



Ray Edwards Show, Episode 276

The 10 Commandments of Hiring a Copywriter

Ray Edwards: *Ray Edwards Show*, Episode 276. The 10 commandments of hiring a copywriter without getting ripped off every time.

Sean Edwards: That was a weird mixture of voices.

Ray: Yes.

Commercial: The *Ray Edwards Show*. Live your destiny by design. Start, run and grow your own internet-based business and create the life of your dreams. You can do it. This is the *Ray Edwards Show*.

[music]

Ray: Why is it in all the old biblical epics, everybody speaks with a British accent?

Ray: Yes. It's a British accent but there are some rules, if it's Greek they're Scots.

Sean: That's true.

Ray: If it's Roman they're English.

Sean: Yes. Which makes no sense.

Ray: No.

Sean: I don't know how that Hollywood tradition got started but it continues to this day. I can understand in the naive 1940s and 50s, but we know more now. Just a thought. Okay. So you need a copywriter. Maybe you're one of the few people on planet earth who did not enroll in Copywriting Academy which you can't do now it's closed, and we're busy coaching students now. I don't know how it feels to be locked out but I'm sorry for you.

Sean: Bummer.

Ray: Anyway. You have a business, maybe you're a platform builder or product launcher, you are a speaker, a coach or trainer, you have a small business, but you know you need copy to sell your stuff and you're thinking of hiring a copywriter. That can be scary.

Sean: Yes. Because they can ask for a lot of money.

Ray: And they can not do a good job.

Sean: Right.

Ray: So you could pay a lot of money for not a good job done. Now the flip side from the copywriter's viewpoint is, they could write you fantastic copy that you pay a lot of money for. Then you could be a totally inept marketer and do everything wrong. Then you could be all upset because your copy didn't work, but it really wasn't the copywriter's fault. So how do you navigate these waters and do a good job hiring a copywriter and doing a good job working with them? If it sounds like you should be afraid you should be, and if you're not, to quote Yoda-

All speakers: "You will be."

Sean: It's always a creepy scene. I don't know why--

Ray: It was the creepiest Yoda moment ever. In today's episode, we're going to cover the 10 commandments of hiring a copywriter without getting ripped off every time.

Commercial: Does anyone want to live a life that is long and prosperous? Spiritual foundations.

Ray: Spiritual foundations. I feel now I should do this segment in a British accent.

Sean: Yes

Ray: Or if I were going to be Greek then I should do it in a Scottish accent. I'm not going to do either of those things. Do you face challenges in your life right now? Maybe it's at home, maybe it's in business, maybe it's emotional troubles or relationship troubles. Maybe your children have problems, they're in trouble or they're ill. Did you know that God is for you in these situations, He's on your side. People say God doesn't take sides, He does, He takes your side.

He says to us in the book of Romans chapter 8 verse 31, "What then shall we say to these things?" In other words, your problems. If God is for us who can be against us? So if you knew that the president or the prime minister or whomever, some big authority figure, was on your side, was for you, then you'd probably think, "Well, everything is going to be okay." But you have better backing than any president or prime minister. You have God Himself who says He is for you, not against you.

So even when bad things are happening and they do happen to good people. God promises that He will turn those things to serve you. He says that He makes all things work together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purposes. We're all called according to his purposes. If you love God, if you follow him, if you believe, then He's going to make everything work out for your good. You just need to look for that. So be encouraged God is for you who can be against you? And He makes all things work together for your good.

Commercial: Now simple hacks that make life cheaper, easier and faster. Ray's tip of the week.

Ray: Time for the tip of the week. This will be the first time in a month. The tip of the week is not about Copywriting Academy

Sean: What?

Ray: Yes, it's going to be about something different. Something that we didn't make.

Sean: Oh, man. Something not quite so self-serving?

Ray: Yes. My tip is very Mac focused this week. I want to recommend that you go take a look at the Mac Sparky Field Guides. David Sparks who is the co-host along with Katie Floyd of one of my favorite podcasts *Mac Power Users*. You could add that to the tip as well. The *Mac Power Users* podcast. If you use a Mac and you're a productivity geek or your just a geek, you definitely need to be listening to this show if you're not.

David Sparks has his own blog called macsparky.com and we'll put a link in the show notes. He writes a bunch about Mac stuff, but he's got a ton of free screencasts that show you how to use productivity apps on your Mac. Like he's got screen capture, videos that train you on OmniFocuss, PDF pin and a lot more and those are free. Then he's got some great field guides. These are both ebooks and video field guides about things like doing presentations, working with photos on the mac like the app photos, going paperless.

This is the first thing that really introduced me to David Sparks and Mac Sparky and his field guides was the paperless field guide. If you want to eliminate paper in your life this is the guide for that. Then he's got a field guide on OmniFocus, one on hazel, one on markdown, one on workflow, so much good stuff. Check out the goodness at macsparky.com.

Commercial: And now our feature presentation.

Ray: And now we come to the point in the program where we cover the 10 commandments of hiring a copywriter without getting ripped off every time.

Sean: That's good. I like that.

Ray: We've heard so many copywriter horror stories?

Sean: Yes.

Ray: I know people who have paid \$50,000 or more for copy and they never got the copy. Now what puzzles me about that is, how did that copywriter get away with that?

Sean: Yes, seriously.

Ray: I know who the copywriter is, and that has happened more than once with this person. So who are the people who go to the known non-delivering copywriter and write that person yet another \$50,000 check?

Sean: I don't know. I don't even know how that happens.

Ray: But it does happen. Based on the experiences that we've discussed with other entrepreneurs we know these things happen in the world of hiring a copywriter. Here are the seven deadly copywriter sins. We'll alternate on these. I'll do number one. Deadly copywriter sin number one, the copy was just plain bad.

Sean: Now just to clarify these are not the 10 commandments. These are--

Ray: These are the seven sins. These are the sins that the copywriter commits. These are the things that can happen to you if you hire the wrong copywriter. Sin number one, the copy is just plain bad. It's too hypey. It's too weak. It's too limp, lily-livered, or it's just information. Just like, "Here's the stuff. Here's what it costs. Buy it."

Sean: Do it now.

Ray: Paying for copy and then getting bad copy, that's a sin on the part of copywriter. Deadly sin number two.

Sean: Deadly sin number two is the copy sounded like everyone else. The sea of sameness, mired in the muck of mediocrity.

Ray: These copywriters get into this mode of they want to write something that sounds like copy, and in most markets, that's a bad idea.

Sean: Yes. I mean really what you need to say to yourself is when you're writing your copy or you're talking to your copywriter, "Is does the copy-- would it fit in? Would it work and fit in with the ad seen on TV ads?"

Ray: And if the answer is yes, you don't want that copy.

Sean: No, I mean that copy does work for it's intended audience but--

Ray: That's probably not your audience.

Sean: Yes, probably not your audience. Deadly copywriter sin number three, this is what we were talking about earlier. Your copywriter takes the money and runs. You write them a big check they go to Mexico or parts unknown.

Ray: Yes, parts unknown.

Sean: Deadly copywriter sin number four.

Ray: The copywriter never communicated with you, ever. They received everything they needed by osmosis or ESP.

Sean: Yes, and you wrote them a check and then maybe on the due date they delivered the copy but they just didn't speak to you.

Sean: Right.

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Ray: That's a bad sign. When we have copywriting clients, we-- now I say we. I don't take clients directly anymore. So, we do have a little -- this is not public knowledge yet, but I guess it is now because I'm saying it in the podcast. We work with some of our copy cubs, or copywriters in training.

Sean: Copy cubs [chuckles].

Ray: And that's what they're called.

Ray: That's lingo in the biz.

Sean: Is it?

Ray: Yes. So we work with them to help clients who need copywriting, and we over-communicate. That means what we encourage because lack of communication is a big problem for people who are hiring a copywriter. It's terrible to write somebody a big check and you can't get them on the phone anymore. So, deadly copywriter sin number five. The copy was late. This is a huge sin.

Sean: Huge.

Ray: It's huge. I have never missed a deadline for copying. I don't write copy directly for clients anymore, but when I did I never missed a deadline. Now, I did renegotiate a few deadlines which I think it's totally fair.

Sean: Right. Because you communicated.

Ray: Yes. Because I called them and said, "Look, this is really going to be tough for me to deliver. I think I'll do a better job if I have a little more time. Would this following day be okay with you?" And if they agree to a new deadline and I haven't missed the deadline, it goes back to communication. Exactly, right. But, the worst thing that can happen is you pay the copywriter, you hear nothing. The due day comes, you still hear nothing, and you have no copy.

Sean: Yes.

Ray: That's bad.

Sean: That's bad.

Ray: Bad. Okay, what's sin number six?

Sean: Sin number six is, they never ask for your feedback back so the final product was miles off target.

Ray: Yes. So, you just get the copy back in this case and you go-

Sean: "What is this?"

Ray: "What the what? We don't even sell that."

Sean: If you end up with that you have a real problem.

Ray: Yes. Deadly copywriter's sin number seven is a paraphrase of a common saying, "They found you, fooled you, and forgot you." Ideally, when you find a good copywriter you want it to be a long-term relationship, not a one-night stand. When it's a long-term relationship, you get to know one another, you begin to be able to anticipate the needs of the other person, and it works better for the copywriter, or it's better for you as the client.

Let's say that now we've frightened you to the point that you need to go change clothes. You might be saying, "Well, my gosh, I should probably not hire a copywriter." No, hire one but follow our Ten Commandments which have been handed down on stone tablets.

Sean: Yes.

Ray: The Ten Commandments of hiring a copywriter.

Sean: I like it, but even in the notes you switched to Roman numerals.

Ray: I had to. It just fits. I wish we had the sound effects that Charlton Heston had in the Ten Commandments movie every time God will shoot fire down on the tablets and write on it. Maybe, we don't. Maybe, Sean will put it in there.

Sean: Yes. There you go.

Ray: There you go, Sean. You got nothing better to do.

[background sounds]

Commandment one. "Thy copywriter shall help you determine exactly what type of copy you'll need, and how much copy you'll need to bring you the results you seek." So, this is really about communication.

Sean: What?

Ray: Setting expectations. The copywriter probably knows if you're thinking that you need too much copy or too little. So, you should talk to them about that ahead of time. Commandment number two. I want this to be a sharing **[inaudible 00:13:55]**.

Sean: "Thy copywriter shall spend time with you and your material to learn your unique voice and then fuse that voice into your copy. Your voice is what differentiates you from the crowd."

Ray: If you use that voice when you're in public, it will definitely differentiate you from the crowd. That's really good. That was very dramatic. I hope we have cinematic music behind us. We used to produce the podcast, and now we just sit down and talk and send it off to somebody else to sort out our mess.

Sean: Right, lucky you.

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Ray: Ten Commandments of hiring a copywriter. Commandment three, "Thy copywriter--" Oh, wait a minute. I have to do this the way you did it.

Sean: I was just doing it the way you did it.

Ray: "Thy copywriter shall deliver your copy on time, every time. If he does not, woe unto him, and he shalt be cast into outer darkness."

Sean: Oh.

Ray: "Where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth and stop payment of check."

Sean: [laughs] Oh, man. Commandment number four. "Thy copywriter shall set up mile markers along the way during thy project so thy can be consistently confidence that thy project is receiving the loving care it deserves."

Ray: I think that's a nice commandment. That's a feel good commitment, there's no weeping and gnashing of teeth in that one.

Sean: Are these commandments of hiring a copywriter, or like commandments to copywriters that want to be hired?

Ray: Well, it goes both ways. These are things that you as a person hiring a copywriter need to expect and require, and I would be asking the questions. If you're hiring somebody they're not--

Sean: In these voices?

Ray: Yes, in these voices. Talk in your normal voice until you get to the question.

Sean: Until you get the question. And don't give them any sort of a warning or explanation.

Ray: Just suddenly say, "Shalt thou deliver my copy on time every time, and if thou does not shalt thou be cast into outer darkness."

Sean: When they ask you, "Why are you talking like that?" Act like it's completely normal.

Ray: "What do you mean? Talking like what? Do you want a job or not?" Fun with freelancers. We are on Commandment number--

Sean: Five.

Ray: Hiring a copywriter Commandment number five. "Thy copywriter shalt check in with you throughout the process to get thy input, and make absolutely certain that thou art thrilled with the hand drafted copies thou receiveth."

This is this is just really important. You know when I did write personally for clients. I didn't in the beginning, but I learned to do this. I learned to take the headline and the

lead portion of the copy and send it to the client and ask, "How do you feel about this?" Because I'd rather get their feedback that they hate it before I write the whole thing, that just waste my time and theirs. This is important and I would--

If you ask any of these things of a copywriter who wants your business and they balk or resist then just politely get off the phone with them and go talk to somebody else. Because they're giving you a problem with the stuff up front they're going to be a problem during the project. Okay, next commandment.

Sean: Copywriting commandment number six. "Thy copywriter shalt continue to work with thou until thy copy doeseth work."

Ray: What happens so often is, I was talking with--I don't I don't think I can say his name because it might compromise him with some people that he was talking about. But a friend of mine had hired a copywriter and paid this person a lot of money to write copy and the copy was pretty good, but my friend wanted some changes. He said, "I can't get the guy on the phone anymore." It's like he took my check and delivered the project and now he won't talk to me, which is too bad because I want to give him more money.

Copywriters often are insecure buggers. I think they have a self-image problem a lot of the time, and so that's why they tend to hide out. You just want to make sure you're not working with a copywriter who has that problem because then it becomes that problem their problem becomes your problem.

Sean: Yes, that is correct.

Ray: All right, Ten Commandments of hiring a copywriter, Commandment number seven.

"Thy copywriter shalt have thy copy proofread, and ensure the text is error free and inerrant." At least, in the original manuscript.

Sean: Which one is that?

Ray: Number seven.

Sean: No, the manuscript? Which is the original manuscript?

Ray: Well, some people think it's the Masoretic text, some people think it's Textus Vaticanus. What do you think?

Sean: I think that's a different subject that I should've brought up. Actually, you brought it up, I just took the bait.

Ray: I made an oblique reference to it.

Sean: I took the bait.

Ray: Just don't think about what we just said.

Sean: All right the eighth commandment to hiring a copywriter. "Thy copywriters shall put thy copy under the watchful eye of a mentor or other senior copywriter."

Ray: Every copywriter has people like this. I have people that I give my copy to, and have them look it over. Because you can't be the judge of your own copy. I mean, Stephen King has an editor, JK Rowling has an editor. If they have to have an editor, so does your copywriter. If your copywriter thinks they're just going to hole up in their Unabomber cabin in the woods and write you a brilliant copy and don't you touch it, and don't you dare ask that somebody else look at it and critique it, wrong copywriter.

Sean: Right

Ray: Nut job copywriter, in fact.

Sean: Yes.

Ray: All right, so we are now on--

Sean: Number nine.

Ray: The ninth commandment of hiring a copywriter and not getting ripped off every time. "Thy copywriter shalt have a track record of results." This probably should go without saying, but it's a commandment so we say it. You should hire a copywriter who has proven they can actually do it, who has written copy that made money. I'm just saying, doesn't that seem like a good idea?

Sean: The final commandment, "Thy copywriter shall not just hand off that project and wish thy luck. Thy copywriter shalt be there if things go sideways ready to swoop in and save thy day."

Ray: Truth. That is truth. Again, this goes back to relationship, you want a copywriter who is going to stick with you, and wants the copy to perform, and so they're going to be available if you need some changes. Now, this is within reason. I mean, you're not going to call the copywriter back three months later and say, "We'd like a new version of the sales letter, and we don't want to pay you for it."

Sean: Yes. [laughs]

Ray: That's just crazy talk, badger.

Sean: Badger.

Ray: Don't do that. If you put the copy in the field, and your conversion rate is a little low, and you think a few adjustments will help, ask the copywriter. I think it's better to just agree to this up front. Just to say, "Well we'll get three rewrites within the first 30 to 60 days." Something like that. If you take these 10 commandments and you build them into the agreement with your freelance copywriter, you will both be a lot happier. Because you'll know the expectations and there will be no question about what's supposed to happen when.

Sean: That's right.

Ray: Those are the 10 commandments of hiring a copywriter without getting ripped off every time.

Sean: You found the show helpful, please subscribe to the show through the apple podcast app, and go to iTunes and leave us a rate and review. We will mention you on an episode at some point. To get the transcript and show notes of this episode go to rayedwards.com/276. Do you have a quote with **[unintelligible 00:23:04]**.

Ray: Yes, I do. Guy Kawasaki is the founder of Alltop said, "Ideas are easy, implementation is hard."

Sean: Wow.

Ray: That's deep.

Sean: Deep.

Ray: It's a heavy levy.

Sean: That's right.

Ray: Until next week, I pray that God blesses you and that you prosper wildly in surprising ways that leave you saying, "What the what?"

Sean: "What the what?"

Ray: See you.

[00:23:59] [END OF AUDIO]