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Use This Unadvertised Technique to Write a Super-Captivating Headline

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By Shannan Seely

Looking to update your sales collateral? I have three words for you.

Headlines. Headlines. Headlines.

Headlines in your sales materials are a big deal. They're like a theatre marquee located downtown. Building a lot of fanfare. Designed to attract an audience. A paying audience. Enticing the audience to come through the door or read the copy.

The Challenge

For sales collateral, writing headlines can be the hardest element to write. In my copywriting journey, I've gained an "aha moment" several times over on this topic. I had thought a good headline required:

- Thinking up eye-catching phrases
- Creatively playing with words
- Keeping the title brief — the shorter, the better

Not exactly true. There's more nuance to headline-crafting.

So I studied how to write excellent headlines. What did I learn? Turns out, creative skill is not enough. Darn good effort is what matters. Writing more, not less. In fact, writing lots more.

What helps me write a super-captivating headline?

Writing 50 possible headlines. Yes, really.

Why 50 Headlines?

Because maximum quantity eventually results in superior quality! The first headlines you write are trite. They were probably word phrases you recently read, sounding common and boring. Get them out of your head and on paper.

Then keep going. When you write and let your mind go, you begin to write original ones.

“Coming up with just one breakthrough idea typically requires a lengthy brainstorming process, in which you generate and iterate on a large pool of potential options before finally reaching your most creative idea.” Loran Nordgren and Brian Lucas

Harvard Business Review

Go deeper. When you dig into your mind, you'll release all those good ideas to discover the one great headline idea.

If you like to see how to write 50 headlines, including the research needed before writing and refining 3 headlines, click the link below:

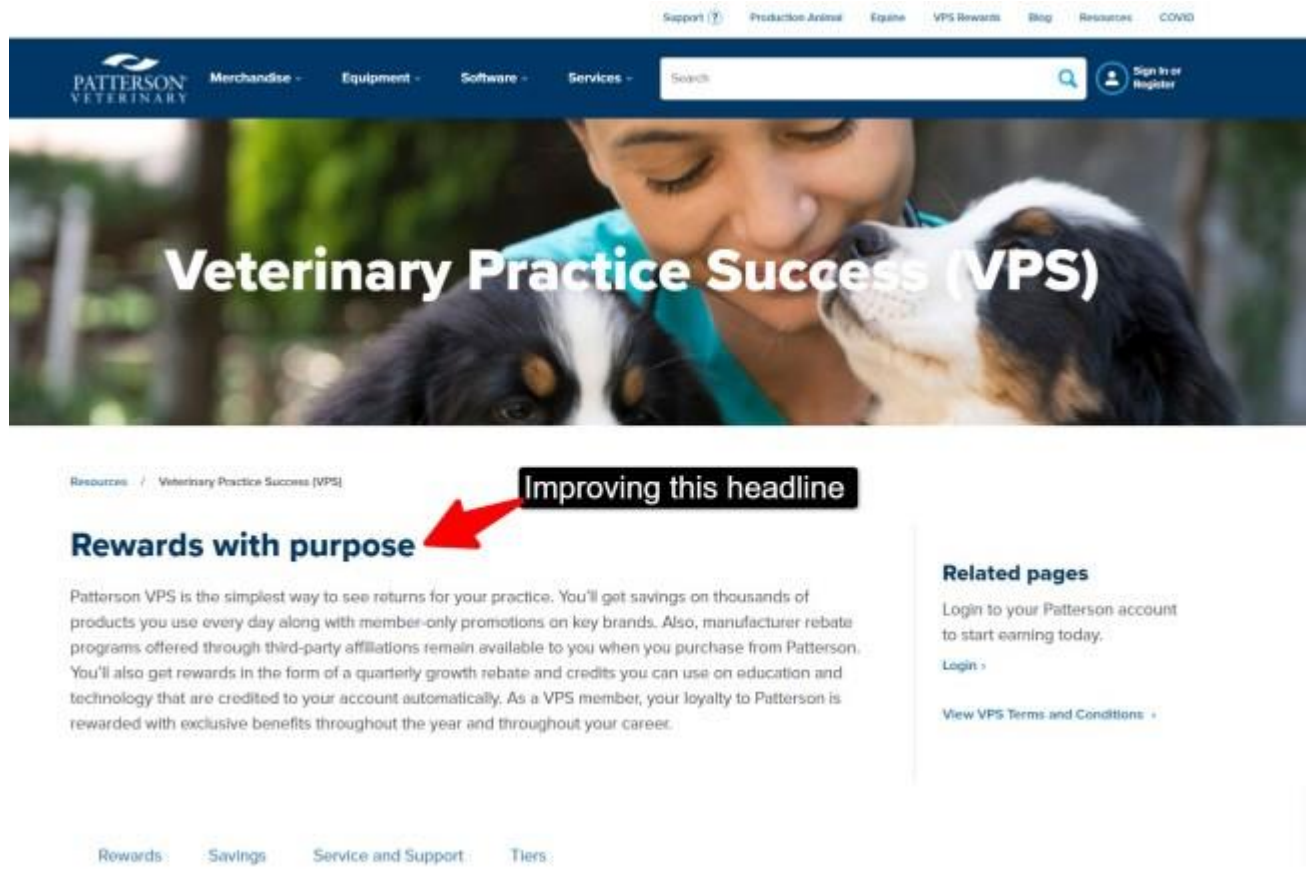
[How to write a captivating headline video](#)

Writing 50 Headlines

The Example

Let's apply this technique to optimizing a headline for Veterinary Practice Success, a rewards program offered by Patterson Veterinary Supply. The company has a healthcare division, but I'm focusing on the animal health side as an example today.

Patterson Veterinary Supply is one of the largest providers in North America for veterinary products and services, including technology and continuing education. Members enrolled in the Veterinary Practice Success (VPS) program earn discounts, rebates and other rewards for purchasing Patterson's product and services.



Improving the headline for Veterinary Practice Success, product of Patterson Veterinary Supply.

The audience, consisting of veterinarians and veterinary practice managers, is a busy group. They're balancing caring for pets and pet owners, and managing staff, while keeping the veterinary hospital profitable. If the headline (above) was on the sales collateral sheet, would they want to read more? Probably not.

The Brainstorm

As I enter the brainstorming phase, I wear my sales hat (formerly worked as a field sales representative in veterinary med) and tap into my copywriting brain. This is part of my copywriting process. I relax and try not to pressure myself. I write 50 headlines without stopping. Not each one is going to be irresistible. I don't judge.

Take a quick look at the 50 Headlines I created:

- Savings, bonus offers, incentives, oh my!
- Get savings on thousands of products
- Get savings on 144,000+ products and services
- Get savings on 144,000+ veterinary products and services
- **Get savings on 144,000+ veterinary products and services. Start today (10 words)**
- Save on over 144,000+ veterinary products and services
- Get exclusive benefits throughout the year
- Get exclusive benefits throughout the year for your veterinary practice (10 words)
- Get exclusive benefits throughout your career
- You get rewards throughout the year exclusive to you
- The rewards program that earns an average of \$2,000 in cash back from purchases made through Patterson (17 words)
- **The rewards program that earns an average of \$2,000 in cash back (12 words)**
- Earn an average of \$2,000 in cash back this year (10)
- Join veterinarians and earn an average of \$2,000 in cash back this year
- You get rewards throughout the year exclusive to you
- Get awards credited automatically
- You get cash back & use it immediately
- The simplest way to get money back on your veterinary purchases
- You'll get credits every quarter and use them on education and technology
- The only rewards program that earns an average of \$2,000 in cash from purchases made through Patterson (17)
- The only rewards program that earns an average of \$2,000 in cash from all your purchases
- The only rewards program
- Earn an average of \$2,000 from everything you buy
- Earn an average of \$2,000 in cash from
- Members earn an average of \$2,000 in cash from purchases made through Patterson
- Each year, members earn an average of \$2,000 in cash from purchases made through Patterson
- Each year, earn an average of \$2,000 in cash
- Earn an average of \$2,000 in cash this year
- Earn an average of \$2,000 from everything you buy
- Earn an average of \$2,000 in cash this year from purchases made through Patterson
- Start today
- This year you could earn up to \$2,000 in cash rebates
- Discover the rewards program you didn't know you needed
- Get member-only discounts
- What program helps your business earn money back?
- Easy three-step process to earn money now
- Take 5 minutes to start earning rewards now
- Get cash back on everyday essentials, merch, equipment and more automatically
- Get savings on thousands of products, member-only promotions and bonus offers

- Veterinarian's favorite reward program
- **See why VPS is every veterinarian's favorite reward program (9)**
- The only rewards program that earns an average of \$2,000 in cash from purchases made through Patterson
- The only veterinary rewards program that earns an average of \$2,000 in cash from purchases made through Patterson
- Grab all the savings when you join the veterinarian's exclusive club
- Perks to help you and your staff care for patients
- All the savings plus the service to succeed
- Take advantage of all the savings
- Tap into the savings
- Do you know about all the ways to save with VPS Rewards?
- Save today and the rest of your career

Compare Headline Ideas to the Captivating Headline Checklist

I pat myself on the back for writing 50 headlines. Then I get back to work. I review the ideas and choose three good ones I believe I can improve. I refine the headlines using the Captivating Headline Checklist.

CAPTIVATING HEADLINE CHECKLIST

What Makes a Captivating Headline?

An attention-grabbing headline will have most of these seven characteristics:

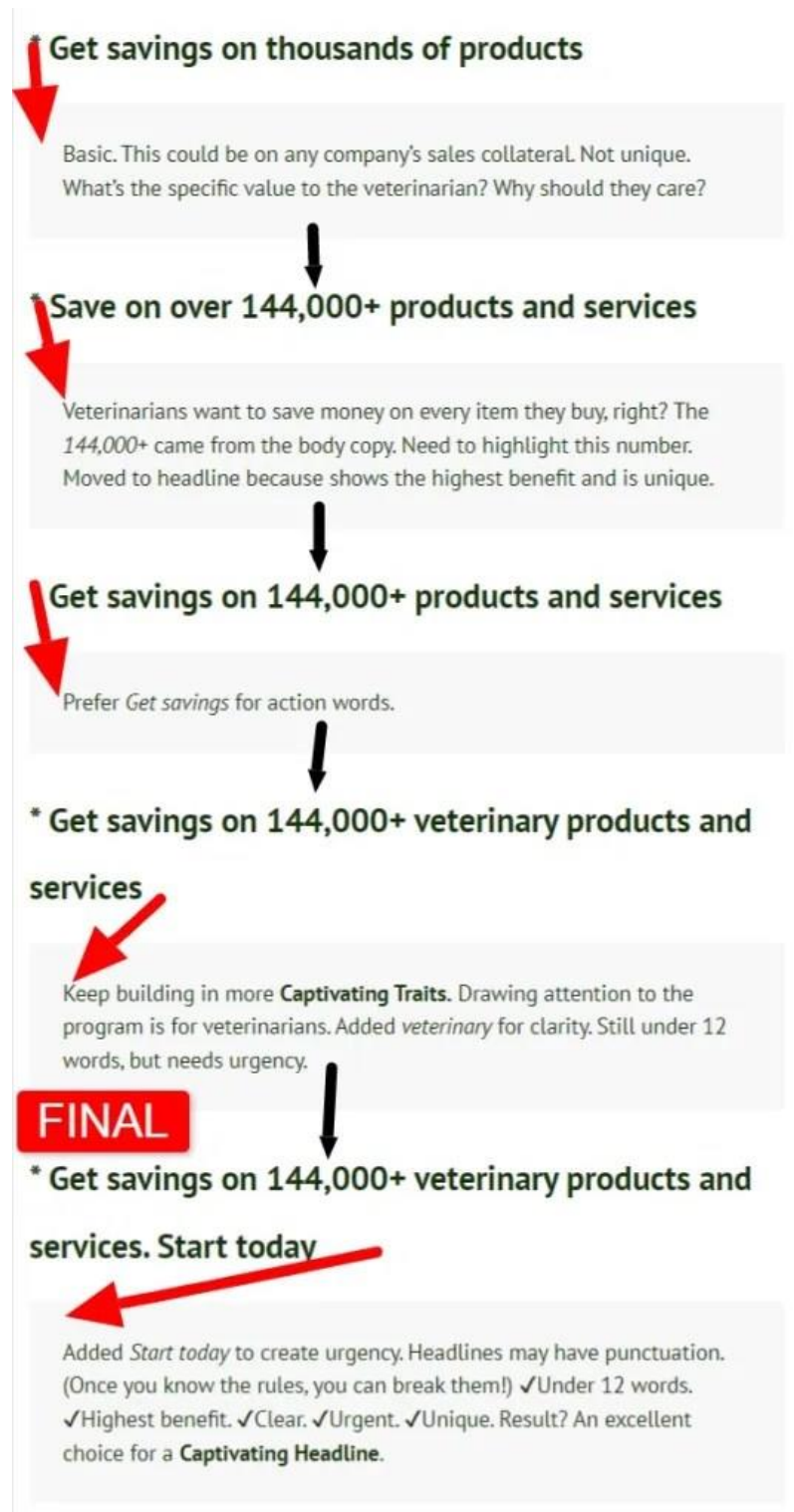
1. **Under 12 words**
2. **Highest benefit**
3. **Clear**
4. **Urgent**
5. **Words prospect uses**
6. **Unique**
7. **Sparks curiosity**

It's unrealistic for a headline to possess all seven traits. I strive for many as possible because the more traits the headline has, the more you'll engage the prospect.

REFINING A HEADLINE IDEA

Transform the Headline from Ho-hum to Captivating

For purpose of this example, let's see how I refined one headline. I grabbed one with potential and worked to improve it.



The Takeaway

I started with the headline:


Rewards with a purpose

Wrote 50 headlines. Refined one possible headline using the Captivating Headline Checklist. And the new, improved headline is:

Get savings on 144,000+ veterinary products and services. Start today

Yes, headlines are hard to write. Using this technique will help. Just allow yourself to brainstorm without judgment.

Photo: Landmark Theatre in Syracuse by CNYCentral

Shannan Seely is a B2B and health care copywriter  leading [Seely Marketing Communications](#). She's obsessed with crafting messages customers read, understand, and emotionally respond to. Shannan has helped Zoetis, CSL Bering, Teva Pharmaceuticals, StarshipHSA (healthcare app), Effectus Clinical Trial Recruitment, and other growth-oriented companies. She's a website, landing pages and email copy expert. Connect with her on [LinkedIn](#).