

# Copywriting UNIVERSITY

*Michael Senoff Copywriting Interview Series*



**Find Out What It Really Takes  
To Pull More Sales And Profits From  
Every Ad Or Sales Letter You Ever Use**

Michael Senoff Interviews Master Copywriter: Ben Settle

Dear Student,

I'm Michael Senoff, founder and CEO of [HardToFindSeminars.com](http://HardToFindSeminars.com).

For the last five years, I've interviewed the world's best business and marketing minds.

And along the way, I've created a successful home-based publishing business all from my two-car garage.

When my first child was born, he was very sick, and it was then that I knew I had to have a business that I could operate from home.

Now, my challenge is to build the world's largest free resource for online, downloadable audio business interviews.

I knew that I needed a site that contained strategies, solutions, and inside information to help you operate more efficiently

I've learned a lot in the last five years, and today I'm going to show you the skills that you need to survive.

It is my mission, to assist those that are very busy with their careers

And to really make my site different from every other audio content site on the web, I have decided to give you access to this information in a downloadable format.

Now, let's get going.

Michael Senoff

*Michael Senoff*

Founder & CEO: [www.hardtofindseminars.com](http://www.hardtofindseminars.com)

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## **If You Don't Know Ben Settle The Copywriter, Read On. You'll Find Out What It Really Takes To Pull More Sales And Profits From Every Ad Or Sales Letter You Ever Use**

Here is another exciting interview from my copywriting series. Several years ago, I found a direct response copywriter. His name is Ben Settle. And when someone had sent me a newsletter that he had written about my [www.hardtofinddads.com](http://www.hardtofinddads.com) site, after reading that copy, I knew this guy was really good and then I knew that I would want to be doing some work with him soon. Ben has since written several winning sales letter for me and my website at [www.hardtofindseminars.com](http://www.hardtofindseminars.com) , including my [Secret Loophole](#) product, my [Joint Venture Magic](#) product, and my [Art Hamel Seminar](#) product. He's also done revisions of my letter for my [HMA Marketing Consulting Training](#) and several others.

Recently I interviewed Ben on some of the most frequently asked questions people ask me about copywriting. There's a gold mine of information in this interview and I strongly recommend you listen to this more than once. These secrets have put a lot of money in my pocket and they will do the same for you if you apply them to your own copy. Now, some of the secrets you're going to learn about in this interview include: How to get unlimited ideas for your ads, products, and other writing by playing video games...The strange but scientifically sound reason why you should write your headlines under water...How to write sales letters, newsletters, and books while driving your car...A secret way of using spell check on your computer to eliminate writers block and procrastination forever...How to make everything you say in your ads one hundred percent believable and credible without needing testimonials, credentials, or other proof elements...What exact questions to ask a client to get the best material for the ad you're writing. You'll learn how to make even deadly boring products sound exciting and fascinating. You'll learn two ways to write copy for own products and services without sounding like an arrogant chest pounding jerk. You'll also learn how to find time to study and learn about copywriting even if you have a job, family commitments, and other adult responsibilities. And in addition, you'll learn how to make outrageous claims and exciting promises in your ads without sounding hype.

Let's get going. There's a lot of material here to cover and I know you're going to enjoy it.

Ben: It's so addictive to get into this game. And then when you start making some money at it, it's like a dream come true for you.

[MUSIC]

Michael: Hi, it's Michael Senoff with Michael Senoff's [www.hardtofindseminars.com](http://www.hardtofindseminars.com). Here is another exciting interview from my copywriting series. Several years ago, I found a direct response copywriter. His name is Ben Settle. And when someone had sent me a newsletter that he had written about my [www.hardtofindads.com](http://www.hardtofindads.com) site, after reading that copy, I knew this guy was really good and then I knew that I would want to be doing some work with him soon. Ben has since written several winning sales letter for me and my website at [www.hardtofindseminars.com](http://www.hardtofindseminars.com), including my Secret Loophole product, my Joint Venture Magic product, and my Art Hamel Seminar product. He's also done revisions of my letter for my HMA Marketing Consulting Training and several others.

Recently I interviewed Ben on some of the most frequently asked questions people ask me about copywriting. There's a gold mine of information in this interview and I strongly recommend you listen to this more than once. These secrets have put a lot of money in my pocket and they will do the same for you if you apply them to your own copy. Now, some of the secrets you're going to learn about in this interview include: How to get unlimited ideas for your ads, products, and other writing by playing video games...The strange but scientifically sound reason why you should write your headlines under water...How to write sales letters, newsletters, and books while driving your car...A secret way of using spell check on your computer to eliminate writers block and procrastination forever...How to make everything you say in your ads one hundred percent believable and credible without needing testimonials, credentials, or other proof elements...What exact questions to ask a client to get the best material for the ad you're writing. You'll learn how to make even deadly boring products sound exciting and fascinating. You'll learn two ways to write copy for own products and services without sounding like an arrogant chest pounding jerk.

You'll also learn how to find time to study and learn about copywriting even if you have a job, family commitments, and other adult responsibilities. And in addition, you'll learn how to make outrageous claims and exciting promises in your ads without sounding hype.

Let's get going. There's a lot of material here to cover and I know you're going to enjoy it.

How did you get started in copywriting? You said you wanted to originally maybe be a comic book artist, but how did you fall into this niche of copywriting?

Ben: I completely fell into it by accident. I've told this very same story on my site, but I put it up there so people know that they're not the only ones who go through bad things. But I was in the multilevel marketing thing for a couple of years and I was basically broke because of it. And one day I was just laying there, totally in debt because of all this stuff and I didn't know what to do. And I just accidentally picked up this book in my office. It was late at night. I remember it was like 3 and I just couldn't sleep. I'm like I don't know what we're going to do here. I know one thing; it's just not worth it. I'd been married for only like nine months. And I picked up this book by Joe Vitale and it was called, *The 7 Lost Secrets of Success*, and I just started reading it. I had the book for a while, but I'd never read it.

Michael: Did you order it online?

Ben: Actually an MLM company sent it to everyone as a monthly training.

Michael: Oh really. What MLM company was it?

Ben: It was Nutrition for Life.

Michael: I've heard of them.

Ben: They're way out of business now. I can't say no good came out of it because I just started taking this book up and started reading it. And

the book is about this really at the time famous advertising guy named Bruce Barton. And Joe Vitale did all of this really wonderful research on the guy and there's a story in there where it's during the Depression. Someone came to Bruce Barton and he asked what do I do, I'm out of work here, no one is hiring. This guy actually had a talent, a reputation for being good at writing sales letters and Bruce Barton said look at all those buildings out there. Write a sales letter to salesmen on hiring you. And at that point, I'm like why don't I get into this copywriting stuff. I thought about it and started typing some things into the search engine and people in my own MLM company...there's this guy named Tom \_\_\_\_\_. The guy is just a brilliant marketer and I didn't even really know he was in there. And I started reading his stuff and he's using all these direct response thing and good copywriting. I was fascinated at that and never looked back. I got into it from that.

From there, like everyone else, and I would say 90% of everyone listening to this, had the same experience to the point where you found Dan Kennedy, you found Gary Halbert, and from there you pick it up and run with it or whatnot, but I just read everything I could. Whatever I could afford, I'd buy it. At the time, I think I even bounced a rent check once so I could get some stuff. It was worth it. I'm not saying people should necessarily go to these extremes of putting their jobs at risk by getting work done at work or bouncing check, but it's so addictive to get into this game. And then when you start making some money at it, it's like a dream come true for you.

I would get some jobs here and there. I got some jobs on Elance. If you're just starting out...I know some people say it's not the best place and it's really not...you talk about running into ignorant and arrogant people, they're there. But you'll get some really good experience and you'll get a little bit of money and you'll get some testimonials. Another thing I did at the time was there was this website, I don't know if it still exists or not, I haven't been there in a while, but there's this website called [www.sendfree.com](http://www.sendfree.com) and it's an autoresponder company. I actually signed up for one of their free autoresponders or something, their newsletter and I got this invitation to join what was called the Sendfree Roundtable. And I don't know if they're still around or not, but if they are, I would definitely recommend some just starting out to join this thing. It was free. And it just all these different people submitting offers via email



to each other in one big digest. Not in a spamming way, but just a good offer. A lot of time people would just offer something free just to build a list.

I knew I needed to get some real experience. I wanted to make some money off it, too, obviously, but it's that experience. You've got to learn how to deal with people. I think most people know that intuitively. And what I did is I said look I'll write a sales letter for a certain percentage of the money. If anyone is interested, get back to me. I got a flood of responses to that and I also ended up getting four or five or six assignments that while working on them made me much better at what I did; just dealing with the people, dealing with the deadlines, learning how to write other people's stuff instead of your own. That was a good way to get started. Just don't expect miracles. I've read John Carlton's Freelancer course and that's all about how to get started. Even he calls the beginning part the shameless whore period and it really is. I mean you really are in that position. You have no power. You have nothing. You're just trying to learn. You're just trying to humble yourself. Someone wants to pay you \$20 to write an ad, take the \$20 and write the ad because it's all about you making yourself better at that point and getting the kinks out of the system and getting some testimonials and a portfolio and all that.

From that point I got some other clients here and there and then I ran into you. Did some stuff with you and since then it's gone pretty good.

Michael: I think I saw you on [www.hardtofindads.com](http://www.hardtofindads.com) and I looked at the day you entered there and I went to your [www.bensettle.com](http://www.bensettle.com) website or someone sent me one of the newsletters you wrote about [www.hardtofindads.com](http://www.hardtofindads.com). And I read that copy and I go man this guy is good. We're going to be doing something together.

Ben: There's another point, too. If you're trying to learn something, teach others what you're learning. Having a newsletter will give you so many opportunities. Yes there are a hundred different copywriting newsletters out there. Use your personality to make yourself different. You don't have to even come off as a "guru" or anything. I'm kind of like an anti-guru anyway. I get so tired of these attitudes in this business. Just be a reporter. Take what you've learned and



report it to other people who are trying to learn. You'll learn more and you'll attract people who are looking for people who know what they're doing. I think that's really big in it self, actually.

Michael: We're going to learn a lot more about you in the following questions here, so why don't we get started.

How do you get your ideas for headlines, themes, and offers?

Ben: Well, there's actually a lot of ways to do this. The one way that I think works the best, and you and I have actually talked about this, is taking hot showers. And I don't know how many times you and I have actually emailed each other to say hey I was in the shower. I got this idea. It's just amazing the way that works. I don't know exactly why it works. I was doing some research on it recently and apparently there is something in your brain where hot water goes over it and it stimulates your creativity. So, that's one way.

Another way would be reading a lot. There is that interview you did with Bob Bly that was really cool and the reason I liked it so much is because he talks about how he rotates what he reads. I've been reading the same magazines and publications for a while now and I'm going to start rotating these because you kind of get bored reading the same stuff and then you start getting exposed to other things.

And another way would be to write a lot. I get all my best ideas when I'm writing articles or copy or something. I think it's that whole thing where you're focused on something else and I don't know how Eugene Shorts explained it, you have your conscious mind focused on one thing and then things lead into your subconscious. I don't know how it works, but I do know I get a hell of a lot of ideas when I'm writing articles and things. And I actually have to keep an open file whenever I'm writing so I can jot ideas in there for later. So, usually that alone will give you all the ideas you can handle.

Michael: In the Gary Halbert seminar I was just watching, he was talking about how he's got this box. I forgot what he calls it. But it's this red box and as he reads articles with interesting news, he cuts them out and just put them in this box.

Ben: A great idea.

Michael: Yes. And before he writes a promotion, he'll open up his box and he'll just start sifting through these articles looking for stimulation and ideas. And also he was talking about how there was a guy who had been coming to his seminars to learn copywriting for years and years and years. And he kept tell Gary that he had writer's block and he just couldn't eliminate this writer's block. And he would say, Gary tell me how to eliminate this writer's block and Gary would say all right, I'm going to tell you in a little bit. He was kind of blowing him off, but finally he did an exercise in the seminar and he said you've just got to start writing. Just like you said. Just start writing. If you can't think of anything to say, just write the words blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, and keep writing blah, blah, blah, blah, blah until something comes into your head. And he did this and finally as he got down to the bottom of the page, he wasn't writing blah, blah, blah and it just started pouring out. And he was able to write his sales promotions without any writer's block.

Ben: Yes. There's just something with doing something, like movement. If you're just sitting there, it's like you can't think of anything. People actually stare at the blank screen. There's a reason why you're staring at a blank screen, because you're not doing anything. You're just staring.

Another good way to get ideas is...when I'm out riding my bike, I've probably lost hundreds of ideas because I never had anything to write when I'm riding my bike in the morning. I'm going to start bringing this digital recorder with me actually. I'm riding with my wife and I'm thinking remember this for me. And she tries to, but so many ideas sometimes come pouring out, what can you do.

And then one last way, and this a little bit weird, but works for me, is I play a lot of video games, specifically the old Nintendo. I don't know why this works. Maybe you're focused on something else, but I've got this old Nintendo from 1980s and I'll just play it sometimes and I'll have a pad of paper with me or something and ideas do just come. In fact, a lot of times I'll play it and I'll listen to something on your site or something I bought, some kind of audio thing and you start to internalize these things as you listen to them over and over

again. And to make that more entertaining, sometimes it's fun just to sit there playing video games. It works.

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- Michael: There's another recording on my site that reminds me of exactly what you're talking about at that's the one with Brian Keith Voiles and how he talks about how he cuts out with scissors headlines and he says the process of using the scissors to cut things out also helps him come up with tons of great headline ideas and other ideas.
- Ben: Didn't you say you were doing that once with scissors or something, just cutting things out?
- Michael: Yes, I do. I don't do it all the time, but when you're focused on cutting something or you're playing video games and you have the movement of hand or you're doing something else, it opens up your subconscious to let ideas slip in. It's just like you hear the story on my site in the copywriting section with Eugene Shorts. He talks about how Beethoven would compose, I don't know if it was all of his symphonies, he would compose them standing at a billiard table with a pen in one hand and his score sheet on the billiard table and in the other hand he had a billiard ball that he would roll across the table and he would have to focus on catching it when it came back. So, all these examples seem to open up the subconscious mind and let ideas slip in.
- Everything we've talked about is consistent, so these are all great ideas I guess for someone having writer's block to open up their subconscious and let ideas start pouring in.
- Ben: And you have endless content when you do that because you'll get ideas, maybe not for your copy, but you'll get ideas for...you want to write a newsletter or something. My problem is never what to write, it's what not to write. And I think I'd rather have that problem, I think than writer's block.

Michael: So, as you get these ideas, where do you write them down and how do you organize these ideas and notes? Do you have a system for all your projects when these ideas are coming in, whether you're playing video games or whatever? How do you organize that? Can you give me some tips on someone who wants to start doing this? What works best for you?

Ben: Well, yes. What I mostly do, 99% of the time, is I just open a simple text file on my computer and I'll type in whatever the idea is in one or two sentences. I'll "save as" just a little title that describes it and I have different folders. I have a folder that says "raw blog files," and that'll be things I'll put on my blog someday. I have another file that says "ezine articles." I'll put it there if I come up with a good ezine article idea. If I'm working on a project, I'll usually have a notebook with me because I don't want to have to jump up and forget anything with that and I'll write it down longhand and I'll have it with my project files. I always have something I can get to if I don't lose it because that's the big thing. It's so easy to lose these ideas.

Michael: Are you writing them down on a pad of paper when they first come into your mind and then you're transferring them into the text file on your computer?

Ben: I only use the paper when I'm working on an actual sales letter. When I'm on the job of a sales letter, I'll always have a piece of paper with me because I always keep those notes written out longhand. But if I'm getting ideas for something else, like an ezine article or something, I'll jump up and type those in somewhere. I don't have a notebook for that.

Another way to do is to go on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and type in the subject of whatever you're looking for ideas on and see what book titles come up. That alone, you just read the descriptions and even better than the descriptions, read what other people are saying about that book and you'll see what the people are thinking about, what people are talking about. You get some of your best ideas reading things like that, like testimonials and feedback.

Michael: So, does Amazon have reviews, where people can leave reviews on the books?

Ben: Yes, absolutely and you can get all kinds of good ideas. I mean the best ideas you'll ever get are when people say something, whether it be in real life or if you're reading a forum. I love looking at forums when I'm working on a project because let's say you're writing to people who own \_\_\_\_\_. When you find a forum of people who own \_\_\_\_\_, you'll see the words they use, the \_\_\_\_\_ they use, the questions they're asking, you'll learn more about them than you will from the actual product itself about different ways you can sell it and what appeals to them.

Michael: Ben, what are some ways to write good pre-sales messages in an email to get people to drop everything and rush over to your long sales letter online, on the Web?

Ben: What I would say not to do is not to make it obvious that you're trying to sell something.

Michael: Let me interject. First, why don't you describe what is a pre-sales message?

Ben: When someone sends you an autoresponder message or when you send one out to your list that you want to show them your sales letter and you're not really putting your sales letter in the actual email, but you're going to send them to a website. I call it a pre-sales message. It's just something to tease them over there. And the best way to do it is to just that. Just to tease them. You almost have to be obnoxious about it. You have to really, really put the tease on. You don't want to sit there and say I want to sell you this thing, check it out. You want to promise a little bit of information like go to the website and I'll show you how to do X, Y, and Z. And then just make sure in your sales letter that you actually fulfill on that promise. But you want to tease them over there. I don't know what the number is, but there are only a very small percentage of people who will actually buy anything and everything on your subject. If you're selling how to make money on the Internet, there are some people who will buy everything on that. But the vast majority won't and so you've got to kind of coax them into it. You don't want to trick anyone into anything, but you want to tease them in. You want to give them something that's really incomplete that they've got to know the answer to. And sometimes you can do that in a few sentences. It doesn't have to be this big thing. In fact, it should be short.

Michael: Are there any other ways to write good pre-sales messages in an email?

Ben: That's pretty much the only way I ever do it, unless, of course, if you're going to be giving a discount or something. That would be totally different. Then you just put the offer right in the email.

Michael: What about in the subject of the email, do you think it's important to have the person's name in there or just no name subject line?

Ben: I never used to use the name, but you and I have worked on a few projects. I always thought you were better at writing email projects than me. I always used to look at yours and you always put the name in there and I noticed that when I get emails from you or other people who put the name in there, I'm way more likely to go to look at it. And nobody can ignore their own name unless it's done in a way where it's obvious that you're overusing their name or something. But I think it's really important to put their name in there.

Michael: So, how long would you say the tease should be to get them over to your web page?

Ben: I would try to keep it as short as possible and it's going to be different for everything, but a few paragraphs maybe. I like to keep it above the fold. I notice a lot of other people like to do the same thing and it's because nobody really wants to read a lot of long stuff usually. Now, that's not always the case with everyone, but if you make it look like it's just a short little thing to read and a link, people will be more likely to go click on it, unless you want them to read a lot of stuff.

Michael: How do you make a boring and mundane product interesting and fascinating? Do you work on boring projects?

Ben: Well, it's not like the project is boring, but sometimes there are products that aren't that exciting or maybe you're writing for a book and the book is kind of neat, but it's not really moving the earth for anyone. I don't know if you've bought a lot of books and things like that from Boardroom, but you'll find that their ads are usually a lot

more exciting than the books. And one of the reasons for it, at least, and what I like to use is something that I learned from Eugene Shorts -- that video he did -- and that was “can’t be done’s.” And what that means is you writing something in a way where people think how is that possible. You don’t want to make something that is impossible, but I remember one of his ads, “How To Vacuum Industrial Drawers Without Removing Its Content.” How do you do that? I have no idea how you do that. You have to find out the answer to that. The secret is probably boring. I don’t know what the secret is, but it’s always something boring. But you make it interesting by making it sound like it’s almost impossible.

Michael: Don’t they call it fascinations?

Ben: Yes, fascinations. They don’t always have to be “can’t be done” statements. Sometimes you can make a fascinations without it necessarily being a “can’t be done.” You know who does this really good is Gary Halbert. If you read his bullets, almost all of them are “can’t be done.” You have to see what the secret is. And I remember in that same video I was telling you about that Eugene Shorts did, even he said people will buy the book even if it’s just to prove you wrong because they just have to know. They may actually return it, but who cares. They’re going to try it.

And other way to do this, and this doesn’t work for everything, but it does work, is if you can find an interesting story behind the product, even if it’s boring. That, too, will actually make it more interesting. Let’s say you have a house down the street that’s worth maybe \$100,000. It’s just a boring house, nothing special. But if you find out like a famous movie star or celebrity once lived there, or someone who has some kind of sex appeal lived there, all of a sudden it’s worth more than that.

Another example would be a play. Let’s say you have a play down the street in your local town. Maybe it’s Christmas Carol. Well, maybe it’s worth \$10 to get in, but if you find out a famous movie star is going to be in that play, all of a sudden it’s more interesting. All of a sudden the tickets are worth more and it’s more valuable. So, that’s another way to make something more interesting.



Michael: What do you think of this whole long copy versus short copy debate?

Ben: Well, the short answer is just depends on where the people you are writing to at mentally. I see people argue about this. I read some of the copywriting forums and the Internet marketing forums and some of these threads are like 30 or 40 replies of people answering this back and forth when it's really just a matter of like Eugene Shorts calls it, the person awareness level. For example, let's say you're selling a product about a brand new way to make money from home that nobody's heard of. Well, if you're going to sell that, that's going to take some explaining. You're probably going to have to differentiate it from the gazillions of other how to make money from home products. You then have to prove it's easy, that it's legal, that'll work for the reader, and all that stuff. And that could take 10-20-30 pages. I've actually seen opportunity ads that were 70-80 pages because there's so much you're going to have to explain. On the other hand, if you're selling something like Viagra, which everyone knows what it is, everyone knows what it does, and people already know if they need it or not, all you really need is a good offer, maybe a deadline or something. And you can use the combined weight of all the other ads that came before yours and that may only take a few sentences. So, it really all just depends on what you're selling and who you're selling it to.

Michael: Do you prefer projects with long copy where the buyer may not be that aware of it or do you like products where there is a higher level of awareness?

Ben: I think it's all personal preference. You're not going to probably be able to justify as much money if you're doing it for something where everyone knows what it is already. I mean there's only so much you can say and really I don't even know why some of them hire a copywriter for that at this point unless they just felt like it; they have money to burn or something. All you need is an offer and a deadline, maybe a price. I like the projects where it may not be a new concept, but it's a new way of getting something, like that barter ad we worked on. That was perfect. It's so unique and it took a lot of time to write it, but it's one of those things where you can do whatever you pretty much want because no one has done it before.

Michael: What do you see is the biggest copywriting mistake that copywriters can make?

Ben: It may sound kind of obvious, but trying to sell something that nobody wants. If you try to sell something to someone and they don't want it or they don't need it, they couldn't care less if it even exists, you can have the best copy in the world and it's not going to make any difference whatsoever. You're not going to get any sales. But if you're selling vitamins to health nuts who are buying \$1,000 or \$2,000 worth of supplements each month, you almost can't lose because what do they want. They want more of what they're already buying. So, even though it's not really a copywriting mistake, it is one that almost everyone probably makes at one time or another.

Michael: So, when a potential client comes to you, your first reaction is looking at the potential market, right?

Ben: Yes, absolutely. That is the biggest thing. What am I going to say to sell this thing? Are they going to care about this? Are they going to care it exists? Does anyone even want it or need it? If not, or if it's just a small group of people, then you've got to take it back to the drawing board and find someone who needs it, which is kind of backwards with doing it, but you already have the product and if you can find a market for it then why not. Yes, that's the biggest thing, for me at least.

Michael: What is your absolute favorite copywriting technique? The one you think everyone should know about and you use.

Ben: I would say that everything changed for me as far as copywriting when I listened to that Eugene Shorts interview you have on your site. He talked about demonstration and that's when basically you demonstrate a claim or two in the ad itself. You're basically telling the readers, look this one thing here and see what happens for yourself. Now, that may not seem like a big deal, but think about it. When you can demonstrate your knowledge, you can demonstrate that your thing works in the ad itself, it lets people with no testimonials, no credentials, and even if you have like a shoddy reputation, you're still going to make a sale. And the best example of that are car salesmen. I mean nobody trusts a used car salesman, no one. I don't know anyone who trusts these people, maybe there are a

few, but no one trusts them, but you'll buy from them because they're going to give you the keys to the car to check it out for yourself. If you like that car, it really doesn't matter if you like the salesman, it really doesn't matter if the salesman knows anything about cars themselves, it doesn't matter if the engineers of that car got their training at the best university; none of that matters. You just drove that car yourself and you liked it and you're going to buy it.

Now, from a direct response point of view, I think a really good example of this is -- I don't know if you know who Kevin Trudeau is -- but he's this infomercial guy. And he's had his problems in the past with the government and a lot of people don't trust him. But he had this infomercial out a little while back. I think he's got part two out now, but the original one was for his Natural Cures book. And in that infomercial, he demonstrates one of his secrets. Apparently someone came up to him with access acid or acid reflux or something, I don't remember the specifics, and he was like look take a shot of vinegar or something weird like that and see what happens. And the guy did it and it worked for him. Well, my wife was watching that infomercial and she at the time was having her own problems with acid reflux, I don't know exactly what the problem was, and she did it and it worked for her and she didn't even like the guy. She couldn't stand the guy before that. All of a sudden, she's buying the book. She's reading all this stuff, all because he demonstrated that one little claim. If you can do that in your ad, you're really way ahead of your competition.

Michael: Can you give me another example in any of the copy that you've written where you've demonstrated the product?

Ben: Yes. Actually, basically every ad I ever write does this. And the ones we've done, like that Art Hamel, How To Buy A Business ad, we basically say there's a reason why people can buy a million dollar business even if they have no credit or anything and that's by using investor. And we basically just tell the story of how Art uses investors to do it. We're demonstrating exactly how to do it right there in the ad. Now, they're not getting all the specifics and the course on how to do everything else, but they are learning that one secret...the one secret that makes it all believable. We're not really teasing them on that.

Another example would be that barter letter we did. We basically give the whole secret away on how to do it. We tell them exactly what to do, but how to do is a different matter. I mean there are still some things they've got to know, but we've demonstrated exactly how it works.

Michael: A lot of copywriters probably think that if they give away all the secrets, they're not going to buy the product. Do you think that's true?

Ben: I wouldn't give away all the secrets, either. Maybe one or two, but give away as much as you can with it without actually revealing the whole thing. There was this really, really good copywriter named David Deutsche and he was on one of those Eugene Shorts CDs and what he said was just brilliant. I just loved it because I've done it ever since. He says you've got to bait the hook nine tenths of the way. Like you're baiting the hook, you're not going to put everything on the hook, you're just going to give away about 90% of it and leave the rest of it unrevealed so they have to buy whatever you're selling to get the full story. And I'll give you an example. There was this sales letter -- I still study this thing all the time it's so good -- and it's one Gary Halbert wrote. It's in his newsletter somewhere on his site and it's selling a subscription to a health newsletter, the Josh Abraham letter, I think. The first part of it talks about how you can help your memory if you're getting older. He says take this herb or something and it'll help you, but at the same time you've got to know exactly what kind of herb to take, where to get it, make sure you're taking the right kind, and then this report will show you how. So, you know what to do, you just need to know how to do it. It's just brilliant the way these guys do that. There are people that I've studied who don't do this at all and I'm sure it works if you're in a really rabid market, you probably don't have to give anything away. If you're in one of these markets where people are absolutely...can't get enough of what you had, it probably doesn't matter. When it comes to things you've got to persuade someone, it doesn't hurt to kind of tease them along and string them along a little like that.

Michael: What do you think is the real secret to becoming successful as a copywriter?

Ben: The real secret, and this probably isn't much of a secret, I think people all know it even if they don't want to admit it, but it's just hard work. It's with anything; it's just really, really hard work. I know a lot of good copywriters that don't have a lot of natural talent, but they work really, really hard at it. When I was in high school, it was the same thing in sports. You'd see the guy who had all the talent; he wouldn't do as well as the guy who works really hard every day. And even Shorts said the same thing. He goes you can be the best copywriter in the world and you'll get your clock cleaned by someone who is just starting out who puts in five or ten times more work on it. When I was just starting out, I didn't have a lot of money or anything and I used to work my butt off on this. I still do, but when you start getting clients and things, you can't put as much time in the learning, but you should. And you find time wherever you can. You read things over and over and over. You write as much as you can and you've got to be constantly at it. That to me is the biggest secret.

Michael: How many times have you read Eugene Schwartz's book?

Ben: Do you mean *Breakthrough Advertising*?

Michael: Yes.

Ben: I think I've read it 11 or 12 times. I'm actually reading it again right now. There's just so much stuff in it.

Michael: And every time you read it, something solidifies or you learn something new?

Ben: Absolutely. I mean there's so much and everyone who reads it will say the same thing. It's not one of these books that you can just go through one time and get everything. Mine is just written full of notes on every page. There's always something, even if it's just the way he words something. In one of the ads that I did with you, the barter ad, there is this part in there that was really hard to write because we're talking about all these different things you can get like 14-cents on a dollar. Well, how do you do that without making a boring list of things? Well, there's this part in his book, and this is just an example, where he is explaining all these different things without using bullet points, but he does it in a way that it all goes

smoothly and flows smoothly. I basically just ripped that whole structure out for our ad. I mean there are always little things like that that you can get out of it even if it's not knowledge. It's just the way he would write and words things.

Michael: Now, there is a recording on my site that I know you absolutely love. It's the one called How To Eat Your Face and Live To Tell About It.

Ben: That is a great one.

Michael: So, when you study things like this, how many times have you listened to that recording?

Ben: Probably five or six times. That actually inspired me to start some of my own projects recently. He talks about things like publicity. He talks about how to write space ads and where he would get his ideas from old comic books and things. There is so much there even though it's not that long of a recording.

Michael: What would you say to copywriters who are working a regular job and they have a family and time is limited, what advice would you give them for finding that time to do the study and the hard work? Any ideas?

Ben: Yes. You've got to find it wherever you can and you probably know this better than anyone with your schedule. Four or five years ago when I was just learning all these things, I had a job and my wife and I also had an office cleaning business. I didn't really have a lot of time. So, what I would do is I would leave for work a half hour early and I would write ads or read or whatever in the car. I actually had to make a deal with the guy who switched shifts with me because I was on first shift. I was duplicating videos at the time. It was really kind of a fun job and they ran a 24-hour operation and I switched hours with this guy who was on second shift because I knew nobody would be there at night. And sometimes I would get my work done as fast as I could and I would actually write ads or study something at work. You've just got to kind of find it wherever you can. I learned this mindset from a guy named Alan Davis and he is a comic book artist. When he was just starting out, he used to work unloading trucks on the docks and he would actually sneak away and draw a comic when no one was looking. This may sound



kind of extreme and I'm not necessarily suggesting anybody do this kind of stuff, but you just find the time wherever you can. You have to do it at night when you're doing stuff. Some people have to do it in the morning.

I read about this one guy, can't remember where I read this, but he writes book when he's commuting. I mean he has a little recorder, anyone else would have a digital one, and he'll talk into it when he's driving and then have it transcribed. You kind of have to get creative with these things if you don't have a lot of time.

Michael: How can someone get over their fear of writing really poor copy?

Ben: Just start writing. When you're just starting out or if you have that fear, just write an ad. In fact, better yet, create a product or find a product to sell, even if it's just a little cheap one. Write an ad the best you can. Throw it up on Ebay. If it's something people want, you'll see that people are going to buy it and you'll start to come to the realization that the writing is all relative anyway because like I said, you can have really, really good writing, but if no one wants it, it's not going to do good anyway. But if people want what you have, you're writing can be crap and it's not going to matter. I mean it'll matter a little bit, but it's not going to matter like you think it will. The best thing to do is just start writing. You're going to write crap at first. Everyone does. Nobody writes really good ads right off the bat. Everyone has to start somewhere and why worry about it.

Michael: One question people ask is how can you avoid sounding too hype without losing the impact of the big promise of benefits?

Ben: One way to do this really, really fast and I've actually started doing this with almost all of my ads now, is just either get rid of all the exclamation marks or use them really sparingly. That alone will kind of take away that feeling of hype especially if what you're saying is true and you really are saying something that you're not really hyping it up. You're actually telling the truth, which is what you should be doing anyway. You don't need all that exclamation marks. If you're saying something that someone really wants to hear about, and that's what your ad should be anyway, something that people are really interested in and they want to hear about, you don't need all the hype and all that. You don't need the National Enquirer five



legged man learns how to make money type thing. You don't need any of that stuff. And it's weird because if you look at those old Eugene Shorts' ads that we can find at [www.newspaperarchive.com](http://www.newspaperarchive.com) and things, every sentence he wrote had an exclamation mark back in the 60s. So, you almost have to do the opposite. I guess back then you could get away with that, but if you just take out almost all of your exclamation marks, that alone will make you stand out and your big claims won't seem so much like hype.

Michael: So, copying copywriters from the past and modeling their hype may not be such a good thing today?

Ben: Well, I mean I wouldn't do it and you put some of those ads up on your [www.hardtfindads.com](http://www.hardtfindads.com) site. Every single sentence has an exclamation mark. How do you explain everything is this supercharged thing? But nowadays you see so much of it. If you want to just stand out, tone it down a little. A couple of years ago, I wrote a newsletter about this and I put a challenge out there to everyone and I said go this site...it was \_\_\_\_\_, this newsletter site and tell me what you think is different about this than what you're used to seeing. And nobody could really answer that at the time because no one really knew who he was, I don't think at the time. He wasn't really promoting himself. The biggest thing to me was he didn't use any exclamation marks. I think there was one or two in the whole thing and that was the older version. The newer version doesn't have a lot of them either. So, if a guy like him is doing it, there's probably a reason for that.

Michael: So, is there a way to create excitement in an ad without sounding hype?

Ben: Yes and the key is just to say something that is exciting inherently. If you're saying something that someone really needs to hear, it doesn't really matter how you say so much as just saying it. If someone has a real bad need for something or someone has a disease that's killing them, you don't have to put an exclamation point if you have something that can cure them. You just have to say it. This herb or whatever will relieve your pain or something. You don't have to put five exclamation points behind that. Just saying it alone makes it exciting.

Michael: Do you have any tips on writing a good headline?

Ben: Yes. The biggest thing with those and I'm on a learning curve with these myself. I'm always looking for different ways to write headlines because some people it's very natural. For me it's very hard. It takes me a long time, but for me the key is to write lots and lots and lots of them. You'll hear people say write a hundred. Well, I say write a hundred, find four or five or six or whatever that are all different from each other and then take those four or five and write a hundred for each of those, different variations. And what I do to do this to get it over with is I'll write 50 a day and that comes out to about 250 a week if you work five days a week and 500 in two weeks. Out of those 500, you should have something that emerges. Usually it'll emerge when you're not actually writing them. It'll emerge when you're, again, taking a shower or something, you're out riding your bike, you'll probably get the answer.

Michael: Are you writing them out by hand or typing them in?

Ben: I type them in. There are a lot of people who will write them out by hand, but I say type them in. What I do is I'll go through my entire swipe file, 500, 600, 700...I don't know how many ads I have in there and I'll just look at all the headlines and see if I can't be inspired. And usually every headline you'll get some kind of idea for what you have and you just write it down. It doesn't matter if it's a good headline or not. You just want to get the basic idea down. And your brain will eventually start arranging things for you if you let it. And that's the whole key of getting away with doing something else.

Michael: So, how do you know which is the one you choose?

Ben: To me that is the tricky part because I usually have three or four that I like to use. For example, when you and I are doing projects together, it usually doesn't take long before I say hey Michael, let's try this one because I don't really know until we see what the sales are. If no fish are biting, then I always have three or four other ones that I wanted to use, but didn't use at first.

Michael: You've got to test.

Ben: Yes. Remember, we were running those Ebay ads all the time. How many times did we change that; like over and over again.

Michael: What swipe file resource do you personally use or recommend for finding old ads?

Ben: Well, the obvious one is your [www.hardtfindads.com](http://www.hardtfindads.com) site, which assuming everyone listening to this is familiar with, but if they're not, go to [www.hardtfindads.com](http://www.hardtfindads.com). There are so many there, I don't know, like 800; something like that. Another good source is old comic books and that special affects cookbook. He was talking about this, too. Those old comics, I swear, they have the best ads in them. I mean there were so good. I still want to buy the stuff when I read them. I'll have people email me and they'll say I just bought a comic book and I don't see any good ads in there. You can't read the comics that are after 1990. For some reason, they all got into image ads after that. You want to go to the older ones, 1980s and before. And the good thing is they're very cheap. Comics aren't like baseball cards. Some of them will go up in value, but most of them don't. And you can get a whole box of them for probably \$15 or \$20 at a comic book convention.

Michael: Or they go to [www.hardtfindads.com](http://www.hardtfindads.com), go to the Ben Settle section, and we've got a whole bunch of yours.

Ben: Yes, that's true. And you could do that, too. And then, we mentioned this earlier, [www.newspaperarchive.com](http://www.newspaperarchive.com), which, Michael, you actually told me about and you can find just about anything that's ever been run in a newspaper before in that one.

Michael: If anyone goes to my site, [www.hardtfindseminars.com](http://www.hardtfindseminars.com), and go to the Products section and long the left in light blue there's a section called Michael Recommends and there's a direct link to that newspaper archive site with a description.

Ben, how does someone with a full time job, a family, and other adult responsibilities find time to read and practice copywriting?

Ben: Like we were saying before, you've just got to make time for it. If you have a job or something, leave early. Get there a half hour early or on your lunch break write ads. On your regular breaks write ads

or learn something and do something. Don't just sit around with everyone else gossiping. You'll find the time even if you have all those things going on. And I'd like to add to something on this. One of the best resources I ever read on time management, and I swear it will change you once you read it, is Dan Kennedy's, *No BS Time Management* book. It is so good and it's short and it's cheap.

Michael: What are a couple of ideas that inspired you from it?

Ben: One of the best ones was he doesn't take calls and he doesn't take emails. I know a lot of people find that almost unbearable. Well, what he does is he normally accepts things by fax and the reason he accepts things by fax only is because when someone has to sit down and write you a fax, a lot of times they'll answer their own questions, first of all. And second of all, it makes them be more clear. There's none of this phone tag thing. They get the fax. They send it to you and there it is. I don't personally do that, but I can see why that would be a big deal. That's just from a business point of view. The other things he would talk about in there are personal discipline and punctuality. Here's a tip for anyone. Don't ever deal with someone who is not punctual. His example is, every time he's done business with someone who wasn't punctual he's regretted it. Personally, I find that to be good advice.

Michael: What questions should someone ask a client to get the best material for the ad they are writing?

Ben: Other than just asking about their customers, I refer to Dan Kennedy again, his book, *The Ultimate Sales Letter*. And he has a list of customer profiling questions in that book. And these are great questions like what keeps your client up at night, indigestion boiling in their stomach. There's a list of, I think it's 10 or 12 things. And if you can get the answers to these questions, the ad is almost all written for you. So, I would just say get his book. It's like \$12 and use those questions, hand them to your client or answer them yourself and there you go.

Michael: There are a lot of people who own small retail businesses who want to apply direct response copywriting and marketing to their businesses, but they don't know how. What advice would you have for these people?

Ben: The key is to start small. Don't try to create some elaborate system in one day, like you see all these experts doing. Just start with something small. Just try to build a mailing list. Maybe put out an offer to your current customers or when people call in, try to capture their name and address and send them an offer and start building that list. In one of Dan Kenney's books, I think it's the *Ultimate Marketing Plan*, he says have your customers capture every single name and every single address when people call in. Offer a reward pool. Maybe \$100 goes to the person who captures the most names. You'll have every single person trying to capture a name and then every week you're going to have a ton of new names and addresses to get you started. All you have to do is offer maybe a 50% off coupon for giving your name and address, and people give it to you. One of the best people I've ever seen do this is a guy named Bill Grazier, and he calls it the marketing funnel and his system is very elaborate. But when you look at how he does things, he puts one piece in and then puts another piece in and another piece in. So, the key is just to start small and build up from there.

Michael: I want to interject. I'm going to plug myself. I developed this product called Phone Secrets and it's an incredible product. Now, I've promoted it a little bit to my list and it wasn't very responsive. But the reason being is I don't think most of my list is retail stores. But for anyone in a brick and mortar business who is handling incoming calls, this is a phenomenal product, which outlines systems, tools, how to train your employees to handle incoming calls, how to capture the names. It shows you offers and bribes that you can give them and it works every time. Plus we talk about some technology that you know about...that phone system that I've been using for the last couple of years. Do you know what I'm saying?

Ben: Yes.

Michael: This think really automates the entire process and can actually build an entire list of every incoming call. So, if you're a retail store and you get set up with this technology that's described in my Phone Secrets system, you could automatically start building a database without even typing a thing. All you have to do is get set up with this. Every call that comes in, the phone number is cross-referenced with the mailing address and the mailing address is automatically put

into a database. So, just by having it set up, you can start building a database and then use the skills that you're students are learning from you on copywriting to mail a simple offer. But the Phone Secrets system, if someone is interested they can email you, Ben, and then you'll send them more information on that.

Ben: Okay.

*You're listening to an exclusive interview found on Michael Senoff's [www.hardtfindseminars.com](http://www.hardtfindseminars.com).*

Michael: Any other advice for retail businesses?

Ben: If you have a little extra money in your budget, get that Magnetic Marketing system Dan Kennedy puts out. I mean he's got all these examples of retail stores in there and a few are copyright free, so you can actually use them as they are. You can get a ton of ideas just looking at what other people are doing. Some people will look in the Yellow Pages ads of other towns, maybe across the country they live in, and see what people who own similar shops are using. So, that way you're not stealing ideas from your competitor right down the street. But you might get good ideas from someone who is in a completely different state than you and you can just use exactly what they're doing. Don't rip it off illegally or anything, but you can definitely use their ideas if they're working.

Michael: Also, on the Magnetic Marketing, don't pay retail for that. I think that course retails for around \$500.

Ben: They've double it since I've gotten it.

Michael: Yes. You can certainly have the list or email you and I can certainly help you get that for a lot less.

Let's go on to question #15. Ben, what are some ways of writing copy for own products and services without sounding like you're bragging or shamelessly tooting your own horn? How do you get around that?



Ben: I can think of a couple different ways just off the top of my head. One way is basically have the letter written in someone else's voice. You and I did that with that Art Hamel ad. It's not in his voice; it's in your voice. He's not bragging about himself. He's not tooting his own horn. You and I are tooting his horn. And there's a huge difference in that. There's a big difference between you going out there and bounding your chest right out of the gate saying I'm this great person at what I do, here's all my credentials, blah, blah, blah, than someone else coming out and saying there's this guy or this girl I've learned from and here's what she taught me and here's her credentials. It's night and day. This is just one of those little things that if you read a lot of ads, you'll see this goes on a lot. I like looking at those old Gary Halbert ads. He used to always have these celebrities writing in their voice, the ad in their voice, so it wasn't the author of the book, it was Melanie Griffith or some other soap opera star and it completely changes the complexion of what's being said. It makes everything more realistic.

Another way to do the same thing, if you can't find anyone who will let you write in their voice or it just doesn't work for what you're trying to, is just use yourself as the example in the beginning of the ad. Again, instead of just bursting out the gate saying here I am and I'm so great and here's all the stuff I know, start with some mistakes you've made that you know the people who are reading made too. Start saying I did this and I just couldn't figure it out and I tried this and finally I stumbled onto this secret. That way you lay a groundwork of being humble and likeable instead of just coming out acting like the god of whatever it is you do.

Michael: How do you deal with business owners and clients who have really no clue about what good copywriting is, where they don't understand the value that copywriting can bring you?

Ben: I refer that question to that Bob Bly interview you did because in that interview he said something that was so profound, and I know it's simple, but it really does make sense. He said something like ignorant clients are fine and arrogant clients are fine, but if they're both ignorant and arrogant, run the other way. Just don't deal with them. If you deal with someone who doesn't understand the value of what you're trying to do for them, all you're going to be doing is giving yourself headaches. I also want to say sometimes ignorant



clients aren't that bad. And I don't even say ignorant. I'll say so-called ignorant people because I have a client who really doesn't know all that much about copywriting and marketing. I mean he knows a little bit and just hands it all over to me and lets me do it. It's actually a lot easier to work with someone like that. If he's arrogant, too, then it would be a nightmare, but sometimes if someone doesn't really understand marketing and copywriting, it's not that bad, just as long as they know the value of what you're giving them. That's the important thing.

Michael: Give me an example? What can happen if you work with someone who is both ignorant and arrogant? Do you have any personal examples?

Ben: I actually worked with someone like that once a couple of years ago. And I don't want to name the name of the company because they're pretty well known and they're a good company. They have a good service and I don't want to disparage them or anything. But I contacted them about writing an ad for them. I dealt with the guy who founded the company and ran the company. He was an old direct marketing guy and he was like yes let's do this. So, I started getting everything ready and then a couple of weeks later I find out he's retiring and his daughter was taking over. Well, I had this little pit in my gut at that time. I just knew I should have walked away. I stuck in there and I found out she had no idea what I was providing for them. She had no understand of marketing or copywriting or anything. She thought she did, but she really didn't and that's a perfect example of someone who is ignorant and arrogant and it just didn't work. The whole thing was a nightmare. Ever since then, I won't deal with people like that.

Michael: How about when you work with clients, do you do letter of agreements or contracts? What's your philosophy?

Ben: There are certain people I don't really mess around with on that if I really know them and can trust them. But yes definitely. In fact, I'm more weary of this now than ever. I had some recent experiences where maybe some things weren't spelled out as clearly, so definitely the more detailed the better. You don't have to have this big legalese sounding thing, but just make sure you have everything on the table, everything is clear, and I would even say go through

your agreement with the person line by line. Even better than that, take a page from your book and tape record the call and make sure you both have a recording of it so that there's never any questions about what is expected and what needs to be done.

Michael: Do you want to describe any other bad experiences that you've had where you've wasted a lot of time working on a copywriting project where the listeners can learn from your mistake?

Ben: Yes. It's going to happen. And the thing is, is there may be times when you're dealing with someone and you think that they're impossible to deal with and usually it's probably a little bit of both of you and it's usually just a matter of you guys both being on the same page so to speak. So, that's why I'm really, really cognizant of making sure everything is pretty clear now so there's no mistake. If there is any misconception at all, you want to make sure that you guys have talked about it before hand and it's recorded.

Michael: How about deadlines? When you take on a client, how much time do you like to give yourself where you're not under that time pressure?

Ben: This is just on average. I'm probably a little extreme on this. I like to have at least 90 days. I don't like being under that. Some people need deadlines and I'm not disparaging deadline at all because some people really need them. I don't like to give myself deadline. I know that's not always feasible because if something needs to be done soon, we can get it done, but ideally I like 90 days and usually it doesn't take that long, but I like to have that time in my head so I'm not constantly sweating bullets. One of the best ways to get things done, and I keep referring to your Bob Bly interview, but there's so much wisdom in it, but like he said, don't just work on one thing. You're going to get burned out if all you do is work on the same project. You've got a deadline of got to be done next week. If all you do is put in eight hours a day in one little project like that for a whole week, you're going to be so burned out and so sick of that, you're never going to enjoy yourself. You're not even going to enjoy the process. So, I would say definitely give yourself some time. But, you know, a lot of the work is done when you're not working as we talked about earlier. A lot of the actual work is being in your brain when you're actually taking a break anyway and getting away from it.

Michael: Do you have any tips on editing, like let's give an example? How do you write your first draft? Do you write it out in longhand or do you type it and then once you have that first draft, take me through tips on how you do the editing of that first draft?

Ben: I'll just give a brief how this works. I think everyone does this differently, but I'll have all these notes in longhand. All my notes are always in longhand and then I'll transfer those notes into a computer and I'll have to physically type out every note and that kind of locks it into your brain a little bit more. And I'll have all these notes and I'll try to organize them in that sales formula of AIDA, attention interest desire action. So, if I have a couple of notes in there that I know are going to be at the end, I'll put those toward the end. If I know something is going to be in the bullets, I'll put them in the middle. And I'll just kind of arrange the notes like that. Usually it takes a couple of hours. At that point, you just start reading through it over and over and over again and eventually you'll start seeing a shape come out of it and eventually you'll have your first draft written.

Michael: Your notes aren't the actual first draft. It's just a starting point of your first draft?

Ben: Yes, in my mind, and I guess this is probably different for everyone. But in my mind, that first draft is when you can look at it and say you know I could actually run this. It may not be perfect.

Michael: Let me take you back. You've got all your notes into your computer. You've typed them in by hand. Now, how do you write that first draft from your notes?

Ben: I just go through those notes over and over and over. And every time you go through them, you'll see something that can be refined, you'll see something that get tossed out, and I'll add to that. Never just delete anything. If you're going to toss something out, cut it out and put it in another file because later on some other thing that you cut out you can use as autoresponder material or ezine article material.

- Michael: Are you adding onto the notes to make it part of the first draft? Are you writing in addition to the notes?
- Ben: Well, yes. A lot of those notes aren't really even complete sentences.
- Michael: So, you're working with the notes to create your first draft?
- Ben: Think of it almost like you're making something out of a piece of clay. You're kind of forming it as you go along. And that's probably the best analogy I can give you is a sculpture looking at that big block and he starts chipping away and in the first hour no one will have any idea of what he's doing. But in his mind he's kind of got it figure out because when you're going through your product and you're doing all that research, you're going to be getting ideas and a lot of that is going to be written in your notes. And then later on when you get a first draft, at least when I get a first draft and I can see it and it's there, chances are it's going to be a little too wordy. So, what I like to do is...and I got this from Stephen King in his autobiography on writing...it's this little formula and it's basically the second draft equals the first draft minus 10%. And in copywriting terms the way I do this is, again, when I've gone through it 10, 12, 15 times and I have a letter that's "done," I'll do a word count on it and let's say it's a thousand words. Well, I'll subtract 10% from that and I'll say okay that's my goal. I want to get it down to 900 words. And what that does is it forces you to go through every single paragraph actually and you'll find different ways of saying things. You'll be able to say things with less words. It'll force you to condense ideas down or maybe make yourself more clear. It's a really great way of doing it. I wrote a newsletter about this a couple of years ago. It probably got the most feedback I've ever gotten because it really helps people out. I can't take credit for it. It's complete Stephen Kings' idea and it's one of the best ideas I've ever heard, too.
- Michael: Do you have to get motivated to write copy or do you wake up in the morning motivated, eager, and excited to dig into writing copy?
- Ben: Sometimes I'm like that. I think most people are like this. There are some days you feel like you just want to jump into it. There will be some days when you go to bed and you can't wait until you wake up so you can work on it, only to find out that you're procrastinating the

next day. And the way I get around all that is I just make thing pathetically easy. I give myself absolutely the most brain-dead goals I can think of and I'll give you an example. Maybe I have this hunk of notes in front of me and where do I start. What am I going to do here? There's all this stuff. I got 30, 40 pages of notes. I don't even want to touch this. This is too much and I wished it was just refined already. You're brain is telling you all this stuff. You're procrastinating. So, what I do is I say well, you know what, all I'm going to do today is I'm just going to go through and I'm going to indent all the paragraphs and that's it. I'm not going to do anything else. Or I'm just going to run a spell check. That's my only responsibility for the whole day. Maybe I'm just going to go through and make sure all the fonts are the same. The idea here is you just want to make yourself get started and if you give yourself these really pathetically easy goals, you'll trick yourself into getting work done because I guarantee you the second you sit down and you say I'm just going to look at this first sentence and I'm just going to see if everything is spelled right, you're going to notice things. I could change that, I could play with that and before you know it, you're actually getting into there and it's two or three hours later and you've actually gotten some good work done. On that Eugene Shorts thing you have, he has that timer, that 33 minute take the pressure off. To me, that's still too much pressure. I have to give myself just pathetically dumb easy things to do and getting started is never a problem at that point.

Michael: What are some good ways anyone can use to put a lot of strong personality into an ad? Is it important to have a personality in your ads and letters?

Ben: Yes, I think it's vitally important. If you look at the vast majority of sales letter out there, they have no personality. It's just a bunch of stuff that they're saying and they have it in a good structure and all that, but there's nothing to like. There's nothing to connect with. And people have heard this before, but it's true. Just write like you talk. Don't write this stilted cold stuff. You really don't want to have to impress anyone. Just write like you talk. One person who is really good at that and I love reading his ads is Matt Fury. I mean he writes just like he talks. So, what if there's a bunch of inconsistent grammar. He's writing like he talks.

One way to incorporate the best parts of your personality into an ad is ask people you know, not people that are going to be mean to you, but ask people you know, family and friends, say is there anything about your personality that they particularly like. If you start getting the same answer, there's something about your personality that people really like and you didn't even realize it and chances are you won't know it until you ask, you're doing something that resonating with people and you should try to incorporate that into your ad whenever you can. If you're writing for someone else in someone else's "voice," talk to that person. You do a great job of that when you're interviewing people. I mean you can look at every single interview you've done and you can see everyone has their own unique personality. And all you've got to do is illicit that personality out of there and put it into the ad. Pick up on their speech patterns and colloquialisms.

When you start editing your ad, ask how does so and so say this. Would he use that word? I have a really good example of this on my site. I have this book that I give away and in that book there's this ad that I put in there just for this purpose. It's from a magazine called National Review, which is this politically conservative magazine that was founded by this guy named Bill Buckley 50 years ago. And he's been all over TV and stuff and he has this extremely distinct personality. And the person who wrote this ad captured it beautifully, even though it breaks so many rules of copywriting, this thing works because it has such strong personality in it. You think you're actually listening to this Bill Buckley guy talking and I know it's a control piece because I've gotten it at least four times in the last couple of years. So, I know it's working and it's because of that personality. If this thing had been written in anyone else's voice, it probably wouldn't have worked as well.

Another really good example of someone who uses personality is that Rich Jerk guy. I'm just captivated by this guy's stuff and I don't know the guy or anything, but I'm like one sales letter away from buying a bunch of his stuff just because there's something about that personality even though he's kind of an asshole. You still want to read his stuff. And that's not to say you've got to be like that. Use your personality. You do that and your ads are going to be about ten times stronger than they would otherwise.



Michael: Well, think of Howard Stern, too.

Ben: Yes. There you go. All those radio guys. That's a good example. I listen to a lot of talk radio and the guys who are on top or the girls who are on top; they're all very strong personalities. Look at Rush Limbaugh. Look at Howard Stern. These guys...love them or hate them...they have these really strong personalities and it resonates with people. People flock to them every day. Look at the Gary Halbert newsletter. It's gotten to the point where I read his newsletters just because I want to see what's going on in the guy's life.

Michael: Well, you know what, if you remember in the Howard Stern movie...did you ever watch that Howard Stern movie.

Ben: Some years ago. I don't remember all of it.

Michael: Well, years ago it had the story of his rise and when he went with WNBC...I don't know if you remember that in the movie.

Ben: \_\_\_\_\_.

Michael: WNBC. So, all the big wigs were up there in the boardroom and they couldn't believe how much listenership he was getting and they did research. They were researching the market and trying to identify what it was that people wanted to know. And the number one reason people were listening is they wanted to hear what he was going to say next. And that's the same thing with Halbert's stuff, with Rich Jerk. They're curious to know what this person is going to say next.

Ben: This is an example that maybe I'm taking this to kind of an extreme, but it's so true. People who read comic books will know what I'm talking about, but there was a time back in the 70s...and this is when I was just a little kid, but I have all these old Spider Man comics. I used to read interviews and I used to want to be a comic book artist, so I read all this stuff and people would say yes I don't even care who Spider Man is fighting, I just want to know what's going on in Peter Parker's life. What's going on? How is he going to deal with that relationship? But people are buying a personality. They're not buying what people normally think they're buying. They're actually



buying a personality, someone they can identify with. So, it's a really powerful thing to add to your ads and sales letters.

Michael: Can you tell me about some of the resources you offer at your website? And what is the URL?

Ben: Yes. The website is [www.bensettle.com](http://www.bensettle.com). It's just my name dot com and it's a newsletter. It's actually technically the blog, but I just treat it like a newsletter. I've had people say you're not supposed to do that, but I don't really care. Getting the information out is the important thing. And on that blog/newsletter, I give away a book. It's a 300-page book...actually it's more than 300 pages...of copywriting secrets and some rare swipe file ads you're probably not going to find anywhere, at least not easily and not without looking around hard. I recently ask a bunch of people on my list, I said if you were going to pay for this book...because they've all gotten it free...I said if you were going to pay for this book, what would you pay for it. What do you the value of this book is, knowing what you know now, without seeing an ad for it, just having read it? And the vast majority was emailing me back saying I don't understand why you're giving this thing away for free and I should be charging at least \$79 for it, maybe more. So, you can get that free for now on my site until I get a chance to package it and write an ad for it and all that. That's the big thing I offer on my site right now other than just somewhat regular updates. I try to update it every couple weeks, every three weeks or so.

Michael: Are there any other ways that you know of that can really increase the response of a promotion or a direct mail sales letter that you've see that works almost all the time?

Ben: Yes. You and I have actually been doing this on all of our ads and that's just simply adding some audio to it. The way you and I have been doing it where you interview the people who created the products or customers of the products, real simple interviews, and we add that to the bottom of the letter or we do it at the top, just depending on what we're selling. That is huge. How many times have people bought from our ads just because we had that combination? First they read the ad and then they wanted some more information, so they listened to the audio, which is like another ad. What did you call it? Copy talking.

Michael: Yes. I call it copy talking because look, a visitor who comes to the website, there are people who no matter what will not listen to audio and will always read. And there are people no matter what who won't read and will be able to listen to audio. So, by having audio or a download or transcripts of the audio in addition to your sales pitch just increases your reach. It increases the number of prospects who open your letter, who listen to your pitch. And the more people who open your letter and listen to your pitch, you're doing them a service by giving them the information in the most convenient ways and that simply just increases response. Also, it's always been proven that a four-page letter will always out pull a two-page sales letter. And an eight-page sales letter will always out pull a four-page letter. And a 16-page sales letter will always out pull an eight-page sales letter. And a 32-page sales letter will always out pull a 16-page sales letter, and so on and so on. And by having one hour of audio is actually like a 64-page sales letter. It comes out to about 64 typed pages. Any by having hours of audio, you've got hundreds of pages of sales material just increasing your chance of selling the product, of having your listener bond with you, and able to command higher dollars for the products you're selling. So, that's why everything we do currently always has an audio component of it.

Ben: Just to end this out, I would say anyone who is looking to hire a copywriter...I don't care if it's me or anyone, it really doesn't matter...try to get with someone who understand audio, someone like Michael, for example, like you. If someone can do that, if they can just interview the person who created the product, maybe a couple of customers, you're going to add another layer to that pitch that you're writing that none of your competition is going to have, especially if it's a topic that is kind of deep in and of itself where it's kind of a complicated subject like that barter letter we did. Anyone who has a question may get it in the audio. So, I would definitely say find someone like Michael or anyone who knows how to do this sort of thing...and there's not many out there, unfortunately. Get with them first before you go to the copywriter. See if you can't get some kind of an interview done, professional interview and the transcripts and maybe even some sort of an audio infomercial or something like that because it'll just make the copywriter's job that much more easy. I don't want to say easy, but it will definitely make the ad better.

Michael: How can someone contact you by email if they had any questions?

Ben: Well, I don't like giving out the email address and don't like posting it on the website because of spam people. So, if you want to contact me, go to [www.bensettle.com/feedback.html](http://www.bensettle.com/feedback.html).

Michael: Spell Ben Settle.

Ben: B-e-n S-e-t-t-l-e. Like Ben and then Settle.com/feedback like if you're giving someone feedback, .html. You can type in whatever you want in that field and it'll get to me.

Michael: That's the end of this interview with Ben Settle. I hope you found this helpful. Go to [www.bensettle.com](http://www.bensettle.com) for more information on his exciting newsletter. If you need to talk to him, make sure you tell him Michael Senoff sent you. That way he is sure to get back to you at once. Thanks for listening.

Here is another bonus resource for you and it's about a section on my site that has about 15 hours of audio interviews with copywriting experts include Brian Keith Voiles, including Carl Gallette, including Eugene Shorts. You will not find this content anywhere. It'll take you to an entire collection of audio recordings, MP3 downloads, and transcripts of some of my best interviews on the subject of copywriting. You'll be able to play them, download them, print the transcripts. It's a collection that you will not find anywhere else. If you want to education on copywriting, you will not find anything better than this.

[END]