Copywriting for the Web

(A Guide on the Basics of Copywriting for the Web)

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Introduction

Although many people seem to think that writing effective copy for the web is easy, it isn't. So if you want to ensure that your readers and your customers understand how your website works and what it can do for them, you need to produce good copywriting for it.

In this book, we will look at the basics of producing good copywriting for the web. But before we start there are a number of things that you should remember.

First, people do not read a website in the same way that they would read printed material. In fact, there are three characteristics which affect how a web user will react to the online content of a site.

It is important to remember that web users are active, not passive. So if they can not find a reason for staying on a site, then they will leave it. Sometimes a person will leave 15 seconds after they have actually gotten there. So if your text is too long, then they are less likely to read it. So if you want a web user to believe what you have to say, you must be able to back up the hype.

In order for any web copy to be effective, it must take into account the characteristics mentioned above.

What is most important of all when looking at copywriting for the web, is not to underestimate the importance of the basics. If you just jump straight into it you may find yourself in trouble,

and your site not being as effective as it should be.

Chapter 1 –

Why Writing Copy for the Web is Different

One of the most important reasons as to why copywriting for the web is different is that the mindset of those who are going to be reading is different.

More often than not, most web pages will be found via a search engine. This is very significant, as it means that the person reading your site has been looking either for you or someone like you. So that puts them in control. This is because they will be focused on finding a particular product, service or piece of information.

So anyone visiting your site for the first time and has found it via a search engine will have a few questions in mind. "Have I come to the right place?" also "Will I find what I'm looking for at this page or site?" Finally, they would be asking themselves "Do I feel able that I can complete the task at this point?"

So what is vital is that you answer these questions in both your headline, and any sub-headlines you may have. It needs to be able to secure a response from this first time visitor immediately.

In order for this to happen, your writing needs to provide answers so that the visitor knows exactly what they are looking for.

What is important when writing any copy for the web is that you reassure any visitors that they are in the right place, and that they should continue to read on.

Chapter 2 –

Visitors Are Important to You

If you fail to plan, then you are likely to fail in your endeavor of producing great copy. If you wish to achieve your goals, it is important to gather all the facts.

First, you should anticipate the users' of your sites questions. Normally, there are four questions that a user will have that will need to be answered.

1. What am I doing here?
2. How do I do it?
3. What is in it for me?
4. Where do I go from here?

So if your site's design and navigation can not provide an obvious answer to these questions, then you should look at using copy in order to explain them. It is important that the answers to these questions should be obvious to all your users, and not just those visiting your site for the first time.

What is important to remember is that half the visitors to a site will not try to bother with working things out for themselves, and the other half may not even succeed.

Next, when planning, focus on your core audience. Remember, you will not be able to reach everyone, so make sure that the copy you produce addresses

your site’s most important visitors directly. So, spend time explaining what the site can do for them in particular. If you want to make it more effective, then do not use words which would only be looked at by people you do not need.

However, if you are targeting more than one type of visitor to your site, then make sure that you can direct them to different pages. What you should remember is that a visitor will go somewhere else if they do not feel your site has something of value to offer to them in particular.

So when providing them with facts, let the facts speak for themselves. It is important that you make your descriptions compelling, although not excessive. Many visitors to sites will skip a site if they feel it is too full of hype (just bear in mind that some hype will almost certainly be necessary in order to excite your visitor).

Chapter 3 –

Plan in Order to Succeed

It is vital that during the planning stage of your copywriting for the web, you understand what it is, exactly, you hope to accomplish.

You have already determined that you need to increase direct sales, build a subscriber base, circulate information, as well as provide technical support. But in order to do this, you must make sure that your web copy can help you to achieve these goals.

It is important to decide who your ideal customer is and just what it is that they really want. Then find and craft the words that will most effectively bring these people to your site.

It is also important to remember that without a detailed plan, it will become impossible to know who you are targeting. Without a target, you are likely to miss out on those people who are willing and eager to pay for your help and expertise.

So when planning your web copy, it is important to know that your target audience is normally smarter and more knowledgeable than the typical visitor to a site.

Now that you have started planning, you need to start looking at whom to target.

Targeting is used to figure out which customers will have any problems they can be solved by using your particular product. It is therefore vital that you become an expert in relation to every single benefit that your product offers. Then, once you are able to determine who you need to target, you can begin to search them out. So start building a profile of those people who will benefit from your help the most. Once you know who they are, then begin by repeatedly using strong web copy, and the most magnetic of the benefits your product can offer as bait.

At last, you have found your target audience, and now you must develop a strategy for writing your copy. In order to do this, the best way is to do the following:

1. In the first part, write about what exactly the customer wants.
2. The tone is how your writing sounds to those that you are targeting.
3. When executing your copy it is important that you are able to present your idea to them in an easy way.

What is most important is that you think about all three of these things in equal amounts, and do not allow any one of them to overshadow the others.

Chapter 4 –

How to Write Effective Copy for the Web

In order to write effective copy for the web, there are two primary areas that you should look at. It is the page title and the META descriptions. Both of these are usually the first two things that a person will see when searching the web for a particular product or service.

However, this does not actually apply to all search engines or directories as some will not show the META description at all. In some cases, they will show a snippet of the content from your site.

Below we provide in list of importance for particular areas that you should focus on in order to write effective web copy.

1. Page Title – This is the first thing that any visitor will see when carrying out a search on the web.

2. META Description – Usually the second thing the visitor will see when carrying out a search through a search engine or directory.

It is important to remember that both of these are likely to be produced on the Search Engine's Results Page (SERP's).

3. Heading Tags – This will relate to specific

subjects within your site.

4. Visible Content – This is another area of importance that you should focus on in order to produce effective copywriting for the web. These are provided below in order of importance.

a. Hyperlinked Tex and Title Attribute – This is frequently displayed as a "tool tip". Which is a short message that will appear when the pointing device (cursor) pauses over a particular object?

b. Alternate Text Tags – This should be for an image and is not to be used for stuffing with keywords that do not apply to it.

c. META Keyword Tags – Unfortunately, due to severe abuse by unethical marketers and uneducated consumers these are not as strong as they use to be. In fact, most search engines will no longer be looking at these as a relevancy factor during their search. So it is important that you make sure the keywords you use in this tag are to be found in the visible content for the page.

So effective copywriting for the web can only be achieved if you carefully research your keywords and keyword phrases. What is the point of writing any copy, if you do not know what it is actually that your target audience is searching for? By targeting the correct keywords and keyword phrases you are taking one of the most important steps in writing effective copy.

Chapter 5 –

How to Find Effective Keywords and Keyword Phrases

Search engines are the most important tool on the web for bringing new customers to a site. Many people who have never heard of your site will use a search engine to find what they are looking for, at your site or at someone else's. But unfortunately, a search engine is not psychic and not very intuitive either. They will not be able to find what people are actually looking for but rather what they are asking for.

But just how do you know what people are looking for? There are a number of different ways in which you can get ahead of the competition in relation to people's search habits. There are many effective programs around and one of these is Word Tracker, which can be found at WordTracker.com. You are able to license this program either by the day, week, month or year. What this program does is provide you with feedback in relation to key phrases that you submit to it. It will also make recommendations in relation to similar key phrases, and you are then able to test them against the most important search engines and directories on the web.

What it then does it tells you just how many people are searching for a particular phrase, and how much competition there is from other sites. Once this is done then Word Tracker assigns each phrase with

a Keyword Effectiveness Index (KEI) ranking. So by using the phrases that attracts the most interest, but the least competition, appropriately throughout your site in both copy and page titles, it will make it more receptive to the search engines and directories. So when it comes time for people who are looking for a particular product or service, then your site should be one of the first they see in their search results.

The best time to do any keyword or key phrases searches is when you are first building your site. This will then mean that you do not need to rewrite your copy later on. But really, it can be done at any time. It is important to remember that if you are not researching what it is your customers want, then your competition will be.

Chapter 6 –

Keep it Short and Sweet

You are looking to keep your visitors coming to your site and also get them to return. There are a number of points you should consider when copywriting for the web.

Keep your copy short and simple

What you should remember is that unless a visitor has been directed to a particular page on a site, more often than not, they will only read 1 or 2 lines of the text. So the longer your text is, the less likely they will want to read it. So if you can, do not add any long copy to any pages where visitors are not expecting it to be.

Also keep your copy simple. This matters as much as how long it is. It is important that your visitors are able to understand what has been written on their first reading. They do not want to have to spend time thinking about what you have written.

In most cases, you should be able to convey one key idea effectively in just one or two lines of writing. By writing any more then that, you are likely to ruin the chance of the first idea you are providing to get through to them.

So by anticipating that your visitors will be willing to learn more about something, then they will look for the page that has more copy on it.

So provide them with a link to another page of your site where they can get hold of the information that they need.

What if you do need to write long copy?

If you do need to include some longer copy, then organize it. Even if your visitors are expecting to find a page heavy with text, they may not actually be willing to read it. So in order to help them, divide any distinct ideas you have into separate paragraphs. Provide them with useful headings, sub headings and bulleted lists. This is a great way of introducing key ideas to them deliberately.

It is best to assume that not all the visitors to your site will read longer pieces in their entirety. So write copy that they will be able to skim through and lets them read the parts that they are only interested in.

Although longer copy does not need as direct as short copy is, it should still be easy to read. You will find that those visitors to your site who have difficulty understanding what has been written, will stop reading it.

Make your Copy Lively

Keep your copywriting clear and write vividly. You should be aiming to write in a light, unassuming tone of voice. If what you have written is boring or overbearing, this will in turn affect the reader, and what you are trying to convey will not get through to them.

So use a consistent voice throughout your copy. By doing this, visitors will more quickly recognize it and so become familiar with it. The more familiar

a site or subject is to them, the more effective it will be.

Chapter 7 -

Other Essential Components for Good Copywriting

It is ever so easy to become a little sloppy with the vocabulary on your website, as well as the look. You may find it so easy that you become inconsistent in the terms and phrases that you use when describing a particular product, service, tool or feature on your site.

So it is vital that you go through your site regularly and make sure that the terms you are using are used consistently. Also, that they are clearly communicating what you are trying to express to those visiting your site.

Therefore, you should always be aware of the spelling, grammar and formatting of any copywriting that you produce. Many sales efforts have amounted to nothing just because of a simple spelling or grammatical error in the copywriting. So spend time using a spell checker to ensure that everything is correct. It will save a lot of time later on.

Try to avoid using lots of capital letters and exclamations marks in your work, as it does not look very professional. But use bold text and color in order to highlight any important points you wish to make.

Another important thing to have is an understanding

of the written language. As creating website copy is different from that used when writing an article in a newsletter, or composing a custom essay or book report or research paper. The language that you use must be very deliberate. It is important that you understand the language and how it exactly influences people's buying behaviors. It is important that you know which words are strong, and which words are weak, and which words should be avoided at all costs.

However there are plenty of ways in which a site can be made more appealing without having to use graphics and animated gifs.

1. By formatting the text on a page, you can break up large chunks of information. So wherever possible, use bulleting, numbering, emboldened text, colored text etc., in order to make important information stand out.

2. Break up your paragraphs into easily digestible pieces of information. This will help to make your content stand out more. It will also help to make those important facts or sections stand out more also.

3. At all times, refrain from adding two spaces after each full stop. Not only will you save time, you will also save space also.

4. At the end of each paragraph, make sure that you press the return key twice and do the same after each section title.

If, however, you need to write long copy, then it is important that you should use some of the

following formatting rules.

1. Keep the column width reasonably narrow. The human eye finds it more difficult to track from the end of one line to the beginning of the next if the column is wide.

2. Use plenty of subheads, as this helps those who would rather just scan a page before they commit to actually reading the whole thing. These subheadings should lead your visitor through the key points.

3. Indent any key elements in your copy. This will help to add emphasis where it is needed. It also helps to break up an otherwise scary block of text. So, the longer the copy on the page, the more important it is for you to use sub headers and indents.

As you can see formatting is essential to any good copy.

Chapter 8 –

Get a Headline that Grabs

The home page of any site is the key web page, especially if it is where you want a person to take some action, such as buying something or subscribing to something.

So, one of the great ways of building momentum, and also increasing the number of people who act on this, is by creating some urgency. There are many different ways in which this urgency can be created, and below are just a few:

1. Provide them with an offer for a limited period of time.

2. Offer limited supplies of a particular product.

3. Offer them seasonal specials.

4. Why not offer them a free gift when they subscribe or pay for a particular item.

5. Daily deals – this is a great way of bringing in customers.

However, just a word of caution when using these types of tactics: It is important that you are both credible and honest with the visitors to your site. So if you are saying that an offer expires on a particular date or at a particular time, then make sure that it does. Just imagine how bad it

would look if someone came back to your site the day after, only to find the offer still in place.

But there are other ways in which you can imply urgency on your site. You could show a page with the prices, and that they are the best prices to be found on the web as at that time. With this method you are not providing a time limit or a limit on how much of the product is available. But by using a time stamp, you are also implying that the prices on these products could increase at any time.

The whole idea of this method is so that you get people moving. So those who would normally be sitting on the fence will actually do something and make that all important purchase.

But above all, you can sell with urgency as long as you do it with integrity, or you may do more damage than good.

Chapter 9 –

How to Go About Writing a Headline

So just how you go about writing a great headline? It's quite simple really. What you need to do is spend less time stressing about how to write your headline, and more time on figuring out what it should say.

Even if you say the wrong thing beautifully, it is not going to do you any good, but if you happen to say the right thing with poor wording, then this will help you much better in the long run.

Unfortunately, there are plenty of copywriters out there today who will give way to their own egos. These are the types who want to show everybody else what wonderfully talented copywriters they are. So, it is important that you put your ego aside and spend time deciding what your headline is going to say.

So just how do you know what to say?

It is more important that you focus your mind on the desires and wants of your target audience, rather than on either the product or service that you are trying to sell.

Why use hundreds of words when 1 or 2 will suffice? It should also be deeply engaging, interesting so that it excites those that come to your site. It

should actually make them sit up and say “yes” to what you are offering.

So if you keep all of this in mind, then you are on your way to producing a great headline.

Chapter 10 –

Test the Tone of Your Headlines

When writing any copy, it is important that the headline you have at the top will set the tone for your whole site. In fact, this is the most powerful text on any page.

So if it should fail to do what is required of it, then nobody is likely to even bother reading the body text. But no matter how many times you write and then rewrite the main heading for a page, you should test it.

The best way of doing this is by writing the best headline you can at first, and then write some alternatives instead. There are plenty of services on the web, such as Vertster.com, which can help you to test for the winner.

The headline on any web page is the key to engaging both the attention and interest of the visitors to that site. It only takes a few selected words, which can result in a huge impact on page conversion rates.

So keep testing what you have with alternatives until you find the right one.

Chapter 11 –

Make Your Text Links Look the Same

During the very early days of the web you would find all the text links were both blue and underlined. Even today, this still holds true…just take a look at Google, eBay, Yahoo or MSN, and all their links are blue, and are either underlined, or become underlined when the cursor is placed over them.

But just what is the point of this? When visitors are first entering any site, they are expecting the links look like this. Remember, it is important that any visitors to a site can figure our how it works in order to get to the pages they are interested in the most. So one element in this process is for them to figure out what text links look like. So if yours are blue and underlined, then you have nothing to worry about, as everyone will know what they are.

But if yours happen to be orange and underlined, then a new visitor will have to spend time figuring out just where your links are. But if your links are just orange, then they will need even longer to work it out.

Unfortunately, there are too many sites out there today which have no set appearance to their text links. Some may be underlined, others may not, some may be blue, and others may be orange. In

some cases, they may be bold and others not. So now you are getting the picture.

If you do not provide your visitors with a uniformed look to your text links, you're placing a huge burden on them. This is because it makes it significantly harder for them to get where they want to be, and find what they need.

Where the web is concerned, people's interest in a certain subject can vanish in an instant. So you need to figure out ways in which you can minimize the "loss of their attention". The only really simple way that this can be achieved is by making sure that all your text links are immediately recognizable, which isn't difficult to accomplish at all.

Chapter 12 –

Be Positive from Beginning to End

When starting any copywriting, it is important that you are positive from the beginning to the end.

You need to grab their attention at the beginning, and make them want more when they have finished. It is vitally important that you use your best material at both the beginning and end of your work.

So if you produce a weak finish, then your customers will walk away feeling disappointed. They will also have forgotten the strong opening that you had produced, as well as the great stuff that followed after. All they will ever remember is what a let down the end was.

So, just how do you apply this to writing copy for the web?

What you should do is to think of your web page as a story, show or performance that you are presenting. It is important that you think about the structure, and any messages you are presenting on your web pages in order to have that all important stronger ending.

Conclusion

Apart from the fundamentals of good writing, impeccable spelling, good grammar and punctuation will go a long ways in copywriting. The most important thing about producing good copywriting for the web is about grabbing, as well as keeping, the person's attention, and in the end getting the result that you want.

Such results may be a sale, or it may just be an inquiry. What could be more encouraging to someone who is just starting out on an online business then to have someone sign up for their newsletter, or that they provide information relating to themselves?

The main focus in order to produce effective copywriting is as follows:-

1. Keep it short and snappy.
2. Be informative but friendly.
3. Be passionate about what you are writing on – but do not make it in to a complete sales pitch.
4. Make sure that you aim it specifically at your target audience.
5. Be aware at all times of search engines.

While lengthy details relating to your company's history and statements are undoubtedly interesting for those that are involved, it is important to remember that those who are reading your site are not trying to be selfish; they just want to know what the benefits of your product are to them. So

make sure that you focus on this in your copy.

Remember that all the pages of your site are important, but the home page is the one where people will get their first impression of you. So it is vital you take particular care when producing this page.

So make sure that your web pages are written first and foremost for your visitors, and not for you.

However, if search engine rankings are important to you, then make sure that each page is focused around a particular keyword phrase. This should be a phrase which you would like to be found by a potential visitor searching for your product or service using a search engine.

But if you want to really do something that will consistently increase the number of visitors to your site; you will need to add more content. So make it a habit to add more content pages to your site regularly.

By doing this a number of good things will occur.

1. Both new visitors and subscribers will know that they have something new to look forward to when they come to your site. So in other words, they know it is important that they keep returning to your site. This only helps to increase the value of your site in the search engine rankings as well.

2. Each new page you include may be indexed by Google and the other major search engines, and will be listed on their results pages. Also, by taking a little time in researching relevant keywords and keyword phrases, you will be optimizing these new pages, which in

turn will achieve a much higher page rank listing.

3. By adding more new content pages, say 2 to 3 times each week, then Google and the other search engines will take note of this. This will result in them constantly evaluating your site.

Although this is not a great way to create a sudden increase in the traffic to your site, it is a great way to ensure a steady growth of traffic and visitors to it instead.

Including fresh content to your site not only adds value, but also increases the amount of search traffic that it will receive.

So as long as you take time over producing the best copywriting for the web that you can, you should hopefully succeed in achieving your goals.

If you need copywriting help on a specific topic, I highly recommend checking out Michel Fortin's blog at:

http://www.michelfortin.com/category/articles/copywriting/

Michel is one of the internet's top copywriters, and his suggestions will help catapult your abilities.

Recommended Resources

Gigantic Resale Rights – grab over $9626.74 (and growing!) worth of software, scripts, eBooks, and Web templates with Master Resale Rights, Resale Rights, or Private Label Rights - low cost, high profit!

PLR-Content.com – Your Content Provider! Get a FREE Silver membership and get instant access to: niche articles with Private Label Rights, hot eBooks with Master Resale Rights, and pre-made AdSense sites with Private Label Rights or Master Resale Rights.

Internet Marketing Hosting Solution

Host4Profit – where to host your web site will be one of the most important decisions you ever make online. Don't risk your business on a host that does not understand the needs of Internet Marketers! Host4Profit is the host for the Warriors Forum, the #1 Direct Marketing Support Forum On The Internet!

Recommended Payment Processors

2CheckOut.com – start accepting credit card payments from customers from several parts of the world!

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