



sharpediting
complete copywriting *solutions*

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Client Questionnaire

The questionnaire that follows will help drive the development of your marketing materials. Before you begin, it's helpful to understand why we ask all these questions. In general, your marketing message must communicate 7 key points to help a person take action. Leave one of these out, and your prospect may have a lingering, unanswered question in the back of their mind. The result is no decision on their part.

- 1. Target Audience** – it's vital to identify and connect with the reader, so they know they are your ideal client and you are suited for them.
- 2. Problem** – a description of the issue that you help them overcome, so they know that you understand their needs.
- 3. Solution** – what should they expect to experience? This should convey a **BENEFIT** (not just features or advantages) and ideally this is in the form of an **emotion**, rather than just a product or service. For example, these would apply to a skin care salon:
 - **Features:** state of the art laser technology; highly competent staff; relaxing setting; privacy.
 - **Advantages:** smooth skin; reduction in spots; fewer wrinkles; pamper yourself; completely safe; confidentiality.
 - **Benefits, as EMOTIONS:** Feeling confident, sexy; a bounce in your step;
- 4. Biggest objection** – this is the one or two "Yeah, but..." statements that immediately enter their mind: I can't afford it; don't have the time; I don't want to appear weak by asking for help; I've heard horror stories about ___ ; etc.
- 5. Social proof: Case studies & testimonials.** [See our testimonial questionnaire provided separately for your use] "Social proof" helps a customer feel they are in good company when they buy your product/service. This is presented through case studies and testimonials that convey specific benefits. Testimonials must say more than "They treated me very professionally," or "You are the best!" What made it the best? What specifically was experienced that could not be found elsewhere? What feeling did they have before, and how was that turned around? Powerful testimonials describe how a customer's life is changed, and follow the S-A-R formula:
 - **Situation** the client was experiencing;
 - **Action** you took to help them or what your product did for them;
 - **Result** they experienced, preferably in measureable terms: dollars saved, expense avoided, new business brought in, etc.
- 6. Risk reduction** – how do prospects know they will be satisfied? What if they are not? Do you offer a guarantee or pledge? This can be as simple as a low price (little investment on their part), a free consultation or trial offer, or a contract that is easy to get out of if they change their mind.
- 7. USP/Credibility** – OK, they're sold on the problem, solution, objection, testimonials, and guarantee. Why YOU? Why not keep shopping around now for a slightly more qualified provider or lower price? We need to tell them why they would be crazy to waste time looking anywhere else and not pick up that phone right now. And it should be done without specifically putting down your competition, although planting seeds of doubt can be effective.

That's our overall objective. Let's begin!

The Sharp Editing Copywriting Questionnaire

Business Name:

Contact Name:

Phone:

How did you hear about us?

Website:

Email address:

Mailing address:

Your responses to this questionnaire will help us create the most effective results for your business. Just as importantly, it will help **YOU** to focus on exactly what you'd like to achieve. Not all of these questions will apply to your situation, but please provide as many detailed answers as you can. Be as specific as possible to guide us in understanding your situation.

If we are polishing, critiquing or rewriting copy that's already written, and if it is published somewhere and publicly accessible, please tell us specifically where to find it. For example, if some of the answers to the questionnaire appear online, refrain from just including a URL (website address). Tell us exactly where on the website this information can be found (or simply copy and paste it).

You may have answered some of these during our initial conversations, but here's a chance to go into more detail to drive the development of your material. Please ensure you save your answers in a separate document. Please send your answers to tom@sharpediting.com **at least one day prior to our discussion**, or upload to your [online project space](#).

Your Project

1. Please describe the specific nature of the project for which you seek assistance. Does it include website content, print collateral, advertising, or branding/naming/slogan development?
2. For a website, do you have a sense of how many pages the site would be? Do you have a proposed site map outlined, or can you list here the various page names you were thinking of including?
3. If this is a website project, will search engine optimization (SEO) be of interest? In other words, how important will it be that clients find you solely through a search engine query, rather than visiting your website because they have already heard of you and just want more information? Are you expecting to build your business with traffic from search engines? (Google, Yahoo!, MSN, etc.)
4. Should we be aware of a pressing deadline that is driving your project? (Being featured in an upcoming publication, a product launch, participation in a marketing event, etc.). Do you already have an expected completion date for our portion of the project?

Your Product or Services

This section will help determine exactly what your customer can expect to experience. While **features and advantages** are important, ultimately we want to convey **benefits**, ideally in the form of an emotion. These might be peace of mind, confidence they have when working with you, or a sense of accomplishment and success.

1. **Features:** A feature is a fact about a product or service, such as "stops spills," "easy to use" or "made in France." Features demonstrate how things are created, delivered and maintained. It's how your product or service works. (Example: prevents wrinkles).
List the key features of your offering here:

2. **Advantages:** these describe WHY it is important that the features exist, why they were designed into the product or service. (Example: makes you appear younger).
Describe the advantages of how your service is offered or designed:

3. **Tangible Benefits:** A benefit is anything that will make life better, easier or more productive by using your service, or by using any of the features and advantages. A benefit, in other words, is what your service or feature does for your clients, and why they should be interested. (example: takes 5 years off your age; a 23% reduction in lines in 30 days).
List the tangible benefits your customer will receive. Use measurements where possible.

4. **Emotional Benefits:** Tangible benefits help your prospective clients justify what is usually an emotional buying decision. This might be the need to prove they are right, the fear of being wrong, not wanting to miss out on a new opportunity or trend, or to feel like they made an intelligent decision. (Example: Feeling confident or sexy; envious friends asking to know your 'secret'.)
What emotions will the customer experience when they have your solution in place?

5. List two short key phrases that describe exactly what you offer, in 20 words or less. (This is about your product or service specifically, and not you, your business or your website.)

6. What exactly will determine a successful outcome for the client? How will they know it has worked?

7. Describe what other products, services or remedies they may have already tried before coming to you, and indicate the likely success of those solutions.

8. List 3 ways that customers could reach the same outcome without using your product/service.

9. List 6 unique and interesting facts you really want customers to know about you and the products or services you provide. It can be anything you want! Let loose, here. You may want to isolate, identify and expand on those facts that make your product the way it is, or that make it different from, or better than, the competition.

10. What's your single, most marketable, unique, competitive edge? This is your essential Unique Selling Proposition (USP). In other words, what is unique about what you offer, or how you offer, package and deliver it? What do you offer that your competition doesn't? And how do you describe the answers in one succinct, persuasive line?

11. If you offer multiple products or services, which one is your "best of the best" (i.e., your most popular, profitable or marketable offering)? If you only offer just one product or service, then what one, single aspect, feature or benefit of your offering truly stands out? What one element truly defines your service's existence and its purpose?

12. Tell us a story about you or your product — something unique, new, different, intriguing or mysterious. And/or what was the story behind your business, company or website? How did you get started and why?

13. How would you respond to these questions?
 - Why this? (product/service)
 - Why now? (versus waiting)
 - Why you? (not another provider of the same product/service)
 - Why them? (what will happen if they DON'T try it)
 - Why this price?

Your Customers

1. Who is your target market? More specifically, who is (or who could be) your "perfect client?" Give us a clear profile and description. Be specific. Supply as much detail as you can in this area, such as:
 - **Demographics** (age, gender, income, education, years in business, etc);
 - **Geographics** (i.e., country, state, city, etc);
 - **Psychographics** (i.e., interests, culture, lifestyle, hobbies, history or experience with others in your profession, etc);
 - **Technographics** (i.e., customer owns PC; technology enthusiast or pessimist; reads emails and surfs the web [how often, how many hours/week]; uses the web for work, pleasure or shopping; has bought online before [if so, what product and from where]; websites they visited, etc).

2. Describe the level of experience customers have with your product or service (beginner, highly knowledgeable, frustrated old-timer, etc.)

3. Is there a specific event or chain of events that caused their problem to arise?

4. What thought process must precede their willingness to look for a solution? And what's the event that happens in their life just before they contact you (what makes them finally pick up the phone)?

5. What frustrations have they already experienced in trying to solve this issue?

6. List at least 6 of the most commonly asked questions about your products or services, as well as the answers you give. Are there any questions you seem to keep answering regularly? What provokes them, or what do you think is not currently addressed (or addressed properly) in your copy, your website, your materials or your emails?

7. List at least 6 of the most common misconceptions about your offerings that your customers have. What are they mostly confused about? List things that people have some difficulty understanding, or those things that, even though you address them in your copy, people can't seem to find them or grasp them properly.

8. What are the 3 specific things your target market seeks, wants to know about or looks for in your product or service?

9. What is your customer's main concern? (Price, delivery, performance, reliability, service, follow-up, quality, efficiency).

10. How do people find you? In other words, how do they learn about what you offer? Why are they seeking you out? What drove them initially to seek you out?

11. What typically motivates your customers to buy or make decisions? (Saving money? Getting ahead in their career? Appearing knowledgeable? Being different? Future security?)

12. What is the main, primary purpose of your copy? (Remember, each page of your website must have only one purpose)? Is it to get people to subscribe? Call? Email? Fill out a form? Refer you? Please be specific here.
13. Is there more than one audience that needs to be addressed in your material? For instance, one person may gather information about a product or service (gatekeeper), while someone else makes the actual buying decision. For large consumer purchases, sometimes a spouse needs to be consulted before purchasing. What applies in your situation?
14. Marketing savvy – are they resistant to marketing claims, do they shy away from typical marketing strategies? What methods would they prefer be used in selling to them?
15. Assuming that a customer has only read your claim of the benefits they will experience, what resistance immediately enters their mind without knowing more? These are the “Yeah, but...” statements to overcome: I can’t afford it; don’t have the time; that’s too extravagant for me; I don’t want to appear weak by asking for help; I’ve heard horror stories about ____ ; etc.

Your Company

Along with your answers to the following, we ask that you supply, if possible, any mission statements, media kits, press releases, prospectuses and all other relevant collateral materials you provide to clients. We want to see what people see, hear what they hear, read what they read, do what they do. We want to experience being your client.

1. In 30 words or less, give us an elevator speech. In other words, name your company, explain who you are and exactly what you do. An elevator speech is a brief, pithy and attention-grabbing introduction of you, your business and your product or service, as well as what it does, why it is unique or how better it is than the competition, that you would tell your prospect during a short "elevator ride."
2. Do you have a business slogan or a phrase that you frequently use that sums up your feelings toward doing business? For example "Just Do It", "Failure is Impossible". "When tragedy knocks, let us answer the door."
3. Describe the current process for attracting a client and fulfilling their needs. Include all terms, both technical and non-technical, available to your client — business and individual clients. Walk us through a client engagement from beginning to end (such as from a visitor first contacting you or visiting your website to enjoying the final outcome. Is there any post-engagement follow-up?
4. How do you structure your pricing? What assurances does a customer have that they are getting their money's worth? This is important as it relates to money, but also to time – once they invest time with you, if they decide to change service providers it could mean a big setback to their endeavors. How do we address these initial concerns (even before they have contacted you)? Do you offer some form of "risk reduction" policy or money back guarantee to put prospects at ease about their buying decision?
5. What specific accomplishments, achievements, accreditations, certifications or affiliations do you possess? For example, are there any reviews of — or was there any coverage in the press about — you, your business or your offerings? Are you a member of a trade or professional organization, society or association? (If so, are they online or can you supply info about these organizations or links to them?)
6. What has been your biggest success story so far? What has been your biggest disappointment? It can be anything: sales, marketing, Internet, publicity, joint ventures, endorsements, clients, projects, results, fraud, academic degrees, funding, unique situations, seminars, honors, gifts, relationships, education, etc... You name it.
7. Please summarize here the types of social proof you will be able to provide (see the description of "Social proof" on the cover page of this questionnaire).

Your Competition

1. Are there any websites, ads, or brochures similar to what you want us to do for you, that you like and want us to emulate? Are there any that you DON'T like and want us to avoid? If so, list all relevant URLs and provide your thoughts and feelings with each one.
2. Do you have any direct competitors or competing websites?
3. Are there any non-competing companies or websites that cater to the same audience you do?
4. In what specific ways are you similar to your competition? Is it easy for your customer to confuse them with you? How? Why?