

THE GARY HALBERT LETTER

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The Boron Letters - Chapter 18

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Dear Bond,

Well, here I am trying to get started again. Once more, I haven't the faintest idea of what I'm going to write about.

Let's see now. Oh yeah. When I left off last night one of the last things I mentioned was how the judicious use of parenthesis (like this) can provide "eye relief" for your reader.

Alright. Now, let's talk a bit more about eye relief. Have you ever looked at a piece of writing and decided not to read it because it looked so forbidding? I'll bet you have. Many times.

Usually, this kind of writing will have long sentences, long paragraphs, narrow side margins, small type and very little white space anywhere on the page.

Now, we certainly don't want people to avoid reading our copy for stupid reasons like this, do we? You say you agree? Good. In that case, I'll press on.

Now, listen up. When a person first looks at something you have written it should be something that looks inviting to read. Easy-to-read. When he looks at your page of copy he should be drawn to your copy like a convict is to a Penthouse Magazine.

Your page of copy (be it letter or space ad) should be laid out in such a manner as to be an attractive "eye treat" for the reader.

This means wide margins, a certain amount of white space, double spacing between paragraphs, short words, short sentences, short paragraphs and an attractive, inviting layout.

And now, my dear son, you are about to learn one of my very most important secrets. What I am about to tell you is so important that you can get as much as 500% more

readership. Yet, at the same time, this important consideration remains almost virtually unknown by almost every agency and advertising person I have ever encountered.

Listen up. Listen good and never forget what you are about to learn. Here it is:

**The Layout Of Your
Advertisement Should
Catch The Attention Of
Your Reader... But...
Not In A Way That Causes
Him To "Notice" The Layout!**

Actually, that's not as clear as it could be, is it? Perhaps I can do better. O.K., know this: In most publications, the editorial content gets 5 times as much readership as the advertising content.

Now, what does this mean on a practical basis? Simply this: It means that your ads should, as much as possible, have an "editorial look" about them. (Better stop here and go call Blade and then go to "work". Maybe I'll get to rake the sand again today!)

Let's talk a bit more about the "look" of your ads and DM pieces. As I said, they should look (the ads) "editorial". However, they should not look like just any old editorial piece of writing. No. Your ads should look like an exciting piece of editorial material.

Here is a way to think about it: Imagine that you have written a book that you want to become a best seller. What's the best thing that could happen? Well, how about this? Suppose a guy who works as a reporter for the L.A. Times gets a copy of your book and reads it and falls in love with it.

Now, let us further imagine that this reporter likes your book so much that he writes a full page article about our book and tells all his readers how wonderful this book is and why they should buy a copy. Wouldn't that be great? You bet!

And, just to sweeten things up even more, let us suppose that at the end of this "Rave Review" he tells his readers how to get a copy by mail. He tells them how much it costs, where to send the check or money order and who the payment should be made out to!

Wow! How about that! A full page rave review that makes the reader desire the book and then tells him where and how to get it!

Now my son, listen and listen closely. Whenever you write an ad it should look, in so far as possible, exactly like a rave review written by a reporter.

It should have the look of an exciting news flash.

Here's something else. You know, whenever I want to study ad layouts, I often study editorial layouts instead.

How do we apply all this to direct mail? O.K., what would that reporter do if he wanted one of his friends in Hawaii to buy your book? The answer? Well, perhaps he would write his friend a letter and tell him the same things he told his newspaper readers.

And, perhaps he would even include a snapshot of the book so his friend would know what to look for in case he wanted to go to a bookstore to get the book. This would be one hell of a sales pitch, wouldn't it? You bet it would and that's how your DM letters should look.

Here is a true story. Once upon a time I wrote a letter to sell a product I dreamed up which was a family name research report. This little report would give you a short history of your family name and it contained a black and white drawing of the earliest known coat-of-arms (family crest) ever to be associated with your name.

As you are aware, this became one of the most successful sales letters in history. In fact, this simple one page 361-word letter generated more than seven million (actually 7,156,000) cash with order customers.

Not bad, eh? But listen to what happened next! Obviously, we wanted to sell these research report buyers other products and the logical course of action was to send them a catalog showing a bunch of products they could get that would display (in full heraldic colors!) their family crest.

Sound good to you? It sounded great to me. So, what I did is I went off on a camping trip by myself and there, all alone in the woods, I created a 5-1/2 x 8-1/2 four color catalog which featured about 70 attractive items that could be ordered personalized with my customer's family crest.

It bombed.

It didn't even return our mailing costs! So, what next? Well, at that point, what I did is I took the 3 best selling items in the catalog and I put together an 8-1/2 x 11 brochure that featured only 3 items.

It did only slightly better than break even.

What?

Groan. What to do, what to do?

Here's what I did then: I wrote a very personal sales letter and I enclosed a snapshot of the best selling of the three items in the brochure. The opening of the letter went like this:

Dear Mr. Noble,

I thought you might like to see what the Noble coat-of-arms looks like in full color so I am sending you the enclosed snapshot.

Etc., blah, blah, blah, etc.

40 Million Dollars!

That's right kiddo. That letter brought in 40 mil while my other "more professional" attempts fell flat on their rears.

What's the moral here? The moral is **YOU CAN DO A BETTER SELLING JOB WHEN AT FIRST IT DOES NOT APPEAR YOU ARE ATTEMPTING TO DO A SALES JOB.**

And, when I come back, the subject of my next teaching will be the importance of the fact that "**YOU NEVER GET A SECOND CHANCE TO MAKE A FIRST IMPRESSION!**"

I Love You And Good Luck

Dad