AMAZEBALLS EBOMBS

ingredients + scoring guide for
pain, fix, next actions, connectors and promises

Crispy Pain

#1

Does the ebomb
LEAD WITH CRISPY PAIN?

Criteria #1 – Does the ebomb lead with pain?

READER: OUCH. UGH! NOOO. WHY? STUPID!

Remember the power of the story arc: Without conflict, there's no drama, and without drama, there's no interest. No reason to continue reading, listening, or watching.

And there's no conflict, no pain, no drama more persuasive than the one your reader is going through *right now*.

That's why great ebombs start with pain. The more vivid, more concrete, more life-like, the better.

More than anything else, people crave to be *understood*.

If you can nail their pain to the wall, they will gladly read, watch, or listen to *everything* else you have to say.

Everybody hurts — REM
Life is suffering — the Buddha

Pain doesn't have to be *described* in words.

TYPES OF PAIN TO TACKLE

★ question (readers ask)
★ question (you ask of readers)
★ worry
★ overwhelm
★ confusion
★ lack of confidence
★ stuckness
★ emotional/psychological preoccupation
★ meaningless repetition
★ slowness / inefficiency
★ lack / insufficiency
★ money lost, or left on the table
★ error
★ failure
★ loss
★ conflict
★ undesirable outcome
★ undesirable situation

PAIN IN WORDS…

What does this error message mean?

Is this book worth buying?

Are you charging too little?

Can I make it as a designer if I don't learn how to code?

It's so overwhelming, I don't know where to start!

I don't think I can.

What should I learn next?

Ugh, this task always takes sooo long.

Hmmm, I'm not sure which to use…

I keep trying, but nothing seems to work…

I'm afraid to try, so I'm going to procrastinate until I give up.

I always forget the steps…

This seems too complex.

ARGH! WHY DOES THIS KEEP HAPPENING??

You can quote people's questions or complaints, depict it with a visual example (ugly design, bad code, errors), draw a funny comic or create an extreme example as a joke, or even imply it by offering the exact opposite.

Here are some examples of *show, don't tell* **when it comes to opening with pain**:

Does the issue seem hopelessly complex? Depict a gnarly cartoon knot with all the related jargon a confused reader might have come across.

Are your readers constantly having to look things up? Screenshot the product manual or Google search box with a likely search term they might be using over and over.

Is the problem that a task your readers are putting off (like pricing) is intimidating in terms of how many steps it takes? Rather than describe their behavior, *list* all the things they *think* they should be doing.

Are your readers having to try, delete, retry, delete, until they want to scream? Include a montage in your video or even create an animated gif. Or write out the tasks they're doing and then strike out the words.

PS: More on this in our upcoming course, The Ebomb Factory!

the ebomb has...

no pain

0 points

just something the author wanted to share for fun, self-expression, or personal reasons... an opinion, a story, a fact, etc., that has zero connection to or consideration of the reader's experience, pains, problems, etc.

crispy pain

1 point

a clear problem that the reader has — even if shared by the author, be it a question, a difficulty, or even a story where the author has made an effort to include the reader (either by acting as an avatar, or simply including them in an aside). pain is minor, without a huge effect on the reader's daily life, career achievement, income, etc.

crispy and VERY painful pain

2 points
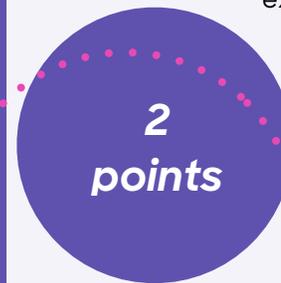
all of the criteria for a 1-point pain, except this pain has a high magnitude: it's VERY painful. high impact on emotional well-being, daily life, career achievement, income, lifestyle, etc. even if it doesn't dramatically affect their life in a real sense, it feels to them as if it does — psychological pain, or the perception of pain, is just as real to them.

The Fix

#2 Does the ebomb DELIVER A FIX?

Criteria #2 – Does the ebomb deliver a fix?

READER: FIX IT FOR ME!

On our story arc, we've jumped from the *inciting incident* to the *denouement*. Somebody's about to ride off into the sunset, and it's your reader! The fix is where you deliver on the back-of-the-book promise: *Read, watch, listen, try* **this** *and you get your happy ending.*

Your content doesn't have to be hilarious, or perfectly polished, or viral, or driven by "authority" — if you *help* someone, that's *everything* to them.

Ebombs are so powerful because they build trust. They build trust by helping the reader. *Nothing* is more persuasive than results the reader experiences for themselves.

Emphasis here is on *results*, whether it's a feeling or physical fact. The 'e' in 'ebombs' stands for 'educational,' but just teaching *anything* isn't enough to qualify for a good ebomb. Otherwise you could sit at a mic and read the dictionary aloud and call it good.

No fix? No ebomb.

SOME WAYS TO FIX THINGS

★ answer a question
★ solve a problem
★ support a decision
★ change a mind
★ guide an action
★ inspire a habit
★ serve up a sample
★ explain an example
★ deliver a result
★ automate a task
★ free up energy
★ reduce stress
★ increase income
★ save time
★ encourage action
★ create connection
★ lift spirits
★ develop confidence
★ give relief

FIX IN WORDS…

Ah, that's what that means!

That book sounds perfect for me / Nope, don't need that.

I SHOULD charge more.

I know what I should learn to succeed.

I've got a list of steps I can take.

I CAN do it.

I know what to tackle next.

Yay! That was so much faster!

This tool/font/language/app/ approach is the right one.

Now I know what mistakes I made, I can fix them.

Is that all it takes to get started? I think I can do that… now.

glances at cheat sheet Yep!

Ooh, that makes so much sense. I've got a handle on it now.

Wow, is THAT why that keeps happening? That explains it.

Fixes can be as small as the right word at the right time — or as big as an app.

You can start with small, level-one fixes and grow them into bigger fixes over time:

1. first, a pretty quote (so tweetable)
2. followed by a two-page essay backed by research or a compelling story
3. compiled into an infographic
4. explained in a recorded talk or live webinar
5. made actionable with an email course

This strategy works for code, education, design, coaching, marketing — any field where you can effect a tiny change *or* a big one.

You could tweet an idea, write a line of code, showcase a hack in a little screencast, and eventually work your way up to a comprehensive tutorial or even software library.

Note: Fixes are rated by *impact* rather than hard drive size — if your "big" fix is full of fluff, it doesn't count. Don't waste time and effort aiming a "big" fix at a level 1-sized pain. It just won't deliver.

ABOUT THAT STORY ARC... *In this case, the story is a heist movie. Your reader is the star. Your content is their blueprint. Who do they call when the shit hits the fan? The fixer. Hint: THAT'S YOU!*

FIX SCORING GUIDE

the ebomb has...

no fix

0 points

again, the most common culprit for 0 points is self-expression: the author wanted to say something or share something, but didn't remember to add specific value for the reader

fix level one

1 point

a small fix for a small problem – be it a small example, a short sample, a tip or trick, a word of advice, a fancy-styled quote to lift the spirits… it's not earth-shattering, but it's a little pick-me-up, a little bit of help that everyone can always use. there's always a place for a level one fix – and they're easy to produce!

fix level two

2 points

a high magnitude fix for a high magnitude pain: not just a couple lines of code, but a library or tutorial; not just an uplifting quote, but an entire essay to help the reader gain confidence; not just "charge more" but a course with steps to take to do it; not just a list, but a cheat sheet; not just praise for automation, but a calculator or spreadsheet that helps *do* it.

Next Action

#3 *Does the ebomb* *OFFER A CLEAR NEXT ACTION?*

Criteria #3 – Does the ebomb present a clear next action for the reader to take to *fix* their *pain*?

READER: OK, I READ, WATCH, LISTENED...NOW WHAT?

Consuming your content is only half the battle. To actually *fix* their *pain*, the reader will have to *use* your content. Try it. *Apply* it. How? That depends on what the details for the pain and fix:

- **Programming:** if the fix is a few lines of code, your reader will have to copy and paste that code into their project, in the right place, and reload or recompile to see it work. And then they may have to troubleshoot!

- **Design:** well, now there's some work to be done. Are you helping them make choices (like font combinations) or to fix a specific problem (like enhancing a form ui)? Or is it a big picture thing? How will they make *use* of the fix? With what process or tool?

- **Mindset:** if the fix is *in their head*, what actions can they take to cement it well and truly in there?

SOME POSSIBLE NEXT ACTIONS

- ★ Q: how will you apply this new skill in the future?
- ★ Q: how has this old way hurt you in the past?
- ★ write me with your thoughts
- ★ next time you get stuck, *stop*, and try thinking of it this way
- ★ use this script / template for your next ___
- ★ go look for 5 things, right now
- ★ read the next article
- ★ download this checklist
- ★ fill out this action plan
- ★ try this example I made
- ★ take this tiny baby step
- ★ apply this rule to your next __
- ★ try this new habit for 7 days
- ★ perform this ritual
- ★ make a commitment

NEXT ACTION IN WORDS...

Wow. Suddenly it's all so clear.

I never really thought of it that way.

Hey, it works!

I wish I had tried this a while ago.

It feels good to really make an effort.

I've heard all this before, but this time I'm really going to try it.

I CAN do it.

It feels really GOOD to do something.

Yay! That was so much faster!

Is that all it takes to get started? I think I can do that... now.

I'm feeling really good about this.

This is going to really help me.

This has already helped me.

- **Writing:** whether the fix is an editing technique, a rhetorical trick, a snazzy method of outlining, or even a way to get over writer's block, just *reading* about it won't be enough.

These are just a few examples. The bottom line is…

Whatever the fix is, the reader has to *do* something with it.

Sometimes, part of what makes your fix a fix will be you *showing* them exactly what to do, as in a detailed tutorial:

> Now put xyz here, and click abc, and reload… and if that doesn't work, try this… and if you see THIS message, then… and another good thing to try is…

Other times, you leave them with a to-do as your sign-off… like a little bit of post-ebomb homework:

> And the next time you face this problem, remember: _____!

Which one's right for you, your ebomb, and your reader? It all depends on the scale of pain and fix, and the specific type of pain and fix. Experiment and you'll get the hang of it!

When you can get your readers to *act*, you give them *results*… and they'll give *you* trust.

the ebomb has…

no next action

0 points

nothing – not click this link for more, not read this, not try this, nothing. the ebomb just… ends. (and the reader forgets it!)

next action level one

1 point

a closing next action that is a *small* step for the reader to take: remember this, think about this, try this mindset exercise, use this phrase in your next email, drop this line of code in your template, use this script for your next negotiation, try this design trick the next time you sit down to work on a logo, commit to really doing it, tell me how it's going – I'm listening!

next action level two

2 points

a high magnitude *application*: something interactive, like a workbook or calculator or tool… or something comprehensive, like a package of exercises to try, scripts to use, negotiating tactics, a flowchart, checklist, a guide… an icon pack or a small code lib… or an email course that nags them until they do it. this makes your ebomb not just educational but *actionable*.
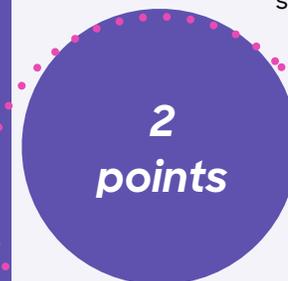
Connectors

(sucking them into the vortex)

#4

Does the ebomb
USE CONNECTORS TO SUCK THE READER INTO THE VORTEX?

Criteria #4 – Does the ebomb provide one or more *connectors* into the content vortex?

READER: I CAN'T... STOP... CLICKING!

Every great ebomb performs **four** jobs:

1. get clicked, aka *generate traffic*
2. get consumed aka *used/read/watched/listened to*
3. help the reader *fix their pain*
4. perpetuate this virtuous cycle... *aka suck the reader into a vortex of more ebombs*

Without connectors, most of your hard work acquiring traffic will produce "one-hit wonders": people who click once, read once, and bounce. The End. *Fin.* Very few visitors will fight your site design to locate more content on their own. Like all of us, the reader is busy and distractable, and so the tab gets closed and that's all she wrote.

Without a direct line to the next thing the reader needs & wants, a great ebomb falls flat.

Connectors give the reader a reason to stick around.

TYPES OF CONNECTOR

★ further content – inline links
★ further content – end of page
★ "next" content, if in a numbered guide etc.
★ "next" content in a playlist
★ autoplay, live load next content
★ content upgrades
★ email courses/drip content
★ internal ad for products
★ downloadable freebies
★ in-line surveys or quizzes, links to content as a result
★ templates to copy to third-party apps (e.g. Trello, Docs)
★ subscribe to newsletter
★ follow on social media
★ members-only area, log in to access / new content
★ join social group (FB etc)

NEXT ACTION IN WORDS...

Ooh, what's that?

That looks interesting!

Just one more...

Your reader gets: More learning. More insight. More understanding. More connection. More action. More fix. More *results*.

You get: double, triple, or quadruple the value out of your content; serious fans; trust, authority, and a reader who slowly becomes more and more willing to buy.

Plus, these are readers *already* on your site — the hardest work (acquiring traffic) is already done.

Connectors are the *best* way to send more traffic to your pillar content.

Level one connectors are simple: as simple as "read this next" or "join my newsletter."

Level two connectors are tailored to the content at hand: *here's the next step in this series*, an email course, content upgrade, or tool to help the reader implement what they just learned, etc. One that specifically flows from the thing they just read/watched/tried/listened to.

Tailored messages are also a good way to drive repeat visitors to product pages (but be careful, this can backfire if overused or not tuned).

NOTE: *Spiller content — e.g. a Tweet, Facebook post, ad, comment with a link, etc. — doesn't have connectors because it is itself a connector from the outside. Spiller isn't bad, it's necessary! But once they click, it's* **especially** *crucial that the linked content has connectors. Otherwise, any traffic you gain will be a one-hit wonder.*

the ebomb has...

no connectors

0 points

nothing — no share for a content upgrade, no join my newsletter, not even a click here to read more... BAM! one-hit wonder.

connectors level one

1 point

a connector that is untailored or mostly untailored; join my newsletter, sign up for discounts, an internal ad for a product that the reader may already own or that doesn't really flow from the content at hand, a link to pillar content that isn't really relevant to the topic at hand and not an obvious next step etc.

connectors level two

2 points

a connector that is *highly* tailored to the content (crispy-ness wins): it flows **directly from** what the reader just read/watched/listened to, **straight into** a *specific* offer: the next in a series, a highly relevant email course, free downloadable, content upgrade, tool, etc. the goal is to pull the reader to **share**, **subscribe** or otherwise **participate** (even buy... a connector can be a tailored sales pitch).

Back of the Book Promise

bonus! what is the ebomb's...
Back of Book Promise

This isn't a scoring criteria... but it's *always* a great question to ask.

Because if you can understand the BoB promise, you will *also* understand:

1. *why* people are reading, using, watching, or listening to that ebomb
2. what the author was thinking that led them to *construct* that ebomb
3. whether or not the ebomb *delivers*

This is a great question to ask *every time* you come across a successful ebomb, especially if it's someone who's reaching the same audience *you* want to reach.

The **back of book promise** is the sales copy you'll find on the back of a nonfiction book. It comes in this format:

By the end of this book, you will _____.

It's a reason for the reader to crack open the book in the first place... and to keep reading through to the end.

Often it's not that literal phrase. Sometimes it's a bulleted list of verbs you'll *do*. Sometimes it's a list of things you'll *learn*. Sometimes it's *questions* you'll answer (with the help of the book, of course).

And sometimes the BoB is implied, like when the text sets up a mystery or painful scenario and the only way to 'resolve' it is to read the damn thing. (A form of show-don't-tell PDF!)

The clearer the BoB, the better.

Answering this question for yourself *before you* sit down to *create* an ebomb will make your ebombs more compelling. *By the end of this blog post, you will _____.*

By the end of this guide, you'll know the 4 specific criteria that go into a great ebomb... and how to tell if yours stack up, and how to deconstruct the ones you find in the wild.
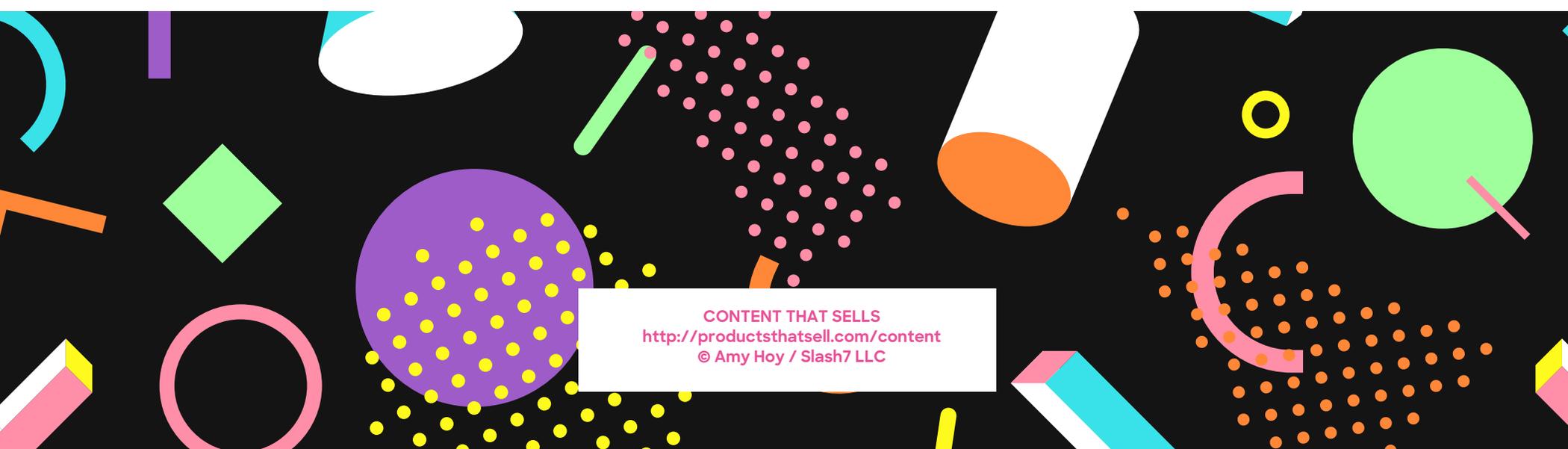
Start with the BoB, then work backwards to deliver it.

TIP: It's hard to go wrong with that old speakers' saw, "Tell 'em what you're gonna tell 'em. Tell 'em. Then tell 'em what you told em." You can make it as chatty or formal as you like, to fit your style.

Here's a conclusion page.

some kinda awesome subheadline should probably go here.