, I love John Carlton, I've got all his stuff, I've bought all his stuff. I love what John Carlton does, and you know, when I see his examples and his DVD's, you know, you get loads of great ideas, and you go, oh, fantastic. And, the same with Gary Halbert, as well. I mean, who wouldn't click

Alan Forrest Smith The UK's Greatest Sales Copywriter!

open a Gary Halbert page and read it? You have to read it, because his copy is done in such a good way, you're pulled all the way through.

JY: Yes.

AFS: And, the same with Marlon Sanders. Marlon Sanders, fantastic to read his stuff. The one that gets mine these days, Jerry, is everybody thinks they're John Carlton or Gary Halbert, or Marlon Sanders, and what's happening is, we're going to loads and loads of Web pages or Web sites which look and sound exactly the same now. So, people are not defining themselves with a real definite face. I mean, years ago everybody knew Ogilvy had done this, or people knew that someone else had done that, and so on.

These days, everything's mish-mashed into each other, and people are just trying to copy, copy, copy. But, don't get me wrong, I mean, I think copy's the best way to start. You just duplicate something that someone else has done, but I don't think...it must infuriate John Carlton and Gary Halbert, or maybe flatter them, I don't know. Everybody's trying to copy exactly what they do. Because, the problem is, you know, people stop reading it in the end because it all looks and sounds exactly the same, and let's face it, there's nothing as good as the original, anyway. So, it's very important that yeah, you copy these guys initially, but you progress and develop your own style, it's very important. Sorry, Jerry, I know I'm rambling on there.

SIDE POINT: I personally have bought all of Johns stuff, read all of Gary's letters, read all of Marlon's stuff and yes ... copied them! But, you still need to develop a "style" that says who you are but at the same time built on the principles they so brilliantly instill in other writers.

JY: Oh, no, no, it's okay. So, could you give us more information-- I know you have a couple of Websites, and you have a copywriting service, as well. Could you give us more information about your Websites and how people can get in touch with you?

AFS: Sure, yeah, well, and anyone can contact me through www.OrangeBeetle.com, or they can contact me through www.AlanForrestSmith.com. And, I have a few new projects which are not ready to go yet, so I won't let you know. I also...I'll just give you another real interesting thing, I have another website called www.Hairee.com, and Hairee.com is a good example of how to establish a niche online, because this particular Website just draws on past experiences from running and owning hairdressing salons, and it's now one of the biggest hit Websites just for hairdressing salon-owners in the world now, so that does very well.

Want To Hire Alan For Copywriting That Sells? Go To <http://AlanForrestSmith.com> To Find Out How.

Alan Forrest Smith The UK's Greatest Sales Copywriter!

There's a couple of services, you can e-mail me at OrangeBeetle.com, or AlanForrestSmith.com, and OrangeBeetle... OrangeBeetle is moving towards being more of an agency. Probably over the next 12 months, you'll see more of that. I have nine first class copywriters that I work with on that one, based in Canada, Australia...they're based all over the place, to be honest. So, that does really, really well. That's grown unbelievably, really. The phone numbers are all the same, as well, it's UK 00-44-1925-764-422, and I'm not cheap. I try to stick being a premium, top end copywriter, but I think with a 33% response rate, I can justify my prices.

JY: Yes, and would you like to spell your Website URL's in case people are listening?

AFS: OrangeBeetle is O-r-a-n-g-e-B-e-e-t-l-e.com. AlanForrestSmith.com is A-l-a-n-F-o-r-r-e-s-t.com. Oh, sorry, no! It's, A-l-a-n-F-o-r-r-e-s-t-S-m-i-t-h.com. See, there you go, Jerry, that's why copywriters need proofreaders! I can't even spell my own domain name!

JY: Okay, so thank you, Alan, for taking the time today for this interview.

AFS: Well, you know what, Jerry, I mean, I've had all sorts of invites, and just to sit and I tell you right now, I'm sitting in the middle of a field by an orchard, surrounded by sheep. I don't know if you can hear them, Jerry, there's some tractors in the background. So, I just live on a farm in the middle of nowhere, and I've just come back from Russia for four days, which was incredible. So, I've had a little busy four days, but just to sit here and be interviewed, you know, by a guy in Singapore, who I've never met, and we've had a nice chat, nice relaxing conversation. And, even just going through these things refreshes my mind, so I'm really grateful that you've asked me to do it, and I just want you to know that I'm grateful for your listeners that they've taken the time to listen, as well.

JY: Okay, so thanks a lot, Alan.

AFS: Okay, Jerry, the pleasure, it was all mine.

JY: Okay, see you, bye.

AFS: Thanks, Jerry.

JY: Bye.

CONCLUSION:

Want To Hire Alan For Copywriting That Sells? Go To <http://AlanForrestSmith.com> To Find Out How.

Alan Forrest Smith The UK's Greatest Sales Copywriter!

You know, it's still weird. The web has pulled all kinds of people together all over the world. I have clients in all four corners of the earth. I can honestly say my working life is a pleasure and love my, well ... job ... if that's what you call it.

Copywriting though ... what a cool job. Get results clients all love us. Fail to get results and the hit man is out. What can I say. The letter was a strange case but I felt the need to get on a level with the target. It worked and Steve thinks I'm superman now.

Why did it work? It was really a carefully planned, carefully thought out process based on well tested principles. Conversational tone. Graphics that tell the story and all the other stuff above. Success is never an accident. That goes for sales letters also!

If you hire me what do you get? Well, you'll get a writer that will pull out every single stop to make it work for you. Truth is I don't care if you love or hate my copy, I really don't. You hire me for results not for perfect poetic copy. If you want sales, that's what I get you ... SALES. I have my ways. I have my rules. I stick to them. Those have made me one of the most in-demand copywriters in the UK today!

Want to work with me?

Call me on 00 44 (0) 1925 76 4422 or email me at afs@orangebeetle.com and lets make some super-profits together.

SOME THANKS

Finally I want to thank Jerry Yeo for asking me to do this interview. Want to thank Steve for letting me use this letter and work with him. Want to thank my wife for putting up with a mad creative! Want to thank my kids that know their dad will be in the orchard typing away at his keyboard when they cant locate him in the house. Like to really thank Michel Fortin for the break and patience when I made a mess of things.

AND ...like to thank Ted Ciuba, Brett McFall and Tom Hua for allowing me to be in this manual.

Regards

Alan Forrest Smith
www.AlanForrestSmith.com
www.OrangeBeetle.com
Tel: 00 44 (0)1925 764422
Cel: 00 44 (0)7793 069 486
Email: alan@orangebeetle.com

Want To Hire Alan For Copywriting That Sells? Go To <http://AlanForrestSmith.com> To Find Out How.