



Ten Tips for Better Web Content

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The best web pages strike a balance between advertising and information. You can't hide the fact that you're advertising, so you shouldn't even try. But what you should do is make people not mind that they're being advertised to, because at the same time they're getting information they can use.

The drama of the internet is giving way to content. It's not that web pages can't be fun anymore. They can be; they always will be, because people do want entertainment from the web. They want a little down time, they want to waste a little time. But they want to waste it on their own terms. When people are ready to get to work, they want information readily available.

If your web site offers informative advertising, and avoids sloppy copy, people will read it, trust it and act on it. Follow these tips to make your web content better.

1. Answer this question: What is the mission of my website?

Why do you have a website? What's your mission? Be specific. Do you want twenty new customers a month? a day? Then say so. Write it down. Maybe your mission is to share five lawn maintenance tips per week. Perhaps you want to sell your photography services to people in the next town over. Your mission might be to help people shop more effectively for real estate. When you know what you want to do with your site, you can make your copy get you there.

2. Use facts to sell your business.

"Under certain conditions, homeowners can be exempt from paying capital gains taxes on the sale of their home."¹ "Eating tart cherries is good for your heart."² "Between 1997 and 2007, college tuition costs rose nearly 30 percent, irrespective of inflation."³ Powerful facts communicate. Powerful facts with credible citations communicate better. Use them.

3. Develop a Number 1 key phrase.

People searching on Google or Yahoo often type phrases: "web content writing", "free MP3 songs," "custom-built homes." When you're brainstorming for key words, think instead of a 2- or 3-word phrase, your Number 1 key phrase, which best sells your product or service.

4. Choose key phrase cousins.

Cousins are variations on your Number 1. If you sell custom window coverings, then "custom window coverings" is your Number 1 key phrase. After you develop the Number 1, pick some variations: "window treatments," "fashionable blinds and drapes," and "custom decorating" would all be good choices. Using key phrase cousins will keep your sites searchable while appealing to your site's visitors.

5. Use key phrases in key places.

Search engine crawlers look with suspicion on pages that use an excessive number of keywords an exorbitant number of times and will ignore those pages altogether or, worse, ban them from their indexes.

Instead, be selective about where and how often you use your key phrases. Use the Number 1 key phrase in the very first clause. Use it or one of its cousins at least once each in sentences two, three, and four. Repeat a key phrase cousin in the last clause of the page.

Beyond that, repeat your Number 1 key phrase a couple of times every 100 words or so.

6. Write loaded subheads and lists.

Because internet readers skim and scan, highlight pieces of your text for the scanning eye to pick up. Bold subheads get noticed. So do lists. Load these subheads and lists with solid information.

7. Eat dessert first—Begin with the ending.

Put your most important information at the top of your page. Start your copy with the best benefit of your product or service. If people read only the top, you want them to have the essence of you and what you offer.

8. Sell on every page of your site.

Web users can enter your site through any page; not all will go to your home page first. Therefore, include a hard-sell of your product or service on every page. Direct site users to your contact page or include a contact pop-up on every page of your site.

9. Make your English teacher proud—Grammar matters.

Even people who can't write in correct grammar know it when they see it. And they know it when they don't. Professionally-written copy makes you credible.

10. Be bossy—Tell people what to do.

Customers need an imperative sentence that will propel them to act: "Call toll free." "Email for a free quote." When you tell people what to do, they'll do it. Don't let the end of your copy trail off. Make your last sentence a command.

1. Internal Revenue Service, <http://www.irs.gov/faqs/faq/0,,id=199598,00.html>

2. Solway, Caitlin, "New human study reinforces antioxidant benefits of tart cherries," http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2009-04/wsw-nhs041709.php

3. National Center for Education Statistics, <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=76>