

DENNY HATCH'S ULTIMATE 83-POINT MARKETING CHECKLIST

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With 50 years in direct marketing under my belt, the checklist below is hard-wired into my DNA.

If you have anything to add, change or delete, I certainly welcome your input. Contact me: dennyhatch@yahoo.com.

All Media: Your Message

1. Do you employ at least one (preferably several) of the seven key copy drivers—the emotional hot buttons that make people act?

"If your copy is not dripping with one or more of these, tear it up and start over." —Bob Hacker

Fear - Greed - Guilt - Anger - Exclusivity - Salvation - Flattery

Yes No

2. Does your copy contain some or all of the 13 most powerful and evocative words in the English language?

You - Save - Money - Guarantee - Love - Results
Proven - Safety - Easy - New - Health - Discovery - Free

Yes No

3. Since "you" is the subject of every sales effort, is your promotion about "you"—as opposed to "we," "us" or "our"?

Yes No

4. *"The prospect doesn't give a damn about you, your company or your product. All that matters is, 'What's in it for me?'" —Bob Hacker*

Are you emphasizing your product and what it will do for the prospect rather than yourself and your company?

Yes No

5. *"Probably well over half our buying choices are based on emotion."*
—Jack Maxson

"When emotion and reason come into conflict, emotion always wins."
—John J. Flieder

Is your sales pitch emotional (rather than analytical and rational)?
 Yes No

6. *"People want quarter-inch holes, not quarter-inch drills."* —MBA Magazine

Does your sales pitch highlight benefits (e.g., you get quarter-inch holes)—as opposed to features (e.g., buy this drill)?
 Yes No

7. *"Your job is to sell, not entertain."* —Jack Maxson

"Cute and clever simply don't work." —Nigel Rowe

Is your presentation cute, clever and entertaining?
 Yes No

8. Do you make an offer?
 Yes No

9. *"You cannot sell two things at once."* —Dick Benson

Are you giving the prospect too many choices?
 Yes No

10. *"The right offer should be so attractive that only a lunatic would say, 'No.'"* —Claude Hopkins

"If you want to dramatically increase your results, dramatically improve your offer." —Axel Andersson

Is your offer the very strongest one you can field?
 Yes No

11. Do you include a personal guarantee of satisfaction backed up with the real signature of a real person?
 Yes No

12. Do you have a deadline date so far in the future it loses urgency, or so near to the drop date that if a delay occurs your promotion would be dead on arrival?
 Yes No

13. Do you include testimonials from happy customers or donors?

Yes No

14. Is your offer so simple that an idiot can understand it?

Yes No

15. Have you made it easy to respond and order—by mail, phone, fax or online—whichever is most convenient for the customer?

Yes No

16. Is your order mechanism so simple an idiot can understand it?

Yes No

17. Does the response link for your offer take the customer to a special satellite page on your website that directly relates to that specific offer—as opposed to your general homepage?

Yes No

18. Has your paranoid legal department destroyed the flow of the argument with disclaimers and footnotes in gray sans serif mouse-type and/or a bunch of the following in superscript? * † ™ © 1 2 3

Yes No

19. Before going live, have you handed your promotion off to several strangers—who have no skin in the game—to make sure the whole thing makes sense, tracks, and the ordering mechanism is smooth and easy?

Yes No

20. Have you personally dialed the 800-telephone number in your ad (or website, letter, etc.) to make sure it is correct?

Yes No

21. Will the phone be answered no later than the second ring?

Yes No

22. Did you provide customer service (or order intake) with copies of sales material (brochures, print ads, infomercial, etc.), so they know what specific offer/product the caller is talking about—as well as actual product samples (if available)—so they can answer questions?

Yes No

23. Do you have a failsafe system in place that enables you to measure responses by source and determine return on investment?

Yes No

24. Are your telephone sales representatives (TSRs) trained to ask for the key code?

Yes No

25. Do your TSRs have an irresistible upsell in their bag of tricks, so they might generate some additional revenue?

Yes No

26. Have you done “secret shopping”—called your 800-number and tested the training of TSRs regarding patience, knowledge and tact?

Yes No

27. Are you able to fulfill orders immediately?

Yes No

28. *“The sale begins when the customer says ‘yes.’” —Bill Christensen*

Does your fulfillment material resell the product and reassure the customer that buying it from you was a really smart decision?

Yes No

29. Does your fulfillment material make the customer feel good about doing business with you? Does it contain a phone number and email address in case the customer has a question?

Yes No

30. Is the product or service ready to use, immediately, for instant gratification? In other words, can the customer wear it, eat it, start reading or listening to it, hang it on the wall, sit in it, or plug it in and have it do its thing the moment it’s unwrapped?

Yes No

31. Are absolutely foolproof instructions included with the shipment?

Yes No

32. Do you make it easy to return the merchandise?

Yes No

33. If the promotional effort is successful, can you turn on a dime and roll it out immediately to new prospects?

Yes No

34. Is 20 percent of your marketing budget allocated for testing?

Yes No

Readability and Creative

35. Always use serif type for copy in printed material, never sans serif. Is your printed material set in sans serif type? And is your digital copy sans serif?

Yes No

36. Do you follow Andrew J. Byrne’s dictum of short words, short sentences, short paragraphs (with no sentence longer than 29 words)?
 Yes No

37. *"Your first 10 words are more important than the next ten thousand."* —Elmer "Sizzle" Wheeler

Are your first 10 words grabbers?
 Yes No

38. *"Avoid gray walls of type."* —David Ogilvy

Does your copy have gray walls of type?
 Yes No

39. *"After two or three inches of copy, insert your first crosshead, and thereafter pepper crossheads throughout. They keep the reader marching forward."*—David Ogilvy

"An ingenious sequence of boldly displayed crossheads can deliver the substance of your entire pitch to glancers who are too lazy to wade through the text." —David Ogilvy

Are you using devices to break up the monotony of type and keep the reader’s eye moving—subheads, boxes, crossheads, charts, graphs, illustrations?
 Yes No

40. *"On the average, five times as many people read the headline as read the body copy. When you have written your headline, you have spent eighty cents out of your advertising dollar."* —David Ogilvy

Have you spent as much time on your headline as on the rest of the promotion?
 Yes No

41. *"Your headline should telegraph what you want to say—in simple language. Readers do not stop to decipher the meanings of obscure headlines."* —David Ogilvy

Does your headline make it immediately obvious what your proposition is about?
 Yes No

42. *"The headline selects the reader."* —Axel Andersson

Does your headline make it obvious who should read what you have to say?
 Yes No

43. "Type smaller than 9-point is difficult for most people to read."
—David Ogilvy

Is any type 9-point or smaller?

Yes No

44. "Never set your copy in white type on a black background and never set it over a gray or colored tint. The old school of art directors believed that these devices forced people to read the copy; we now know that they make reading physically impossible." —David Ogilvy

Is any copy set in reverse type?

Yes No

Direct Mail

45. Does your company name and address, 800 number and link to your website appear somewhere on every piece in the promotion?

Yes No

46. "A letter should look and feel like a letter." —Dick Benson

Does your letter look and feel like a letter?

Yes No

47. If the letter is personalized, does the typeface in the personalization (date, name, address, salutation) match the typeface in the body of the letter?

Yes No

48. Does the signature look real (as opposed to a computer-generated font) and is it printed in blue or black ink (as opposed to red)?

Yes No

49. Are all the elements in the mailing small enough to fit in the envelope and folded so they're machine-insertable?

Yes No

50. Have you thought about your audience and had a professional select your list accordingly?

Yes No

51. If the offer can't get delivered, its return is 0 percent and your money is wasted. Have you used all the tools you can find to clean your list so all the contact points (address, email, phone) are current and correct?

Yes No

52. Do you take advantage of the USPS tools to help keep your customer and prospect lists squeaky-clean?

Yes No

53. Do you track delivery rates on every rented list so you know if you've been conned by an unscrupulous list owner or broker?

Yes No

54. Have you checked the key coding, so that you can track the order back to the original source of the name and thus determine Return on Investment (ROI)?

Yes No

55. Have you given the lettershop detailed instructions—and a sample dummy of the mailing—so no question exists about how every element is folded, the order in which it's inserted and which side of each element faces the envelope flap?

Yes No

56. Has a USPS expert analyzed your entire mailing to guarantee that you're taking advantage of all possible technology and presort postal down to carrier route sort?

Yes No

57. Have you checked with your local postmaster to be sure the thing is indeed mailable?

Yes No

58. Have you cleared the mail date with all the list owners from whom you're renting names?

Yes No

59. Are the permit numbers on your outgoing indicia and incoming business reply mail correct?

Yes No

60. Is the address on your business reply mail correct?

Yes No

61. Do you have postage money for the mailing on deposit with your lettershop or the USPS?

Yes No

62. Do you have money deposited in your USPS Business Reply account?

Yes No

63. Did you add a variety of “seed” addresses—colleagues nationwide, who will forward the mailing to you when received—so you can see how the piece looks when delivered and the date received?

Yes No

Space (Off-the-Page) Advertising

64. *“I’ve never bought an ad at full rate in my life.” —Iris Shokoff*

Do you have a professional media buyer negotiating the best rates?

Yes No

65. Does the publication you have chosen have a history of success with direct response advertisers, and have your competitors advertised there more than once?

Yes No

66. If your ad is running in a niche publication (as opposed to general interest), have you versionalized the headline and copy to appeal to that specific readership?

Yes No

67. Is the order coupon on the lower outside corner of the ad (as opposed to the gutter, the top or worse, in the center)?

Yes No

68. Is the coupon square or rectangular as opposed to a triangle, rhomboid, circle, or some other weird and disconcerting shape?

Yes No

69. Are the reply address, phone number, email address and Web address on the order coupon as well as in the ad itself?

Yes No

70. Is there room on the coupon to legibly write a credit card account number and all other information?

Yes No

Catalogs

71. Have you included an order form (even if its printed on a catalog page) for shopping list purposes if not for ordering?

Yes No

Email/E-commerce

72. Is the subject line of your email no more than 35-40 characters max?

Yes No

73. If the recipient does not respond to your subject line, the entire email is a 100 percent failure and your effort a total waste.

Is the subject line of your email a grabber—irresistible?

Yes No

74. Will your subject line get past spam filters?

Yes No

75. Remembering that you're a mouse-click from oblivion, is your website landing page powerful, to the point, easy to navigate, and not wordy or boring?

Yes No

76. Is your landing page mobile friendly?

Yes No

77. Did you test your landing page on an iPhone, iPad, Android phone and Android tablet to make sure it works okay visually?

Yes No

78. Do distractions exist on your landing page that could take the customer's mind off the business at hand (e.g., "Investor Relations," "Press Office," "About Us," "Site Security," etc.)?

Yes No

79. Is your website unreadable because copy is in gray or pastel hues rather than clear black?

Yes No

Broadcast—DRTV

80. Are your 800 numbers and Web reply address prominently displayed in large type at the bottom of the screen throughout the commercial?

Yes No

81. Have you alerted your inbound telemarketing operation as to the precise times that your commercials are running and provided a response estimate?

Yes No

82. Have you made arrangements to handle overflow calls during spike periods?

Yes No

83. IMPORTANT: Did you have at least one professional proofreader to flyspeck your copy for misspellings, typos, errors and goofs?

Yes No

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This list owes a tremendous debt to Dr. Atul Gawande's "The Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right." Here is my 55-word review of a hugely important book for all professionals in every field:

******* The Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right** by Dr. Atul Gawande. Dazzling descriptions of how checklists are created, save lives in hospitals, help Warren Buffett analyze companies, prevent disasters on crippled airliners, enable skyscrapers to be built, restaurants to run and how Wal-Mart saved New Orleans in Katrina. Checklists keep smart people from screwing up, as well as create teamwork and foster communications. A masterpiece! Metropolitan Books, 224pp, ISBN-13: 978-0805091748, hardcover, paperback, Kindle.



At age 15, Denny Hatch—as a lowly apprentice—wrote his first news release for a Connecticut summer theater. He served in the Army (overseas on Governor’s Island writing news releases) and had nine jobs in his first 12 years in business. He was fired from five of them. He went on to save two businesses and start three others. One of those—the *WHO’S MAILING WHAT!* newsletter and archive service founded in 1984—is still on going. Denny is the author of six books on marketing and four novels, and is a direct marketing writer, designer and consultant with 40-plus years experience. His latest book is [WRITE EVERYTHING RIGHT!](#)



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