

Color Your Copy Now!

**How Editing Your Copy with
These 6 Colors can Instantly
Improve Your Response Rate**



activate

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My son cried when I took his crayons away...

So I tried to make up for it by giving him my stapler to play with instead.

It's ok – don't worry. I made sure the clip was empty before handing it over.

You see I really needed his crayons to finish the important copy project that I am going to tell you about.

But first, let me ask you this. What is your least favorite part of the copywriting process?

Is it doing the research?

Or is it the stress of waiting for the critique to come back on your first draft?

Or how about the sleepless night before your copy goes live on a big product launch?

Many direct response copywriters got into writing copy because, well, they love *writing*.

But the actual writing part of being a copywriter is just a small piece of a project.

You see, most copy assignments can be broken down into 3 basic phases:

1. Research – This is typically the longest phase as it deals with fact finding and forming the big idea.
2. Writing – Here's where things get interesting and you begin to put pen to paper. If you've done your homework, then this can actually be the shortest of the three phases... And the most fun.

Unless of course you haven't done enough research...

Because then it turns into the part where you just have to open up a vein and begin to bleed on the page.

Come to think of it... the whole bleeding on the page bit can happen even if you *think you have* done enough research. So even more reason for the next phase, which is...

3. Editing – If you've survived the first two phases, then the editing phase is where the real testing begins.

Editing is often the hardest part of the project and therefore is the least enjoyable for many copywriters.

Because editing and writing, though related, are two very different skill sets.

And just about every experienced copywriter I know will tell you that editing your work is often the most painful part of the entire project.

But the editing phase is where true masterpieces are sculpted...

Where average sales letters are turned into breakthrough winning controls...

And where aspiring copywriters either survive the gauntlet and arise the hero...

Or succumb to the perils of defeat and limp back to their desks with their tail between their legs.

The struggle is true so much so, that even Bond Halbert, the esteemed son of the late great, Gary Halbert, recently released his new book *The Halbert Copywriting Method Part III* to help copywriters better develop the critical skill of editing.

But here's the kicker – Bond's short book, really a treatise on editing, was released **FIRST** in his three-part series.

So if the lesson of editing is that important to the heir of the "Prince of Print", then maybe it's something you and I should pay attention to as well.

An Introduction from an A-Lister

Just last week I was reminded of the agony that is editing, when I was asked to critique (and subsequently rewrite) a sales letter for a new client.

Yet because of the serendipity surrounding this new relationship, I was strangely excited about the project.

You see, I was introduced to this new client by the A-list copywriter Parris Lampropoulos as a result of participating in his once in a lifetime copy training.

Parris is one of a handful of the greatest living copywriters working today. So I took his introduction with the full reverence it deserved.

And the real cherry on top is that my client is an active member of some of the best marketing and business mastermind groups in the world.

He's a part of Joe Polish's Genius Network, is in the Game Changers program with Dan Sullivan's Strategic Coach, and is getting private consulting from the one and only Jay Abraham!

So this guy knows direct response marketing and he knows the value of great copy.

And needless to say, I *knew* the pressure was on.

That's why I had to steal my 3½ year-old son's Crayola crayons.

Here's What Happened

While I sat in my home office banging away at my keyboard, working on my client's letter, my son was in the kitchen coloring pictures of dinosaurs.

And when I went to go refill my coffee, I saw him and the idea hit me like a ton of bricks.

As I walked into the kitchen, I saw his bright lemon yellow, midnight blue and seaweed green crayons roll off the table and onto the floor.

When I went over to help him pick them up, it dawned on me that I used to use multi-colored highlighters for note taking in college.

Then I remembered an old book called *Six Thinking Hats* by Dr. Edward de Bono.

I'll explain what the Six Thinking Hats® are and how to use them for editing copy in a moment.

But for now, suffice it to say, I also used to refer to the Six Thinking Hats, back when I was a leadership coach for nonprofits.

This all came to me in a flash...

Here I was, struck with a copywriting epiphany as I bent down to pick up my son's crayons off our tile floor.

A Framework for Focused Work

Well after that, I finished helping my son, refilled my coffee and headed straight into my office.

I sat down at my desk and went back to revising the letter I was working on, but this time, I was doing it with the Six Thinking Hats in mind.

In the *Six Thinking Hats*, Dr. Edward de Bono provides a framework for *thinking about thinking*.

This framework is extremely helpful for navigating contentious team meetings or facilitating group brainstorming sessions.

The value lies in being able to hear multiple perspectives without having the conflict of competing priorities or aggressive personalities.

In fact, at one particularly combative board meeting I was facilitating as a coach, the members and I literally had to pull out a copy of de Bono's book just so we could get through the rest of the meeting without anyone being charged with battery.

But this framework could just as easily be applied by a single individual...

Say for someone who needs to focus on various elements while working on a creative project...

Much like a copywriter does.

"Thinking is the Ultimate Human Resource"

Dr. de Bono is a genius. He is widely considered the world's leading authority on teaching creative thinking and was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2005.

Dr. de Bono has taught at many prestigious universities, including Harvard, Oxford, London and Cambridge. And he has been a consultant to several top global companies, such as IBM, Siemens, Bosch and General Motors.

He has written 70 books, and his online bio at debonogroup.com says, *“Dr. de Bono was chosen by a group of academics as one of the 250 people who have contributed most to humanity **in the whole history of the human race**”* (emphasis mine).

I repeat: **Genius.**

And I’m not the first direct marketer to have gleaned insight from the creative virtuoso of Dr. de Bono. The direct mail legend Joe Sugarman writes about an experience with the de Bono “Think Tank” toy in his book *Triggers: 30 Sales tools You Can Use to Control the Mind of Your Prospect to Motivate, Influence and Persuade*.

Sugarman described the de Bono Think Tank as a *“Spherical device that holds 14,000 words printed on small pieces of plastic, with a small window through which some of the words are visible”* (page 75).

Sugarman would shake the Think Tank so that three words would appear. Then participants in his seminars would have to use those words to develop a copy theme or advertising concept.

The Think Tank is basically a combination of a Magic 8 Ball and a Mad Gab game, and is a fun way to get the creative juices flowing.

This is the type of creative thinking that made Joe Sugarman untold millions. And now the same brilliance of Dr. de Bono is available to you with the Six Thinking Hats framework for editing copy.

In the introduction to his book, Dr. de Bono says *“The Six Thinking Hats method may well be the most important change in human thinking for the past twenty-three hundred years”*.

And that *“Thinking is the ultimate human resource”* (page xi).

The genius of the Six Thinking Hats is in its simplicity and practicality.

It is a model of thinking that allows you to focus on one item at a time, even though multiple items are spinning in the background.

The premise of de Bono’s book is that the biggest enemy of clear thinking is complexity...

...The same could be said about sales copy.







So de Bono says that the Six Thinking Hats help to:

“Simplify thinking by allowing a thinker to deal with one thing at a time. Instead of having to take care of emotions, logic, information, hope and creativity all at the same time, the thinker is able to deal with them separately” (page 172).

While de Bono is writing mainly to executive teams, for our purposes, we can replace the word “thinker” with “copywriter” (assuming of course that the copywriter is thinking the whole time they are writing...but that’s another story).

The Six Thinking Hats and Why They Matter for Your Sales Copy

Here's a summary graphic of the Six Thinking Hats on the next page.
Beside each colored hat is a brief description of what each color means.

	The White Hat calls for information known or needed. "The facts, just the facts."
	The Yellow Hat symbolizes brightness and optimism. Under this hat you explore the positives and probe for value and benefit.
	The Black Hat is judgment - the devil's advocate or why something may not work. Spot the difficulties and dangers; where things might go wrong. Probably the most powerful and useful of the Hats but a problem if overused.
	The Red Hat signifies feelings, hunches and intuition. When using this hat you can express emotions and feelings and share fears, likes, dislikes, loves, and hates.
	The Green Hat focuses on creativity; the possibilities, alternatives, and new ideas. It's an opportunity to express new concepts and new perceptions.
	The Blue Hat is used to manage the thinking process. It's the control mechanism that ensures the Six Thinking Hats® guidelines are observed.

The Parallels to Writing and Editing Copy

(Photo credit: http://www.debonogroup.com/six_thinking_hats.php)

I hope by now you are beginning to see the parallels this framework of thinking has for writing effective copy.

Just as clear thinking is a big part of the research and writing phases, it is also a critical piece of the editing process.

After all, a confused mind does not buy.

So if you're a copywriter or a business owner reviewing sales copy, then the Six Thinking Hats can help give you an easy structure to use for clearly editing your work...

...And the potential for increasing your response rate.

Again, the key is to focus on each of these main elements, one at a time, and address them accordingly.

Even though there are many parts to an effective sales letter, we can break them down into certain sections.

For instance, a general outline would include a headline, lead, and body with occasional bullets, risk-reversal and close.

And beyond the mechanics, underlay a series of deep psychological aspects all adding to the gestalt of copy.

The Six Thinking Hats will allow you to evaluate these individual aspects, or "triggers" in your copy.

It provides a way for you to analyze each of the sales points made within the sentence structure of your copy.

By using the Six Thinking Hats framework and the simple exercise I am about to show you, you can feel confident in the editing process as a copywriter.

You can come away from this exercise with a visual summary of the pace, movement and tempo of your copy.

With this overview in hand, you can then make any needed adjustments in order to strengthen the sales argument of your copy.

And so, before we dive into the exercise, here are a few quick words on each of the Six Thinking Hats – from a copy perspective.

1. **White Hat – Information:** While de Bono states the white hat should be neutral, as a copywriter, you have to know when to present facts and information objectively... And when to give your opinion on them.

De Bono also contrasts the typical, argumentative, Western style of brainstorming with the Japanese style of meeting. He explains that when groups meet in Japan, the priority of each individual is to first listen to the perspectives of others.

For copywriters, this openness to seek out other perspectives, can give great insight. Much can be learned for instance, with a "voice of the customer" survey. Or perhaps, by listening to the "voice" of the manufacturer... Or even the "voice" of an unconverted prospect.

And of course, listening to the voice of your copy chief, client, or peer critique, can improve your copy as well.

2. **Yellow Hat – Solution:** Using the yellow hat is all about giving your prospects hope. It is a promise of a future benefit from buying your product.

Remember, people don't buy products. They buy solutions. So use the yellow hat to create a positive feeling for your prospect.

3. **Black Hat – Objections:** While de Bono uses the black hat to refer to caution, I like to think of it as addressing objections in copywriting.

As is often the case, the black hat is contrasted to the white. Whereas the white is concerned with information, the black hat is preoccupied with doubting it.

So when editing copy with my black hat on, I am looking for points that seem unbelievable. I'm intentionally skeptical and looking for ample proof to back up every claim.

It is also interesting to note that de Bono says the black hat is the most used and most valuable hat in a Western context.

This is because of its emphasis on critical thinking and caution. According to de Bono, the black hat *"Points out difficulties, dangers and potential problems... It prevents mistakes, excesses and nonsenses"* (pg. xii).

The same holds true for ruthlessly editing copy while wearing the black hat. You must look for the reader's objections. If the reader's objections are not adequately addressed and answered, then you've jeopardized your chance at making the sale.

4. **Red Hat – Emotion:** We know that people buy on emotion and justify with logic. So don't hold back on the touch-feely components of your product.

Think of fiery passion. Passion is contagious. Zig Ziglar used to say "Sales is the transference of feeling." Therefore be passionate and emotional with your sales presentation.

And use both positive and negative emotions to your advantage. Refer to Dan Kennedy's list of "E-Factors" or common emotional hot buttons that elicit response.

Emotions like fear, pride, love, greed, anger and guilt, all work to increase response if used correctly.

5. **Green Hat – Innovation:** Green is the color of growth. It represents liveliness, vibrancy, and fresh energy. Green ideas are stimulating, new, and full of expectant possibility.

In the hyper-competitive financial niche, where I write a lot of front-end copy, new client acquisition promotions *have* to have a fresh big idea.

These new ideas are needed in order to breakthrough the clutter of a crowded and sophisticated marketplace.

But in any industry, you should look to incorporate new ideas that hook your reader right from the start.

6. **Blue Hat – Organization & Action:** Lastly, the blue hat provides organization. It guides the flow of a sales piece like a riverbank guides the flow of water.

De Bono assigns two additional features to the blue hat that aid in its ability to give structure: Questions and a directive for action.

Specifically, there are two types of questions the blue hat can ask.

- 1.) “Fishing” Questions: These are open-ended questions left dangling to hook and reel the reader in.

They are usually baited with some kind of benefit or curiosity. Or they can be tied to envisioning an emotional state in a future scenario. I.e., “*What would it feel like for you to be debt free?*”

- 2.) “Shooting” Questions: These are cut and dry, yes or no type questions.

De Bono calls them “shooting” questions, because like in hunting, you either hit your target or you don’t. If it’s a hit, then you’ve won your prize.

But if you miss, or miss too often with the reader, then you’ve likely lost your shot at the sale with them.

Finally, the blue hat is responsible for making the call to action. Again, this is part of building the structure of the sales argument within the promotion.

According to de Bono, “*The blue hat asks for the outcome*” (page 145). It is the hat of control and shapes the problems and solutions presented.

It’s important to note too that de Bono didn’t just assign these colors meaning at random. Rather, his vast academic research into the field of creative thinking revealed these common color distinctions.

Nick Kolenda, author of the book *Methods of Persuasion: How to Use Psychology to Influence Human Behavior*, confirms de Bono’s descriptions in his marketing guide, “The Psychology of Color”.

Likewise, Roger Dooley, author of *Brainfluence: 100 Ways to Persuade and Convince Consumers with Neuromarketing* has written about color psychology and has referenced these descriptions on his blog at Neurosciencemarketing.com.

And even marketing and compliance expert Robert Cialdini has addressed the psychology of color with his chapter “What can a box of crayons teach us about persuasion?” in his book *YES! 50 Secrets from the Science of Persuasion*.

So while the conversation around color psychology can go deep, for our exercise, the brief descriptions provided above serve as a mechanism for editing copy. They provide us handles to grip as we edit. And make quickly scanning your copy for a balanced flow easy once finished.

Applying the Six Thinking Hats

Don't worry. I am not suggesting you go out and buy six different colored hats to wear at your desk when writing or editing copy.

However for those more kinesthetic types, that may not be a bad idea...

A simpler and more practical way to edit your copy with the Six Thinking Hats is to do what I did, and bust out some crayons.

Don't be afraid to steal them from a kindergartener if you have to...

After all, editing sales copy is important work... right? Right.

I suggest starting with the white crayon and begin working your way down a printout of your sales letter. And color or underlining all the facts and figures you come across in your copy.

Look for information and claims being made. Where are the statistics and sources cited? Where is the product information listed? Highlight these sections all throughout your piece.

Then follow the same process for the rest of the five colors.

At the end of your editing session, your sales letter will look like a beautiful rainbow...

Ok, maybe not so much. But it's ok. We're not after art awards anyway...

We're doing this to increase sales!

So if all this crayon talk puts you in the mood for some adult coloring, by all means, be my guest.

Just save it for after the money starts coming in ;)

A Real World Example

Take for instance the colored edits of the sales letter I told you about earlier.

Below is a scan of the sales letter I revised for my client, with edited, colored lines inspired from the Six Thinking Hats.

How You can Benefit from the Easiest Sports *FUN*draiser EVER!

- Customized Team Logo
- No Costly Upfront Inventory
- No Worries about Product Shipment
- No Door-to-Door Sales for Student Athletes
- A Renewable Stream of Revenue for Your Team

Dear Coach, Parent or Board Member,

What if there was a way to virtually guarantee that the next fundraising campaign you did was the easiest and most profitable campaign you ever ran for your sports team?

What if there was a way to consistently earn a renewable and repeatable revenue stream for your sports team, without having to deal with the hassle of spending tons of money on upfront inventory...

...Or sending your student athletes out on the street to peddle junk food, like candy bars and caramel popcorn, door-to-door in the cold to complete strangers.

Your annual fundraising efforts do not have to be this stressful anymore... You *can* legitimately earn all the money you need to operate your sports team at the highest level.

Your team can sell a great product that people actually want to buy...

...And make enough profit to quickly get your athletes back on the track, field or court, where they belong.

Coffee is the second most highly traded commodity on the planet behind oil. (And 75% of Canadians already enjoy and consume premium coffee every day!)

You can Win Big with All Star Coffee

With All Star Coffee, we've taken the traditional fundraising model and turned it on its head.

By modernizing the process with an easy to use technology platform that is totally customizable to your team's colors and logo, we've made it as EASY as possible for you to reach your team's fundraising goals.

No more upfront risk, buying expensive inventory of an unhealthy product that only generates a few cents in profit off each sale... And costs you more to store than it does bring in cash...

With All Star Coffee, each team gets \$7 dollars for every pound sold!

And every one-pound bag has a **thank you** message with your team's logo printed right on the front! So every unit sold also serves as additional advertising for your team.

And since we help you coordinate shipping, **you can rest assured** knowing that your team's supporters will receive their fresh roasted coffee just in time to enjoy the delicious taste and smooth smelling aroma.

Our master roasters have crafted our blends to be **inspired** by some of North America's best-selling coffees... and our beans are sourced from the finest growing regions in the world.

Every team that signs up gets their own customized website, complete with name and logo, to make online orders a breeze.

And each team will receive personalized emails, social media posts, and additional online support to optimize your digital marketing.

Creating Team Support and Engagement Online and Off

There is no denying it, our primary method of communication these days is digital.

At All Star Coffee, we've looked at every step in the fundraising process and have simplified it with technology.

We've made fundraising **EASY** and **profitable** by providing teams with all the digital tools necessary for running a simple and effective **FUN**draising campaign.

Best of all, All Star Coffee campaigns are designed in such a way that you can quickly and easily repeat the same campaign year after year, without having to jump through any new hoops or download any new software.

And for those fans passionate about using traditional fundraising methods, we've made traditional flyers and business cards available for supporters to spread the word offline as well.

When the power of online communication channels is paired with in person relationships, fundraising has the ability to go viral... Think "word of mouth marketing" maximized by the ability to share online with fans, groups and followers.

So How Does It Work?

Simply submit your team's credentials and team logo on the All Star Coffee website (details enclosed). And by the next business day, you will receive your team's customized All Star Coffee webpage, customized emails and social media posts, and a proven sales strategy that is guaranteed to start generating you more funds immediately....

All you have to do is forward the email, post to social media, or click the send button! It really is that easy.

Start YOUR All Star Coffee FUNdraiser Today!

www.allstarcoffee.ca

And as you can see, it is easy to tell which of the six colors I have more of and which I have less of.

In this case, the dominant rhythm of the first page goes: yellow benefit → green new idea → overcoming a black objection.

And the rhythm of the second page is: white hat information → with a green new idea → followed by overcoming black objection.

You'll notice there are also several lines of yellow benefit and red emotion sprinkled in as well. All of these follow the blue hat structure, which leads to a clear call to action.

My client loved the letter and it is already getting new sports teams to sign up for his fundraising service.

Covering the Core Elements of a Sales Letter

While the Six Thinking Hats isn't a comprehensive template for writing copy, it does provide the core elements of an effective sales presentation.

And you can even overlap the Six Thinking Hats editing framework, on top of the simple AIDA template to create a more complete letter. Just these two simple models would provide you with a solid enough sales letter to work in most markets.

The acrostic "AIDA" stands for: Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action. And it has been a classic hallmark of copywriters for over a hundred years.

You can use each of the Six Thinking Hats to compliment the AIDA formula in your writing.

For example, yellow benefits can work to grab attention and hold interest. And green new ideas can incite desire. When these elements are paired with the black hat of overcoming objections, your letter can lead to a sale.

The blue hat structure also helps to ensure you have all the essential copy sections included and balanced in your sales letter.

Run the blue hat crayon over your headline, subhead, lead, bullets, risk-reversal and close, to make sure everything flows, as it should.

You can use the Six Thinking Hats as an editing process after your first draft, in a peer-to-peer review critique, or as a business owner reviewing copy.

One fun and interactive way to do this would be to print out your sales letter and literally color on your copy with crayons, as I did in my example.

Of course you could use highlighters too, if you wanted to be a little more professional...

But the multisensory act of reading, and physically underlining your copy can have an additional benefit for comprehension.

According to Parris Lampropoulos, the thumb of your dominant hand has more nerves directly connected to the brain than any other part of your body.

And of course, I suppose you can use the Six Thinking Hats to consciously write copy as well.

One way to do this is by using the text-highlighting feature within your word processor, to keep track of the colored “hats” you’ve worn while writing.

Another, perhaps less cumbersome way, would be to list out all your points in a copy-boarding fashion, and then color coordinate them before assembly.

So for example, you would color or highlight all of your figures and statistics, white for the color of information. Emotional points would be colored in red, objections in black, and so on.

Then you could compile the copy, line-by-line, cutting and pasting each sentence as needed.

And yet another way to use the Six Thinking Hats for writing copy, would be to write out each of your main points on colored Post-It® notes or colored construction paper, and manually piece your sales letter together Frankenstein style. Then just type up what you have gathered so that it looks nice.

Color Your Copy Today!

Once you get started coloring your copy, the creative ideas are endless. The point is that if this method resonates with you, then take action on it immediately.

Feel free to do a Six Thinking Hats color edit of your most recent sales letter and send it to me for review. If you’d like, I can even post it up on my website and showcase it for others.

So go ahead, break out a box of Crayola’s and start editing your sales letters for a better response, today!

About the Author:

Joshua Lee Henry is the founder and CEO of Activate Advertising Agency, LLC. As a direct response copywriter and consultant, he primarily serves the financial publishing and personal growth niches.

Joshua’s specialty is writing long-form sales pages and marketing campaigns that convert cold traffic for his clients. He has written for the Zig Ziglar Corp., Mauldin Economics, and been a ghostwriter for Jack Canfield.

Joshua has a bachelors degree in sociology and philosophy, a masters in leadership, and an MBA certificate for Salesforce from the Drucker School of Management.

Joshua is married to his beautiful wife Larisa. Together they have a son Judah and daughter, Eden. They live in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

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