

"How A Blockbuster Movie Can Help Give You A Winning Control!"

By Peter J. Fogel

Yes, a bold statement and promise. But it's true: A block buster movie and a winning control do have a lot in common in the way they're developed and in the way that they succeed.

Both the film director and direct marketer adhere to a "structure" if they want their prospect/moviegoer to be so caught up in what they're seeing on the screen (or in reading a sales letter) that they have no choice but to be moved to action: In a movie it's tears, laughter (and word of mouth advertising) and in a DM piece it's "Cha-Ching" ordering your product or service.

The "hook" of a blockbuster movie is its USP. In Hollywood it's called high-concept. This means that in one sentence you "get" immediately what the film is about and you know whether you want to spend your hard earned money on it. (What's-in-it-for-me!) In the film "**Independence Day**," aliens invade Earth! Ka-boom! It gets your attention and imagination going at mach four.

You're hoping there's a compelling story and some great special effects. Naturally, your headline should also have a compelling offer, (8 Simple Ways To Get FREE Publicity) or inspire such curiosity that the prospect thinks, "Okay...

I'm piqued with interest... what do you got?" In a screenplay, (the blueprint of a film) the first ten pages are the most crucial. It must grab the reader and keep them interested as to what'll happen next. In Tinseltown, it's called "a page turner."

Just like a James Bond film that needs a stupendous opening action sequence (its lead) to hook the moviegoer into watching the rest of the film, so must your sales lead draw the reader in so you have a "page turner." In a movie or sales letter there's a continuing courtship where you're stroking your prospect/audience's wants, needs and desires with strategically placed hot buttons.

Your "Hero" Must Succeed!

In the beginning of a film, we must immediately root for the protagonist/hero. Even with his flaws we have empathy for his plight. If we feel for him we go on the journey to see if he can accomplish his goal. In a movie -- "our hero" gets up a tree (his one major obstacle to overcome) and then we want to see how he gets down (usually the second act.) In "Titanic" it's our ill-fated lovers who battle the antagonist who wants to keep them apart and the sea that spells their doom.

So who is the protagonist in your sales letter? Well, your prospect of course. He has a dilemma and you – the marketer, his ally, are there to solve it for him. And your sales letter is the vehicle to do just that! If not, “your hero” will be “stuck up the tree” with no way to get down. Now our luckless film hero doesn’t know what his options are.

He just knows that he has to take action to take away his pain! And of course your product or service is going to give “your hero” a remedy (help him get thinner, healthier, or sexier.) In a blockbuster movie, we know who the enemy is. And in a sales letter the marketer is dealing with an adversary, too.

His prospect’s attention span, his baggage and doubts about whether you can really help him. And so to accomplish his goal the marketer must realize that he’s in a high-stakes poker game with lots of obstacles ahead of him. One where he must never show his hand... *too early*. Just as a movie has “twists and turns,” so should a sales letter.

One with as many layers as possible as to keep your hero off guard. If the prospect suspects that this is the “the same old, same old,” he’ll chuck your letter and go feed his fish. So how do you keep YOUR prospect mesmerized with your offer? The same as is done in a movie: with plot points. These are little landmines that pop up and send our hero on another path... that alters his life. One way to do that is to think of...

Sub Heads As The Beginnings of a New Scene

In the Jack Nicholson film “Something’s Gotta Give,” everything is going grand in Jack’s character’s life. He’s a playboy and enjoys the company of younger women. Then tragedy occurs... he suffers a heart attack. And his journey goes on a new path. So swipe from Hollywood using this same technique.

Just when your prospect starts to “figure out” where you’re going with your offer, you introduce another problem that he’s clueless about... or add another tremendous benefit for him. Keep him off guard. And this is where you can think of your subheads as scene introductions.

Take Your Prospect On a Journey With Your Sales Letter

Do this by placing as many layers in your sales letter as you can so your prospect unwraps your offer like a child opens a gift on Christmas Eve. Your goal is to have “your hero” feel NOT that he’s reading a sales letter, but that instead he’s on a journey to where his problem will be solved. Watching “Titanic,” you get lost in the story of watching our lovers unite, then separated by an evil suitor—and then wondering if their love (and themselves) will survive the sea.

A strong movie uses suspension of disbelief exponentially. And you want the same thing in your campaign.

But you must tread carefully. Ever watch a film and have that one big scene not ring true and think to yourself? “Sorry, I don’t buy it... THAT would never happen. You’ve lost me.” (usually a third act failure.) Once it occurs, the film’s a let down for the audience.

That’s why structure and the right amount of ingredients are so important to a movie and DM piece’s success. If one component is off—then stick a fork in your customer... he’s done. In a film we invest time with our hero to see him/her succeed at the climax. If they don’t, we feel cheated. And in your sales letter, you must make your prospect feel “complete” with his decision of buying your product or service! (the climax of your sales piece)

Watch as many films as you can... look for the nuances and the hidden structure that holds (or doesn’t) hold the flick together. Notice what twists and turns the filmmaker used to keep you hooked into his story, and kept you there. Every line of action and dialogue in a film propels the story forward. Does every sentence in your sales piece do the same with your prospect right up to the call of action?

Have you built up enough trust with your prospect so that he could become a lifetime customer? A successful movie is never linear and so your sales letter should never be if you want a strong ROI. And right there is a real cliff hanger... but it’s one ending you have to get right... if you want a blockbuster control. Fade to black...



Peter J. Fogel is a copywriter who specializes in direct mail, web, and radio copy. Sign up for his Monthly Direct Response e-zine at www.peterfogel.com and receive the FREE e-book, “**Marketing Secrets of the Masters**”