

The 'U-Count' is a very simple formula for enhancing your sales letter and Robert Hayes-McCoy explains how it works for you

Get into the habit of using 'you' as often, and as early in your sales letter as you can and you'll instinctively find yourself composing your letter with your reader's viewpoint in mind. This is a liberating exercise because from the moment you start seeing things from your reader's viewpoint you'll find yourself, almost automatically, explaining the benefits of your product or service to your reader's advantage. And this is exactly what your reader best wants to hear from you.

Now let me tell you something very interesting, something that you can use to your immediate advantage. It's a little trick of the copywriter's trade and I call it '**The U -Count**'.

Every time you finish drafting your sales letters count up the number of times the word 'you' - or any of the variations of the word you - i.e.: your, yourself etc - appears in your draft, paying particular attention to your opening paragraph.

Quite simply, the more 'YOUs' you have in your letter the better it is from an effective one-to-one communications viewpoint. If you find that you have no 'YOUs' at all in your draft, my advice to you is tear it up and start again. Because, the chances are that you are not communicating with your reader. All you are doing is talking to yourself.

If your 'U-Count' is very high you have the makings of something very interesting in your hands. Because a high 'U-Count' means that you are very actively engaging your reader in a 'you-me' communications process. And this is the kind of communications process that your reader likes, and responds to, best.

If your 'U-Count' is only 'so-so' you should go back and have another look at your draft letter and see if there are any areas where you could possibly increase your U-Count'.

Pay careful attention to your opening paragraph and try, wherever possible, to have a high 'U-Count' in this very important paragraph. Better still; see if you can introduce the word 'you' into your opening sentence.

Sometimes, it's a very useful exercise to print out a hard copy of your draft letter and use a

yellow highlighter to carefully highlight for yourself every single... You... Your... You're... Yourself ... Yourselves and... Yours... on each page.

This enables you to see at a glance whether the 'U-Count' is distributed evenly on your page(s). What you are trying to avoid is the possibility of ending up with a 'curate's egg' of a 'U-Count. A 'curate's egg', for those of you who are not familiar with the eating habits of these worthy people, is an egg which is good in some parts and bad in others.

If you find that there is a feast of 'YOUs' in some parts of your letter and a veritable famine of 'YOUs' in other parts of your letter it's always worth your while to go back and have another look at those paragraphs, or areas in your letter, where your 'U-Count' is low. See if you can edit these areas slightly and increase your 'U-Count' in those paragraphs. Let me give you a quick example of what I mean. In the following letter I've highlighted with a yellow marker all the 'YOUs' that the letter contains.

P Manahan & Co
Chartered Accountants
5th Floor Trinity House
Trinity Street
Dublin 2

Mr Robert Hayes-McCoy
Managing Director
Robert Hayes-McCoy Consultants Ltd
13 Lea Road
Sandymount
Dublin 4
Ireland

Dear Robert

**Sometimes you're the windshield
Sometimes you're the bug...**
From the song "The Bug" - Dire Straits

Do you ever get this feeling about your company's accountancy and financial planning workload? One moment you're on top of everything and the way forward is clear. Then wham! Something unexpected comes along and it messes up all your plans.

Welcome to the latest edition of Solutions Newsletter. As you can see, we couldn't resist including the above line from the song 'The Bug' on the back page of your newsletter.

Because we're coming up to the time of the year when many companies come under pressure to keep their accountancy workloads and forward-planning strategies moving forward. And we'd like you to know that we're available to give you a professional helping hand if you ever need to call on us.

Even if you have no immediate requirement for our services you're very welcome to call me and ask me to come in for a 'no-obligation' consultation discussion with you immediately. This way, I may be able to help you to identify some relatively self-contained tasks that you could very profitably delegate or sub-contract to us.

Perhaps we can assist you in drawing up your strategic development plan for the future. Or we might be able to give you valuable independent professional advice on some project that you've put out on the long finger because you simply haven't yet found the time to give it the attention it deserves.

Whatever it is! Even if it's just for me to come in and have a general chat with you about the scope and the range of professional services that we can offer you, I'm looking forward to receiving your call. My telephone number is 01-123 456 and you're very welcome to call me now while you have our latest edition of Solutions in your hands.

Yours sincerely

Peter V. Manahan

No paragraph has less than 2-YOUs and some have a 'YOU' on just about every single line. What you see in this letter is not only a very high 'U-Count' but an excellent distribution of 'YOUs' throughout the letter as well.

Of course the finished letter that was sent out in the mail to potential customers didn't have the YOUs highlighted in yellow. I'm simply highlighting them here for you so that you can immediately see what I mean when I talk about trying to achieve an even distribution of YOUs throughout your letter.

Remember, the greater your 'U-Count' the more you are engaging in 'you-me' communication with your reader. And the more consistent your high 'U-Count' is from the start to finish of your letter, the more consistently you engage your reader in one-to-one communication - and the more difficult it is for your reader not to read all of your letter.

A uniformly high 'U-Count' not only makes your sales letter more interesting to read, but it also makes it very hard for your reader not to read every word that you write to him or her. **And that's exactly the way you want it!**

Robert Hayes-McCoy is an Irish multi-award winning direct marketing copywriter. His book 'Persuasive Direct Marketing – what you say and how you write it.' will be published at the end of this summer, 2004. The 'U-Count' is one of his many success concepts contained in this book. For further information Robert can be contacted at copy@iol.ie or visit his website www.the-real-mccoy.com