



## Chapter

# 9

## Headlines and Taglines

*We can show you the easy way to get an A in this class.*

Got your attention, right?

That's what a headline is supposed to do. It appeals to your self-interest. It can promise a reward. It makes you want to know more. It can draw you into the ad.

### Why Have a Headline?

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All forms of marketing communications use headlines, even when we don't call them headlines. In television it's the start of the commercial. In radio, it's the first few words of copy. In a letter, it may be a title or the first paragraph. David Ogilvy stated that the headline is the "ticket on the meat,"<sup>1</sup> which sounds rather simplistic for someone who wrote,

**"At 60 miles an hour the loudest noise in this new Rolls-Royce comes from the electric clock."**

He found a benefit (exceptionally quiet ride), included specifics (60 miles per hour), and twisted it with an unexpected comparison to an electric clock, probably the last thing you'd think about when buying a Rolls-Royce. At 18 words, it's very long by today's standards, but still memorable.

Not all print ads have headlines, especially visual puzzles. However, it's important to know how to write a good headline first. Then you can decide if you need it. Some texts dissect and analyze headlines in great detail, but we'll boil their functions down to four primary points. A *good* headline does one or more of the following:

- Gain immediate attention (the old fishhook in the brain).
- Select the right prospect (appeal to self-interest).
- Lead readers into the text (they want to know more).
- Complete the creative equation (synergy with visuals).



### Words of Wisdom

*"The headline is the most important element of an ad. It must offer a promise to the reader of a believable benefit. And it must be phrased in a way to give it memory value."<sup>2</sup>*

—Morris Hite