

107 - Write Better Copy so People Stop the Scroll and Engage with You Instead

Laura Davis: [00:00:00] In this week's episode, we're talking about how you can write better copy on social media to increase your engagement.

Laura Moore: You're listening to "JFDI with The Two Lauras." This is the podcast where we share tips, advice, and inspiration for freelance social media managers. And in today's episode, we're talking all about how you can write better copy to get more engagement on your organic and paid social content.

So let's just dive straight in, shall we? So I think, and you might disagree with me, but I think that there's a myth out there that people don't read captions on social media posts. I think people think people don't read them, and I think that's wrong.

I think, or maybe it's just me, no, I think people do read captions, but they read them differently. And they read a lot of things differently on social media than they do anywhere else.

Laura Davis: [00:01:00] I think people read captions if the post has given people a reason or prompted them to want to read more on the captions.

Laura Moore: Yes.

Laura Davis: That's what I do.

Laura Moore: But even with that, they read differently.

Laura Davis: Oh, 100 percent.

Laura Moore: Logistically, they read differently because they're on a small device. They are reading in a small period of time, they're distracted because there's loads of other things around. So yes, they've made that decision to read that post because whatever was on that post has given them a reason to read it.

But they haven't deliberately, for example, opened a blog or opened a book or opened a newspaper.

Laura Davis: Their intentions are different.



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Laura Moore: Their intention is totally different. So your caption has to take that into account, I think. And if it doesn't, then you don't get the engagement.

Laura Davis: And the biggest point just to kind of reiterate it because I think we just glossed over it in what you said before is that is the distraction.

Yeah, the distraction on social media is huge. [00:02:00] So you have to write copy that tries to keep people's attention.

Laura Moore: Yeah, because if you think about it, if you open up any app, any social media app, and you're looking at a post, you will be distracted by the notifications icon. You'll be distracted by being able to create a post.

Like I've just got Instagram open on my phone, for example. But just at the bottom of the screen, I can see a button to go to home. I can see a search button. I can see a button to press to create content. I can see the reels button. I can see a button to go to my profile. And I can see the back button to go to back to where I was before.

So those are just all distractions just from the app, let alone anyone else's content.

Laura Davis: On some platforms, you can see other content. And again, in on Instagram, if you've got a small post, if you've not optimised for the right, correct size post, the chances are on that screen at any one time, there will either be a glimmer of the post above or a glimmer of the post below, and that can be really distracting.[00:03:00]

Especially if you can only see part of it. You're kind of like intrigued by it. So, your copy has to work so hard. It's so different to, you know, writing a copy for an email or for a website where people have chosen to go and read that and generally speaking takes up the whole screen or your whole phone, it's just your email.

And so it's hard work. Your copy on social media has to do a lot of heavy lifting, as they say.

Laura Moore: Definitely. And I think just to reiterate, when we're talking about copy, we're talking about the words that you put in your caption on your ads or your social media, like organic posts, but those words could also be in a carousel.



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They could be on a screen, on a reel, for example. But it's the actual words we're talking about in this episode, okay? So the actual copy that you're writing. As in copywriting.

Laura Davis: Funny that.

Laura Moore: I know, weird. So what you said earlier about like, people read captions because they're given a reason to. That's the first piece of [00:04:00] your copy that you need to nail, is the hook.

Like everyone will always tell you, you need to have a good hook, but it's so crucial that even in your copy, you have an amazing hook. Like you might have a reel that is, the video's got a great hook, or you might think your image is a great hook, but your copy also needs to have a great hook in the caption so that people read it, because otherwise they might watch the video, they might look at the picture and think it's amazing, but they might not read the caption where actually what you want to tell them to do is, is located.

Laura Davis: Yeah, a hundred percent. And I think I, for people who don't, don't know me or haven't heard me say this before, I am the hardest person to be marketed to, like, in all, all senses and the hook has to work really hard.

Laura Moore: Unless it's Apple, unless it's an Apple product.

Laura Davis: Unless it's Apple, I'll just buy everything. I think you have to, I am so, as Laura will agree, I am so easily distracted.

Laura Moore: Yeah.

Laura Davis: I have [00:05:00] the attention span of a gnat, probably a gnat's baby. I cannot, I cannot keep focus, especially on social media - fly around, my mind's all over the place. So I think having a strong hook and I don't know whether as well as working in marketing and I do try to remove myself from that sometimes, but it's when people like ask a question on their, you know, say for example, they've got a Instagram carousel and the first slide is, do you want to know what I, I did to make my Instagram better?

And the answer for me is a yes or no.

Laura Moore: Yeah.



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Laura Davis: And if it's a yes, I'm fine. I might hang around half the time I'm like no and then just carry on going like I don't think people work hard enough on their hooks is what I'm trying to get at and I appreciate not everybody is trying to market to me, so you might be thinking shut up Laura, I don't give a shit what you think.

And that's absolutely fine but I think in the in a world of millions and millions of pieces of [00:06:00] content people consume every day. I think people need to remember that and really work hard on their hook. It needs to be something that they spend a lot of time thinking about.

Laura Moore: Yeah, definitely.

Laura Davis: Am I going over the top?

Laura Moore: No, I think it is really important. But I also think that quite often people will start with their hook and then they get overwhelmed and what have you. And I think you could start with that hook of whatever it was you just said with a yes or no answer, write the rest of your caption and then come back and tweak that hook afterwards to make it better.

Like that doesn't have to be the very first thing that you nail in your copy. You, the very first thing you write might be a call to action. It might be the middle piece. It might be a tiny little question you've got in there. You don't have to start at the beginning and finish at the end. But what you do need to do is not try and tell the whole story in the video or the image without having a hook to get people to read the caption, because you want people to read everything that you've put out there.

You want them to spend as much time on your content as possible. And if there is no hook to get them to read the caption, they won't [00:07:00] read it. And you just need to think as well, depending on what platform you're on, how much of that actual caption will they see before they have to press the more button?

Or like see more or whatever it says on different platforms, it's always different. And so that first piece of that hook, it might not, you might not even be able to show the whole sentence. So the first few words might only show and that has to be interesting.



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Laura Davis: That's like on, when you're on a Instagram reel or on a TikTok, you can just see a few words, like, and that's hard. Like, and this is why we all need to charge more.

Laura Moore: Yeah, definitely.

Laura Davis: It's hard to get a hook that's gonna grab someone's attention, make them stop that idle reel scroll, you know, get them out of that flow, and stop them to go and then read the caption.

It's really, really difficult.

Laura Moore: Yeah, and this whole read the caption hook, isn't a hook.

Laura Davis: No.

Laura Moore: Like, you telling me to read a caption isn't going to make me read a caption. If you say, read the [00:08:00] caption to get blah blah blah, maybe I might read it, because you've just told me why to read it, but you just kind of need to work a little bit harder.

Laura Davis: I think we all need to like, channel our like, Daily Mail headline writing.

Laura Moore: Definitely. Definitely. And I think there's ways that you can do that without it being clickbaity.

Laura Davis: Well, I was going to say, yeah, you want it, you kind of want it to be, to be clickbait, but clickbait that delivers. You want it to give them what you're telling them you're going to give, rather than on like the Daily Mail, the headline, the actual article is never as good as the headline suggests.

You want your content to be, if not better than the hook suggests.

Laura Moore: Yeah, you need to have the curiosity that a Daily Mail headline would have. But then deliver on it. So let's just give you some examples. So I, uh, we, um, we always say this. If you can, call out your audience in your caption, then do that as early as you possibly can in your hook.

So like we would maybe put social media [00:09:00] managers, for example.



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Laura Davis: Yeah. And then just a side note, and I don't want to digress, but that isn't small businesses.

Laura Moore: No, no, no. Cause no, let's not even go into that. So yeah, try and call out your reader in your, in your hook, try and maybe you can, and you don't like that might be in another piece, another part of your content.

It might be like on the graphic, for example. So it might not, you might not need it in the caption as well as the hook, but you could start with like an emoji. So like a pointing down emoji and then the rest of it just says, there's more tips here. You're pointing down to the caption that makes people realise what is in the caption, they want to read it.

Where you said just now, do you want to know how I did X, Y, Z? Instead of saying that you could say, here's how I did X, Y, Z, because then you're not asking a yes or no question that somebody in their brain, you know, subconsciously is answering. They're saying, oh, how I did it. And they carry on reading. It's almost like -

Laura Davis: Well, therefore you're, you're, you're telling the, the reader that you are going to get a [00:10:00] solution, you are going to be told how to do something.

Laura Moore: Yeah, exactly. You could start with a call to action and we'll talk about calls to action in a minute, but you could start with your call to action and your, as your hook, like comment, blah, blah, to get this free, whatever it is.

And that could be like your CTA could be your hook. And then you could try and just format that hook slightly differently to make it stand out because of, as we've talked about, there's all these distractions. So maybe if you had capitalised your hook, so it really kind of shouts at the reader, that might get their attention even more.

So there's lots of different things. That you could do in terms of like just that first line just to attract somebody's attention because you have to attract their attention before you can get them to read and get them to engage.

Laura Davis: But just as a, again, I feel like I'm just here for the side notes, side notes don't have, I see this all the time.

People have like emoji, emoji, emoji, emoji.



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Laura Moore: Oh yeah.

Laura Davis: Emoji, emoji, emoji. Just remember, think from an accessibility perspective, from a screen reader, imagine how [00:11:00] that will be interpreted. So just don't shove emojis everywhere.

Laura Moore: Yeah, definitely. Okay, this one I know Laura and I are going to disagree on massively, but let's talk about length of the social media posts or length of the ad copy.

Because you hate long copy, right?

Laura Davis: Uh huh. I, I can't bear it.

Laura Moore: No, I know.

Laura Davis: I don't know whether I'm, maybe I'm just lazy. I just think if you can't say it in a few lines, then just don't say it at all.

Laura Moore: But this is what I mean about people read differently on social media, because you would have no qualms about reading a long book.

Laura Davis: Well, I don't know.

Laura Moore: Well, no, but if you were in the mindset to read a book, you would read a book.

Laura Davis: Yeah.

Laura Moore: And that's way longer than a social media post.

Laura Davis: I have found myself getting to the end of some long copy and I'm being impressed.

Laura Moore: Wow. Wow.

Laura Davis: I know. I'm impressed by myself. And there are reasons why.

Laura Moore: Right, hang on.



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First of all, I need to know, did this happen on LinkedIn?

Laura Davis: Oh, I very, very much doubt it. [00:12:00] Most LinkedIn posts get my back up, so I just don't read anything on LinkedIn anymore, just look at pretty pictures. And I'm sure we'll kind of come on to this, but to do with the the formatting of it.

Laura Moore: Yeah.

Laura Davis: If a long piece of copy includes, for example, lots of bullet points, then I'm there.

I'm fine with that. And I, I am a scanner. I will not read. And then sometimes, and I know it pisses you off, but you'll share like, a piece of content with me. I'll scan read it and then respond. And then I'll say something like, but you know, I wonder why they don't include this. And you'll be like, uh, paragraph nine.

Laura Moore: Yeah, like, like when I'm writing a daily email, you'll be like, what? Why haven't you said blah, blah, blah, and I'm like... Uh, I have. Have you checked the email? Yeah, totally.

Laura Davis: I never scan our emails.

Laura Moore: Yeah, right. Yeah. But I think that's a good point though. I think the formatting is really important because people do, because [00:13:00] they are like distracted and time poor and all of that stuff.

So they do need to skim read it and scan it and stuff. So like what you just said about bullet points is really important. That is one way to just break it up and I think the more you can kind of break up your copy and give people like space to just take a breath and there's not like a massive long paragraph with hundreds of sentences and no, no, you know, even no bloody grammar and no full stops and whatnot.

Like break it up and give people a space in between. That makes it much easier to read. So like short sentences, short paragraphs.



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Laura Davis: If I'm on like a platform where you click on the see more and it opens up, I see on Instagram it's even worse when you can see somewhere at the bottom it catches your eye where it says continued in comments.

Laura Moore: Oh yeah, I'm sorry like, I am all for a long, a long caption but if you've got to continue in the comments, no.

Laura Davis: But the, when you click on that see more, if I [00:14:00] instantly see bullet points, well-formatted copy, you stand way more of a chance of keeping me than if I press see more and I just see big chunky paragraphs or even no paragraphs, just one big massive chunk of text.

Like I will, I literally, even if I thought it was going to be really interesting, I will just scroll on because I just can't bear it.

Laura Moore: Yeah.

Laura Davis: And then I read, I probably don't read top to bottom. I'll press see more, maybe then probably head to the easily formatted part whether it be like the just single lines or the the bullet points.

I will head to that. If the bullet points have intrigued me enough, I possibly will then read it more, kind of, top to bottom. But I'm all over the place, which is probably why I miss things, but I'm sure I won't be alone with that.

Laura Moore: No, you won't be. There will be different people who read differently all the time.

So, in terms of, like, formatting, short sentences, short paragraphs, line breaks. Like, I'm sorry, but why are people [00:15:00] not putting more line breaks in their copy? Like, that drives me nuts.

Bullet points, like you said, you can use capital letters to kind of make things easier to read, like to break up text, like don't have your whole caption in capitals, but like, you know, if there's a word that you really want to kind of emphasise, use capitals.



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You could add an emoji here and there. Don't use loads of emojis. Like Laura said, think about how it sounds on a screen reader. Don't use fancy formatting, like those fancy fonts that you can use. The only place that you can use bold and italic is in a Facebook group where Facebook actually lets you. So don't use any outside apps to do that.

And then, and I've said this to Laura in the past, like a lot, just remove words. If you think about if you had to pay a pound for every word that's in your caption, what ones can you take out and have it still make sense? Because the more words you can remove, the easier it will be for somebody to read.

But then before you actually post it, read it out loud, like literally read your whole caption. And yeah, you could do it in the way that Laura does and [00:16:00] like go all over the place of what if somebody started here and all of that stuff. But if you just read stuff out loud, you see whether it makes sense and you see if there's unnecessary words in your copy and you can take those out.

Laura Davis: I always add, which is why you always say to me, like, do you want to pay a pound for my words? Like I always write too many words. I'm a very, because like copywriting is not my thing. And I feel like the more words I put in, particularly adjectives, I'm like, oh, you know, let's make something sound better by using two adjectives instead of one.

Laura Moore: Yeah.

Laura Davis: Like, I think, and I don't know whether that's whether because I'm relying on my, you know, GCSE English from like, a long time ago. I was trying to try and quickly do the maths then, but I can't think how long ago it is where you have to, you have to write more. It's about writing more. You know, you do a dissertation at university, it's about trying to hit those number counts.

Laura Moore: Yeah.

Laura Davis: Whereas actually, if, if anything, you need to write the least amount [00:17:00] that still has the impact.



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Laura Moore: Forget every single thing you've been taught about writing when you start writing on social. Because it's just like, you don't need loads of words. You don't need to say ensure instead of make sure, like just talk how people, how people speak.

Laura Davis: Once upon a time.

Yeah.

And I think that point there, you know, writing how you want to sound, and you know, we're not going to go down on, you know, in your like brand voice, but I think it's really important, isn't it? You can totally tell when it's not been written, or it's been written by a bloody ChatGPT.

You can totally tell it's not, it's not written by -

Laura Moore: Oh god yeah. Empower yourself!

Laura Davis: Yeah.

Laura Moore: Yeah. That's the thing though, that because of ChatGPT, there's so many words that you should probably be avoiding now. Illuminate, empower, all of those kind of words, like they're just, you wouldn't, you wouldn't be sat in a coffee shop and going, I really would like to have a piece of cake cause it will make me feel empowered..

You know, like just come on, like write how [00:18:00] you speak. Don't use those terrible words. God, I bet that's probably somewhere on a sales page on our, on our website somewhere, I need to go and do a search for empowered and go take it off. If you spot it in any of our content, please let me know.

So yeah, speak how, how people, no. Write how you speak and speak how other people speak. Yeah. I think that makes it easier to read. And then the other, the final thing in terms of like -

Laura Davis: Oh, hang on though. Hang on, hang on, hang on. Before we move on to the final bit, tat, I want you to tell people the saying on the old length of copy, because I think it's brilliant.



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Laura Moore: Okay. So people always ask us this, they mostly ask us this about ad copy actually, which is really interesting. Like, how long should your copy be on a social media post? And there is a perfect answer to this. Your copy should be the same length as a Scotsman's kilt, because it needs to be long enough to cover up the important bits, but short enough to keep people interested.

Love it. [00:19:00] Love it. There you go. Feel free to put that on a graphic and tag us. Yeah, so the final thing then on your copy, on your captions, what have you, is the call to action. And this is the piece where people are always like, yeah, but I'm not sending anything or I don't want to, you know, I haven't got a link to click.

I don't need a call to action. Sorry, but every single post that you put out on any social media platform needs a call to action because otherwise people don't know what they need to do next and they will be distracted and they will go do something else.

Laura Davis: And if you, if you miss that, that's, that's, yes, we did say every single post should have a call to action. All of them.

Laura Moore: Yeah, especially like if you're listening to this podcast thinking, oh, well, hang on a minute. I'm listening to this because I definitely want to get better at copywriting because I want to get more engagement. And then you're not giving a call to action.

You're not going to get engagement. Like you need the call to action.

Laura Davis: Yeah, people need to be told what to do.

Laura Moore: Yeah, otherwise you're just leaving them hanging, and then what are they gonna do? They're just going to scroll.

Laura Davis: People will just read all that copy. They've got to the [00:20:00] end of all those paragraphs, and then they go, okay, yeah, good point, and now move on.

But if you write, if you think this is a good point, tell us what, you know, if you ask them a question, or tell them what to do, or like it, or share it, jump in your DMs, wherever you are in your kind of objectives of what you're trying to achieve, just ask, ask them to do something.



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Laura Moore: Yeah, and your call to action doesn't have to be like a direct call to action, it doesn't have to be that you're asking them to do something - you like, it could be lots of different things.

Yes, you could ask them to comment or share or, you know, do all of those things, but it could be that you are asking a question that's in related, like related to what you've been talking about. Like Laura just said, where they are just answering the question, you know, rather than giving them a, a direct instruction, you're asking a question that they're going to answer.

But it just needs to be clear as to, you know, what do you want somebody to do? Because otherwise they're just going to hop off.

Laura Davis: And I think more importantly, yes, [00:21:00] you have to have a call to action on every single post, but don't have multiple call to actions. Don't ask your audience to do multiple things because they don't, they don't, they just don't do that.

We don't sit there going, right, I'm going to like this post and I'm going to answer their question. And I'm going to go and click a link in their bio, then I'm going to go and share it.

Laura Moore: Yeah.

Laura Davis: People don't do that. It's hard enough to get people to do one thing. So let's, like, just keep this real, guys.

Let's just ask them to do the one thing.

Laura Moore: Yeah. And if your aim for that, if it's a sales post, and your aim for that post is to get somebody on a website to go and buy something, don't ask them a question, like, what do you think? Tell them, go and buy this thing on my website, here's the link, or go click the link in my bio.

Like, tell them the next thing to do, don't distract them with something else.

Laura Davis: Yeah. So your call to action has to be aligned with the objective of that post and whatever your overall and overarching strategy is. Don't just willy nilly put things in.

Laura Moore: Yeah.



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Laura Davis: Like, you [00:22:00] should be thinking about your call to actions.

Like, when you're coming up with the post.

Laura Moore: Yeah. As soon as you've decided what your reaction goal is, that you want, you know, what the reaction is that you want somebody to have when they see that post, and then go and do. You, you, you know what your call to action should be, should be aligned to that. By the way, if you visit our Instagram profile, you'll see that there's loads of posts on there that have got different call to actions, different hooks, all of that stuff to help you out.

So just have a scroll through our Instagram profile and you'll see loads of different posts with ideas and lines that you can basically steal and go and use in your own copy.

Laura Davis: Nice.

Laura Moore: And one of the things that you might want to think about is, like, when you're spending all of this time to write all of this brilliant copy, you know, you're getting your hooks right and all of that stuff, and that can be quite time consuming, and you spend all this time creating great content, and then you're like, oh, okay, I've got to think of another piece of content to put out now.

So, we've got a brilliant resource that you can have for free. Obviously, you're a lovely podcast listener, so we're going to let you have this for free. We call it the "Ultimate Guide to Remixing Your Content." And what [00:23:00] it is, is a useful way of finding your great content, finding your content that hasn't really done very well that you could use in a different way and make it better, and reusing that copy if you want to, in different ways.

So we give you lots of different ways that you can take a piece of content and turn it into another piece of content. If you want to go and grab that, go to <https://thetwolauras.com/remix>, you can get that for free. And yeah, it will help you to turn your existing content into more content without having to think of loads more ideas.

Laura Davis: Nice.

Laura Moore: And there we have it! Another episode down.



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I hope you've enjoyed this one. I love talking about copy, mostly because I like doing copywriting. If you want to annoy Laura Davis feel free to put out a really long caption and tag her with no formatting. She'll probably be the only person that engages on it.

And probably won't, will be two words. One of them will begin with an F and yeah, we'll see you on next week's episode. See you next week.

Laura Davis: [00:24:00] Bye.

