

# 10 Rules for Writing Marketing Copy

*Excerpted from the home page of [www.brandsmartchurch.com](http://www.brandsmartchurch.com), taken from Chapter 11 of Rod Arnold's book, [What Smart Churches Know](#). Rod is an expert on ministry branding and marketing, and a personal friend. Good guy. Knows his stuff. Rod says:*

When writing for an advertisement, mailer or other relatively short marketing piece [such as a Press Release], there are some tried and true rules to help you write as effectively as possible.

## **Rule #1: Less Is More**

For most marketing or advertising applications, less copy is best. Keep it clean. Think about how much time you give the average billboard—about a half second. Just one glance. You should think of other media the same way, such as newspaper or magazine ads, flyers, bulletin inserts or video projection slides. Don't try to say too much—just say one thing. Focus on your core message, the one promise that will resonate with the reader.

## **Rule #2: Focus On “You,” Not “We”**

Make the message about the customer. Say “you get,” not “we give.” It is a subtle change in approach that can make a world of difference.

## **Rule #3: What's In It For Them?**

Remember, people don't care what you're doing, they're interested in how it will benefit them. You must translate features into benefits. Make it your goal to solve a problem for them. For example, “positive friendships and biblical training for your kids” is stronger than “children's programs for all ages.” And “be refreshed and encouraged” appeals more directly to people's self-interest than “contemporary worship with biblical teaching.”

## **Rule #4: Be True To Yourself**

The marketing copy you write should consistently reflect your brand identity. The language you use should reflect your church's style and personality, whether it's traditional, modern, young, diverse - whatever fits your brand.

## **Rule #5: It's Only Funny Sometimes**

Humor can be tricky, so use it wisely. With humor you run the danger of coming across cheesy, or of some people not getting the joke. Again make sure it fits your brand identity. And keep in mind, humor typically hurts direct response rates. Use it with extreme caution.

## **Rule #6: Keep it simple**

Use short words. Use short, easy-to-read sentences. Enough said.

## **Rule #7: Hide it under a bushel? No!**

The offer is critical. It's a statement of what's in it for the reader. Don't hide the offer or bury it in copy. State the offer boldly. And keep in mind, “FREE” is the strongest word in marketing.

**Rule #8: Don't save the best for last**

Remember, most people will only read the headline, so make it count. Surprise endings are great for novels, but this is marketing. Put the most powerful stuff up front.

**Rule #9: Remember who you're talking to**

Narrow your audience and focus on them. Are you speaking to families with young children? Single mothers? Retirees? [A particular television or radio station? A certain magazine or newspaper?] Who is your primary customer? Try to picture that person in your head. Remember, if you target everyone, you'll appeal to no one.

**Rule #10: Focus on the fundamentals**

Every direct response marketing message should contain three essential ingredients:

*The offer.* What's in it for them

*The call to action:* What should they do and when should they do it

*How to respond.* Give them email, phone number, website, etc.