



INSPIRING ACTION WITH YOUR WRITING
AIDA: ATTENTION-INTEREST-DESIRE-ACTION

"Free gift inside!"

"Dear Jim, You have been specially selected."

"Calling all Parents."

Every day we're bombarded with headlines like these that are designed to grab our attention. In a world full of advertising and information – delivered in all sorts of media from print to websites, billboards to radio, and TV to text messages – every message has to work extremely hard to get noticed.

And it's not just advertising messages that have to work hard; every report you write, presentation you deliver, or email you send is competing for your audience's attention.

As the world of advertising becomes more and more competitive, advertising becomes more and more sophisticated. Yet the basic principles behind advertising copy remain – that it must attract attention and persuade someone to take action. And this idea remains true simply because human nature doesn't really change. Sure, we become increasingly discerning, but to persuade people to do something, you still need to grab their attention, interest them in how your product or service can help them, and then persuade them to take the action you want them to take, such as buying your product or visiting your website.

The acronym AIDA is a handy tool for ensuring that your copy, or other writing, grabs attention. The acronym stands for:

- Attention (or Attract)
- Interest
- Desire
- Action

These are the four steps you need to take your audience through if you want them to buy your product or visit your website, or indeed to take on board the messages in your report.

A slightly more sophisticated version of this is AIDCA/AIDEA, which includes an additional step of Conviction/Evidence between Desire and Action. People are so cynical about advertising messages that coherent evidence may be needed if anyone is going to act!

How to Use the Tool

Use the AIDA model when you write a piece of text that has the ultimate objective of getting others to take action. The elements of the acronym are as follows:



1. Attention/Attract

In our media-filled world, you need to be quick and direct to grab people's attention. Use powerful words, or a picture that will catch the reader's eye and make them stop and read what you have to say next.

With most office workers suffering from email overload, action-seeking emails need subject lines that will encourage recipients to open them and read the contents. For example, to encourage people to attend a company training session on giving feedback, the email headline, "How effective is YOUR feedback?" is more likely to grab attention than the purely factual one of, "This week's seminar on feedback".

2. Interest

This is one of the most challenging stages in the AIDA model: you've got the attention of a chunk of your target audience, but can you engage with them enough so that they'll want to spend their precious time understanding your message in more detail?

Gaining the reader's interest is a deeper process than grabbing their attention. They will give you a little more time to do it, but you must stay focused on their needs. This means helping him or her to pick out the messages that are relevant to him quickly – use bullets and subheadings and break up the text to make your points stand out.

For more information on understanding your target audience's interests and expectations, and the context of your message, read our article on the **Rhetorical Triangle**.

3. Desire

The Interest and Desire parts of the AIDA model go hand-in-hand: as you're building the reader's interest, you also need to help her understand how what you're offering can help her in a real way. The main way of doing this is by appealing to her personal needs and wants.

Rather than simply saying, "Our lunchtime seminar will teach you feedback skills," explain to the audience what's in it for them: "Get what you need from other people, and save time and frustration, by learning how to give them good feedback."

Feature and Benefits (FAB)

A good way of building the reader's desire for your offering is to link features and benefits. Hopefully, the significant features of your offering have been designed to give a specific benefit to members of your target market.

When it comes to the marketing copy, it's important that you don't forget those benefits at this stage. When you describe your offering, don't just give the facts and features, and expect the audience to work out the benefits for themselves: tell them the benefits clearly to create that interest and desire.

Example: "This laptop case is made of aluminum," describes a feature, and leaves the audience thinking "So what?" Persuade the audience by adding the benefits "...giving a stylish look, that's kinder to your back and shoulders."



You may want to take this further by appealing to people's deeper drives "... giving effortless portability and a sleek appearance and that will be the envy of your friends and co-workers."

4. Conviction

As hardened consumers, we tend to be skeptical about marketing claims. It's no longer enough simply to say that a book is a bestseller, for example, but readers will take notice if you state (accurately, of course!), that the book has been in the New York Times Bestseller List for 10 weeks, for example. So, try to use hard data where it's available. When you haven't got the hard data, yet the product offering is sufficiently important, consider generating some data, for example, by commissioning a survey.

5. Action

Finally, be very clear about what action you want your readers to take; for example, "Visit www.mindtools.com now for more information" rather than just leaving people to work out what to do for themselves.

Using the AIDA model will help you ensure that any kind of writing, whose purpose is to get the reader to do something, is as effective as possible. First, it must grab the target audience's attention, and engage their interest. Then it must build a desire for the product offering, before setting out how to take the action that the writer wants the audience to take.



© Emerald Works Limited 2022. All rights reserved. "Mind Tools" is a registered trademark of Emerald Works Limited.