



David Jenyns has hunted down the greatest minds in various industries.



- Internet Marketing
- Web 2.0
- Personal Development
- Trading
- Real Estate
- SEO

And he's asking them the questions
YOU want answered...



Name: John Carlton

Industry: Internet Marketing

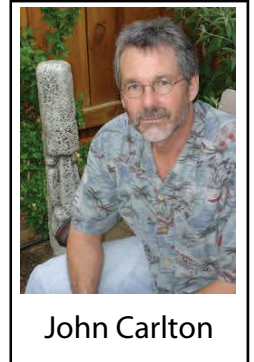
Website: www.john-carlton.com

Product: [Simple Writing System](#)

John Carlton's Bio: John Carlton is one of the highest paid freelance copywriters today. It is a status he earned after more than 20 years of being in the copywriting and marketing industry. He is the guy who the top Internet marketers go to when they want great copy for their websites, ads, email campaigns, sales letters, product launches, and more.

John Carlton refers to himself as "the most ripped-off writer on the Web", and no one on the inside of the online business world disagrees.

Interview Transcript Below.



John Carlton

David Jenyns: Hi guys David Jenyns here from www.podcastinterviews.com. I'm excited today, I have lined up a fantastic interview with a copywriting legend. He's pretty much taught anyone who knows anything about copywriting who is big in the internet marketing space. He's worked with Rich Schefren, Eben Pagan, Frank Kern, Mike Filsaime, that's just to name a few. He's worked with some of the greats, some of the guys who started off in direct mail and evolved. We're talking Jay Abraham and Gary Halbert. He's worked with them for years.

I think what I like most about John Carlton, and that's who we'll be talking to today, is he really earned his stripes writing copy back in the day for some of the big boys, some of the big companies. So it's just not that he's only worked in the online space. He's done a whole host of things and I'm sure we'll dig into that sort of thing.

When I first got introduced to John Carlton's work was quite a few years back. I think the first time I actually heard him speak live was at Ed and Frank's seminar here in Melbourne, and that was a good number of years ago. When you see someone in person, it really gives you an opportunity to see their material shine through. That is what I saw with John Carlton. He wasn't faking it; he lives and breathes this type of thing.

I'd just like to welcome you to the call John.

John Carlton: Thanks Dave, I'm glad to be here. Sorry for making you get up so early in the morning.

David Jenyns: No, I'm getting used to these early starts. I know we've only got a short time today, so I'm going to dig straight into it, no fluffing about.

John Carlton: Ok.

David Jenyns: Your expertise obviously is in copywriting, and I think one of your skills is interweaving storytelling into the way that you do copywriting and I would be keen to get your thoughts on why you actually do that and how it works in the whole selling process.



John Carlton: Ok, Dave. First of all just to give people a basic idea of where I came from, I am not a natural salesman. I was one of the original slackers in the world. I didn't get my act together until I was thirty-three years old. I was lost, I was broke, I was literally sleeping on someone's couch, I was homeless. I'd lost my girlfriend, my job and my place to live all within a two month period and I was a lost boy. I just made the decision that I'd better get busy making a place for myself in the world or I was going to be a bum for the rest of my life.

So I didn't have an early start, I had no advantages, I did this all on my own because there were no courses back then. We're talking about the early 1980s, back when you guys were still gleams in your parents' eye. I had a lot of job experience because I kept getting fired from every job I had. The entrepreneurial world of becoming a freelance copywriter working with a number of different clients appealed to me on multiple levels, not the least of which was the fact that I couldn't work for anybody. I had a problem with authority, I didn't do well wearing a tie, having to show up somewhere at eight o'clock and having to work til five.

So I had an early start and I've been doing this for a long time. As you mentioned I've worked with some of the biggest clients out there. I've written controls for some of the biggest mailers in the world. By mailer I mean people who use direct mail which is still king by the way in most of the direct response world, although the online world is catching up quickly.

So I bring an old school sensibility here and by old school I mean that when I start figuring out how to make advertising work offline. By the way I wrote some of the first infomercials on TV; I've written for radio, I've written for everything. When the web came around, I realized the web was just another vehicle for spreading a sales message to a wider audience. So I got online in a hurry as soon as I realized the potential there.

Writing for the web is no different, essentially, than writing for anything else, for any other medium, except for the advantages of technology. We can talk about that later if you want, but basically being able to use video and being able to use audio and animation and all kinds of things is great and makes for a very vibrant multi sensory experience when you're trying to get your sales message across to somebody.

The basic salesmanship hasn't changed since the first caveman traded up to a cave with a better view for a slab of mastodon beef. My big discovery early on was that the real secret to being able to sell things, not to get people excited about something, not to just start a conversation, not to just become a moderately good person at doing so, but to be able to sell, to be able to close the deal, to be able to get people so excited that they say, hey, what you have, that's exactly what I want. You're the guy I want to deal with and you know what, you're right, I'm going to buy this right now.

To get to that point required hanging out with some of these, what I call old school salesmen. That's why I started getting really interested in this. The things that worked long ago, it worked while you were growing up, it worked pre web, is working now on the web. These are the kinds of things where you begin a sales conversation where you just start talking about things and get people to understand that what you have is really something that can change their life.

When we talk about products that change people's lives, if you're building a playhouse for your daughter out in the backyard and you're out of nails and you need nails, and I have the nails you



John Carlton (continued): want, then your life has been put on hold, at a very mild level. It's not super life changing but it has changed your life. You wanted to get the thing done, you can't get it done, you're stuck. I have the nails. It's my job to make you understand I have the nails, it's a good deal, let's get that thing done. That's one level.

Another level is, if I have a dire health emergency or problem and you have some answers about how to take care of it, what to do, all of those things, that is a very urgent problem, that's very high on the trauma scale. The conversation that you have to have to let people know about what you offer, whether it's a product, a service, whether it's information, whatever it is, you have to begin a conversation that has the goal of establishing yourself as the person they want to deal with, as establishing that what you have will fix the problem, that it is a solution, that it is what your prospect is looking for, and you've got to be able to close the deal. You have to make them understand that. You are the guy to deal with and they should do this now.

The best way to have this conversation, I just went around the block to answer your question, we are naturally wired to listen to stories. Before writing was invented, back in Sumeria five thousand years ago, where they stuck sticks into clay tablets and started creating alphabets, before then and even during the early days, the only way we had to communicate was by telling stories.

This was to spread information, to keep the history of the tribe alive, to be able to tell Bob who lives on the other side of the forest something you know that you'd like him to know and you've never met Bob. The story you're going to tell Bob is interesting to the guy who is going to tell Bob, he remembers the story. He tells Bob the story. Now he gets the story. Bob tells his kids and they tell their kids etc.

Our brain is actually wired for listening to stories. Now that doesn't mean any old story is going to work. Most of us in the modern age have lost the ability to tell stories. I was pretty lucky, Dave, I grew up in a story telling family.

I was the youngest by ten years and that meant when I was little, I learned very quickly that I was not going to hold the attention of the table about what happened in the sandbox that day if I didn't get a hook going and tell a good story. They would look at me and interrupt and go on with their own stories. They didn't want to hear what a kid had to say.

That stuck with me and I've always been interested in storytelling. So when I got into the marketing side of life, and I became a real entrepreneur and I learned that the best salesmen that I would meet or read about or find out about all told stories. So it all made perfect sense. So the storytelling needs to be short, sizzling and stay within the pocket of your listeners. This is not you telling a story, this is you being the conduit. You are the translator of the message. So the story you tell is not about you, it's about what is going on in the head of your prospect when you're trying to sell something.

So the story you tell, now that you know this and you start reading some really good things online, you start seeing some videos that are really good and hold your attention, start thinking critically about that. Go ahead and listen to it but stop yourself and say, wait, why am I interested in what this guy is saying or writing? Why is this hooking me? When you start looking at it critically like that, in almost all cases he will be reading a tale for you. And it is like you're thinking, what happens next, oh, ok and he's taking you down a path.



John Carlton (continued): Of course if what he has is something I want but I'm not quite ready to buy it, then that story involves all the things I need to hear in order for me to make an intelligent decision that, you know what, yes, I do want this, I want it now and he's the guy I want to get it from. Does that make sense David?

David Jenyns: Yes, I think you hit the nail on the head. I'm curious though, you talked almost about weaving this hypnotic story and that's effectively what you're doing. You might not have even noticed it, but at the start of the call, you even opened up by telling your own story and I think that drew the listeners in. It's a really good way to draw people in.

The elements that make up that story, I know there is that classic old formula you hear, the AIDA formula, the Attention, Interest, Desire and Action. When building those hypnotic stories, what are the actual elements, the building blocks for that?

John Carlton: I don't hear that AIDA formula much anymore, but that was one of the first ones I learned. I believe it was John Caples who wrote back mostly in the 40s and 50s. I may be wrong there, but it's a very old thing. It's a basic formula and it's one of the first formulas that I use. Just to repeat what you said, the letters are AIDA and that stands for Attention, you have to get their attention. In most ads, that means the headline or whatever comes first and when I talk about hooks or grabbing their attention, that's what we're talking about, the attention.

Then Interest, you must build interest immediately. The formula AIDA or Aida as we call it, is mostly about the first half screen page if you're writing a letter or the first minute if you're doing a video sales letter. So you're grabbing attention. You're not sharing information, you're grabbing attention, you're finding some common ground or some curiosity value or something that is going to make the listener say, what? He's going to stop and hopefully he's going to drop whatever else he's doing, he's going to stop multi tasking and he's going to pay attention to you. That is very, very important.

By the way, just as a side tangent there, most video watching, movie watching, most reading, reading magazines, even reading books, that is a passive behaviour. It's like information goes in, settles in your brain for a short time and then leaves. You don't have a lot of retention, there's not a lot going on. As a marketer, you need to take your prospect out of that passive state and get him into an active state. Like the last letter in the AIDA formula, you're going to ask for action.

When you watch a movie, the movie doesn't ask for action. It's entertaining you, you get to veg out. When you're reading a book or magazine, it's not asking you for action. When you're reading an ad or watching a video that is actually trying to get you to click on a link or make a decision, you have to be in an active state.

Let's go back to that AIDA. The first letter is Attention. Next is Interest. You have to build the interest. That is the first word out of your mouth after you've got somebody's attention. Just for argument's sake, let's say I have a product for bowlers. You guys have tenpin bowling over there. Let's say you have a product for bowlers. Let's say it is an information product. To get attention, you might do something as simple as, hey bowlers, how would you like to, in tenpin bowling it is to roll a 300 game or get a 200 average.



'Hey bowlers' is getting attention because if I'm a bowler and I'm passionate about bowling, then that perks me up. So it could be something as simple as that. That's getting attention. Now building interest, then you would say something like, hey bowlers, how would you like to add fifty pins to your average in three days without changing the way you bowl or without going through any painful body re education process, just using a couple of secrets from a professional who won the bowling tournament three years in a row and has since been secretly teaching other professional bowlers these things for thousands and thousands of dollars...

That would be building interest. That would be finding out what the guy is passionate about, he is a bowler. All bowlers want to get a higher average, so you start getting into it. That would be the attention and the interest. All that takes place in the first couple of sentences that you're laying out there.

The third letter is D and that is Desire. By building desire, that's where you really start kicking in the salesmanship. You start saying, how would you like to have this? You can have this tomorrow.

Here's what you'll get when you buy this product. I'll show you the secret of doing blah...I'll show you six different ways you'll solve the problem of blah, blah, blah for this and that. You start making a storyline in my head where I am not now the blundering bowler who is lucky to get a 150 game and I'm embarrassed to go out and I always lose bets with my buddies and things like that.

I am now envisioning this pretty picture in my head of me being the guy who wins all the money on the bets, who is the guy that other people whisper about behind my back when I walk in, hey, here's that guy who bowled that 280 the other day, blah, blah, blah. So that is building the desire.

Finally the A we already talked about, is the Action. That is what separates the men from the boys, the losers from the winners, the all-so-rans from the spectacular successes. Action, actually to get people to act. Everybody knows this. Now there is so much advertising out there, there are so many sales messages swirling around online, especially if you're in marketing and you're on anybody's email list or you're paying attention to social media, there are all these things that come out.

These people are saying, you'll click here to get the secret or make sure you get in on this, it's only going to be available for an hour and a half on Friday and all these launch sequence things. The reason those things last, and as much as they sometimes irritate people, if you understand why marketers do that, you feel a little less angry about the fact that there's so much of it because they're trying to get you to act. They are trying to get you from this passive state where you are listening to a story and maybe you are all full of desire, we call this getting someone up on the fence. You've got to knock them off the fence.

They can't be saying, well, this is a pretty good product, someday maybe down the road when I've got nothing else to do, maybe I will even buy that. That's something I really want to do. It's easy to get them to that state. You have to get them through that state and into that state, where you know what, I'm clicking right now. You are absolutely right. I'm buying this right now and let's get





John Carlton (continued): going. I can't wait to get this going right now. That is the Act thing. That is the AIDA more thoroughly explained.

David Jenyns: Yes, and I think what you've described there is a really good basic building block for someone to start on their journey to become a copywriter. I think it is a skill everybody needs to learn if they're in business, even in life. That storytelling and that salesmanship just flows through everything you do because really at the core of it it's just persuasion and persuading people to take the right action or the action that is in line with what you want them to take.

To learn that skill, we went over that formula there, and it just rolled off the tongue for you and I know you've had a lot of experience. There was a time when you went through the trashy novel writing as well. What does it take to get to the point? I don't know if everybody is going to spend the 10,000 hours to get to that tipping point, but what does it take to become a good copywriter?

John Carlton: Well, there are a couple of different ways to do it. I have a saying that I would rather take a near illiterate but street wise salesman and turn him into a guy who creates ads, I'd rather do that than take somebody with a PhD in English literature and try to turn them into a salesman.

That is especially with the advent of video. The reason that video newsletters are so hot right now isn't because there is anything magic about video. It's merely that it is a multi sensory experience for the listener. You hear a voice, you can watch the scroll as it goes down, you can read analysts at the same time and there is a lot of retention value in that.

But the advantage of video of course is the technology. It used to be hard, you had to wait for a video to load. It's still hard for a number of people, but we're very close to that situation where video is just a no-brainer now. It loads fast, you click on it and it gets going. That's why video is hot right now because most people have the band width to be able to handle it.

The advantage to people who are afraid of the writing part of copywriting, and that is why I don't even use the word copywriting anymore David, I use sales message, creating a sales message. It takes the heat off the idea that somebody says, I can't write, I hated writing at school, I'm bad at it, therefore I'll never do this. Well, it's nonsense. At the very worst, you can record what you want to say. If you know how to sell it face to face, then you can record that and have somebody transcribe it. Take out the ums and ahs and you've got a pretty good ad right there.

Especially with video now, you can just get on video. If you can sell face to face to one person, you can sell face to face now on video to everyone in the world at the same time online. The idea of copywriting, while it scares people, it's more salesmanship than anything else.

All of us have an inner salesman. He exists, he is in there. For most people he is fast asleep and will remain asleep for their entire lives. However, if you're married, you sold someone on marrying you. Even if you have a really good girlfriend or boyfriend, you're very happy, you've been together for a while, you sold them on going out with you, you sold them on going out on a second date, you sold them on moving in with you, whatever situation you're in.

If you've gone through an interview and got a job, then you sold yourself at that job. So we bring out this inner salesman at certain times, but he usually goes right back to sleep and we don't even realize what happened. We just wing it. Salesmen, conscious salesmen, who understand what



John Carlton (continued): they're doing and understand that persuasion isn't just a word but it is really a communication device, salesmen lead better lives, Dave. They are more conscious than the average person out there. They understand human behaviour because they have to and of course they see the world as it is.

Most people see the world as they wish it was or they think it should be. So they wander around being constantly upset at the way things are going because it doesn't make sense to them. They're constantly at odds with the way things turn out and a salesman just stops that. He isn't trying to change people's behaviour, he is trying to understand people's behaviour and realizes the persuasive nature of being able to sell something.

Salesmanship has a bad name and rightly so. There are a lot of scams out there and a lot of people use their salesmanship chops in a psychopathic way to sell something that people don't need. That doesn't mean that the thing they do isn't the right thing to do.

I tell people, Dave, when I speak at seminars, I always ask people to raise their hand if they're selling an unethical product or scam. Of course everyone chuckles and no one raises their hand and I say, I'm deadly serious about this. If you're selling an unethical product, then I hope you die and rot in hell, because you're making it really rough for the rest of us, who have good things, really good, solid products. We really care about people and advertising or marketing is the way we get the word out.

There's nothing mysterious about this. You don't know, Dave, that I exist. You feel you need help creating sales messages. You're looking around for help and you don't know I exist and I'm sitting here with all this help that I can offer, this advice, these courses I have, all these things that are meant to shortcut it, all the experience that I brought to everything that I offer.

If you don't know I'm out there, you may never find out and you may go the rest of your life without realizing what a great opportunity it would have been to meet me. If you just hear about me and I don't do everything I can do to make sure you realize that I am the guy you should be dealing with, that what I have really can change your life, and this is an opportunity right now that you can jump on, if I don't do everything I can to make you aware of that, then shame on me. I am not a good marketer if I don't do that. I will not be a marketer for very long anyway because I won't survive in this noisy, crowded marketplace of the global online market that's out there.

It's not necessarily the noisiest guy that's going to win, it's going to be the guy who understands salesmanship. It doesn't mean you shout louder. It means you have a real conversation with people and you let them know what they need to know, again to understand you're the guy they should be dealing with because you have the experience, you're a nice guy, you're fun, it's a great world to be in and you're hip and what you have really is what they need. You're going to be there to watch their back, all these things that you know, your prospect doesn't know and it's your job to make him aware of that.

So when we get back to salesmanship, it's all about being able to communicate the way that most people don't know how to communicate. That word influence is huge. You mentioned the tipping point. I think you were referring to Gradwell's book *The Tipping Point* where he talked about the 10,000 hours to become an expert. You don't have to be an expert at this to make it work. If you can tell any bit of a story, if you've ever told the story about the last time you were on a cruise ship,



John Carlton (continued): and it tipped over or pirates tried to rob it and you held the attention of a room for three minutes, then you've got the beginnings of being able to weave a story about what you offer, to be able to get the attention and build the interest and desire of someone listening to you.

If you learn a few more tricks, you're going to be able to weave that story in a way that leaves them gasping for breath and ready to punch the button and do whatever it is you want them to do or sign or opt in or click to buy or get the free report or whatever. You don't have to be an expert.

However, you do have to understand something which is probably the primary directive for anyone who wants to be a successful marketer. You need to understand the basics of salesmanship. If you don't, a lot of people out there just think, I'll job out all the creation of my sales messages. I'll outsource it, I'll find some writer on Elance for \$50 to write it or I'll get my niece who is majoring in English in high school, she knows how to write. You think it is just something that goes out there. You're going to be out of business really soon because that doesn't work.

However, if you take the next step and hire a really expensive writer, to do all these things, to write your video scripts, to write your sales letters and all those things, you're only going to be as good as what he creates for you. What is that old saying, you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day, teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.

If you go out and buy expensive freelance copywriting services, you are essentially having someone hand you the fish. You don't know if it is any good or not until it works. If it works, you don't know why it works. If it doesn't work, you don't know why it didn't work. You don't know if what this expensive writer has turned in is any good or not. You're just operating entirely on faith. That is just really a poor way to conduct yourself in business.

You should at least understand salesmanship and how to tell a story, how to have a conversation with somebody who is a little bit interested in what you have, to be able to let them know that what you have is what they want etc. Have that conversation. You don't need to do the actual writing, but if you don't know what a good ad looks like, if you don't know what a good video script reads like, if you don't know what the elements are that need to go into these things, then you're just a babe in the woods.

You might have a great organization. You may have a big staff, you may own the building you're operating out of. You may have the warehouse lined up. You may have the best product in the world. You can't sell it, you're still going to die a slow, agonizing death.

Most of the top marketers online, the brand names that you hear out there, they're one man bands. They maybe have an assistant, maybe a staff, they outsource a lot of things. All they need is a pencil and paper really, although they can work on computer, or a recorder. They just need some way to translate their salesmanship into a mass produced vehicle, a website, a video, a mailed letter, an email, that is all they need. You can take away everything else and a lot of entrepreneurs do run into problems, not everything goes swimmingly for everybody all the time.

You talk to anybody who's been around for a while, who's been through multiple businesses who is a successful entrepreneur You can take everything away from him, all of his money, all of his



John Carlton (continued): staff, all of his equipment, his place to live, everything and leave him naked in a cornfield in Brisbane. What do they grow in Brisbane?

David Jenyns: Sugar cane.

John Carlton: You leave him naked at Wolf Creek. If he can just make it back to civilization, his ability to sell, his ability to actually create a message that lets people know he's the guy they should be dealing with, what he has is what they need, that they should buy right now, that's what you need. You can start rebuilding immediately. Everything else is nonsense. Everything else is just icing on the cake. Knowing how to sell and all the elements that go into that, and you don't need to be an expert. You just need to understand the process.

That's why I became a guru. I wanted to start sharing these things. I was a very successful freelancer, one of the highest paid freelancers out there. I walked away from all that to teach because, I know it sounds rubbish, but it's true. I get more out of teaching than I do out of anything else. Every other writer that I've dealt with, I've talked into becoming a teacher too. They say the same thing, we really like it, we do it, we do it well, it's a lot of fun.

I get to see the aha lights go off in people's eyes as they figure this out and go off into the world to become totally independent, not sort of independent. They know how to get the websites up, they have membership sites, they have a product, now all they need to do is to sell it, so let's go find somebody with the magic box who knows the voodoo of how to sell.

Forget that, learn how to sell first, everything else is easy. All of those things are easy, creating products, getting online, all the technology, all of those things are easy. Actually learning how to sell is easy, but most people don't approach it, they think it is voodoo, they get all screwed up in their head about how it is.

It's really the simplest thing there is and salesmen lead better lives. You are more aware, you are totally conscious, you understand how things work, you see the world as it is, not as you think it should be or some fantasy. You can actually get what you want. It's the other side of the goal setting. You're not just dreaming and setting goals, you're actually implementing actions to go get the goals.



That was the big thing for me, Dave, by the way, when I turned thirty-three. The big realization I had was reading Think and Grow Rich by Napoleon Hill. The lights went off in my head. Up to that point I didn't think I could want or desire anything and then go and get it. It was just not in my brain, the thought was not even hovering around the edges of my thought patterns. The idea that I could now actually want something, that I could desire something, make a plan to go get it and then implement that plan and then go get it, that is what real goal setting is all about. That blew my mind.

Within months I was off to the races. That was the big realization I had. So once you understand how these things work, part of implementing, part of making your goals come true, is to become a conscious, good salesman who understands how to weave a story that influences people because you're going to help people. If they don't know you exist, if they don't know you have the best product or service out there, they're not going to figure it out on their own. They're going to go to your competitor or they're going to go somewhere else, or they're not even going to get involved in these things.



John Carlton (continued): Shame on you if you think that you're going to build a better mouse-trap and the world will somehow magically beat a path to your door. It's not going to happen, especially in this noisy, crowded online world.

David Jenyns: Wow, I'm dumbfounded. You just got on that roll right then. As you were telling that story just then, there were those hypnotic story elements that were all interwoven. That's clearly someone who is a master of their craft. It takes years to develop and get to that skill. I'm imagining when you first start out, having those simple formulas and structures for writing the story might be a good way to start. I'm imagining over the years you start to develop different ways of telling the same story.

For someone who's just starting to get their feet wet in copywriting, is the idea of trying to get one basic story structure down that you like and then apply that throughout what you do, or does that become stale? You talk about not becoming an expert. To get to where you are now, everything we talked about now, you embedded so much into all those different layers, you were just selling on multiple layers. It's probably even at a subconscious level. But for someone to do that who is just coming in, you're in a different league.

John Carlton: Actually, I'm not. I started out really clueless. I didn't know how to sell, I didn't understand a lot of things. I had a tiny little experience in an art department in a computer supply catalogue. I was actually living in Silicon Valley in the late seventies, but I wasn't writing. I was creating the art for the catalogue that was being mailed out. I met a copywriter and I started getting interested in it. It wasn't a head start, I had a little bit of an idea of what was going on. I thought, I can do that.

I'd never met a freelancer, I'd only met some copywriters who had been hired and worked within a company. I knew freelancers existed and I thought, I could do that. I could work out of my house and this was where I was at that point in my life. I didn't have any resources or anything.

What I did, Dave, I started researching things as much as I could, hanging out with old school salesmen. I was living in Los Angeles at the time, I'd moved from Silicon Valley down to Los Angeles. There was a thriving freelance market down there, so I started meeting some freelancers. I'd just started risking things and I just started beating down doors and just made that happen.

You don't have to do that. People doing that now don't have to do that. What I did back then was, every time I had a success, I wrote it down. I kept thorough notes through my entire career. I still keep notes, that is what my blog is. It's six years worth of notes. I wrote a newsletter for five years before that. This is all about sharing my notes. My life is my career.

What is interesting about this is, very early on, those early notes I took became a check list that I would go through much like AIDA. I used that for a while. Very quickly I started adding to it and massaging it around. I came up with this seventeen point check list that I started referring to. It helped me understand what I needed to say, who I was talking to, what was the position that I or my client or the ad was going to be in. It had all the elements that I had to do to make sure I had covered all the points that I knew, that were going to make this sales message as powerful as possible.



John Carlton (continued): What's interesting is, I mentioned I came from a storytelling family so I needed to do that. That doesn't mean that it immediately translated. I was not an expert storyteller back then, especially trying to translate sales messages into stories. My career started before NLP was started, so while I have friends who were conversant in NLP, I've never studied NLP. I understand all about thrown anchors and all those things because I hang out with these guys.

I have never been thoroughly impressed with that and I never tried to do trickery or anything in this. One of the advantages you have as a marketer is, if you want to get into weaving stories that sell, which by the way is the only way you will become really successful, one of the big advantages you have is not some 10,000 hours you'll be able to spend with master mentors who take you to a secret hill somewhere in Tibet and teach you how to do these magic things.

No, it's having a simple checklist like I had, which is the essence of the Simple Writing System. Just a simple checklist to watch your back and then bring the passion that you have for what's going on, for whatever your product is, whatever you're into and realize whatever you're doing, you really are changing lives.

If the person you're talking to is a prospect for what you have, then his life is either on hold, he's got some level of trauma, he is in need. His life is incomplete to some level, it might be a low level, it might be a high level, without what you have. He's looking for something. He's either going to get it from you or he's going to get it from someone else or he's going to wander off and do something else.

At the point that you are in front of him, either your website is in front of him, your video, your email, your letter, whatever is in front of him, at that point the advantage that you bring to the table if you know just a few things that you need to cover, is your passion. It is your ability to say, you know what, here's what happened to me, or here's my tale and blah, blah, blah.

People get confused. In that situation, the key point here is that you care about what you offer and it's a legitimate, ethical, good product. The person you're talking to is in your target market. You don't care if he's not. If you're selling nails, for example, and he doesn't need nails, then no matter how good your story is, it's not going to have any effect on the guy. If the guy needs nails to finish a project, he may be looking at a number of different possibilities for getting those nails and you're one of many. As you tell your story, his need and your offer coincide. Whether you close the deal or not doesn't matter.

Let's make it different. Let's say I'm a business owner, a brick and mortar business owner in downtown Melbourne. I sell meat pies. I need to get online because my competitors are actually catering meat pies to places outside Melbourne and I'm losing out big time on this, so I need to get online. I haven't got a clue how to get online. You can tell me how to get online, how to get my business going, how to do it right so I don't have to spend a year to two years making all these mistakes and wandering down blind alleys and trying to figure this out on my own.

You can teach me in two days everything I need to know. Our passion intersects at that point. I have a need, you have the ability to fulfil that need and now it's up to you to make me understand that the price is good, it's a genuine value, I don't risk anything if I come on board. You really are the guy to deal with. How do you do that?



John Carlton (continued): Now think about the passion you can put into this. You're not trying to convince me I need to go online. I know that. But that is about as much as I know. I don't understand anything else. You can't talk jargon with me, there are a lot of things you are going to lose me on and I'm going to be paying really close attention because I really want to leave. This is making me nervous and I'm pretty sure I don't want to be 'sold'. But I'm interested, I need to find out about these things. So you can have that conversation.

Just pretend you're in a bar and I'm next to you. You hear me say to the bartender, wow my life is miserable. I need to get online or my meat pie business is going south in a hurry. You turn to me and say, I'm sorry, I couldn't help overhearing. You need to get online? That is what I do. What do you say after that? Remember in the real world, I'm not your best buddy, you're a stranger to me and I'm actually appalled that you would interrupt my conversation so I am not ready to sit down and listen to you.

What you have to say to me in those first few sentences needs to be able to capture my attention, start building my interest, and give me a reason to listen to what you say next and give me a reason to get interested in you and what you have to say. In the first hit are you going to sell me something, or are you going to come across like a used car salesman? I'm out of there. I can bolt at any time. I can say, wow, that was miserable I went in for a pint and instead this guy rips my ear off trying to tell me about some weird online thing he has.

If I've already identified myself as a guy who needs what you have to offer, helping people get online, think about how you could blow it, and then think about how you could make it work. How you make it work is all salesmanship, telling a story, making sure you're paying attention to me, not to your story. It's not about you, it's about me and my needs.

Once you understand these few basic elements of weaving a good sales story as we call it, or a good sales message within a story, then you're off to the races. But until you learn those things, or if you think, I've been in business twenty years, I know these things, well maybe you do and maybe you don't. If you're not doing well, if you have gaps, if you know you're leaving \$10 or \$100 on the table for every dollar you bring in, if you know your competition is smoking you and about to leave you behind, then you better learn these things. It is very easy and it's very quick.

If you deal with a guy like me, I've been around the block so many times I can't even remember how many times I've been around. The knowledge and advice I give you is not theory. I'm still in the frontline trenches of marketing. I'm a major online marketer. In fact I'm a super affiliate. Even though I'm old school, I'm the guy the younger guys go to in order to learn the basics and then they go off to weave their magic.

It's an opportunity. There are a lot of opportunities out there to learn how to do things, to be taught things. It can be really confusing, it can be time consuming. But please, my message to anybody, and I say this in all sincerity and all urgency, get the basics down first. It's not tough, it's not voodoo. It's not magic, it is easy but you're probably not going to figure it out on your own.

Even if you dedicate yourself to figuring this out on your own, in other words going to talk to old school salesmen, trying to read all the books that are out there, trying to do trial and error, trying to go down the dark alleys and do all this, it's going to take you a very long time to learn it all on your own. Over a very short period you can get the short cuts delivered to you from a guy who has already been there.

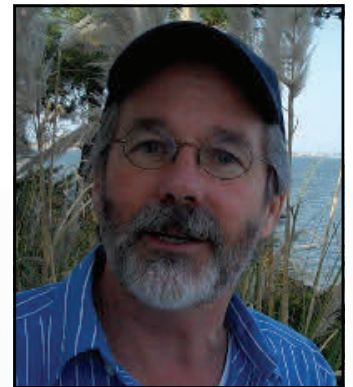


David Jenyns: One thing you mentioned, coming from that old school background, and I think old school especially with the direct mail, back in the day we're talking fifteen, twenty A4 sales letters, I feel like it's slowly starting to morph. I can only judge it by my own experience. Back in the day I'd read through those, because it's the old line we've all heard before, copy can never be too long, just too boring. Right?

So if it hooks you and it drags you in, you're going to read all the material. Even with that said, I feel like there is an evolution. I don't know if it's coming from my own self, or whether it's happening across the board, we are seeing a lot of shortening of sales letters. When we're told to write a good sales letter, we are told to have the appropriate sub heads because the chances are, the person is only going to read those sub heads anyway.

I'm wondering about your thoughts, especially coming from that old school, writing long sales letters, is there ever going to be a change in the shortening and the tightening of that copy where you almost embed the entire sales process into a video with short copy underneath it? I'm interested to get your thoughts on if I'm picking it up or if it's not actually there.

John Carlton: Here's the story, and I'll try to keep it as short and precise as possible. Old school direct mail letters were not fifteen and twenty pages. They were four, eight or twelve pages long. The reason they were four, eight or twelve pages long, that's how printing presses work. They work in things of four. A four page sales letter front and back would be two physical pages printed front and back. The number of pages you had mattered, because the heavier your letter was, the more you would pay in postage.



Old school copy and writers learned to write, eight, sometimes four, usually eight or twelve page letters, occasionally up to a sixteen page letter. There would be other things in there, like a return envelope and an order form and often some other elements. The price of the package mattered. So guys learned to write very concisely.

I should also tell you that a full page newspaper ad, where you see a lot of copy, you've probably seen them. What is the name of the local paper there?

David Jenyns: The Age or the Herald Sun.

John Carlton: Yes, the Herald Sun. A full page of copy seems like a lot, but it is not. A newspaper, full page of copy is about an eight page letter. A full page of copy in a magazine is under three pages. So you think about that, so even though it's long copy, it's very dense, it's going on. It's not what you think.

What happened online, Dave, was that there were not constrictions on the length. So I definitely remember when I saw my first thirty page scrolling website. It was thirty manuscript pages on a single scroll. What happened was there was no physical reason not to write until you were absolutely exhausted and you could stop writing. Online you were not penalized for length. So people got longer and longer.

The old school guys like me, we've never gone beyond the old thing. I type out in words, so it's page by page, and I'm still writing eight and twelve page letters. Now sometimes I'll go up to



John Carlton (continued): twenty because I can and I'm adding things. But that adds testimonials or other stories or things like that. I'm still as concise as possible.

The rule is not to be boring, but you start at your story. You start at the beginning of your story, you get attention, you start building interest and desire. You work through all the things you need to establish in your prospect's mind that you have credibility, that what you have is something he can start picturing in his mind and you work up to and in to the actual sales process. Here's what you need to do now, and you start working through that.

When you're done, you stop, you sit back and you look at it and how long was it? That's how long you need it. Now if you're really good, you can go back and start chopping things out.

Here's a tip for newbies out there writing. Drop all the adjectives. Just stop relying on adjectives. If you don't know what an adjective is, look it up and then realize those are the colourful words that people get caught up in when they think they're describing something. Really what they're doing is just adding words to the message. Make your verbs do all the work, and that is just one tip. That's something I can maybe talk about in another call, Dave.

If you show me what you're talking about, I'll bet if you add up everything, especially in a launch, that a launch could be a series of three minute videos and then a final video that is maybe twelve minutes long or something like that. A minute of video is about a page of copy if you wrote down what the person says. If you add everything up, all the emails, all the videos, all the written work, all the testimonials, everything, in a launch, even though each element is short, when you add it all together, you've still got a classic long form sales letter. You're just spreading it out over time.

That's the magic of a launch by the way. It's just taking the sales process and spreading it out. Nothing's changed, it's just a different delivery system. It's a different method of delivery.

What you bring up is worthy of an entire book or even a documentary. Old school thinking was, what's the most cost efficient way to get to a person? When it was mail, it was, you've got to have your whole message in the mail. You're not going to mail three different letters and hope they get one. They don't open the one on Monday, then they open the next letter that comes around on Wednesday and they open the next one on Friday, like you can do with email. So it's a different process. Time is on your side online.

Also the costs are on your side because email is essentially free. You can broadcast 70,000 emails for the same price as one, for essentially nothing. So when you add all the things up, you're still dealing with what people say is long copy. It's not long copy. I don't like long copy because I like to write, I just do what works. If I woke up tomorrow and the universe had shifted and suddenly I could say a happy phrase and people would go out of their minds and start buying, if that worked, I'd start doing that.

So I'm all for short things. I was one of the first guys to jump into video. I did one of the first marketing podcasts on iTunes. I didn't do anymore, but I did one of the first ones. It was up for a couple of years. I'm an early adopter of things. I had one of the first marketing blogs up. I love online, I loved it, I love all of these things. The only thing that rankles me a little, is when people forget all the things that used to sell things, that's all over with and everything is new because you're online. That's fine. They're just trying to sell something. All is fair in love and war and advertising and that is great.



John Carlton (continued): The truth is, humans haven't changed. We still crave stories, we're hard wired to hear somebody tell us a story. Before we pull out our money or our credit card or hit the buy button, we need to have certain emotional, physical, intellectual, rational, irrational, logical, illogical, emotional things covered. Most buying decisions are emotional but to get to there, you have to go through an intellectual process. So most people make that, yes, I'm going to get it! That is an emotional thing, that's where you shift parts of the brain that you're going to.

But to get to that point, you have to have enough information where your brain is ready to say, yes, let's do it, gosh, let's do it. You have to be able to supply, if you want to make the sale stick, you still have to use stick strategies. You have to supply your now customer with enough sound bites so that he can go back and tell his skeptical wife why he bought, tell his nosy neighbour who would make fun of him if he made a bad buy why he bought, and especially his jerk brother-in-law who thinks that everything he does is wrong. He's going to have to explain himself in the real world.

What, you bought something online? Why did you buy that? You've got to give him sound bites, you have to give him ammunition for why he bought. Even though the reason he bought may be not what he's able to say. He's not clearly able to say it because once you understand basic, not advanced, but basic salesmanship, the psychology that goes on, once you understand these things, it's all aha experience. It's oh, that's why. Of course, now it makes sense but it doesn't make sense until somebody has presented it to you.

Once it starts to make sense, then you realize how that buying thing happens. How someone goes from not even knowing who you are five minutes ago, to suddenly being rabid about what you have and wanting to deal with you, wanting to actually get involved. That's going off down another rabbit hole. I could talk for hours about this, in fact I do in my products.

The basic things are so intellectually and emotionally satisfying to learn because they explain everything about human behaviour. It explains everything about why we do what we do, why the capitalist system really is the best one out there and how people act. Not how you wish people would act or even how they say they will act. You know a lot of people say oh, I'd never buy anything online and then you dig into their lives and they've been buying things online a lot.

They're doing all their banking online, they've bought a lot of things online. They research everything online. Their first stop is no longer the Yellow Pages or even asking friends, their first stop is online and then when they have a conversation with their friends about what they've researched, then they're more knowledgeable and their conversation changes. Depending on how good they are at search engines, they either come away with nonsense or they come away with solid info.

But they're still looking for someone to get it for them. So you arrived as the hero. You're the guy who says, hey, I've been there, I understand what you're doing. I like these things myself. I just took the extra time or energy or I was able to go deeper than you're able to go. Now you could probably get to where I am too, but it might take you a couple of years. So how about you get there by Monday, next Monday? I can help you do that. I'll shortcut everything and we can share our passion.

Usually when you're a marketer, you are a window to a world that me, the prospect doesn't otherwise have access to. So you're the guy who is going to let me hang out with other people who



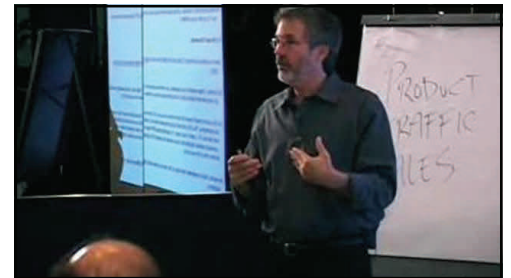
John Carlton (continued): share the passion or I get to find out all these things. This information really has changed a lot of the ways we behave and a lot of the ways we look for things and a lot of the ways we buy product. But we still buy product, in fact we're buying more of it. Just a lot more of it is information based and so on.

I think I'm going down another rabbit hole there David. So I probably need to wrap up.

David Jenyns: One last thing you had said, and it opened up a little door in my mind if I may be so cheeky. I'll just finish with this last question. Is that alright?

John Carlton: Ok. Sure, sure.

David Jenyns: I was keen to find out, you being on the cutting edge and things as they're starting to evolve, it does feel with the way things are going online and the way Google is so entrenched in people's mindset these days, you have to be extremely transparent. If you do one thing that is wrong, and that gets out there, it gets plastered all over the internet and what happens on YouTube stays on YouTube. Once it's in there, it's very hard to get it back out again.



So I think a big part of that sales process, again I can only talk from where I'm coming from, but you're able to see a lot of the shifts with a lot of the different copywriters. I'm wondering what your thoughts are as far as the need for transparency and building that proof. For me now, when I write copy, it's all about proof. Really I just have the initial hook story to draw them in and then after that it's just, how can I prove what it is that I'm saying is true?

John Carlton: Yes, it's what I was finishing up on that last rabbit hole we went down. My blog, I share this, it's not some super secret, but I don't make a big deal of it. The reason I started my mailed newsletter back in 2001 and why I picked up the blog, I think I started the blog in 2005, I can't remember now. The thing in the back of my head was, I wanted to leave, not a legacy, but I wanted to leave the story of my life, of what I know, not for my nieces and nephews but my grand nieces and nephews who are very, very young and have no idea what is going on.

I keep thinking in my head, I write to them. I write in a way that I'm not saying or sharing anything I wouldn't say directly to these people who I care very much about and I have a stake in making their lives better. So the transparency there becomes natural.

People like to think it is because of online and social media and things, but people are not easily transparent. It is a bit of an effort. Even people who are into texting and Facebook and all of these things, even though it seems like we're sharing more, we're really not. Life is mostly shallow. Most people live their lives in the shallow part of the pond.

When you have a passion, whether that passion is from trauma, you need something, something is broken and you need it fixed, or you just really, really want something, you haven't been able to find it and you want somebody else, you're looking for help in getting there. When you come as the guy who is willing to lay it all out there and tell your story and you've been somewhere I haven't been and you're offering me a chance to come into your work, where you're going to be the guy who is the perfect guide.



John Carlton (continued): It's like, yes, I've been there, I know what this is like. Let me tell you what happened to me. If you can use it great, if not, at least you know what my experience was and you start laying this out. This is what we call either the hero or the go to guy, as I called it. That is what I called it when I started teaching. You become the go to guy.

It's like for a few clients that I was able to work for who didn't inhibit me in what I was writing. The letter would arrive, or the email would arrive in the inbox or people would find out about it and they didn't say, oh boy, I'll bet they're going to try to sell me something. Rather the response, and we know this because we ask people all the time, the response was, hey, what's this nutcase got to say today? What story is he going to tell me today?

What that means is, even though you know I may have a pitch or I'm going to sell you on something, or I'm in marketing, so somewhere along the line I'm going to have something for sale or something, you don't care. The content that I'm laying out is so good that if you never buy anything from me, your life has been enriched invaluablely by just connecting with me, by being inside of my world. If you do buy, it's even better.

I become the go to guy. You think, hey, I have a question about copyright. I wonder what Carlton has to say. Let's check on his blog and let's go there. By becoming the go to guy, you become that resource, that constantly desired, welcome resource in people's lives, where you're just the first thought that comes up whenever they think about these things. So, when I have something for sale, you don't automatically buy, but you're going to give it a look. You're going to say, ok, let's see what he has to say.

You're certainly going to be entertained and you're going to learn something during the process. It's never a waste of time, and who knows, you may become a customer and the new BFF in my life.

David Jenyns: I love the way that even when you talk about those things, and I know you said you hadn't done any study of NLP or even further back the Eriksonian hypnosis work, just the way you layered that last little bit, positioning yourself, whether it is conscious or subconscious, it shows you've embedded this in the core of who you are. You've just effectively told us that you're the go to guy when it comes to copywriting. I truly believe that. If people want to find out more, they should head over to your blog which is the www.john-carlton.com or just Google John Carlton and it will be the number one position to find out more.

Also I wanted to mention, you mentioned your Simple Writing System as well, which is a fantastic course. It'll break down that checklist that we did talk about. If you want to find out more about that, I've got a special link I've set up through www.davidjenyns.com/sws. Yes, that is my affiliate link, but hopefully, if I've introduced you to John Carlton, it's only fair that we keep that relationship going. I go out there to get these interviews for you guys so that I can introduce them. So it is a little bit of a win-win.

John, I just wanted to finish up by thanking you for your time. You are the go to guy when it comes to copywriting and you share that information so freely, so thanks for your time.

John Carlton: Well thanks David. It's always a joy to talk to someone like you who is interested in this, who knows a lot of things and you don't ask the same old questions. That was a riveting



John Carlton (continued): interview, one of the best set of questions I've been asked and I appreciate the opportunity to share the answers with your people.

David Jenyns: Perfect, thank you.

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