

# The Red Letter



## I Give You My Words

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### Cuts, Cakes and Copywriters

Poor Tré.

My wife and I recently decided to save a few bucks by investing \$80 in a shaver and grooming our Pomapoo (Pomeranian/Poodle cross) at home. At \$35 a cut, five cuts a year, we'd save \$95 in the first year and \$175 every year thereafter.

Talk about seemingly sound logic gone south.

Grooming a dog well takes years of practice and expertise that we didn't factor into the equation. After a two-hour marathon, Tré sulked away licking one paw shorn nearly to the skin and scratching long patches of curly white fur on the rest of his body. When I took him to a groomer, she chuckled. "I once took a class on how to make cakes," she said. "I threw my first one away and decided to leave cake making to the professionals."

It was the best, most concise reasoning for using a pro I've ever heard. It can be applied to almost anything, especially writing copy for advertising and marketing materials.

We write every day, in e-mails, notes to our family members, grocery lists. But writing compelling copy that sounds professional and sells? Stringing words together is no big deal, but is it patchy in places? Thin or overgrown in others? Does it read like a do-it-yourselfer?

"Copywriters are specifically trained to write copy that sells," says Apryl Duncan, a freelance copywriter with national experience. "Taking a stab at it yourself may sound like a good idea, but the selling message will suffer and your company will lose sales."

Cuts, cakes or copy – doing it yourself will definitely save a buck today, but long term it'll cost you. Just ask Tré.

### Top 10 Ways To Blow a Campaign

*Ignore Your Target Audience* – enough said.

*Do It Yourself* – see "Cuts, Cakes and Copywriters."

*Shoot from the Hip* – fail to plan and you'll flop.

*Run Your Ad Once* – no ad is that good; frequency is key.

*Skip Consistency* – strong, lasting impressions require it.

*Don't Call for Action* – fail to ask people to do something and they won't.

*Don't Prepare a Budget* – spend your money too soon and opportunities pass by.

*Spend with the Cheapest* – good deals are costly if prospects pay no attention.

*Target Broadly* – reaching everyone reaches no one.

*Place Ads In The Wrong Publication* – if your prospects aren't reading it, forget it.

\* Adapted from "Ten Ways to Blow Your Advertising Campaign" by Apryl Duncan

### A word is more enduring than worldly wealth. – Irish Proverb

The Good Word

#### And Then, By Request.

This one goes out to Rebecca Knutson, Fargo, who many months ago wrote to say she knows several professionals who confuse "than" and "then."

Well, then, Rebecca, here you are.

When comparing one thing to another, you might find that one is more appealing *than* the other.

- I like compelling writing better *than* boring writing.
- There's nothing better with chocolate chip cookies *than* ice cold milk.

If you're talking time or

sequence, use *then*:

- First you write, *then* you rewrite.
- I ate my cookies first, *then* drank my milk.

That's about it. To quote the infamous words of Ace Ventura, "AIIIIIIrighty, then!"