The Online Marketing Made Easy Podcast with Amy Porterfield
Session #33
How to Write Copy that Sells with Ray Edwards

Show notes at: http://www.amyporterfield.com/33

Amy: You are listening to the Online Marketing Made Easy Podcast Episode #33.

Intro: Welcome to the Online Marketing Made Easy Podcast. Business advice is so easy you'll feel like you're cheating. And now your host, Amy Porterfield.

Amy: Hi there! Amy Porterfield here and welcome to another edition of the Online Marketing Made Easy Podcast. Today, we are going to be talking all about copywriting.

Now because I like to keep it real with you, I have to admit that copywriting is not something that comes easy or natural for me. I really have to work at it and I have a lot of room to grow in this area. But one thing I know for sure is that impact and revenue are directly tied to your ability to write great copy. That's one thing that I just know for sure.

Now, for those of you who are new to all of this, let's just be really clear about what copywriting really means. The concept is simple. Copywriting is all about writing words that persuade people to do or buy something. Now, the concept is simple but fine tuning the skill takes some time. But it's worth the effort because as I mentioned, stellar copy makes a true impact in the success of your business.

Now, I'm not an expert by any means in this area but I have a really good friend that is. I have invited copywriting expert, Ray Edwards to come on the show today. Now, Ray and I go way back and it's a little bit surreal to me that we actually are friends in this phase of my life because here's the deal. What feels like a lifetime ago when I was still working with Tony Robbins, we were in need of a killer sales letter for a big product we had just created. And at the time, we were getting one-on-one consulting with internet marketing rock star is I guess what you would call him, Frank Kern. So if you don't know Frank Kern, this guy is a master at online marketing and internet marketing and all that good stuff.

So Frank Kern actually suggested that we reach out to Ray Edwards to ask him to write the sales letter for this big product launch we are doing. Well, it turns out that that was the best decision we ever made because he nailed it. Ray really got the essence of what Tony

wanted to say in this letter and it converted. Every single time we would use it, we knew that we were going to hit a homerun.

So right then and there I knew that Ray was the real deal. Well, fast forward to about five years which is now present day, and Ray and I are actually still friends and probably even better friends than we were back then.

Now here's the deal. If you told me five years ago when I was still in the marketing department working with Tony, if you told me, "Amy, one day, you will have your own online business. You will have your own podcast and Ray is going to come on your show for an interview." I would have looked at you and say that you are kookoo. I would never have ever believed you.

You might have heard me talk about this in some of my other podcasts but I've never really had that entrepreneurial spirit. I wasn't necessarily born with it. However, I always had that kind of angst inside of me that I wanted to do my own thing. But back then I wasn't thinking, "What kind of business could I create on my own?"

So we will talk about that in a whole another show and I'm sure I've talked about it before. But again, the reason I tell you this is because back then, if you told me that, I would have thought you were crazy. So if you are starting something new and you're not sure where it's going to take you and it feels really, really scary, I want you just to push yourself and keep moving forward. Don't look back. You'll never know exactly how it's going to turn out but if you keep taking action and get that momentum, you might just be pleasantly surprised with what you can create. I am a perfect example of that.

OK. So this is not about me although I got off track a little bit. So let's get back to the episode. Again, we're going right into copywriting. I think you're going to get immense value out of this mini copywriting training with Ray Edwards. So let's go ahead and dive in.

Ray, thanks so much for being here today. I have literally been looking forward to this since the minute you said you would do it. So thanks for being here.

Ray: I am so excited, Amy. Thank you.

Ray: Yeah. This is such a treat. Now, as I told you, this is a hot topic. Copywriting in general is something that I know my audience is interested in. It's a little bit mysterious to some of us. And I just thought you are the perfect person to come on the show and really make it make sense to all of us. And before we get there, I just want to read something

from you blog. I didn't tell you I was going to do this but I found something on your blog that was perfect.

So do you mind me reading your own words?

Ray: No, not at all.

Amy: Kind of a little awkward I know but it was just so good. So bear with me guys because it's not too long but it's just so good I had to read it. So this is what Ray said on one of his blog posts.

He said, "If you truly want to start your own business or create a second income stream, one of the first things I would recommend you learn is the basic skill of powerful copywriting. Now, this is not some get rich quick scheme. This is a serious business skill that can provide you with a comfortable six-figure annual income for the rest of your life. You can run your business from anywhere. You can dream up promotions and campaigns, write the copy, put the plan into profit all in the same day.

And yes, you could retire from your present job and use your copywriting skills to build your own marketing empire working wherever and whenever you want. Or you can keep struggling along like most internet marketers. That road leads to nowhere. You don't need to learn the new shiny object of the week system. You don't need the latest greatest website. You just need a skill that is valued and that has the power to give you leverage. The skill I recommend starting with is the ability to write persuasive copy."

And I thought that pretty much sums up the reason why I have you on the show today.

Ray: Oh, that's pretty good. I think I want to write some copy now.

Amy: Good stuff, right?

Ray: Yeah.

Amy: I'm telling you, this gets you to take action. So here is where I want to start. First, I know a lot of my audience will tell me, "Amy, I don't think that I am a good writer." And tell me what you say to people because based on what I've learned from you, I don't think you need to be born with that writing gene to be good at copywriting. Would you agree with that?

Ray: Absolutely. And I think for those people who say, "Well, I'm not really a good writer. I didn't do good in English Lit class."

Amy: Yes.

Ray: I say, "Good for you." Because the people who did really well in English Lit class are the people who struggle the most with writing persuasive copy because persuasive copy is very conversational. It's very informal. It's you writing the way people talk except cleaned up just a little bit. When I say cleaned up, you leave out the "uhms" and "uhs". And if you just recorded yourself having a conversation with somebody and you transcribe that, you would think, "That's kind of awkward." So you would clear it up a little.

But it's learning to write in a conversational way that communicates with people. And people who are stuck on the grammar and the proper construction of a paragraph or diagramming a sentence really have a harder time. So if you don't think you're a very good writer but you can write an email to someone, to a friend, or you can write a post on Facebook, you've got what it takes.

Amy: Really? Because that probably makes a lot of people breathe a little bit easier. That's good stuff. Now, tell me though. Really, I know this is a big question and it's kind of not very specific but where did they start? If they just don't know, they have never done persuasive copy in a way that has converted their leads to actually become customers and they – a lot of my audience wants to write emails because I teach list building. So build up an email list, I think that's a golden piece of your business. But once you have this list, what I'm getting a lot now is, "What do I say in these emails? What do I write? How do I get people to become my customer?" What would you say? That's such a big question.

Ray: Well, you want to write things that are first valuable to the people that are reading them. So want to write something that conveys valuable information. It's really the question about content marketing. That's a big buzz word these days.

Amy: Yes.

Ray: People think, "Oh, I just give away lots of free content and then I'll sell things." Well, maybe, maybe not because if your content is great content but it doesn't move people along a spectrum toward a buying decision, it won't help your business. So this will sound overlay simplistic but you want to write emails. Let's just take that email autoresponder sequence that you probably have on your to-do list.

Amy: Yup.

Ray: You want to write email that is promotional content that actually adds value. A better way of putting it probably would be that your value-adding content should always have a promotional element.

Amy: OK. Tell me more about that.

Ray: OK. So it's a mistake to think that your content that adds value and your promotional content are two different things because you don't want to train your readers to see a difference. You don't want people thinking, "Oh, this is one of Amy's promotional emails. It has no value and so I'll skip it."

Amy: Yes.

Ray: No. You don't want people to think that. So I advise always having a promotional link in every email.

Amy: Do you?

Ray: Yes.

Amy: OK. This is good. I totally agree.

Ray: I do because you want your readers to be trained to expect a link, to click on the link, and to be rewarded, to get value from doing it. So for example, you might give them a link in one email to a video training of yours that's free. Just maybe a quick snippet or a short segment and bam! I clicked on Amy's link. I got value.

So the next email, you might give me a link to a video where someone else is teaching something. Maybe it's a free segment from a workshop that Tony Robbins gave or an online episode from his *Breakthrough* TV show or it's some tutorial that you thought was really helpful. And it's not something that you even did but as a reader, what I'm trained to see is, "I clicked another link that Amy sent me and I got value again." So the next email might contain a link to your sales page. But I've been conditioned now to know, "Every time I get an email from Amy and every time I clicked on it, I get value." So I don't feel like you suddenly switched the game on me.

Amy: Oh, I see what you're saying. OK. So when you say every email should have a promotional component but if I wrote an email and I link to a video, I'm not necessarily promoting in that video.

Ray: Not necessarily. Now, I don't want people to get the wrong impression. I don't think that you will forever have a ratio of sending a whole bunch of links that have nothing to do with what you're selling. But I do think it's important to let people know that every email you send has a link and that every time they click a link, there is value in it one way or the other.

And as far as writing content that is useful and valuable to people versus how much content do you write that's promotional, I use something that I call the 90-10 rule. And it's not really a rule. It's kind of a guideline.

Amy: OK.

Ray: Ninety percent of the emails should be content and ten percent should be promotional. So 90% of the email is content that motivates, educates, or inspires the reader. And the last 10% is a promotional element that directly is related to the content that you just gave them. So …

Amy: Perfect.

Ray: The content has to be really useful, something they can either use right away or – and here's a really important distinction, that they can picture themselves using and getting an immediate benefit.

So psychologists tell us that our brain doesn't really seem to be able to differentiate between an actual experience and a vividly imagined experience. So if you can help your readers vividly imagine doing what you recommend and getting the benefit from your content, they feel that it has already benefited them, that it has already helped them.

So their emotional state at that moment is, "Amy just really helped me. Now, I'm ready and open to hear what she has to say about her new program because I already know. Amy helps me."

Amy: OK. That's a huge distinction right there, huge aha for me because – so you're saying when you write these emails and you're giving value and you're helping them and you're telling stories that benefit them in one way or the other, that's how, the way I see it, that's how I'm building my relationship, building my affinity and my trust.

And so through that is why they're more inclined to then click that link that leads to my program, product, or service.

Ray: Absolutely.

Amy: Ok. So I do the work upfront. And that's where I think a lot of people find a disconnect because they're trying to write one, emails that add value then the next email they're writing is their promotional email. And you made such a great point that there shouldn't be a difference between the two. Your audience shouldn't see the difference.

Ray: That's absolutely right. One of the most successful emails that we've sent out to my list in a long time was one that I sent very recently about a program where I'm teaching people how to write a book quickly. And the email was really an inspirational article, if you will, that tell people how to do that. Some keys to actually getting that done. So it was 90% content. I'll read to you just the beginning of the email.

Amy: Oh good.

Ray: And then I'll tell you how I made the transition.

Amy: Love it.

Ray: So the email starts this way. "I have a question for you. Do you feel like you have a book inside of you but you just never seem to get around to writing it? Have you ever wondered why you don't ever seem to get that book written? Maybe you tell yourself that you will do it someday. Let me tell you the truth. Someday is usually code for never. It's like that sign hanging in the coffee shop that reads, 'Free coffee tomorrow.' No matter how many times you show up at the coffee shop to get your free coffee, you always have to come back tomorrow. Tomorrow and someday never actually come. Look, if you have decided that you're just never going to actually write a book, that's cool. You certainly don't need to write one to be a worthy human. But if you want to write a book, isn't it time you get it done?"

And then I go through five keys to writing your book quickly. And they're really meaty, useful information that any reasonably intelligent person could put to use right away and they could get started in writing their book. But toward the end of that, after I write the last key, I transitioned this way.

I have a little header in my email that says, "What to do right now? Review the steps above and get started. That's what you need to do right now. Writers don't talk about writing. Writers write. If you would like to know some of my own personal tricks on how to get a book written in 30 days or less, you might want to register for my free webinar training."

And then I give a little paragraph about the webinar training. They got lots of great content and they got a promotional link at the same time.

Amy: OK. Masterpiece. If I could have one ounce of what you have in that head of yours, I would be making billions. That was a good stuff.

OK. I know you're going to talk a little bit about why you did what you did but you just made me think of something. Oh, one thing that comes up a lot is my audience says, "Well, how do I know if I'm giving away too much? That they're just not even going to need to click that link because I just gave them some of my best stuff in those, let's say, five points?"

Ray: Well, OK. So here's – this is the most fun thing. I love to talk about this. I believe your best marketing is your best material.

Amy: Do you? OK.

Ray: I really do. I don't hold anything back. Here's the truth of the matter. In the five points that I gave in that email, I gave a complete outline. Anybody who is smart enough and motivated enough to read the email could take what I gave them and do what I talked about. They could get their book written in 30 days.

The turning point is when they realized, "I probably could get it done easier if I had Ray to help me through the details instead of having to figure it all out myself."

Amy: Yes. Right. That is so perfect. That's what it is. You can teach them all you want to teach them inside these emails or these blog posts. But when they realized, "I have the Ray factor to it" and then everything seems more streamlined, less stress, less overwhelm."

Ray: Exactly. And so on the webinar, just like you do with your webinars, I teach really great material on that webinar. And at the end of the webinar, I said basically the same thing I said in the email, "You can take what you just learned and you can go put it to work and get this done. Now, if you want help from me directly in a more in depth way, we've got a program you may want to know more about. And here is how that works." And we had a 40% conversion rate on that webinar.

Amy: Wow! That's really good.

Ray: People who bought the program. Yeah. So you're giving away your very best stuff. But people, what they want from us, Amy, I believe is teachers, is they don't really want information. They want transformation.

Amy: Yes, so true. Now, that leads to a really important question. You open that email up with questions, which I know that style and I love grabbing them right away with something that they can reflect on. But those questions you asked were so personal and I don't ever want to write a book because I did and it was painful. However, there are so many people out there that want to write a book and you knew those questions would spark something in them, stir something in them. How did you know which questions to ask?

Ray: Because I listen to what my readers and my customers and my audience tell me. And I really pay attention. I read all the emails that come in to our email accounts. I read all the comments on the blog. Particularly when I see people who subscribe to the podcast or to the autoresponder sequence, I just pay attention. And when I see people that I know are active and especially if they've bought something in the past or they're a new subscriber. Just something that indicates to me this is a person that is taking some actions. I will actually go and follow them on social media. I'll look at their Twitter profile. I see what they're talking about.

And you just really have to get to know the people that you're talking to. And there's no magic way to do it other than get to know people. Pay attention to what they say. What language do they use? What words do they use?

And I've done a couple of surveys of my readers asking what they're interested in. I always give them room to write their own words about what they would like to learn or what they would like to know more about. And I pay attention to the words that keep cropping up over and over again.

Amy: Yes. That's something I learned when I worked with Tony. The fact that I was likely using words, let's say, when I was working on marketing materials with Tony, I was using words that made sense in my head but he would remind me, "That is not what our customers is asking for. That's what they're thinking in their head." The same concept. I've heard it so many times where if you have a headache, you're not going to Google – what is that thing that people use? Have you ever heard that? You don't Google aspirin, you Google headache or something like that. I'm totally screwing this up. But knowing the words people are actually using is so very important.

Ray: Right. I mean we have the language that we use and it's – some people refer to this as the curse of knowledge because we know all the terms. We know what they mean. We

know what copywriting is. I try not to talk too much about copywriting to people because invariably, half the people will think I'm talking about protecting their intellectual property.

Amy: Oh, good point. That's funny because when I was doing research for this podcast, I was looking for Ray Edwards copywriting. I wasn't finding as much there. Of course, I found a little because you have a book about it. And we'll talk about that. But I found more when I went to your blog and just started reading all the different posts and realized it's in everything you talk about one way or the other I think. So that's such a great point.

Ray: Absolutely. And there's a great copywriter from the previous century named Robert Collier and he famously said, "You have to join the conversation that's already taking place in the mind of your reader." And I think Tony uses a phrase, he says, "The easiest way to influence people is with what's already influencing them." And it's how they talk about the things that are influencing them and the language that they use."

People don't –generally, the general public doesn't want to learn how to write good copy. What they want to do is they want to sell more of the stuff that they sell.

Amy: Yes. That's exactly what it is. I think that was my really messed up metaphor there with the aspirin and the headache. They want – what they want is they want to sell more. And that is exactly what I'm hearing so much from my audience. And that reminds me, when somebody wants to sell more and they want to talk about it, let's say on a sales page or in an email, and let's give like an actual example.

Let's pretend like I am a fitness coach so I actually have services that people can sign up for and either do them virtually or in-person, whatever it might be. And I want to talk about that let's say, in an email. What are some things I want to think about in terms of talking about my service without just being completely annoying in the way I'm selling it?

Ray: Well, this gets at the heart of a concern for a lot of people. And that is, they want to sell more but they don't want to be salesy.

Amy: Exactly. And they shy away from it like they actually don't sell enough because of that concern right there.

Ray: Exactly. So what I recommend doing is don't make the mistake of giving away tons of free content that doesn't move people along the buying continuum to the point where they get ready to make a purchasing decision. But what you do want to do is when you send out those emails or you write those even sales pages, I work hard to make sales pages in and of themselves valuable. I always ask myself this question. If somebody reads this sales

page, will they actually get some value out of it even if they don't buy anything from me? And if the answer is not yes, I know I haven't finished my work.

And I like to think through the ten most frequently asked questions that people have before they buy my product or my service. And I'll answer those questions in the form of content. So it might be if I'm a fitness trainer, it might be what to look for when you're thinking about hiring a fitness trainer.

In fact, when I started my career as a copywriter, I sort of just stumbled on to this idea. I wrote a paper, a whitepaper is what I thought of it as, which was how to hire a copywriter without getting ripped off because that was something that I saw people talking about a lot. They were paying for these services and they were not happy with what was happening in the end result. People were not delivering the copy on time.

So you transfer this to a fitness trainer example. For instance, it might be that people are worried that they don't want to hire a fitness trainer that's going to push me harder that I want to be pushed or that's going to maybe caused me to injure myself or not be sensitive to my particular needs that I have in working with a fitness trainer.

So I might write how to hire – ten tips for hiring a fitness trainer who works with you instead of against you. And you think about the questions that your audience is asking and if you know your customers and your prospects really well, you know the things that come up. In fact, in the sales world, we call these questions objections.

Amy: Yes.

Ray: I don't like to call them that because I don't think that's what they are. Here is something to keep in mind. If people are reading your sales page or your email autoresponders, here's a secret. They secretly are pulling for you to have the answer that they're looking for. They want you to be the answer to their question. They're basically coming to your material saying, "I really want you, Amy, to have the answer to how to promote my business on Facebook. I'm hoping that you do and I'm really hoping that you'll show me and demonstrate that that's true." And we forget that. It's not an adversarial relationship. They are on our side.

So if you keep that in mind, you start thinking through, "Well, what are the questions that people want answered before they make a buying decision?" So, one of the questions for fitness trainer probably is something like this, "I'm really out of shape. I'm carrying a lot of extra pounds. I haven't exercise in ten years. Is this going to be right for me or is it going to be too much for me?"

So as a fitness trainer, I might write, if I work with people like that then I might write an answer to that and say, "Here is why you don't need to worry about this. When you choose the right trainer, they're going to be sensitive to your needs." And you walk through the actual qualities that you possess that will be able to help them make a good decision.

So I like to think through the ten most frequently asked questions and then I like to think about the ten should asked questions, the things that they should be asking but they probably haven't thought of but that I know they should ask.

Amy: Oh, this is good. Tell me more about that because this is something people don't talk about a lot.

Ray: Well, whatever your product or service, there are probably common objections or questions that come up that you know pretty well. And there are also questions that you think to yourself, "If they really knew what they were getting themselves into, they would be asking these questions. These are the questions they should ask that are more important."

So I like to make a list of those questions, things that I know are important for my customers and my readers to know and I would alternate. I would have, "This is a way to come up with 20 emails." The topic for – a lot of people say, "I don't know how to write all these emails. I don't know what to write about."

Amy: Yes, exactly.

Ray: Well, so you take your ten most frequently asked questions and you come up with your ten questions that people should be asking. And by the way, these are questions that will help them evaluate a buying decision and presumably, that buying decision will be in your favor.

In my example when I wrote my paper on how to choose a copywriter, I did essentially what I'm explaining right now. And guess what? I was the only copywriter I knew of who met all the criteria that I outlined in the paper.

Amy: Imagine that?

Ray: It's funny how that worked out. Now conceivably and probably, I'm almost certain of this, there were other copywriters who did but I was the only one I knew of. And of course, I built it around my own unique qualifications and the kind of clients that I was looking for.

And so, you can do the same in whatever your area of expertise happens to be. But you set the criteria and you do it in a way that's informative and helpful even if they never do business with you.

Amy: That's what I'm so glad you just brought up because as you're writing this paper, I'm sure the paper was not all about you blatantly. I do this and I do that.

Ray: Oh no! No, no.

Amy: So that's where I think people get a little bit stuck. You are putting it out there like, "Here are some valuable information even if you never ever do business with me."

Ray: And I actually use that language. And here's a more important point. I actually mean it.

Amy: Yes.

Ray: I want people – if they read what I've written and they decide that I'm not the person that they need to do business with, well, I don't want to do business with somebody who doesn't feel like I'm the right person for them, not because I don't like them but because that would be a bad fit for them, it would be a bad fit for me. But I want to give them some value that will actually give them a set of good criteria to make a decision even if the decision is not to work with me because that's what we're really after. We're not really interested if we're writing copy at the most powerful level in making every person say yes. What we are interested in is getting every person to make a decision.

Amy: Yes, whether it would be one way or the other.

Ray: Yes! And that's a powerful place for you as the business owner and it's a powerful place for the individual because my experience is Amy, we always know. When we're at that point of decision inside, we really know yes or no. But oftentimes, we are conditioned to just put the decision off. And that is not a powerful place for people to operate.

Amy: So true. I never really looked at it that way. But getting them to do one thing or the other, you've actually moved them to action. It might not be in your favor just yet but at least you help them make a decision.

Ray: Exactly. And the truth is, if they've stuck with you long enough to sign up for your webinar or for your email autoresponder series or they're following your work, they

probably have already decided that they want to work with you at some level, that you are the right person for them. You're just helping them be comfortable with that decision.

Amy: Oh, that's a great way to put it. Yeah, that makes perfect sense. Tell me this, while you were saying all this, I thought, "Does this whitepaper that you wrote, does it still exist?" It must still exist on the web somewhere, right?

Ray: It's funny that you ask because I knew I was going to talk about that this morning. I went looking for it and I can't find it.

Amy: What!

Ray: I'm going to dig around. It was so many years ago. Hey, it was back in the days when there were still – do you remember a thing called a BBS?

Amy: No. What is that?

Ray: Well, it's bulletin board service. You had to actually dial into the internet with a phone.

Amy: No way!

Ray: Yeah, it's true.

Amy: And it was the – so you dial in and then what happens?

Ray: I was on the CompuServe at the time.

Amy: OK.

Ray: Do you remember CompuServe?

Amy: I do. I do.

Ray: So you dialed in, it made that noise. It would be like [mouth sounds].

Amy: That was really good, Ray.

Ray: I heard it so many times. And then you would log in to the discussion forums. And I posted it on a discussion forum and it was really just a flyer. Just something that I took as a – when I say a flyer, I mean I was just taking a chance that it would work. I wrote it up and

I posted it and it became one of the most popular posts. It got – what do they call it? Pinned to the top of the discussion forum.

Amy: OK. So tell me this. If you find it before we go live, can I link to it or put a PDF or something under this?

Ray: Yes.

Amy: OK, good.

Ray: Absolutely.

Amy: We will put it in the show notes if we can find it and I bet, Ray, I bet someone is going to find it for you if you can't find it.

Ray: I bet you're right.

Amy: I have this good feeling. I think it would just be very cool. A lot of the people listening could really benefit from an article such as the one that you're talking about. And so, that would be the way to start that conversation but also, teach yourself to take yourself out of it in terms of me, me, me but still write an article that really makes you look like, "I know my stuff and I'm your guy/I'm your girl." So, we will look for it and see if we can find it.

One of my questions to Ray was going to be related to the fact that I get a lot of emails that say, "Amy, what do I write on a weekly basis? You teach us how to get these leads off Facebook, what am I doing with these leads to keep them engaged?" And exactly what Ray said right there about the objections and what questions are they not asking but they should be asking.

Take the next hour. Just sit down in front of your computer and start brainstorming all of these different objections and questions not asked that you think should be asked. You will have months of content right there in front of you.

Ray: Yes.

Amy: And I think – do you – now, tell me a little bit about your process. I want to switch gears a little bit and I have two questions for you. One, do you batch your content? How do you work in terms of getting a lot of stuff written in a short amount of time?

Ray: I do batch my writing and my content. I keep a text file on my desktop that has ideas. Anytime I think, "Oh, that would make a good blog post or that would make a good email," I just – I think in subject lines. So I write the subject line or the title of the article or the blog post and I pop that into my little text file. I mean literally, it's like the text program on my computer. It's nothing fancy.

So when I sit down to write, I have a period of time blocked out typically, three or four hours and I will sit down and just go – scan through those titles and look at the ones that appeal to me the most where I think, "Oh, I could write that right now. I'm inspired about that." And I just start typing.

And for me, the key is having focused blocks of writing time. I shut off my instant messenger, I shut off my telephone. I don't have Facebook. As much as I love it, I don't have it up or on the screen. All I have is what I'm writing. And my rule is, while I'm writing, while the digital timer is counting down, I'm only allowed to sit there and I may or may not write. But I have to sit there in front of the keyboard. And eventually, even if I'm not writing, I'll get bored and I'll start writing just to have something to do. And I just keep writing until I'm either finished or the timer runs out, one or the other.

Amy: Perfect. Great. That's really helpful. Also, you reminded me of something. When you were reading that email that you wrote about the book writing seminar that you do, I could imagine that the format that the email was in even the style, the bolding, the bigger texts or smaller texts or whatever it might be, is that something that you spend time thinking about?

Ray: Oh, absolutely because the way things look visually really impacts the way we receive them. And you do a great job with this with your emails. Your emails look very personal like they come from you, not like they're an ad or a brochure from a company.

Amy: Right.

Ray: But I can tell, you give a lot of thought to how that email looks and what gets bolded and what doesn't. You don't go overboard with that stuff. But you know there are certain phrases. It's helpful to break copy up into smaller chunks for instance like your English teacher would not be happy to know that you're writing paragraphs that are two or three sentences long at the most.

Amy: Right.

Ray: Because that's not the right way to write a paragraph. But on the web, if you give somebody a big block of text, their eyes glaze over and they move on. So you got to keep it scannable.

Amy: Scannable, that's such a great word whether you're writing sales copy on a sales page or in an email, that's the word you really want to think about. And I think I learn this from Derek Halpern of Social Triggers but he was saying that there has actually been studies done where people look at a block of content and it just looks too long like actually in length on the page, they're not going to read it.

Ray: That's absolutely true. There have been many studies that have proven that that's true. There are three behaviors that people engage in when they come to any web page or anything that has text on it. And that is, they skim, they scan, and they scroll. And so, whatever you've written, they're going to skim across the beginning of it. They are going to scan down through the body of the text and they're going to scroll down toward the bottom of the page.

And so, what I'm trying to do when I wrote copy is make those section headers, those bolded little headings that tell what this next little section of copy is about. Make them compelling enough that people will stop their scrolling, go back to the beginning and start reading because they want to know what I'm talking about.

Amy: Yes. I think that's such a great lesson to remember that no matter how great your content is, if you don't format it in a way that – I love that. So skim, scan, scroll, are those the three?

Ray: Yes.

Amy: Think of those words when you're writing and really pay attention to how you're reading content and what keeps you from reading or what will make you go back. I'm notorious for the three words you just said. But if something grabs me especially in a headline, I'll go back. I want to make sure it's first worth my time. So the format of that email is so very important.

And one other thing and then I promise I'll wrap it up. But one other question I have for you is I feel like you are the king of really elegant brevity. Like you do not go on and on in your blog post but you just give me these great lessons really quickly. Like what is your secret for not going on and on? Because I go on and on like I am right now. I can't stop sometimes. But you don't. Like what is that? I need that.

Ray: Oh, thank you. That's so gratifying to hear you say that because I work hard to do it.

Amy: Do you?

Ray: I tend to go on and on. If you get me talking, you'll discover that that's true. What really opened my eyes to this was reading two different fiction writers. I read – I started reading books by a guy named Robert Parker. He passed away a few years ago. And he wrote – if anybody remembers the *Spenser: For Hire* TV series.

Amy: Yes, I do.

Ray: It was actually based on a series of novels that Parker wrote about a detective named Spenser. And the novels were, let's just put it this way, a lot better than the TV show but they were very brief. He had a very staccato abbreviated sort of writing style. And I started studying writers who are like that.

Elmore Leonard who is the guy who – he also passed away recently but he inspired a TV show called *Justified*, which is a big hit for FX these days starring Timothy Olyphant. My wife seems to like that show a lot for some reason.

Amy: Well, he's kind of a handsome guy.

Ray: Yeah, that's what she tells me. And it really harkens back I think to Ernest Hemingway who had a similar writing style. And he really – he has four rules of writing and I teach people this in my writing course. I teach them that you need to write – use short words, use short sentences, use short paragraphs and write in active language. And those are Hemingway's four rules of writing. And I have them pinned on the wall near my desk.

Amy: I love that. I do. Talk to me really briefly active language. What do you mean?

Ray: So active language versus passive language and this gets people bogged down but it's really kind of simple. If I say to you, "The glass was thrown across the room by Amy." That is passive language. The subject is the glass and something happens to the glass. But it's a passive kind of happening. If I say, "Amy threw the glass across the room." That's active. It's vigorous. The subject now is Amy and what happened was she threw the glass.

So active language feels alive and vital. Passive language feels like you're just slightly removed from the action.

There was a famous political scandal where someone in the administration said, "Mistakes were made." Well, that's passive language and it kind of distances me from the mistake, right? It's not saying, "I made a mistake." It's saying, "Mistakes were made."

Amy: Yes.

Ray: And what's more arresting and gripping is if you can say, "Look, I made a mistake." Then people are more drawn to that kind of active, vigorous sort of language.

Amy: Yeah, they are paying attention. They are with you. Perfect. I love that. There is so much – gosh, Ray, we might need to do a part two because there is so much that we could get into. I am so happy, truly happy that you came on the show to talk about this because these are the topics that are coming up again and again with my audience. So when I can kind of hit a home run with someone, which I feel like I've done with you, I could not be more grateful. So thank you so much for being with us and talking to us about all of this.

Ray: Thank you for inviting me. I've really enjoyed it.

Amy: And I could listen to your voice forever. I think there are a lot of people that will agree with me in the comment of the show notes because seriously, you got just the greatest voice.

Now, here's the deal. There's a few things I've got to ask you. First, you – and I downloaded these and I love them. You have this pack of copywriting infographics and they are so good. Now, how can people get their hands on that?

Ray: Well, if you just go to RayEdwards.com, a helpful little box will pop up.

Amy: I love the pop up box.

Ray: It will allow you to put your email address in and will give you access to those infographics. And we're actually adding some things to that package. We got a couple of short little e-books that are helpful for people wanting to write copy. And I'm also doing a quick little video that does a walk-through. This is something that people have asked me for. We talked about listening to your audience. I keep getting requests from people saying, "Hey, I love those infographics. Could you maybe do an audio or a video that sort of explains how to use them?" So we're going to do that as well.

Amy: Oh, good. I love that. So definitely, go to RayEdwards.com. Sign up for his infographics. I have them and I love them. And of course, they're totally free.

One more thing I'll say. In the intro, I mentioned that you have a book. Now, my question to you, this book is, *Writing Riches*. You can get it on Amazon. We will link to it in the show notes. But the question for you is that if I am totally a beginner at all of this, a lot of my audience, not everybody but a lot are just starting out building their online business. Is this book too advanced for them? Is it a good place for them to start? Tell me a little bit about that.

Ray: It's written for absolute beginners who don't know anything about any of this. And it's also filled with a lot of information that people who have been doing it for a long time have told me, "Hey that was really useful. I learned something from this book." So I think you can pick it up even if you've never done any copywriting and you don't really – you're not comfortable with the whole idea yet. You can read this book and get some really good solid advice that gets you started.

Amy: Perfect. I didn't even know that it was written for a beginner so that makes it even all the more better. So, thank you so much, Ray. I just really value our friendship. I'm glad we kind of rekindled. As I mentioned in the intro, Ray and I met many – it feels like a lifetime ago, many years ago when you were working with Tony Robbins and I'm so glad we are still friends. So thanks for being here.

Ray: Oh, it's my pleasure. I feel the same way. Thank you, Amy.

Amy: Take care. So there you have it. I hope this mini copywriting training with Ray has inspired you to make copywriting a core focus as you build your business. Now, make sure to check out the show notes at AmyPorterfield.com/33 for any of the links that we talked about in the show today.

Also, remember I've just launched a new feature of this show called Ask Amy. So if you want to actually record a question for me that I answer on the podcast, just go to AmyPorterfield.com/AskAmy and you can record your message there. I would truly love to hear from you.

So thanks again for spending the last or so with me and I can't wait to talk to you next time. Take care.

Outro: Thanks for listening to the Online Marketing Made Easy Podcast at www.AmyPorterfield.com.

Show notes at: http://www.amyporterfield.com/33