

5 Copywriting Rules To Bend When Selling Complex, High-Ticket IT Solutions

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By Tom "Bald Dog" Varjan



[Blog entry](#)

The news broke early 2014. Only seven years and twenty something fatalities later, General Motors decided to recall some 2.6 million Chevrolet Cobalt cars for faulty ignition switches.

GM CEO, Mary Barra desperately tries to isolate herself from the problem, saying that those cars were produced by the old GM, but she is the CEO of the new GM, and the new GM is not responsible for the old GM's actions.

What is even more interesting is that the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the automobile industry's regulatory body in the US has known about the problem, but decided to do nothing and let GM get away with murder.

The NHTSA hasn't had the balls to apply the rules to GM.

I mention this sad incident because just like the car industry, copywriting too has its own long-established rules, and copywriters all around the world do their best to adhere to them.

And the reason for that is that most copywriters all around the world write for non-technical audiences.

While we are all human beings and are more or less the same, there are some minor differences that you have to consider when selling technical solutions in the B2B world.

It means you have to break some long-established rules.

The NHTSA didn't bother to apply the rules to GM most probably because GM bribed NHTSA as the same way as the drug companies bribe the FDA to in order to maintain a hefty supply sick people, so the drug companies can sell more medicine.

But back to copywriting...

One of the reasons for the need to bend copywriting rules is that your solutions get evaluated and buying decisions are influenced by both technical and non-technical people.

And while non-technical folks think along the lines of conventional copywriting wisdom, the technical folks think differently.

They want to see more facts and features, whereas the non-technical folks are more than happy to read about benefits and business value.

In some areas, for instance with white papers, you can address either technical or non-technical people, but on some of your materials, for instance your website, the same copy has to address both groups of buyers.

So, in this article, we discuss some rules that have to be bent for technical audiences and how to bend them.

Bendable Rule #1: Copywriters Don't Need Subject Matter Expertise

Conventional wisdom says that good copywriters can write copy about anything and to any market.

Well, in theory, orthopaedic surgeons can do heart surgery too. After all, they studied the heart in medical school.

When it comes to high-end, complex technology, they still can sell anything to anyone.

First, it's a constant uphill struggle. Second, they will end up selling to the low-end "budget" segment of the market.

When buyers read sales copy, they instantly position sellers as fungible vendors and their salespeople as dreaded peddlers.

Why?

Because copywriters can't speak the same language as buyers.

For instance, let's say, your company sells medical equipment to hospitals.

Imagine that your copywriter starts his copy with using the term "heart attack".

The doctors on the buying panel will roll their eyes, and gesture to the economic buyer: "He's an idiot. Get rid of him!"

Why?

Because doctors never use the term "heart attack". They use "myocardial infarction".

They use doctorese¹ not marketese.

And this is only one example.

I'm a strong believer that if you want to sell your complex, high-end IT products and services, and you want to penetrate new client accounts what you need are not more salespeople, but copy that demonstrates...

- Subject matter expertise in your target market
- Industrial experience
- Good understanding of what you sell
- Target market industry-specific general business savvy

So, if you sell to law firms, your copywriter had better know what "utilisation rate", "dormant client percentage" or "client growth rate" means.

If you sell to retail stores, they should be intimately familiar with terms like "sales per square foot", "sales per hour" or "pilferage".

Yes, the sale is still not fully guaranteed, but now they can speak the same language as the buyers panel members, so they can have intelligent conversations about how to improve the current situation.

Bendable Rule #2: Sell Benefits Not Features

When selling to "normal" people, you emphasise benefits and mention features only as some

¹ The medical version of legalese.

afterthoughts.

When your buyers are technical people, the role changes a bit.

If you sell an Intel Galileo board, based on the Intel Quark SoC X1000 microcontroller, your buyer knows all the benefits microcontrollers offer, and now wants to know whether or not the Galileo fits into his existing control system, where you can emphasise the benefits is the additional professional services into which you envelope your system.

For instance, you maintain a 24-hour technical hotline that clients can call and get help and support on their Galileo systems.

Or, you can dispatch a senior engineer and she can reach any nook and cranny of planet Earth within 36 hours to deal with any Galileo-related problem.

These are valuable benefits both to technical and non-technical buyers.

Bendable Rule #3: Steer Clear Of Jargon

In traditional copywriting the notion is that you have to get rid of all jargon and dumb down your language.

But the reality is that a technical buyer, with a master's degree or a Ph. D., doesn't want to read some grade four drivel.

Unlike most ordinary people, these technical folks are surrounded with reference books and dictionaries. They are not intimidated when they have to look something up.

Technical people love jargon, because that marks their territory and keeps losers out.

You have to know that many technical people nurture the notion that the only reason why others are non-technical people is because they don't have the brains to become technical people.

Now the funny thing is that this notion comes from people who haven't achieved much as technical people. Highly accomplished technical people don't look down on non-technical people.

And here I also want to mention that when I write copy, I use rather more jargon than less.

Technical people love reading the kind of copy that non-technical people can't understand.

Bendable Rule #4: Careful With Copy Enhancements

You may have seen in B2C copy that copywriters love using all sorts of copy enhancements, like big, "screaming" headlines in red letters, yellow highlighting and other enhancements.

Don't do that to technical buyers. They will bin your copy before you could say Jemima Puddle Duck.

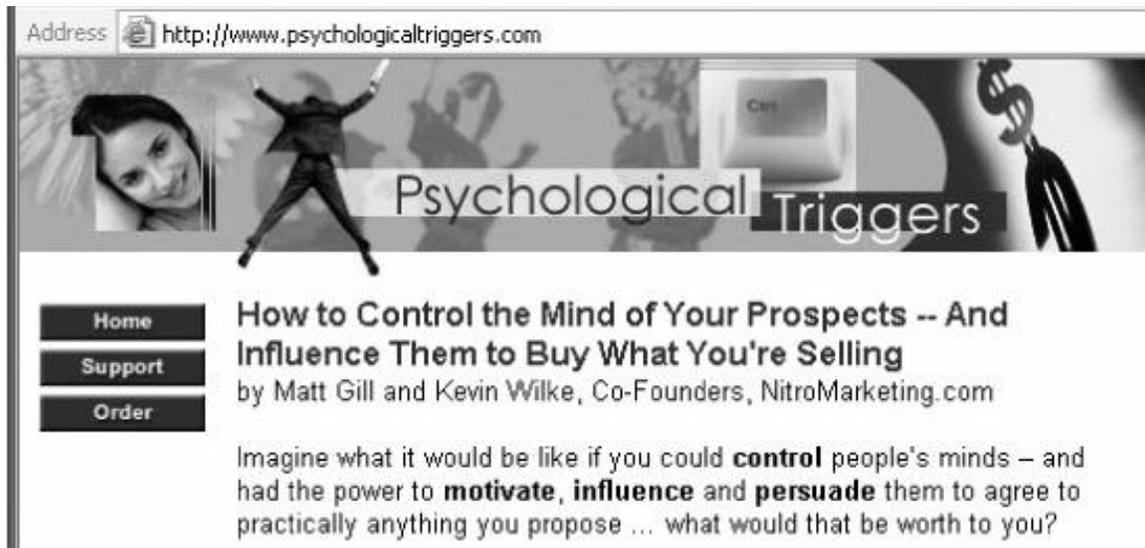
It's not just that the tone of your copy has to be low-key, but its look as well.

No matter how low-key the tone of your copy, if the appearance screams.

Actually this is one of the main problems that IT companies are facing when they hire B2C

copywriters to write their B2B copy.

In the B2C world a certain level of hype is acceptable, but in the B2B world, you have to be very careful.



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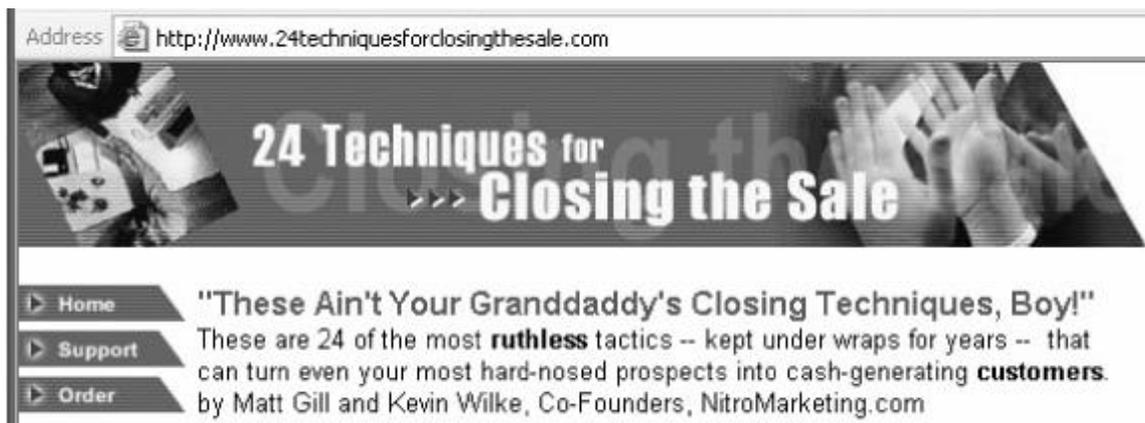
- Home
- Support
- Order

How to Control the Mind of Your Prospects -- And Influence Them to Buy What You're Selling
by Matt Gill and Kevin Wilke, Co-Founders, NitroMarketing.com

Imagine what it would be like if you could **control** people's minds – and had the power to **motivate**, **influence** and **persuade** them to agree to practically anything you propose ... what would that be worth to you?

Do you really want to be mind-controlled by some commission-hungry peddler?

Or...



Address  <http://www.24techniquesforclosingthesale.com>

 24 Techniques for Closing the Sale

- Home
- Support
- Order

"These Ain't Your Granddaddy's Closing Techniques, Boy!"
These are 24 of the most **ruthless** tactics -- kept under wraps for years -- that can turn even your most hard-nosed prospects into cash-generating **customers**.
by Matt Gill and Kevin Wilke, Co-Founders, NitroMarketing.com

Technical buyers have very refined bullshit detectors, and they don't take it well when sellers try to get ruthless on them and manipulate them.

The problem is that even if you work with a good B2B copywriter who knows how far she can push readers, your salespeople may be just a touch too aggressive, and while your copy works, your salespeople may blow the sales at the end of the sales process.

This is especially bad at companies that employ salespeople on straight commission, because only the bottom of the profession is willing to work on a straight commission.

Although in my experience, most IT companies that have salespeople on straight commission don't even bother to have good copy, so there is a chance they get their copy written by some "writers" on Elance from India or Zululand.

Bendable Rule #5: Sell Feelings Not Facts

Conventional copywriting wisdom says that that you have to invoke warm and fuzzy feelings in your buyers, and then as a result of knowing, liking and trusting you, they buy from you.

They may know you. They may like you. But they can't trust you because you can't present factual information only warm and fuzzy feelings.

Granted, most economic buyers are not technical people. But they surround themselves with technical people, and usually heed their advice as to which sellers to hold and which ones to fold. And if the technical folks don't like your presentation, they beckon you to leave.

When I was a technical buyer during my engineering years and found salespeople's presentation confusing, I always recommended buyers to move on.

Imagine that you have some former B2C salespeople. They try to dazzle buyers with feelings through endless emotional hot button pounding.

Yes, economic buyers may be "normal" emotional human beings, but the technical people who advise them are pretty left-brained, and they don't respond well to "emotional irritation".

They hate the typical B2C sales tricks like scarcity or artificial deadlines.

But the problem is that if you stay on pure technical facts too long, buyers may just relegate you to technical people. This is fine and dandy, but technical people are not authorised to make decisions.

So, you end up presenting to technical people and then the technical people carry your message to the real buyers, because once you're relegated to technical people, you will never meet real buyers.

You get barred from entering the boardroom and get stuck in the server room.

The other consideration is that technical buyers don't make instant decisions. They love playing out multiple scenarios between meetings, and they don't tolerate to be rushed.

Rushing for the close can easily cost you the sale.

Since most technical people look down on sales and marketing, they regard themselves as resistant to flimflam activities like marketing and look down on people who practise such despicable professions.

This is why, while technical people are involved in the sales process, you have to make sure, you don't get relegated to them.

And this is where the art comes in.

Technical buyers are interested in "server room" features. From the features they can conclude what they can achieve.

Economic buyers are interested in "boardroom" benefits, like increased profits, increased talent retention, increased brand loyalty, reduced client attrition, etc.

In your materials, use process visuals and stay away from silly pictures that you typically find in

advertising pieces.

Use plenty of references and footnotes in your materials to demonstrate that the piece of information you've just written is not out of thin air, but it's credible.

And stay low-key.

Many years ago, then British prime minister, Margaret Thatcher said...

"Being powerful is like being a lady. If you have to tell people you are, you aren't."

You don't need flash, glitz and glamour to explain your goodies. Yes, dress them up nicely, but you don't have to go overboard. Leave the bling to gangsta rappers and the 70s' ageing disco stars and glam rock veterans.

On Summary

So, when you're writing to technical audiences,

Your copywriter had better have subject matter expertise. If she has industrial experience in her technical domain, that's even better. But at the moment there are only a very few of us with significant industrial experience.

Write equally both about features and benefits. Buyers want to know the benefits, but technical influencers want to know how things work.

Use the right amount of jargon to demonstrate that you're a peer to the buyer.

Stay away from copy enhancements that are commonly used in the B2C world, including yellow highlighting, big read, "screaming" headlines and all sorts of retarded adjectives, like "amazing", "cutting edge", "one-stop shop", "robust". They can only undermine your credibility.

Sell facts not feelings. Yes, you need some feelings, but make sure your copy doesn't turn into a group hug.

Now look at some of your crucial copy, especially on your website and your leave-behind pieces. How could you apply these five rule-bendings to them?

In the meantime, don't sell harder. Market smarter and your business will be better off for it.

[With victory on high...](#)



Tom "Bald Dog" Varjan

<http://www.varjan.com>

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