

Special Report

## The Care and Feeding of Creative Talent

How to Get Writers, Designers, Photographers,  
and 'Creative Types' Producing their  
Best Results for You and Your Clients So You  
Generate More Response and More Business.

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# The Care and Feeding of Creative Talent

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## Keeping Your Creative Talent Creating

Marketing, advertising, and publishing are different from other businesses. An accounting firm relies on accountants who are typically predictable and reliable. A real estate company relies on sales people and managers who, again, are professional and driven.

As a decision maker in marketing, advertising, or publishing, you fully understand that creative content is vital. You also understand that content comes from ‘creative types’ who are not accountants: creatives can be unpredictable, and are motivated by ‘the muse’ and ‘artistic integrity’ and something called *creativity*. Your success depends almost entirely on creative output.

- If you’re in direct marketing, you need a copywriter who can write copy that produces results...so you get results...and your client is delighted and get more business from this client and others.
- If you’re in the branding side of advertising, you need photographers and graphic designers and copywriters who can execute flawlessly to produce a the ‘look’ that defined a brand.
- If you’re in publishing, your editors, graphic designers, photographers, and writers must produce exciting and inspiring content or nobody reads the magazine...or, if you’re digital, nobody reads your content and the publication/website dies.

I’ve been on both sides of the creative fence. For 22 years, I’ve enjoyed concurrent careers in writing and publishing.

As a publisher, I've produced over 7,000 pages of magazine and web content; I've published three successful magazines, managed a custom publishing department for a large newspaper chain, and written or worked 17 books with 18th on the way.

I've been writing copy for 22 years. Today, I publish a subscription-based blog for a targeted area in my home town and I write direct response copy for satisfied clients around the world. **These clients measure results and they continue to hire me.**

So...I've managed creative talent. I'm also a creative who has been managed... sometimes really well and sometimes really poorly.

This special report is for account reps, agency owners, publishers...pretty much anyone who hires and manages professional creatives. I'm going to get you into the head of a creative type (a dangerous place to be, perhaps!) and help you be the type of manager that creatives LOVE to work for. The benefits...

1. You'll pay less for excellent creative talent and get more value from your investment in creative talent.
2. Your clients will get the work and results you promise.
3. Your business will be much more likely to succeed.

This report does **not** detail *how* to find creative talent...that's for another special report. The goal is to provide proven steps to help you:

- Test creatives to see if they're a good fit.
- Keep them happy.

- Deal with problems.
- Keep them engaged.
- Keep them aligned with your culture and standards.

Follow the recommendations in this special report and your life will be easier and more profitable.

- You will spend less time and less money searching for talent.
- Your ads, editorial, websites...*everything* will be consistently excellent and productive.
- Moments of panic will decrease significantly.
- Managing traffic will be much easier.
- Clients will start to see better results and will give you more business.

Again, your success depends on your ability to motivate, manage, and inspire your creative talent.

## **The Good, the Bad, the Ugly...The Choice is Yours**

In the past six months, I've worked for three very different clients.

### **The Good**

This client sends me regular work, pays almost immediately, appreciates my work, and makes my life easy by being accessible, clear, and sensible. If there's a problem (which is rare) we work it out and move forward. I really enjoy working with this client and will bend over backwards to help him and his agency, especially when there's an

emergency and they need copy almost immediately. They have a passion for direct marketing and I have a passion for direct response copywriting. That's a pretty good match. Actually, this client is better than good, they're *beyond superb*. Having a superb and reliable and friendly client is more important than rate...a great lesson for agency heads.

## **The Bad**

I have a client (although I'm going to fire them soon) who pays more than the 'good' client above. This client has been extremely successful and has made a lot of money in the Internet marketing space which is based totally around direct marketing. So you'd think it's a good fit. Why would I want to fire this client when the pay is good and they're a proven direct marketer? There are two primary reasons I want to issue the 'red card' soon. One...vague creative direction. Two...yelling and screaming when the work isn't right. The two are connected: provide vague creative direction and you're going to get anything...and if you get 'anything' then you should be yelling and screaming *at yourself*. Screaming at creatives to bully great work out of them is a poor strategy, especially when creative briefs are a mish-mash of mumbled gibberish.

## **The Ugly**

In the summer, I briefly worked with a highly specialized advertising agency based in a major American city. The head of the agency called me for the first time at 9:30 on a Saturday night for a brief interview. I work all hours but getting a call at 9:30 on a Saturday night was weird. I told the agency head I was a direct response copywriter, inspired by writers like Bob Bly, Herschell Gordon Lewis, Andrew Wood, and Dan

Kennedy; the agency head hadn't heard of them, a huge red flag for a direct response copywriter.

I wrote some ads for this client and it was a disaster. The agency head:

1. Called me at all hours of the day and night demanding copy...once at 11 p.m. at night when I was in bed.
2. Paid on time but set restrictive time limits for work. "I need this, this, and this, but don't take more than 10 minutes."
3. Committed the heinous sin of saying "I don't really know what I want but I'll tell you when I see it."

I imagine this client goes through at least five writers a quarter and rarely gets the creative output he needs. His Craigslist ads keep popping up on Google Alerts.

## 14 Ways to Get Consistent Results from Creative Talent

1. **Choose your talent carefully.** Interview them using specific questions. Look at their samples. Check their references and testimonials. And look at their marketing, especially if you're in the marketing and advertising field. If they don't know how to market themselves, they won't understand *your* marketing strategy. It's vital for creatives to understand the big picture.
2. **Provide clear instructions.** The single most important guideline. I rarely receive a creative brief...or that used to be the case. Now I politely request one. If you don't provide a clear creative brief, then don't expect great work and don't blame the creative. When you provide a clear, lucid creative brief, you'll get work that's pretty much ready to go. It's not complicated. And show your

creatives examples of what you're looking for...this helps. Creative direction that's vague, rambling, rude, or mumbled will almost totally guarantee poor results.

3. **Make it clear you welcome and invite questions.** Do not growl at creatives when they ask questions, even if they ask dumb questions. Use the 'there are no stupid questions' rule.
4. **Provide training modules and information.** One of my favorite clients provided me, a lowly freelancer, with a full day of training so I know precisely what they expect. And guess what? I give them precisely what they expect...
5. **Don't ask a graphic designer to be a writer and don't ask a copywriter to be a web developer and write code.** Recently, a large company interviewed me for a contract copywriting position. Half way through the interview, I realized they really wanted someone to typeset their content using HTML. I had one client who expected me to go into their WordPress site and write code. I'll do a lot for my clients but the client is inviting disaster if they ask copywriters to write code...especially this one! The photographer takes photos. The copywriter writes copy. The proofreader proofs. The graphic designer designs. The developer writes code.
6. **Set realistic deadlines.** Calling me at 11:30 at night expecting copy to be ready by 7 a.m. the next morning is lunacy yet this happened to me just a few months ago. The deadline depends on the work required but be realistic. When you rush creatives, the quality of the work will decline.
7. **Communicate the marketing strategy.** What's the goal of the photo shoot? Who will read the brochure the graphic designer is creating? When a copywriter writes copy, it's a conversation between a buyer and seller. Who is the buyer? Who is the seller?

8. **Pay when you say you're going pay.** Some creatives want to be paid up front, others will wait. I recently had a client who paid half an invoice 45 days late. That's a straight red card.
9. **Be prepared to pay a little more than 'average' rates.** I just created this sentence...it's amazing...YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR...when people in the 'creative' industry look at creative talent as a cost, they will likely fail. When they look at creative talent as the most important investment in their success, they succeed. It's OK to pay 'average' rates at the beginning of a working relationship but when the creative starts to produce, increase their pay.
10. **Don't ask for free or 'spec' work.** Just in the last year, I've heard 'it's the next Facebook' and 'it's the next PayPal' several times. If it's the next big thing, find venture capital specialists to fund the venture and pay the creatives properly.
11. **If there's a problem, be specific.** As I mentioned earlier, the head of an agency with over 30 years of experience recently said, "I don't know what I want but I'll tell you when I see it." He then followed with, "the writing is poor." I miss the mark sometimes...every copywriter does...I *always* fix the problem and get in alignment when I have specific and clear feedback.
12. **Use a contract with all terms and conditions spelled out clearly.**
13. **Heap praise on your creatives when it's due.** Make sure they know you love them. A creative will work for a friendly client for less money than a horrible client who pays more. Creatives have egos.
14. **Be aware of who is out there** and make sure you have a deep bench.

I hope this special report helps you manage, develop, and work with creative talent with greater ease in the future.

And if you need additional pointers or direct response copy that produces proven results, call (704) 517-0241 or [email](#) here. My website is [here](#).

Follow these steps and you'll quickly develop a deep and solid pool of reliable creative talent who will help you generate additional revenue.