

## The Seven Deadly Sins of Marketing

Centuries ago, Pope Gregory the Great was credited with identifying the infamous seven deadly sins —

lust, gluttony, greed, laziness (back then, it was more vividly termed “sloth”), wrath, envy and pride.

Though we’re pretty sure the pope was talking about personal actions that landed you on the fast track to a fiery inferno, these sins are surprisingly apropos when it comes to the ineffective practice of marketing. Read on to see how a few smart moves can help you sidestep marketing hell.

**1. Lust.** These sinners find themselves coveting every shiny new object. Pinterest! Content marketing! Facebook ads!

Just like in the dating world, lust is great for about five minutes. But it doesn’t always lead to a rewarding, long-term relationship.

Step back, take a breath and ask yourself, “How will <insert toy name here> get us closer to our strategic goals? Does it replicate something we’re already doing well? Do we have the resources to manage

it?” New toys may indeed have a place in your marketing strategy. But you’ll only know that by thinking rather than simply reacting.

**2. Gluttony.** This is really a spin-off of lust. How do you know you’re guilty of gluttony? When you lust after not just one new thing, but everything all at once. Now. It’s the business equivalent of the red-faced toddler in the checkout line screaming, “Because I want it!”

How to handle gluttony? Push back from the conference table and recall that strategy trumps gluttony every time. Just ask the guys at Instagram. Their laser focus on doing one thing extremely well scored them a billion-dollar payday courtesy of Mark Zuckerberg.

*(cont’d on p. 2)*

## Boosting Your Proofreading Effectiveness

Whether it’s a function of limited time, decimated budgets or simply laziness, spelling and grammar errors have reached epidemic proportions across all communication channels. Know this: nothing diminishes the effectiveness of your hard work faster than a typo on your

website, in your email blast or on your PowerPoint slide. You look lazy, sloppy or worst of all, just plain dumb.

Avoid the typo trap with these quick tips for more effective proofreading:

**Never rely solely on spell check.** Microsoft has made idiots out of more people than reality TV. Spell check was never intended to replace the human eye, brain or capacity for common sense.

**Take a break.** Allowing time between writing and proofreading gives you distance from the material so you can return with a fresh eye and mind.

**Don’t proof on-screen.** Print out your document, put it aside for at least 15 minutes (take that break we mentioned) and you’ll be much sharper as a result.

*(cont’d on p. 3)*

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The Accidental Creative*

*Tips & Tools: Smart Additions  
to Your Copywriting Toolkit*



## Write You Are...

Looking for some useful additions to your copywriting toolkit? Try these the next time you're struggling for inspiration, pressed for time or in need of a chuckle:

**styleguide.yahoo.com** — Useful resources include a “good word” list, editing 101 tips and “Ask an Editor” feature.

**iwl.me** — Analyzes your prose and tells you the famous writer your style most resembles. Useless at work but fun at cocktail parties.

**alphabetizer.flap.tv** — Quick tool for alphabetizing just about any list. Best feature: ignoring definite articles so names starting with “the” don't all end up under “t.”

**snappywords.com** — This visual dictionary is a handy source for synonyms to brighten up a boring headline or email subject line.

**aminstitute.com/headline** — Claims to evaluate the emotional resonance of your headline. Give it a whirl and see for yourself.

As always, keep in mind that no online tool is a substitute for your professional judgment. Use with caution!

“Never write an ad you wouldn't want your family to read. You wouldn't tell lies to your own wife. Don't tell them to mine.”

David Ogilvy

## Seven Deadly Sins (from p. 1)

**3. Greed.** It used to be primarily larger companies that bought into the “greed is good” mantra, but lately it seems that companies of all sizes are guilty of this sin.

Many businesses want to be all things to all people. When asked about their ideal client, these are the people who quickly answer, “Everyone!” Unfortunately, greed can soon lead to overexpansion, inefficiency and dissatisfied customers.

It's no secret that good marketing takes focus. Even companies that sell many products across multiple markets must establish a clear, consistent marketing position for each one.

**4. Laziness.** This happens when management refuses to put real marketing muscle behind the company's sales efforts. These companies leave the heavy lifting to their beleaguered sales force and then blame “the feet on the street” for poor results.

As Al Ries has said, marketing is not selling. To sell in today's marketplace, you first have to establish a clear identity for your brand — and that takes some work. Working in concert, marketing and sales can identify customers' primary needs, then develop a position and a marketing plan perfectly designed to meet them.

**5. Wrath.** Ever been on the receiving end of a customer's anger because your product or service didn't quite live up to your brand promise?

Imagine arriving at Disney World and being greeted by nasty ticket sellers, a garbage-strewn Main Street USA and broken-down attractions — not quite the “Happiest Place on Earth” you were promised. Don't stake out a position you're not prepared to deliver on, because hell hath no fury like a customer scorned.

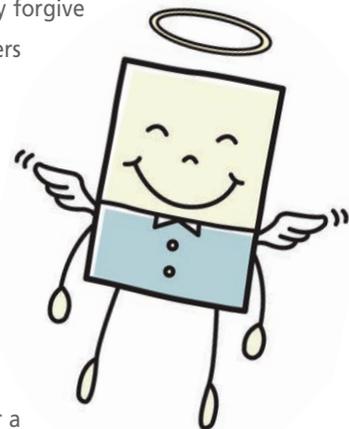
**6. Envy.** Does any company not suffer from this one? “Why are we always second out of the gate with a new idea?” “Man, their website makes ours look like &%\$#@\*!” “What a smart campaign — why didn't we think of that?!”

After a while, every marketer becomes myopic about his or her own product, brand position and industry. That's why every company can benefit from the occasional dose of outside expertise. Lucky for you, this one's an easy fix. Call in a hired gun — creative agency, copywriting team or marketing consultant — for some fresh ideas that'll make you the envy of competitors far and wide.

**7. Pride.** Look out when a company starts feeling infallible. Stops innovating. No longer keeps an eye on rising stars and potential threats. Tunes out customer comments, both positive and negative. Believes their own press.

No organization can afford to rest on its laurels. To stay on top, you need to remember how you got there. Noting the missteps of others is an effective way to dodge the pride trap. Companies as diverse as Research In Motion and News Corp. prove that no company is too big or too smart to falter.

Though God may forgive all, your customers might not — that's why avoiding the seven deadly sins is key. With a few smart moves, you'll be trading in your horns for a halo in no time.



# Great Ad Copy: Just Four Questions Away

Marketing copy in general can do many things. It can educate and inform. It can entertain and amuse. It can be thought provoking or educational. Ad copy, however, has one specific aim: to grab the interest of a customer in a way that motivates him or her to buy — now.

Ad copy is also unique in other ways. For one thing, while most ad copy isn't actually poetry, it does have the freedom to be poetic. Your ad can be full of imagery, rhythm and even rhyme. However, if it doesn't sell the product, even the most powerful poetry is pointless.

Here are a few yardsticks to measure the quality of your ad copy:

*Does it create emotion?* Given the glut of information out there, your ad has to grab and hold attention. How? Great ad writers always create genuine emotion using a

message and presentation that makes a strong connection — not one that feels emotionally manipulative.

*Does it make a promise?* Before starting the writing process, it's vital to identify your brand promise. This tells customers what to expect from you and what benefits they gain. Whether or not you've gone through a formal brand promise exercise, it's critical that your ads clearly communicate this message.

*Does it offer convincing proof?* Okay, so your ad makes a powerful promise in an emotional way. Are your customers going to believe what you say? If your product is really easier, cheaper or better, you've got to make sure readers believe it. Get some proof (a testimonial, research results, even a money-back guarantee) and present it in the most convincing way you can.

*Does it ask for action?* As every sales pro knows, your efforts are wasted if you don't ask for the sale. Once you've got your customers emotionally engaged and believing your promise, that's the time to ask them to take action. Not several different actions. Just one. But it is a good idea to ask them a couple of times, to make sure they don't miss it.

Have a great ad you'd like to share? Email [compost@fahouryink.com](mailto:compost@fahouryink.com) a pdf with your thoughts on what makes it stellar and you just might be featured on our blog.



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## Proofing (from p. 1)

**Team up with a sharp-eyed pal.** It's nearly impossible to proofread something you've written. Call on a friend to eyeball your document and offer to return the favor.

**Read your document aloud.** This technique helps with flow and clarity of phrasing as well as spelling and grammar. More bang for your buck and well worth the time.

**Read backward.** Not just last page to first, but actually read each sentence from end to start. This technique works because it forces you to read individual words rather than quickly scanning complete sentences.

**Plan on multiple rounds.** It's tough to proof for more than one item at a time — grammar, flow, formatting — so pick one to focus on now, then go back later or pass along to a colleague for the next round.

**Make your own cheat sheet.** Everyone has weaknesses, so if your's include exceptions to "i before e" or when to use affect vs. effect, create a personal checklist.

Is every document worth all these steps? In a typo-free world, yes. Realistically, you have to pick and choose where you'll spend your time. Focus on customer-facing documents and those with some permanency, like printed brochures or direct mail efforts. An online typo can always be corrected, but you'll be stuck with a carton of typo-riddled printed newsletters forever.

Confident in your proofreading skills? Be the first to post the "whoops" from this article on our Facebook page, and we'll reward your eagle eye with a \$25 Amazon gift card.



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## Inside: The Seven Deadly Sins of Marketing



### ***The Accidental Creative: How to Be Brilliant at a Moment's Notice***

© 2011, Todd Henry

*"Each day we are faced with escalating expectations and a continual squeeze to do more with less."*

Sound familiar? If that's the case, ***The Accidental Creative: How to Be Brilliant at a Moment's Notice*** is a book worth a look. Too many people dismiss creativity as the sole domain of writers or artists, but in reality it's what we all do, every day.

To create is to explore possibilities, says author Todd Henry. But creativity isn't as easy as simply flipping a switch. You need to cultivate an environment that offers the

stability and clarity necessary to produce great ideas seemingly on demand.

***The Accidental Creative*** is filled with thoughtful ideas for creating that environment. Try these for starters:

**Avoid falling victim to "the Ping"** — Limitless access to information is not always a good thing. Resist the urge (Henry calls it "the Ping") for short-term satisfaction — checking email, glancing at Facebook — at the expense of long-term gain. Remind yourself that the Ping slowly eats away at your effectiveness.

**Cultivate a "developer" mindset** — Henry describes three modes of effectiveness: drifters, drivers and developers. The latter have a strong sense of a project's overall

objectives and are purposeful in reaching them. They lock in on the problem quickly, focus on crucial priorities and establish a plan to minimize distractions and stay on course.

**Improve your diet** — We are what we take in, says Henry. The stimuli we internalize over the course of each day inform the quality of the insights we generate. So unless you're developing the world's next legendary cat food campaign, no more kitten videos on YouTube. Choose stimuli that are challenging, diverse and relevant to the problem at hand.

As Henry says, "Cover bands don't change the world." Take his wisdom to heart and you'll be in a much better position to go forth and create.