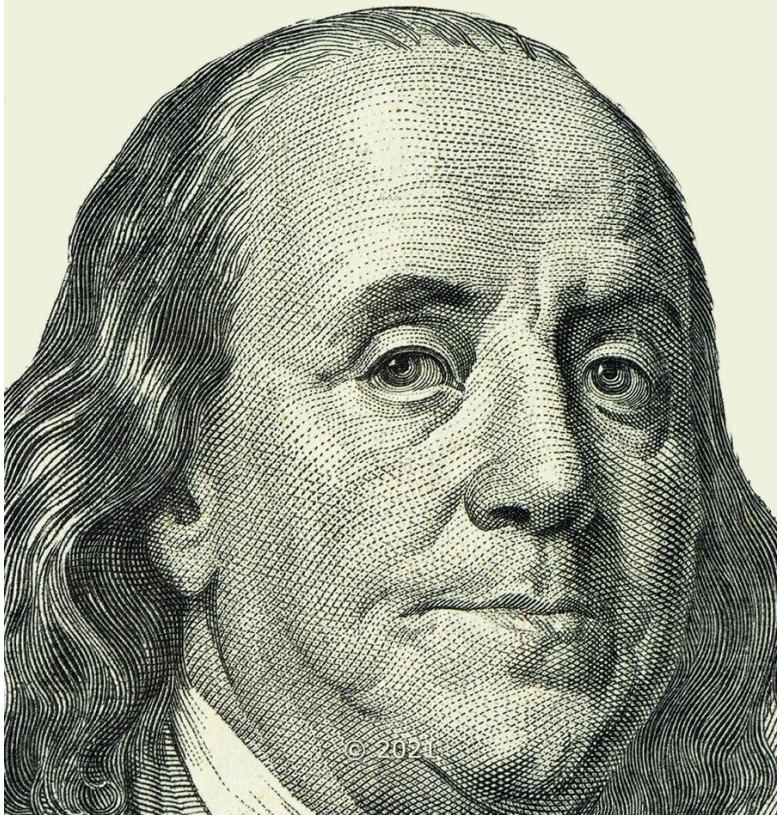


# Spot-On

## Commercial Copy Points That Earned The Benjamins

Compiled by Holland Cooke



I get a lot of work done on airplanes, away from the phone, and fueled by that crankcase coffee they bring. I'm writing this aboard Southwest flight #1365.

When I fly, I smile at the person next to me, but try to appear on-task-enough to avoid small talk, because Question One is usually "So...what do you do?"

There's no short answer. "I do a TV show" becomes a time bandit. And "I'm a media consultant" isn't self-explanatory, and invites drill-down follow-up questions.

I've been tempted to say "I'm a proctologist," but with my luck the person next to me would be one, ready to talk shop. So I've settled on "I write radio commercials," whereupon the other passenger opens a book.

Longer version: I work at the intersection of advertiser-supported broadcasting and the Internet; and a big part of my work is crafting commercial copy for advertisers on my client radio stations.

So my antenna is always up for a catchy phrase that conveys why-to-buy. Examples in this book were culled from scraps of paper I've fished out of sport coat pockets.

## **Emulate success.**

"I'm a consultant. If you steal from me, you've stolen twice."

By doing so, you hitch-hike on expensive research that Madison Avenue has funded, testing and honing and testing and honing messages such as those you're about to read.

If you remember ONE thing you read here, it's this...

## **Start in their world, end in yours.**

Common mistake: The Close comes too early in the script, sometimes right-off-the-top:

"The big Presidents' Day sale is on at Adams Automotive!"

Instead: Start by speaking directly to the consumer's pain. Extra points if you can make it a question:

"There's lots more winter left, so why risk getting stranded with a dead battery?"

## **The Pandemic Dividend**

As our lives were upended, advertising rose to the occasion, relating-to – and offering solutions-for – challenges imposed by the shutdown, and enduring change in The New Normal.

***“New movies, every week, only on Netflix.”***

NFLX stock nearly doubled in two years.

***“It used to be just Friday.  
Now, casual is every day.”***

Men’s Wearhouse

***“Getting help to re-open the economy safely.”***

TV ad to re-elect U.S. Senator Jack Reed, touting how he brought-home-the-bacon:

“He made sure big states didn’t roll-over Rhode Island,” scoring “\$1.2 billion for hospitals and protective gear and testing.”

Remember: It’s only “pork” when the do-re-mi goes elsewhere.

***“The safe way to pay.”***

***“The safe way for your customers to pay.”***

Benefit statements for both parties in the transaction, in network radio spots for “Touch-free payments from PayPal.”

***“Not sorry.”***

TV ad for Reese’s Peanut Butter Cups, as Easter 2021 approached...and many felt like we’d just had a YEAR of Lent.

***“You’ve been home staring at your bad windows and doors.”***

Renewal By Andersen, as home improvement activity surged during the shutdown

***“Sometimes the greatest destinations aren’t far away.”***

TV commercial depicting a happy people enjoying Wayfair.com’s array of home and patio goods

***“The Patio Center at East Texas Brick, making your outdoor space your favorite place.”***

By client radio station KTBB

***“Ready to explore again?”***

Subject line in Email from Amtrak

***“Cover your poker face.”***

Mask-up reminder at Las Vegas airport

## **Tick-Tock**

Even before the pandemic, convenience always clicked.

***“Get in. Get out. Get on with your life.”***

Slogan displayed on “Chili’s To Go” kiosks in airports

***“Jiffy Lube, where you never need an appointment.”***

Elegant in its simplicity, helpful, relevant to impulse buyers

***“The New York Times in a New York minute.”***

Amazon Kindle ad in airline magazine

***“Meds made easy.”***

Capsule.com, “the pharmacy that hand-delivers your prescriptions, the same day, for free -- all from your phone.”

“We deliver your medication whenever you need it. Capsule is always free and your copay will not change.”

“We handle your insurance. All you have to do is schedule delivery.”

***“Find local dentists who take your insurance.”***

ZocDoc.com

***“If you’re terrified of the dentist, or just too busy for multiple visits.”***

DentalRelaxation.com, Boston

***“Never go to a dealership again.”***

Vroom.com Super Bowl commercial.

## **The Magic Words**

"You" and "your." Use `em early and often.

***"You've just been served divorce papers.  
What's the first thing you should do?"***

Attorney Robert Wilson's opening line in radio commercials promoting online FAQ videos

Even if you're happily married, TELL ME that -- when you hear that line as you pull into your parking space -- you're NOT sitting there with the key on Accessories to hear what follows.

***"Less in your hands, more at your fingertips."***

Ad copy when iPad launched

***"We charge you less, so you have more to invest."***

TD Ameritrade

***"Off your phone. Into your home."***

Keepsake app: "In 5 minutes order your photos printed and framed."

***"You have an uncle in the TV business."***

If you live in Southeastern New England, you'd have to have your head examined to buy a television anywhere BUT Pinnacle Discount Center in Warwick RI.

At least that's the clear impression you get when WPRO morning host Gene Valicenti touts the deals -- "including BOGOs!" -- that Pinnacle's "Uncle Bill" has "in-stock, today!"

***“You can’t not watch.”***

Tag to promo for exclusive content on NBC’s Peacock stream

***“Your Only Local News Radio”***

Radio stations I work with, which – unlike robotic competitors – are delivering something unique.

Each of those 5 words is a workhorse.

And now, the LEAST-magic words...



## **Pure Styrofoam**

Avoid commercial clichés and advertiser-centric phrases, such as...

### ***“all-new”***

Say “new,” if it is new, and if newness is a consumer benefit (and say why).

### ***“needs”***

As in: “for all your [product category] needs,” the ultimate “blah, blah, blah.”

Instead? Either:

- a) Say something more-specific, a benefit statement. Or...
- b) Say nothing! Too many commercials are over-written, causing the announcer to rush. Let copy breathe.

### ***“...and much more.”***

Means nothing. Weed-out stuff like this, and you’ll give copy more time to breathe.

## **Welcome to The Gig Economy.**

This is a growth category in the era of Uber, and with technology obsoleting so many jobs. More of us than ever are entrepreneurs, prospects for business-to-business advertising.

***“You supply the ambition. We supply everything else.”***

OfficeMax

***“Get noticed.”***

There are “Tools to take on Small Business” aplenty – “inspiration and solutions to take on tomorrow” – at StaplesConnect.com

***“Make working for home work for you.”***

OfficeFurniture.com, “Your home for your office.”

***“Get your business back with Valpak.”***

Insert in that envelope stuffed fulla retailers’ coupons, which boasts that “53% of Americans have tried a new business because of direct mail.”

## **Pitch parents.**

Nothing trumps a parent's concern; and Mom is the family Secretary of The Treasury.

***“Nearly every student at every grade level is behind due to COVID.”***

Carol Pope, Sylvan Learning Centers

***“Pause your Wi-Fi for family time.”***

Cox Cable/Internet commercial, touting a feature which parents – who make the purchase decision – will appreciate.

***“Go Henry, making every kid good with money.”***

GoHenry.com TV ad

***“If you're good, I'll take you to Gregg's.”***

Gregg's is an iconic restaurant in Rhode Island, famous for its desserts.

In another ad-lib commercial on his WPRO morning show, Gene Valicenti suggested this line to parents, who – Gregg's reports – are now repeating it.

## **“Hmmm!”**

It's a goal we have in radio, to say something that cuts through the listener's mental clutter, prompting a "Hmmm!"

***“Better legs and a better butt, with every step.”***

Reebok Easytone sneakers

***“It's never been easier to sell your car!”***

THERE'S a-world-turned-upside-down, eh? Before the supply chain ground to a halt, garish dealer commercials typically claimed "There's never been a better time to buy a car!"

***“It's none of our business.”***

Internet Search portal DuckDuckGo.com:

"Tired of being tracked online? We can help."

***“When your hand's in the bag, your head's on The Cape.”***

Cape Cod Potato Chips

***“Sips like a Coke. Finishes like coffee.”***

"Is it Coke? Is it Coffee? Yes."

It's "Coca-Cola® with Coffee."

***“We need time to shut our brains off.”***

Staci Wilson, owner, Azalea Pools

***“We care. You'll see.”***

Eyecare Associates of East Texas

***“Give the gift that lasts forever, a tattoo.”***

Commercial for Octopus Ink on my client stations WGVA/WAUB in New York's Finger Lake region

***“I’m going to give you a phone number that I hope you never have to use.”***

First line in commercial I’ve scripted for various auto body shops that advertise on radio stations I work with:

“It’s the number for [name of business]. If you DO get into an accident, this is the number you want in your glove compartment. You’ll want it handy because, suddenly – right there at the crash – tow trucks just...show up. Simply tell ‘em take me to [name of business].”

***“I don’t invest in companies. I invest in the people who run them.”***

Barbara Corcoran from “Shark Tank,” interviewed by WCBS/New York’s Joe Connolly

***“The weather is brought to you by...God. The forecast is a service of Sturgeon Bay Community Church.”***

Title sponsorship copy on my client radio stations there

See a common thread among these examples?

“Word economy...”

## **Less is more.**

And yes, boiling-it-down takes work. In 1657, French mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal wrote "If I Had More Time, I Would Have Written a Shorter Letter."

***"Feel pretty."***

Sign above a cosmetics counter in Bloomingdales, New York

***"Today's the day."***

MasterClass.com, where famous experts explain things

***"Used cars never felt so new."***

Shift.com

***"We help people get jobs."***

Indeed.com

***"Introducing Astro. Keep home closer."***

Amazon's new robot is like the dog you don't have to housebreak. Like a real dog, Astro patrols your home, and will alert you – wherever you are – to intruders.

Among numerous other robo-tasks: You can tell Astro "Bring this sandwich to Sarah."

Astro knows who Sarah is.

Unlike a real dog, it won't just eat the sandwich.

And now, The Six Most-Dreaded Words in Radio Sales...

## “We tried radio. It didn’t work.”

Why it didn’t work? In order of likelihood:

1. **Wrong station.** The prospect’s previous radio buy might have been on the wrong station. Successful reps demonstrate how their station’s audience is the prospect’s prospects.
2. **Insufficient exposure.** No, Rome wasn’t built in a day. As we tell advertisers: “Right now, someone is shopping for what you sell. Are they thinking of you?” Take a lesson from Donald Trump: Repetition works.
3. **Ineffective copy.** Too many radio ads are about the advertiser, instead of the purchaser’s happy outcome. Like setting a talk radio call-in topic, start with those magic words, “you” and “your.” Then explain how what’s being advertised makes the listener’s life better.

To see my video “Writing Results-Producing Radio Commercials,” click “For Sales” at the top of the page at [HollandCooke.com](http://HollandCooke.com)



## **"But WAIT! There's MORE..."**

Here are two more videos, also at "For Sales" atop [HollandCooke.com](http://HollandCooke.com):



Stations I work with make big money doing what radio does best: cutting through mental clutter, with stories told by familiar local on-air personalities.

IN THE NEXT  
TWO DECADES,  
ANOTHER  
**65 MILLION**  
AMERICANS  
WILL HIT THE  
BIG SEVEN OH.

The consumers who spend the most have a lifelong radio listening habit. In "Grey is Gold" you will see what they're buying, and now to pitch it.



## Hearing is believing.

Don't just describe how you will tell the advertiser's story, demonstrate it.

Spec spots are a powerful tool, and under-exploited.

Sure, A-B-C, "Always Be Closing." But top-billing reps' first call is typically an information gathering conversation. And the super-smart reps I work with record that conversation, on smartphones.

Often, we lift sound bites, and write-around them with lean announcer copy which incorporates:

- the prospect's slogan;
- key phrases culled from the prospect's other marketing; AND most-important of all...
- What we heard in that first call interview...

...which entitles the rep to begin that second call by saying "Based on what you told me..." and hitting Play.

In Sales meetings I leave behind a thumb drive of spots I've scripted and/or produced and/or gathered in my travels, enabling station reps to tell a local prospect: "This message produced results for a business just like yours in Delaware" (or wherever else it aired).

Like I said, "I'm a consultant. If you steal from me, you've stolen twice."



Call if I can help you move the needle, 401-330-6868.