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Ten Tips for Writing Effective Web Copy

By Julia Hyde

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On the Internet programmers and designers rule, not the writer. Yet words drive targeted traffic to your site, carry content, make the sale, convey marketing messages, persuade people to buy and make the difference between your site's success or failure.

Here are 10 tips for writing effective web copy:

1. Make sure content is easy to read

In the online world, less is nearly always more. Write your copy for the impatient, online reader. Here are some guidelines for the length of your content:

Headings: 8 words or less

Sentences: 15 - 20 words

Paragraphs: 40 - 70 words

Page word count: 250+ words

Eliminate pompous words and fancy phrases. Effective online writing is not about impressing the reader with your extensive vocabulary. It's about communicating. Use short, simple words. Get to the point. And then stop.

2. Write from me to you

The most powerful word in the English language is "YOU". Write for your reader, in a conversational tone, not for your ego.

Get to know your reader. Is there a common style or tone you need to use to reach her? Don't forget, she's come to your Web site to do something—make a purchase, obtain information, sign up for a subscription. Make sure every word you write moves her toward a solution.

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Content is about getting the reader's attention and keeping it. Content is about selling. Make sure your content is driving your customer's actions. Then put that content on your home page.

4. Write for how people search

If you want your site to be found when people search the web, use words your target readers use. Before you begin to write, sit down and think carefully about the keywords you're going to use. Then carefully weave those words and phrases into your copy. Here's two Web sites that will help you find the right keywords and phrases for your site.

1. Overture

2. Wordtracker

5. Create Effective Headings

The heading is the most important piece of content you'll write.

That's because:

1. Internet users scan read and the first thing they read is your heading. If it doesn't grab their attention, they'll leave.
2. An effective heading can used in title tags (more about this later).
3. The heading can be placed on your home page as a link to content.

When writing headings:

Keep them to eight words or less

Include important keywords

Avoid the use of adjectives and prepositions (and, a, the, of).

Be clear and concise. Avoid wordy, wishy-washy phrases.

6. Write keyword-rich title tags

Title tags are a small piece of HTML code that appears in the top bar of your browser. "For example, "Acme Company Home Page." Title tags, along with meta keywords and meta descriptions, are one of several important factors in achieving high search engine rankings.

Title tags appear in your site's HTML code like this:

ACME COMPANY HOMEPAGE

You can view a site's title tag by clicking VIEW then SOURCE on your browser's tool bar.

Because search engines use title tags to gather information about your Web site you need to think

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carefully about what words you put in the tag. Don't be tempted to put your company name in the tag (unless you're a well-known brand like Nike or Microsoft).

Instead put specific keywords relating to your business. For example, if you're a California real estate company, you would want your company to appear in search engine results for searches on keywords such as "California Real Estate" or "Realtors in California." So, you would use the keywords "California Real Estate" or "California Realtors" in your title tags. If you wanted to be more specific, or you prefer seeking business in a specific geographic area you would use keywords such as "Silicon Valley Real Estate" or "Silicon Valley Realtors."

7. Provide links and connections

The web is about linking information. Make sure your site links your reader to other information and other sites link to you. Never make your Web site a dead-end. Some search engines, including Google, are based, in part, on their ability to find you from links on other sites

8. Write effective summaries, sentences and paragraphs

An effective summary is who, what, when, where, how. It's about getting the information across in 50 words or less. Keep your summaries short and factual. Make sure they encourage your reader keep reading.

Remember, keep sentences to between 15–20 words. Paragraphs between 40–70 words. Make your first sentence grab your reader's attention or they'll move on.

9. Sell Benefits not Features

If you want your Web site to sell your product or service you must write about benefits and not about features. A feature describes a product or service. A benefit is what the user gains from using that product or service. Don't say, "Our duvets are warm and comfortable," say "You'll be warm and comfortable in one of our duvets." Tell your customers how your product or service will make them happier, sexier, healthier, wealthier. In other words focus on making sure every line of your copy is dedicated to what's in it for them.

10. Edit. Edit. Edit. Then edit again

Mistakes in online copy are temporary and easily fixed, but by the time you've noticed your errors so have thousands of other people. Have two or three people proofread your text. Check it yourself for consistency in grammar, punctuation, capitalization, abbreviations etc. And finally, read it backwards—you'll be surprised how many errors you'll spot.

Julia is an independent copywriter and consultant specializing in search engine marketing and copywriting, direct mail, press releases and other marketing materials businesses need to increase sales. Learn more about how Julia can help boost your companies profits by visiting www.juliahyde.com. Or email info@juliahyde.com. She'll get back to you right away.

How To Write A Killer Sales Letter

By Patric Chan

I sit down and look at my notebook. Then, I put myself into the `zone`.

That's how I start to write web copy that sells.

Whether you agree with me or not, your web copy will determine whether your product's going to sell online or not.

Simple reason. In an offline sales pitch or presentation, you get to interact with your prospect. You get to touch him. He gets to see you personally.

But not online. No, no, no. It all depends on the words on your site. See how powerful words are?

I'm not saying I'm a guru at web copy. There are many other copywriters who are far better than me. Many. But I've written my own web copy and it's selling. And at the same time, I've been hired to write for others.

Keep on reading on how I write killer web copy and you can pick up any of the tips.

The first part to write a copy, you MUST be in the `zone`.

What the heck is the `zone`? The `zone` is like... the mood. You see, writing a great copy is like an artist painting a beautiful picture. When you are in the `zone`, your hand can't stop typing and your mind keeps on coming up with amazing ideas to write.

Like, I'm in the `zone` when I write this article.

How to be in the `zone`? I'm not sure how you can achieve that, but for me, I put in a lot of passion to write a killer copy and I look into the future to see how this copy will sell like crazy.

That's how I get into the `zone`.

Once you are in the zone, keep on writing. Don't stop. Even though, you know you are writing wrong grammar or putting in weird ideas. Just keep on writing.

Then, after it's finished, read it all over again. This time, you'll pick up the mistakes and you'll add in more ideas. Continue doing this until you are satisfied with your work. Finally, edit your work.

When you start your copy, your headline is one of the most important parts of the copy.

Some copy writers write tons of headlines before they start. For me, I'll write about 5 headlines and read it over several times. Then, I'll pick the best and fine tune it at least 5–10 times before I decide to

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use it.

One more part of writing copy; don't feel bad `borrowing' some ideas from successful copy you've seen.

Get a swipe file of the best copy you can find.

And the last thing you need to keep in mind when writing a killer copy is this:

"What's the end result the reader will get if they buy from you?"

Your copy **MUST** sell hope and benefits to the reader if you want them to buy anything after reading your copy.

Now go write your killer copy.

All the best.

Warmest regards,

Patric 'High-Speed Marketing' Chan
Chief Marketing Strategist

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Patric works with world-class internet marketing gurus to build successful online businesses. He is also the author of `How To Make More Money Easily'. Discover more insider secrets and the exact proven strategies to make money online:

How To Write A Killer Sales Letter

How Can You Be Sure That Your Marketing Efforts Will Generate Profits?

10 Quick Tips To Writing Profitable Articles

10 Proven Tips for Boosting Ad Response

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