



Insights — 2012

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Copywriting in Singapore

Copywriting is everything you read. A great piece of copy can be all that stands between good and great. Copywriting is culture-specific. Singapore has a unique culture that copywriters must embrace if they are to please the crowd, and their clients. Singapore affords ample opportunity to anyone willing to work hard and create something great.

By the time Quantico picked up momentum, we were already writing copy for clients in many countries, Singapore included. What struck us most about Singapore was the ease at which communication flows. With four distinct languages, Singaporeans are constantly grappling with the subtleties and nuances that affect language, and English is no exception. Yet the efficiency with which communication travels is unparalleled. It was this flow of efficiency that piqued our interest. When we set about creating Quantico, we decided to create a copywriting platform that could match this efficiency with the quality required to make every piece of communication outstanding.

Our success is no secret — it's an insight into how copywriting in Singapore works. It's a cultural perspective that we've shared here. Copywriting itself is an interesting occupation. Unlike medicine or law, no accreditation or special permission is required to become a copywriter. In Singapore, where the business climate is favorable to almost anyone willing to engage in enterprise, copywriting seems like an easy option. It pays well, and there are virtually no barriers to entry. And yet clients are often disappointed with their appointed copywriters' work.

This is because copywriting is an art unto itself. There may not be regulatory commissions overseeing the licensing of copywriters, and this is precisely what makes it more difficult to establish a copywriting presence. With the absence of such licensing, the quality of copy becomes the yardstick to measure success. The copywriting industry in Singapore, as in most places, is self-regulating.

Great copywriters attract great businesses and Singapore being a close-knit business community shares this information rapidly. Self-regulation is perhaps the best way to determine which copywriters are worth their prices. Of course there is a downside to self-regulation. There is no official list for businesses to consult when searching for copywriting in Singapore.

Word-of-mouth is usually the preferred choice, followed by Google searches involving: Professional Copywriting Singapore. Most organizations find copywriting services in Singapore in this fashion. But most will not maintain their relationships with copywriters in this fashion. Like all good businesses — copywriting is no exception — copywriting agencies that consistently deliver great quality are always in demand. This is no secret.

But what constitutes great quality? Quality itself is partly subjective, and is determined largely by culture and society. Singapore has a unique culture and copywriting as an industry has to morph to meet these requirements. At Quantico, we made it a point to do away with quality-standards that we had applied in other countries, simply because what works perfectly in Australia may not work perfectly in Singapore. Take grammar for example.

The rules of grammar are applicable in any English-speaking culture and must be consistently applied regardless of nuances in English. But an idea expressed in one

country may not be feasible in another. Copywriting is a combination of great ideas expressed in perfect language. What's perfect differs from culture to culture and that is what great copywriters always take into account.

Take the example of the Chevy Nova. No doubt a strongly-qualified copywriting team took pains to make the name sound great. And it did sound great in the United States. Then it came to Europe, particularly Spain, where the Chevy Nova met with a language barrier.

Nova in Spanish literally means 'won't go'; not the best phrase for a car. The copy was great and the rules of grammar were equally applicable in both continents. But the meaning was totally different.

Great copy requires a sound cultural knowledge in addition to language proficiency and creativity. A great copywriter balances all three in perfect harmony to create great copy. Singapore is a multi-lingual country.

Each language has its own nuances. The complexity of communication increases when one residing in Singapore quickly learns that each language spills distinctly into another to create a whole new sub-culture. We were excited about these hybrids. It's what got us to Singapore's copywriting scene. All copywriters at Quantico are trained not just in language but communication, media and culture. Being in a multi-lingual country like Singapore requires multi-disciplined copywriters that can gauge the pulse of a dynamic communication system.

Our senior copywriter is a trained musician. This training has proved an invaluable asset when creating great copy. Our secret was not aggressive marketing or Google ad words. We've not done either, ever. In fact, we only just put up our Facebook page. Instead we presented our understanding of Singapore's unique communication system to our clients and they liked what they saw.

Copywriting in Singapore requires great creativity, great cultural insight, and great linguistic skills. We've put up some of these on our Facebook page. Continue the conversation there.

Copyrighting Copywriting

Understanding ownership over written material is fairly straightforward. While this insight is in no way a substitute or alternative for proper legal advice and should not be treated in any way as legal information, it serves as a primer on how copyright law works.

The Copyright Act of 1976 came into effect on 1 January 1978 and was subsequently followed by several amendments. The Berne Convention, to which several countries are signatories to including Singapore, fosters the standardization and uniformity of copyright law across member states. While the convention is responsible for such standardization worldwide, countries themselves have their own copyright laws that at times supersede the laws prescribed in the Berne Convention.

Basically, any piece of text, copy, story, database, or script that is created after 1 January 1978 is automatically covered by copyright laws as long as it exists in some tangible form such as print media or electronic storage. A piece can exist solely on a website but it is still protected by copyright law. An email sitting on a server is also protected by copyright law but an impromptu public talk that is broadcast without being recorded is not covered.

The author of a piece of work is the owner of the copyright unless the author gives up that right to another entity. Copyrights can be transferred and willed to another entity, in which case the copyrights to the piece of work may be owned by someone other than the author or authors.

The standard duration of a copyright lasts for the length of the author's life plus seventy years. For two or more authors, the duration is the lifespan of the last surviving author plus seventy years. Other copyright durations can be eighty years, ninety years, and one hundred and twenty years, depending on the type of work.

After the copyright has lapsed, and there are no transfer or ownership issues, the work usually becomes public domain, as is the case with the works of William Shakespeare. However, if a writer adapts a play written by Shakespeare, then the copyrights to that adapted work belong to the writer and are not public domain.

A piece of work that is copyrighted bears the symbol: © which affirms the copyright. To type this symbol on a Macintosh computer, press Option and G together.

To type this symbol on a Windows Computer type (C) and Microsoft Word will convert it to a copyright symbol. Alternatively, hold down Alt and type 0169.

In most cases there are no prerequisites to register works with the copyright office, but it is always advisable to talk with the Intellectual Property Office in Singapore and to a copyright lawyer.

When a client, in Singapore for example, hires an agency from another country to do its copywriting, copyright issues should be addressed at the outset. Ownership of the copyright must be established and agreed upon before hand.

Cases where works are made for hire are treated differently from cases involving individual and joint authors. Under the 'works made for hire' system the law regards the

employer as the owner of the copyright and as the author, even if someone else is actually doing the writing. A copywriter writing a tagline for an advertising agency in Singapore does not own the copyrights to the tagline. The advertising agency owns the rights, unless there exists a separate agreement detailing terms that are different to standard copyright law.

Similarly, if a client contracts a copywriting agency to do its copy, both the client and the copywriting agency must agree on the terms of copyright. Hiring a freelance copywriter poses the same issues. A freelance copywriter may be covered under the individual or joint author system and would therefore technically own the copyrights to the work unless the freelance copywriter proactively declares the work as being made for hire.

Unfortunately many clients in Singapore and across the world face copyright disputes owing to vague or undefined clauses on copyright ownership.

Quantico Copywriting has extensive knowledge of copyright issues and works in an ethical manner to educate and protect clients from copyright disputes. Copy produced for any purpose is an asset and must be guarded by the client and the copywriters. In other words, solid copywriting must always be protected by solid copyrighting.

Copywriting Essentials

Copywriting is about using words to express your voice and tone across any written media. Beyond this basic definition, copywriting has a higher purpose. It is a communicative aspect of your organization and of yourself, and is therefore always saying something about you - when you want it to, and despite yourself.

Copy - or the words used in a text - makes two points of connections concurrently. Within the first point of connection, copy creates identification between its text and its intended audience through arrangement. Certain words, phrases, even punctuation, when combined in selected ways can powerfully impact people's perceptions. Here's an example of how two punctuation marks - the comma, and the colon - can change the entire context of a sentence.

- A woman without her man is nothing.
- A woman : without her, man is nothing.

Both these sentences have the same words, in the same order. In fact, the words and their arrangement are identical. Insert two strategically placed punctuation marks, and the sentences are entirely opposing.

This is an example of the first point of connection that copy makes with its readers. A person reading these sentences will agree with either the first or the second, or both and start to place the words in context.

Copy at the second point of connection generates meaning and evokes emotional responses based on the first point of connection.

Once we understand the context of copy, we start to create meaning, build perception, and attach socio-cultural perspectives to the words.

In a patriarchal society, the second sentence may cause people to take offense with the meaning. In societies which make no distinction between the rights of gender, the first sentence may well result in negative backlashing. And in either society, both sentences may either be welcomed or discarded and the copywriter hailed or blamed.

Clever, penetrating, and even insightful words may create identification with audiences, but it is critical to understand that the second point of connection will equally influence the overall effectiveness of the message and its reception, process, and place in your target audiences' minds. There are too many examples of copywriting that have only taken the first point of connections into consideration, and have ignored, to their ultimate demise, the importance of the second point of connections.

Copywriting is a powerful and tenuous communication tool. It is based on language, and languages are culturally driven. An acceptable word in one language may mean something completely different in another. When Chevrolet launched its Nova line of cars, people in the United States accepted the product with enthusiasm and even pride.

When Chevrolet launched in Spain, the snickers travelled from Seville to Zaragoza. Because the term 'Nova' in Spanish literally translates to "won't go." Cultural impact of languages is key to writing good copy.

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The internet may have blurred the lines of business but has augmented the boundaries of culture. Thus a copywriter in Singapore may be contracted for a copywriting job in Italy without much hassle.

But the Singapore-based copywriter needs to understand the context in which communication operates within Italy — the power of copy in both Singapore and Italy are equal but its cultural presence and impact may be regarded as polar opposites.

In other words, what may be construed as fun or funny in Singapore's copywriting landscape, may be met with contempt in the Italian cultural scene. There are lots of talented writers in our world. Not all are copywriters. The ability to write in a language is an insufficient qualification to begin laying claims to copywriting.

Yet many promote themselves as copywriters because they are able to write a funny, or insightful tagline. This is the same as someone claiming he or she is a ballet dancers simply because that person can touch his or her toes without bending the knees.

Like every specialized field that requires depth of understanding, plentiful exposure to cultures, and basic rigorous training, copywriting mandates an immersive knowledge and solid grounding in the field before one may exalt themselves with the title of copywriter.

It truly serves a noble purpose and has the power to move people all over the world from Singapore to Spain, across NGOs to NASA, to you and me.

Copywriting Blogs

Many companies in Singapore and in other countries now include **blogs** as an essential part of their online marketing strategy. Brand blogs are a great way to engage with audiences and maintain good relationships with customers.

Copywriters are often tasked with the responsibility of managing a blog and keeping it lively and interesting - both to attract new customers, and to retain current ones.

Copywriting for a blog need not be a difficult task. The most important consideration is to make your writing scan-worthy.

Online audiences don't often have a lot of time to devote to reading something. So if they see that your blog is too wordy or that the sentences are too unwieldy, they'll just click on the next link, especially in internet-advanced cultures like Singapore.

Ensure that whatever you have written can be easily scanned and read in a few seconds. Copywriting for blogs also means that your blog post lengths should vary.

A long post of about 300-400 words should be interspersed with shorter posts of 100-200 words. A general rule of thumb is to write one long post for every 4 short posts.

How often a copywriter should post to the brand's blog is another important question. About 5 posts a week is normally acceptable - that means one long post and 4 short posts every week.

Making your content interesting to audiences is another concern for copywriters who blog for their companies. Think of what your customers would be interested in. You can do this by engaging with other kinds of social media.

For example, you could do a Twitter search on key words relating to your company and see what people are talking about. Facebook can be a useful tool as well. Recent studies have shown that Singapore has one of the highest Facebook usage statistics in the world - so copywriters who blog can use this to their advantage when copywriting for the Singapore market. Research your company's Facebook page, or the Facebook pages of your competitors and other similar products.

What are people talking about? What are their concerns? Use this information to write blog posts on your blog.

Copywriters writing for blogs also often worry that their writing may not be interesting enough or lacking engagement.

Some sure tips on making your blog posts more interesting are using lists, using videos or images, and answering questions. Copywriters should always approach blogging from a reader's point of view, asking themselves whether they would be interested in reading a post like this. Even though blogs are a less formal form of speaking to your customers, they are still part of your company's official marketing strategy.

This means that the tone of your blog should match your company's tone. Copywriters need to identify the tone of the company - is it fun, credible, youthful, luxurious? Then, ensure that the blog posts are in line with the company's tone of voice. This consistency helps to maintain trust and authenticity.

Blogging is a great way to attract new customers and to maintain a link with your existing customers. Copywriters can make their blogs shine by using these tips and blogging consistently and authentically.

Copywriting Persuasive Proposals

Proposals are routine communications. They come from outside the organization and from within. The Singapore business matrix is peppered with proposals, as is any advanced economy that relies on this tool to decide what ideas and concepts to adopt, and which ones to reject.

Writing proposals is therefore a scary thing for many. The standard practice is to clone an old proposal style, tweak a few paragraphs and formats, and hope that the proposal will do its job. This approach almost never works. The other approach, also doomed to fail, is data dumping. Cramming as much marketing information and corresponding lists of benefits, backed by statistics, and the odd client testimonial into one document isn't going to work very well.

We operate in the information age. This does not mean information bombardment, but rather information management. Selecting the most relevant pieces of information and presenting it in a streamlined way that preserves the integrity of the message — now that's a great proposal. Proposals abound everywhere.

So why is it still so difficult for me to write one? That's because it's one thing to write a proposal; quite another thing to copywrite a proposal. Copywriting is different from normal or academic writing.

Copywriting has one primary purpose, and that is 'to sell'. The reader is the most important part of the process and copywriting has to engage the reader 100% of the time. Not 90%. Not 99%. 100%. So when a proposal is written, the prospects (target readers) are expecting themselves to be at the centre of the content, not the sender of the proposal. Dumping information into a document only serves to make your client work to understand the content. No client wants to work to comprehend your proposal. That is why the majority of proposals end up in the rejection pile.

Be specific about your prospect's needs and goals. When you copywrite a proposal you place the reader first, all the time. By doing this you automatically place your client and his or her business first. Not focusing on the client's specific problem, or on the specific solution that provides a specific payoff is the first pitfall that poorly written proposals stumble into. A generic proposal is just not going to cut it with your prospects. Copywriting a proposal will always take into account specifics.

Treat each proposal as a unique piece of communication. Unless you're writing to Smoky the Bear, your prospects are human beings, each with his or her own sense of uniqueness. Nothing serves to dampen enthusiasm for a proposal than one which makes no clear distinction between customers. The cookie-cutter proposal always ends up in the shredder. Your prospects want to feel special and want to receive a document from you that has not gone out to thirty other organizations.

This is true regardless of organizational size and hiring capacity. A pharmaceutical company in Singapore does not want to receive a template proposal anymore than the small wedding boutique across the road, looking to make a name for itself. Copywriting a proposal means taking into account uniqueness. Take the trouble to prepare a new proposal for every single prospect. This is by no means easy. A city the size of Singapore can appear daunting when one considers the number of businesses

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operating, each asking for a proposal. Do it any way. Make every proposal a unique one. Soon enough, your prospects will begin to appreciate the effort.

Put your key points first. Organizing your key points is critical to a successful proposal. The norm here is to write a cover letter first, introduce some benefits, thank the prospect for giving you the opportunity to propose, add some more figures and charts, then demonstrate how great everything will turn out. This is not the best method by far, and if it works it only does so because almost every other proposal is following the same format thus reducing the prospect to look for other reasons to choose your proposal from the stack.

Put your key points first; before the cover letter if you have to. Do not bury them in the second or third paragraph, leave aside second or third page. Put your key points first. Copywriting is about selling and in our time-starved economies, relevance is everything. The rest of the information must support the key points so they can come later. Put your key points first.

Write to express. So you've put your key points first. That is excellent. If your proposal is still not getting the attention it deserves, it is probably because your key points are full of technical detail or jargon. Clarity is important. Copywriting is about making a strong point quickly and clearly. Don't use twelve words when seven will retain the same meaning. Big and fancy-sounding words don't work well in proposals. Keep them for academic writing where vocabulary is given extra credit.

Bombastic language designed to contribute rhetoric, impact, and integrity to the message may not always have the desired outcome upon the subject at hand, nor does it procure any further importance that otherwise might be afforded from the prospecting client, subsequently prodding the dear sir or madam to precipitate a state of communication atrophy with the inevitable eventuality of a decision taken by said prospecting client that terminates any future or present opportunity to further correspond and liaise upon the matter, all owing to the propensity to utilize language that bequeaths terms unwanted and barren of true meaning executed in the spirit of impressing, the consequence of which perpetuates further bifurcation of corporate communication channels.

What a load of drivel, and a classic example of how meaning is so easily lost.

Don't use fancy language gratuitously. Use words that are most relevant to your content, and which fully captures the meaning of your message. Copywriting is about writing to express, not just impress.

Ensure proper editing. Poor punctuation, syntax, and spelling is poor credibility. Copywriting involves editing. A proposal that has not been edited and proof-read is a proposal without copywriting applied to it.

Errors in grammar, spelling, or worse — facts, figures, and statements — are credibility killers. Read your proposal from your prospect's point of view. We are hard-wired to find faults in others' works. Use this to your advantage. By putting yourself in your prospect's position, you are not only able to scrutinize the proposal of personality and uniqueness, but copyediting also becomes much easier.

Consistent formatting, regular language spelling (British or American) and getting the client's name and salutation correct all go a long way in making your proposal do what it is meant to do — stand out from the crowd and make a point quickly and effortlessly. It is interesting to note that in Singapore both the British and American form of spelling are acceptable for corporate and government use, although in Singapore's public schools, the British form of spelling is the norm.

Research the organization the proposal is meant for. If the organization ascribes to the commonwealth form of communication, using the American alternative may not be in your best interest. Likewise if the organization uses the American form, so should your proposal. If the organization originates in Singapore, either form will be acceptable.

These rules are also applicable for Malaysia, Indonesia, and other parts of South East Asia. Copywriting a proposal is important not just for the reasons mentioned in this article, but also for internal communications.

Whether you are writing across organizations or within one, the approach to copywriting a proposal properly is always about taking the time to place your reader first. Write for your readers and your readers will read what you have written.

Copywriting Press Releases

The purpose of a press release is to demonstrate the newsworthiness of a product, service, event, or person.

A press release is sent to editors and journalists to invoke them to include a story about what you're offering, in their media channels. In Singapore these media channels include print, radio, television and numerous online avenues that give copywriters ample opportunity to publicize their writing.

Copywriting for a press release is quite different from writing promotional copy - both in content and in tone. The content of a press release is informative.

This means that copywriters have to stay away from blatantly promotional language, and simply highlight the informative aspects of whatever they are trying to promote. At the same time, you need to find your most newsworthy, unique, and interesting features to highlight.

The best way to do this is to identify a few points about your topic that make you or your brand unique. You may need to do a little bit of research on your market, so that you are able to identify what sets you apart from your competitors.

When writing the press release, make sure you highlight these points at the very beginning. However, keep your language non-promotional.

This means staying away from superlatives like 'best' and 'fastest' - it is better to provide facts and statistics that indicate how good or innovative you are, instead of self-promoting.

The format of a press release is very important, because editors and journalists are more likely to select press releases for publication if they follow the conventions of the media. Ideally, the press release should be written in such a way that it can be translated into an article easily. This means adhering to journalistic conventions such as keeping the main and most important points in the first paragraph, and ordering the points in order of importance. These conventions are particularly important in countries like Singapore where media channels are highly evolved and attract high engagement.

Copywriting a press release becomes more effective when you include catchy quotes from senior members of your organization, and interesting factoids that make your product or service stand out. Use the words 'For Immediate Release' or 'For Release on [date]' on the top of your press release to indicate when you would like the information to be released to the public.

In addition, use the name of the city that you are launching this brand, product, or service at the beginning - for example, start your press release with: "SINGAPORE - Zoom Motors is excited to launch our new line of family cars..."

When copywriting your press release, ensure that you do not use more words than necessary - keep the information succinct and readable, because editors receive several press releases every day.

To make the press release more enticing, use an interesting headline, avoid jargon, and use as many concrete facts as you can. Finally, include information at the end about whom to contact for more information. Ensure that there is a phone number and an email address.

Of course, every copywriter should proofread the press release thoroughly and check all facts before submitting it to the media.

Remember that media publicity is a great way to increase awareness of your brand. Following these tips will help copywriters write more effective and successful press releases that generate media interest and increase publicity.

Copywriting Wikipedia Articles

Copywriting for social media is an integral part of an individual's or organization's web presence. Creating interesting and buzz-worthy content is not just a matter of finding the right topic, but also utilizing the best writing style and structure to carry the content through. [Wikipedia](#) is one of the more powerful but often-overlooked tools of a copywriter for social media.

It provides a platform for copywriters to create awareness of an organization, brand, individual, or product, but must be used in an appropriate manner. The draw of Wikipedia is its functionality - anyone can write an article on Wikipedia for any topic - example: Copywriting Singapore, Ford Fast Cars, NASA's Space Quest - and it will be published for the entire web to read. This creates tremendous potential for promotion and publicity.

However, many copywriters make basic mistakes when writing Wikipedia articles. A simple test is this - search for a Wikipedia article about a very well-known personality. Then, search for a Wikipedia article about a lesser-known personality - for example, a local celebrity in your hometown.

Chances are, the article about the lesser-known personality has been written by a copywriter working to publicize the individual - and the article will very likely contain obvious publicity material. However, articles about better-known personalities are often written by writers who do not have any stake in the individual's publicity.

When writing a Wikipedia article, the copywriter must ensure that the copywriting is objective and precise. It is essential that the highlights of the brand, individual, or organization are presented in a way that is neutral, and that every fact contains a citation.

Simply listing an individual's accomplishments or the range of products a company has created will lead to the article being flagged as neutrality-disputed, or requiring cleanup because it does not meet Wikipedia's standards.

This means that the article - no matter how much effort has gone into the copywriting - will be perceived as less credible.

It is very important for the copywriter to use suitable references when writing a Wikipedia article. This can seem daunting when there is very little information available about the subject-matter.

However, with skill, the copywriter will be able to derive more information from each reference, and use it to generate more effective content for the article. Conflict of interest is a major issue when writing an article for Wikipedia. Because a copywriter may be commissioned by an individual or organization to write a Wikipedia article, it is likely that the copywriting may be biased. For this reason, it is very important to identify and remove bias from any Wikipedia article.

This can be achieved through a number of steps. First, the copywriter should scan the article to identify promotional language that highlights the benefits of the organization or individual.

Such language should be replaced by neutral words and phrases. Secondly, the copywriter should change lists of benefits or achievements to a chronological order of events that presents an objective history of the individual, organization, or brand.

Wikipedia itself has several resources and message boards available to copywriters who need help with its guidelines and standards.

The benefit of Wikipedia's openness is that copywriters gain a clear insight into what is necessary for writing an acceptable entry.

Finally, Wikipedia is an encyclopedia - which means that the writing should be of excellent quality. It pays to check and double-check grammar, spelling, and punctuation; as well as to proofread for any mistakes and formatting issues.

When used appropriately, Wikipedia can be a powerful social media tool for raising awareness of issues and topics - and can demonstrate how influential copywriting is.

Layout Essentials

Good copywriting is when your words are smart. Good layout is when your words are smartly dressed. Quantico Copywriting Singapore's copywriters and graphic designers know this truth and will collaborate for hours on end sometimes, to get that perfect balance between great words and great presentation. There are no secrets but there are strategies to getting the harmony between great copywriting and great design perfect.

The Grid System

A blank page can be intimidating for anyone. How far down does a copywriter insert the first sentence? Where does a graphic designer first put a pen to paper. And where should the target audience begin reading from? Enter the grid.

Every surface can be divided into a grid. A selection of columns and rows intersecting across the surface creates neat boxes called modules. Each module is a container that holds information. The organization of these modules across the surface provides a system of reading for the copy to flow. Depending on language and design requirements, the modules are accordingly arranged to facilitate smooth reading and comprehension.

Modules are the result of intersecting rows and columns. Drawing vertical and horizontal lines across a page creates modules. The shape of a module depends on where the lines are drawn, spacing between lines, and the angles they form. The possibilities are unlimited but the standard two and three column grids (in newspapers and magazines) are generally favored owing to the ease of reading they provide. Quantico copywriters in Singapore and Jakarta are often asked to make the two column grid work in collaterals with small dimensions.

Margins are the spacing between modules. Modules without margins are adjacent to each other, providing an intimate, sometimes compressed feeling, depending on what the copywriter and designer want to achieve. Examples of such layout are text books, novels, and one-page brochures that are usually devoid of graphics. Modules with margins around them are individual floating boxes containing text or graphics that stand alone. These modules allow for more individual styling and are generally found in university prospecti, catalogs, and websites where specific bits of information are required to stand out and make a point.

Most collateral is a combination of these two modular layouts. A designer has to decide on the most important bits of information and lay each bit out in the best possible module combination. The sheer number of combinations and input from individuals makes the task both exciting and daunting. Quantico copywriters in Singapore often have to collaborate with the design team in Malaysia to ensure that the final product for the Kuala Lumpur audience meets the culture's reading expectations and delivers a strong, desirable graphic experience.

Verso and Recto

Verso and recto are common terms in copywriting and design. When a book is open, the page to the left of the center line is the verso spread. The page to the right of the center line is the recto spread. In reading conventions, the human eye usually enters a spread from verso top left, and exits from recto bottom right. Simply having this

knowledge can greatly augment layout. The copywriting and design teams work together to optimize this rule to create an engaging reading experience. If the rule is known it can be manipulated to create some extremely attention-grabbing spreads.

Quantico copywriters and designers in Singapore and in other countries debate often on the topic of verso and recto, analyzing the nuances that affect reading patterns in different countries and cultures. Ultimately the placement of important bits of copy must follow the natural reading pattern of the particular culture the collateral is being prepared for. In LTR (left-to-right) reading languages like English, Malay, Tamil, Korean, and Mandarin, the standard verso-recto relationship rules apply and affect the outcome of perception. In RTL (right-to-left) reading languages like Arabic, Persian, Yiddish, Urdu, and Hebrew the recto-verso relationship is critical to comprehension. Languages that are read from top to bottom also follow the standard verso-recto relationship since the eye still enters from the top left and exits at the bottom right. Copywriters are aware of these relationships and work with designers to ensure maximum comprehension and clarity throughout the piece.

Characters Per Line

When it comes to reading, the longer the line the more tired the eyes become. A line length is defined by the number of characters in that line. The quest is always to find the perfect number of characters that aids reading. This is a hotly debated topic with the results varying between experts. From experience and research Quantico's copywriters and designers have found the magic number of characters per line: 55. A line in a paragraph should not exceed 55 characters otherwise the piece becomes tedious to read. The same piece of copy presented in 55 characters is more refreshing and engaging than the same piece produced in a line with 80 or more characters. The challenge is to layout the copy in lines not exceeding 55 characters while preserving the integrity of the message.

Typography Essentials

A critical purpose of copywriting is to persuade audiences to see a benefit in a particular point. Great words themselves carry the most weight and, in most cases, will achieve the goal. But an added boost from typography is always a welcome addition. Typography has a history so rich and expansive it's impossible to discuss every element in this insight.

The discussion here is instead on the effect typography has on copywriting and design. Why is comic sans the most hated typeface? or why is Helvetica the standard typeface for virtually every document, store front and signboard? Typography is perhaps the greatest, silent hero, quietly creating incredible associations within the copy in a self-effacing way that it was meant to follow. As long as language and music have been around, so too has typography.

The essence of typography is about dressing up letters. The way copy looks greatly impacts its meaning. Letters in an alphabet are essentially images, tiny pictures to which we have attached meaning. In fact, the roman alphabet known today has evolved from pictorial representations. And like any picture, the potential to make it look pretty and for a purpose has always intrigued artists, illustrators, and designers alike. As language has evolved, so too have letterforms.

Consider the letter 'A'. There are literally a thousand ways to draw this letter and still retain its meaning. The reference here is to (sometimes incorrectly labeled) fonts. Consider a wedding invitation. The wording is the message itself. The typeface used for the message is usually script-like and elegant. Snell Roundhand is a favorite. The wording in the invitation is cordial and informative but the typeface used reinforces the look and feel of the message — in this case elegance and dignity.

A typeface describes a type family: Helvetica, Times, Myriad, Gotham, Arial, and Verdana. A font refers to a specific member in the family: Helvetica Light, Times Italics, Arial Bold. Typography is the study of type. The prevalence of incorrect terminology is largely due to word processing programs that list all the typefaces under the incorrectly titled drop-down box 'fonts'.

Copywriters and designers are aware of the difference because knowing which typeface to use can greatly influence the final fonts selected and therefore create the right impact when copywriting. Just like language and music, type has feeling and emotion that is conveyed when readers interact and engage with the message.

Take for example the word 'sexy'. The word itself does not change, but when different typefaces are applied, its meaning and context can be radically altered as far as perception is concerned. If the typeface 'Impact' is used on the word 'sexy', perceptions of its meaning will be quite different than if a more gentle typeface like 'Georgia' or almost sensual typeface 'Snell Roundhand' is used. The way the letters are presented are as important as the meaning borne by the words these letters form.

In music, certain tones evoke discomfort or inspiration. Typefaces can do the same just by virtue of its design. The best typefaces serve the purpose that typography was created for.

A typeface enhances the message of the words, reinforces its content, and provides legibility. And it does all this without being noticed. If the design of a typeface overshadows the content and message of its words, then the typeface is not fulfilling its purpose — unless of course this type of design is deliberately intended. Good copywriters are also good designers.

Great design and presentation are about great visuals. At times these visuals are relegated to images and illustrations. Typographic considerations are extremely critical to great copywriting and design. In a society where words permeate every type of communication, typography is solely concerned with presenting these words in a manner that reinforces the message. Considering the typographic element in copywriting or design, is engaging in higher-order communication. Resorting to standard typefaces that are used so often — Helvetica, Times, Verdana, Arial — without considering their design and contextual impact is a very poor, but unfortunately fairly common practice.

Singapore is rife with direct mailers. Remember the last mailer for air-conditioning servicing or that new property fair? Think about why people toss it in the bin without reading the whole thing or even part of it. What about bank statements? The numbers and expenditure lines are all present, but in which typeface? And why has the bank chosen that particular typeface from over a few thousand varieties? Most importantly, does the typeface provide legibility and evoke certain emotions? Is it business-like? Compare the typeface from bank statements to the brochures at the branch? Why the difference, if any?

Questions like these provide a key insight into the quiet, yet incredibly strong impact that typography has on every society across the planet. Typography, and copywriting are intrinsically connected. Singapore is a great place to experiment with type, owing to the sheer number of communication displays.

Singapore itself is a hub of deep, rich communication practices, some effective, most average, and all relevant to this and future discussions about typography and its impact on copywriting and design.