

FILTHY RICH
Writer



COPYWRITER CHECKLIST

**Find Out If You've Got What
It Takes to Succeed**

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ANOTHER BONUS!

A confession: I would be lousy at brain surgery.

I'm kind of impatient, not always great with attention to detail and I've been known to pass out when someone was just *discussing* a medical procedure.

My characteristics are not well suited to brain surgery. Other characteristics of mine, however, are extremely well suited to copywriting. (And I'm sure that most surgeons would make lousy copywriters.)

Should you be curious to learn if copywriting suits *your* skills, this is your lucky PDF. The Filthy Rich Writer team has compiled a list of the most important traits for successful copywriters.

First, take the quiz. Assess yourself honestly and see how you do.

Then, keep reading for the deep-dive into exactly how certain traits will help you become successful.

Read on, assess yourself honestly, and see how you do.

And then, make sure to make it to the last page for your next bonus!

THE QUIZ

1. You've just finished some writing that you love—in particular, there's one line that you think is amazing. But the piece is too long and that one genius line might not be exactly...necessary. What do you do?

- A.** Find a way to make the line work. If your gut says it's good, it's got to be right for the piece.
- B.** Lose it. If it's adding too many words and not working hard, it's not worth trying to keep it.
- C.** Make the line your headline. You want to lure them in with the best writing you have, right?
- D.** Cut it, but save it for later. You never know if you'll be able to work it in again.

2. You're working on a project and your project manager wants to meet with you to go over what you've written before the official creative review. What do you do?

- A.** Accept the meeting, but keep putting it off until the creative review. You want to keep the relationship good, but you don't want to affect the project.
- B.** Don't accept the meeting. Politely remind him or her that any input should have come in the project kick-off.
- C.** Take the meeting. Getting more input and feedback now can only help you and your designer make the project better in the end.
- D.** Don't accept the meeting, but ask to get any additional project information via email.

3. It's time for the creative review. You and your designer have worked hard on your project and now it's your chance to present it to the team. After you present it, everyone has feedback—and some of it isn't glowing. How do you react?

- A.** Listen to the feedback and take notes, but don't react. This is not the time to set people straight or fight back.
- B.** Listen to the feedback and take notes, explaining your reasoning for anything they're not particularly sold on.
- C.** Listen to the positive feedback, but tune out the negative. You don't want someone's negative feedback to affect your writing.
- D.** When someone starts giving you negative feedback, be assertive. Explain that you've worked hard on this writing and you don't appreciate their reaction.

4. Your new freelance client has kicked off a project, but instead of giving you a deadline, he says, "It's not a huge rush. Just do it whenever you can." How do you respond?

- A.** Thank him for the flexibility, but insist on getting a deadline. How else will you move ahead with the project?
- B.** Thank him for the flexibility, and then set up a deadline for yourself to keep yourself on track as you work.
- C.** Thank him for his flexibility and then plan to get to it when your schedule is a little less crazy.
- D.** Thank him for his flexibility and then plan to give him a call in a few weeks with an update on your progress.

5. When you're presenting your work to your client, he or she asks you why you chose a specific word and if it could be changed. What do you say?

- A.** You explain the reason you chose that word and that you can't choose another one because that one was so carefully chosen.
- B.** You explain the idea behind the copy, but you don't have an explanation for each individual word. You'd be happy to change it.
- C.** You explain the idea behind the copy, but you don't have an individual explanation for every word, just the important ones so maybe you could change it.
- D.** You explain the reason you chose that word but explain that you're willing to explore other words if that one doesn't feel right.

6. You're working with your designer and she emails you because she wants to cut a word from a line to make it work. Do you let her just cut the word?

- A.** Sure! It's all about collaboration and it's important that the design looks good. If that word throws it off, let her delete it.
- B.** No way. You've planned your copy very carefully and each word serves a purpose. She'll have to make the design work around it.
- C.** No way. You've planned each word carefully and losing one could mess up the meaning and cadence. You offer to come over and find new phrasing that fits.
- D.** Sure! You just take a look at your copy and suggest which word to cut to minimize the impact to the meaning.

7. You and your designer have been working on a complicated project for a week when your project manager calls a meeting: The objectives of the project have changed completely. How do you react?

- A.** That is absolutely unacceptable. You have already been working on it for a week and you're not about to go back and start over.
- B.** That's unfortunate, but sometimes that's how it works. Back to the drawing boards! Maybe you'll find a way to avoid the same thing with this client in the future.
- C.** You and your designer go get a beer to complain. "Every time this happens, we have to pick up the slack..."
- D.** You quickly evaluate how much time you have to do the new work and reason that you can do it, but it just won't get the same level of attention and creativity as it would have if you'd had more time.

8. You've been working as a copywriter for about a year and your boss sends you an email about a daylong copywriting seminar and asks if you want to sign up. What do you do?

- A.** You've already been working as a copywriter. What more could a class teach you? Frankly, you're a little offended.
- B.** You prefer to do your learning on the job (you've already learned so much!), so you politely decline your boss' offer.
- C.** You check it out and, if it seems professional, you sign up. You've been copywriting for a while, but there's always more to learn.
- D.** You sign up right away! Even if it turns out to be a crappy course, you'll get a day out of the office. You can't lose!

THE ANSWERS

**You've taken the quiz...
Now, let's see how you've done!**

Question 1

Best Answers: B & D

Copywriter Characteristic: *Willingness to Kill Babies*

No, not real babies. Your babies. (And not your *real* babies.) By "babies," I mean the copy you've crafted that you just love.

Copywriters need to be able to avoid falling in love with their work because it's going to get changed. Rare, rare, exceedingly rare is it that the copy you write will be used exactly as you first wrote it. It's going to get changed, your very favorite "babies" are going to get killed, and you're usually the one who has to do it. You need to be able to let it slide.

Question 2

Best Answer: C

Copywriter Characteristic: *Willingness to Share Chairs*

Sometimes, it's more efficient for the graphic designer you're working with to step away from her computer and let you sit down and type right into Photoshop. And, metaphorically, sometimes you've got to share chairs with the brand managers on your project, the developers, even the senior level executives.

Copywriting is a very collaborative business and you have to be willing to do it. You'll get a lot of feedback from a lot of different sources and you have to be willing to work with them and incorporate it.

Question 3

Best Answer: B

Copywriter Characteristics: *Thick Skin, Objectivity*

When I say you "get feedback from a lot of different sources," I'm not kidding. The average creative review (when you and your designer present your work to the stakeholders) often consists of at least five or six people and, in general, everyone has an opinion. But here's the key: No matter what is said, you can't take it personally. You are not your work. Sometimes people are not going to like what you write. It has happened to every single copywriter that has ever walked the earth. But that doesn't mean that they don't like *you*. You have to have a thick skin and learn to: Let. Things. Go. And you have to find the usefulness in negative feedback.

Question 4

Best Answer: A

Copywriter Characteristic: *Love of Deadlines*

I have great news for you: Your work is always going to be due at a certain time. And sometimes it's going to be due before you even think you can get it done. Genuinely non-sarcastic "Yippee!"

As every copywriter knows, if you don't have a deadline, things don't get done. Copywriters love deadlines and they are absolutely, die-hard dedicated to never missing them. Sure, it's a bit love/hate sometimes, but deadlines keep us on track. And real copywriters never miss their deadlines, no matter what. Missing them ruins your reputation, and our careers are the sum of our work and our reputations.

Question 5

Best Answer: D

Copywriter Characteristic: *Precision With Words*

Puzzles are not finished by cramming pieces together. Each piece has its purpose, works with the others and has its own special place. Just like words.

As a copywriter you need to have a keen understanding of (not to mention appreciation for) how words work together. When you craft a piece of copy, every single word must have a purpose and be part of your plan. Then you have to be able to explain what that purpose and plan are. That's what makes you an expert.

Question 6

Best Answer: C (Maybe, in a pinch, D)

Copywriter Characteristic: *Love for Using Words Well*

No one would read Dr. Seuss books if they sounded like, "One fish, two fish, red fish, another color fish." or "I do not like green eggs and ham, I do not like them, Sam." The rhythm in those two lines is all wrong.

And while copywriting is usually not about poetry or rhyming, each line you write should have an inherent rhythm that needs to be respected. Each word has a purpose and a place in the rhythm; they can't just be cut haphazardly. You'll have to make changes sometimes, but you have to make those changes thoughtfully.

Question 7

Best Answer: B (And, yeah, sometimes C)

Copywriter Characteristic: *Flexibility*

It's absolutely imperative that copywriters be flexible. Schedules change, directions change, projects change—and often mid-stream, with little-to-no notice. You also have to be flexible enough to see the project from several different mindsets: You've got to approach projects from the point of view of the brand, not to mention the point of view of every different type of person that will see it and/or interact with it.

Sure, sometimes it sucks when you get redirected. And you might want to spend a *little* bit of time complaining. That's natural—just don't let anyone hear you do it and don't make it a habit.

Question 8

Best Answer: C

Copywriter Characteristic: *A Desire to Learn*

Nobody knows everything. Even when you become an absolute expert, done-everything, been-everywhere copywriter, you'll get good insight, suggestions and feedback from all kind of sources.

Sometimes it will be the VP of Marketing and sometimes it will be the intern. But no matter what, you have to be open to feedback and willing to learn. If you come into copywriting thinking you already know everything, you're done for. But if you come in ready to learn, you're setting yourself up for success.

THE RESULTS

So...How'd you do?

Were you eight for eight on the quiz? If so, that's great! If not, don't worry about it; you're just starting out.

What's more important is that you're eight for eight (okay, technically nine for nine) on the Copywriter Characteristics—or, at the very least, you're willing to cultivate them.

Along with a willingness to work hard, these traits will help you build a career you'll enjoy, you can be proud of and one that will reward you handsomely.

Now, your next step (see trait number eight) is to get schooled. Learn, learn, learn!