

By Denny Hatch



# Great Book, Lousy Promotion

A large box arrived from Elsevier, unsolicited and containing a wonderful book—essential reading for anyone who writes the English language whether for fun or for business communications.

The title: “Gabay’s Copywriters’ Compendium: The definitive creative writer’s guide” (Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann). Its 700-plus pages are packed with copywriting secrets, business quotations and speech writing how-tos, as well as with insights on PR writing, Web writing, proofreading, punctuation, grammar, metaphors and a ton more. It is fast, funny and chock-a-block full of actionable information on what to say, what not to say, how to say it and how not to say it.

Marketers will find a wealth of valuable secrets and rules that must be obeyed if you want action. The author calls them “Top Tips” for direct mail copy, viral copy, writing press releases, packaging copy, great brochure copy, poster copy, great awareness (above the line) ads, writing reports, great Web copy and radio ads. “Gabay’s Copywriters’ Compendium” is a British import, but that makes no never-mind. It simply is great.

## How to Do Publicity

The book arrived in a box containing a generic cover note—a truly crappy, photocopied sheet of paper showing the logos of all of Elsevier’s various divisions and a list of the categories of books it publishes. At the

bottom was the following copy:

We believe your readers will want to learn more about this book, so please consider it for a possible book review, excerpt or author interview. For more information or additional material, including electronic files, author contact information and publishing information, please contact the publicity department.

My first jobs after getting out of the Army in 1960 were working in the publicity departments of two publishers, Prentice Hall and Franklin Watts Inc. I was responsible for getting books reviewed—jollyng up reviewers and radio talk show hosts in hopes they would give the new titles some coverage.

In PR, as well as in direct marketing, it’s imperative to give enough information so the person can act—NOW.

When sending a book for review, it’s essential to include the following: (1) a copy of the book; (2) a personal cover letter to the reviewer that sells the book and tells why it is important to the readers of the review; (3) a press release that enthusiastically describes the book and its benefits, along with some fascinating tidbits to whet the reviewer’s curiosity; and (4) a review slip that formally states the title, author, publisher, price, publication date and description of the book (e.g., trim size, binding and number of pages).

This formula—with obvious variations—holds for any publicity effort for

any product or service.

“Editors are basically lazy,” said my first mentor, Evelyn Lawson, when I was working as an apprentice at the Ivoryton Playhouse in Connecticut at age 15. “If you give editors something they can use—and save them the effort of creating something new—they will use it and be grateful to you.”

I am an editor. I am lazy. When somebody wants to sell me something or wants me to review something, I want guidance. I don’t want to spend time calling for essential information that should have been provided at the outset.

In short, buy “Gabay’s Copywriters’ Compendium.” You will use it for the rest of your life. Alas, I have no idea what the price is, when it is being published or where it might be available without doing some Web research.

If Elsevier has any sense, it will fire the incompetent amateurs that sent it to me for review. They are an embarrassment. ■

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