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2008

Writing Web Copy



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Featured Resource

[Copywriting Guide](#) - Essential guide to producing more sales through your web copy and ad copies.

INTRODUCTION

Writing good, effective web copy is not as easy as it seems. Visitors to your website need to know exactly what you're offering without having to spend a lot of time clicking around. You only have a few seconds to grab and keep their attention, so it's vital that your web copy is clear, simple, and of course, compelling.

Here are a few things to that you'll want to keep in mind when it comes to writing for the web:

- People don't read websites in the same fashion as traditional printed material, where the reader reads left-to-right, top-to-bottom. Instead, web pages are read in much the same way as a glossy magazine, people let their eyes skip across the page pulling out sections they find interesting to give their focus to.
- Internet users are actively seeking information as opposed to passively soaking up data. If they don't find what they're looking for on your website, then they'll just leave. If your web copy is too long or not interesting, they're unlikely to read it fully, so you must be able to cut out the junk and keep it interesting.

With so many websites vying for your visitors attention, it's important that you understand the basics of producing targeted, effective web copy before diving in head first to produce content for your website.

WHY IS WEB COPYWRITING DIFFERENT?

When writing copy for the web it's important to remember that your visitors are specifically looking for the kind of services, products, or information that you offer. Therefore your copy must quickly answer the questions of your first-time visitors. They'll want to know, *"Is this the right website?" "Does it have what I'm looking for?"* And *"Will I be able to get what I want here?"*

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These questions should be answered in your page headings and headlines in a manner that will hook your first-time visitor immediately. Because the typical website visitor scans the copy, this may be the only opportunity for you to grab their attention.

In order to facilitate this, your web copy must provide answers instantly, the visitor needs to know that they indeed have come to the right place and you have exactly what they are looking for.

The most important thing to consider when writing copy for the web is that you must continually reassure your visitors that they have found the right place and that their goal can be achieved on your site.

YOUR VISITORS ARE IMPORTANT

Fact gathering and planning are crucial to the production of great web copy. You can do this by thinking like your visitor. What questions do they need answers for?

There are four basic questions that you will need to address:

- Why am I here?
- What do I do?
- Why should I do it?
- What next?

If your site does not provide instant answers to these 4 basic questions, then this is the first step. These answers should be available to all visitors regardless of them being a first-time visitor or not, returning visitors often forget the answers to questions and need to be reminded.

As you plan your web copy make sure that you're keeping your focus on your target audience, and though you won't be able to please everyone, you can make sure that their questions are answered directly.

If you're attempting to target more than one visitor demographic then make sure you send them to specific landing pages designed for their target group. If the visitor does not think your site is of value to them they will go elsewhere.

When writing the answers to your visitor questions, it's important to let the facts support them. Don't slave over your copy in order to produce excessive descriptions, instead keep it easy to read and understand without injecting hype.

PLANNING YOUR COPY

When planning new copy, keep in mind that your target audience is going to be more intelligent and clued up than the typical visitor to the website, they've come to you for a reason and they are looking for answers.

Targeting describes the process of defining which of your visitors will have requirements that can be filled by your particular services or products. You must strive to become a complete expert in every aspect of your product or service. Once you have determined who you need to target, then you can start to look for them. It will help to create a basic profile of those who will be most likely to purchase your service or product. Once this profile is complete you can then start to produce targeted web copy written to appeal to the target audience the profile indicates.

Now that you have found your target demographic, you can begin to develop a plan for writing your copy.

- At the start of the copy tell the customer what he wants; present him with his own question.
- Decide on a tone for your copy, one that is likely to fit well with your target audience.

- Present arguments to them in an easy to understand manner so that there will be unanswered questions

KEEP IT SHORT AND SIMPLE

As a business owner you're continually working to generate traffic to your website, but you also want your visitors to keep coming back. With that said, there are several things you should keep in mind when producing copy for the web.

Unless a visitor has been driven to a laser targeted landing page on your website, they're likely to do nothing more than skim the first section of your page. The longer your copy is, the less likely it is that it will get read so don't place long pieces of copy on pages where visitors do not expect it to be.

Writing simple copy is important because you want your visitors to be able understand what you're trying to present to them without a lot of work on their part. They don't want to spend the time trying to figure out your website, and you don't want them to think about whether or not they should buy from you. Your goal is to get them to click the order button without a thought. If you cannot give the facts briefly and directly then you should consider rewriting the copy.

Aim to deliver one key point over one or two lines. Any longer and you can easily lose the focus of your visitor.

Again, your visitors are specifically looking for something, so once you have captured their attention you need to direct them to a page that has more detailed copy. Provide them with a hyperlink to a fresh page that contains all the information they need.

If you really need to include longer passages of copy in order to get your point across, then make sure that you format it in a style that is comfortable for the reader. Break up your copy so that readers can skim it and still get the answers they're looking for. You can do this by using headings, sub-headings, bullet points, and short paragraphs.

Longer passages of copy do not need to maintain the approach of directness that we would use in shorter copy, however, make sure it is simple to understand and that visitors will not be deterred from reading it due to its complexity.

Try to keep a neutral tone when writing copy. You should aim to produce copy that is simple to read and maintains an unassuming tone, and is neither tedious nor overbearing. Ignoring any of these simple guidelines could cause your reader to switch off and you will lose the opportunity to convey your point to them.

GOOD COPYWRITING

One of the biggest mistakes of writing web copy is not maintaining consistency. You may discover that unintentionally you become lazy in the quality of the content and the look of your site when it comes to presenting particular services and products.

It's imperative that you regularly review your website to check that the phrases and terms you are using are consistent. You must also ensure that your ideas are communicated clearly throughout your site and presented to your visitors in a consistent manner.

You should always thoroughly check your spelling, grammar and formatting closely. One simple spelling mistake will often undo all the planning and effort that was put in producing what otherwise could have been a piece of stunning web copy. A simple spellchecker is often all that is required to ensure the quality of your copy is not damaged by any silly mistakes.

You should try to avoid excessive use of punctuation, things like exclamation marks and question marks. Instead use headings and bold text to stress any points you wish to bring to the notice of your visitors. Excessive punctuation looks unprofessional and some visitors, especially those with advanced language skills, will find it annoying.

There are also many ways that a website can look more visually appealing without resorting to complicated graphics and page layouts. **Consider trying some of the ideas outlined below, you may be amazed at the results these simple practices can deliver.**

- Break up the pages as much as possible by formatting large chunks of information. The use of formatted text can drastically improve the readability of a page.
- Make sure your paragraphs are easily digested; break up the large areas of text into several paragraphs. This will help to make your copy more readable and supply you with the opportunity to get more points across.
- Never ever add extra spaces at the end of a line, this makes a webpage look like the writer is struggling to find words to fill the page.
- At the end of a paragraph ensure that you signify it actually was a paragraph by leaving two empty lines below it, you should also do this after every heading or title.

If you really must write long bodies of copy then try to use some or all of the following formatting rules.

- Column width should be kept fairly narrow. The visitor will find it uncomfortable to move their eyes from left to right across the entire width of a webpage.
- Make sure you include plenty of subheadings; this will facilitate visitors with the ability to scan the page quickly in a hyper textual fashion to focus on parts that interest them.

HEADLINES

The page that your website visitors land on is quite possibly the most important part of your entire site, and is doubly so if the page requires the visitor to "convert" (which is the term we give to the process of enticing a visitor to buy a product, a service, subscribe to the website or perform any other action they were brought to your site to perform).

The most tried and tested way of increasing conversion ratio is to instill a sense of urgency in the visitor. **Here are several effective ways that you can achieve this:**

- Offer daily deals, this is a great way to get customers returning to your site.
- Free offers or bonus offers when buying a service or product.
- At Christmas and other holidays why not offer seasonal promotions?
- Instill a sense of urgency by telling your visitors that stocks are limited and going fast.
- Limited time or limited availability offers also work well.
- One time offers are also good because the visitor realizes that they will never be offered that special again if they say no.

However, if you intend to use these marketing tactics make sure you follow through. If you tell your visitors that an offer is open for a limited period, then it should remain open for a limited period only.

Not doing so is a mistake that is witnessed again and again across a broad range of websites; the owners foolishly believe that their visitors are not bright enough to see through this transparent attempt to get them to part with their money.

There are other more stealthy ways to introduce a sense of urgency, why not include a price page with timestamp prices? Ensure these prices are keen and competitive, the inclusion of the timestamp implies to the customers that these prices may change at any time. This approach relies much more on psychology and if you attempt it, make sure you understand how your target demographics should react to it. If you are selling high end and expensive products displaying prices may not be the wisest option.

This whole concept of urgency is designed to get people to convert; there are three types of customers, or more correctly two types of customers, and three types of visitors. The first kind of customer wants to buy and he takes very little convincing and is probably the perfect customer.

The second type of customer is the kind of customer who thinks they might want to buy but they need to be convinced.

The final type of customer or visitor is actually no customer at all, and nothing you do can entice them into purchasing your product or service.

Just remember if you do intend to use this concept of urgency try to avoid hype; you must come across with integrity.

HEADLINE DEVELOPMENT

Writing a good headline is not quite as complicated as many professional marketers would like you to think. It is actually very simple; if you approach it from the right angle it should be no problem at all. Instead of thinking about how to write your headline just think about what it should say.

Consider the fact that the wrong headline written beautifully is less effective than the right headline written badly. A weighty headline does not need to be dressed up with flowery words.

Do not let your ego get in the way of your headlines, a headline does not need to be clever, it does not need to be witty, it does not need to be catchy and it does not need to be elegant. It does need to be effective.

It can help when trying to develop a headline to think of it backwards, consider the question it needs to answer, is your target audience looking for specific product? You don't need to tell them you can supply it, you need to remind them that they wanted it.

Headlines do not need to be long winded or clever, why write a thousand words when a handful will suffice?

HEADLINES AND TONE TESTING

When writing any copy, it is important that the headline sets the tone for the rest of the content. Never forget your headline is the empowering text; it sets the scene for the copy.

If your headline fails to perform its basic function, you can rest assured that your visitor will deem your copy of a similar worth. Incredible copy displayed beneath a terrible headline becomes terrible copy simple because your visitor isn't going to read much past your headline if it doesn't get their attention and arouse their interest.

Don't be afraid to write multiple headlines and switch them in and out of your page in an effort to decide which fits best with the tone of the rest of the copy; you can always change headlines at a later date if you feel it's not working. In fact, if you have a lot of return traffic you may find it beneficial to rotate headlines regularly.

The headline on any webpage is the facilitator and an enabler of conversion; it can be seen as the key element of page content and carries much weight with your visitor. If a

potential customer does not say yes to your headline, they're not likely to say yes to your products.

KEEP IT UPBEAT

You're trying to excite your visitors into purchasing your product or service, so keep your copy upbeat. Always keep things vibrant, never dull or depressing. Negativity should be avoided, never tell a visitor something is not; instead tell them what could be.

You have one chance to grab the attention of your visitor, you need to do this at the very beginning of your copy and you need to reinforce this at the very end. It is advisable to use your best content at the top and the bottom of the page, at the top to grab attention at the bottom to make sure the visitor ends his experience on a high note.

If you are weak to finish, your visitors will exit your site with a feeling of disappointment. They will no longer remember the upbeat and compelling introduction as well as the quality detail presented in the body of a copy. The only thing they *will* remember is a disappointing fadeout at the end.

It may help to consider that writing web copy is very similar to telling a story; you should start with a concise introduction that will set the scene. You should then continue to provide the storyline, you can think of your closing paragraph as the finale.

CONCLUSION

Always remember that your job is to entertain your reader, unlike other forms of writing you do not have the luxury of time on your side. You must grab your reader quickly, interest him enough to gain his concentration, and maintain that concentration and focus throughout your copy. Copy also has a more important purpose, to entice and excite a prospective customer into becoming an actual customer.

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If you're trying to sell difficult products, you may want to explore the option of changing what is perceived as a conversion. Why not have a simple user registration process or newsletter sign up that effectively becomes a foot in the door. If you are finding it impossible to achieve sales purely through copy than either of these two options gives you the opportunity to revisit a prospective customer and attempt a conversion later.

To summarize:

- Adopt an unassuming tone
- Keep things short and sweet
- Avoid the hype, be passionate but sincere
- Make sure you are writing for a targeted audience
- Always consider keywords and their relation with search engines

You should also remember the following facts:

Remember that the landing page of your site is the most important; this is the opening of your window of opportunity and needs to be given much weight.

Make sure your website is developed with visitors in mind and not for yourself, what looks and reads good to you may not fit your target audience.

