

Web copy that counts:

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By Charles Warnock

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For some marketing communicators, making the transition from print to online media is like packing for a trip to destinations unknown. Before you venture, it's important to know what to bring, what to leave behind and something about the online culture. For example, long lines of text and certain typefaces don't belong online, but strong headlines and tight, benefit-oriented writing are always welcome. Here are some guidelines to help you create online copy that counts:

1. Before you begin, know the reader's goals, your goals and how they successfully come together. Looking at many corporate Web sites is like peering through the wrong end of a telescope. Content that's focused on the company's vision, history, or organizational structure is of little value to most readers. If you can't draw a direct connection between organizational goals and your readers' goals, your content is probably off the mark. It may help to outline the audience needs, your solutions and the successful outcome you're promising. Then write the story so your reader is the star and the company, products and services are supporting players.

2. Clearly define your success criteria.

Writers who begin with vague goals usually achieve marginal results. Your purpose may be general, such as building brand awareness, but it's likely that you want readers to take some action as a result. Broad goals such as building brand recognition can often be measured by more specific results – capturing 100 new e-mail addresses, 25 requests for additional information or 10 new orders.

3. People don't read online, they scan.

Keep in mind that many people won't read all of your copy, and some won't read it at all. Many will scan your pages to for something eye-catching and move on if it's not there. Take the time to craft an attention-getting headline and use subheads and bulleted lists to break up blocks of text and move readers onward. Think in terms of "chunking" information because people may begin reading at the beginning, middle or end.

4. Edit mercilessly.

Usability guru Jakob Nielsen says that reading from a computer screen takes 25 percent longer than reading from a printed page. He recommends giving online readers about 50 percent less text than print readers. Listen to Jakob. Think of your words and sentences as individual workers, each with a specific role in creating successful copy. If it's not the best word or sentence or it's not bolstering your message's effectiveness, it's fired!

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5. Let your words do the work.

Identify the strongest benefits of your product or service and present them in clear, convincing language. Don't try to grab attention with loud colors, excessive bolding, capitalization or punctuation. In addition to compromising your credibility, it makes for a spotty, unattractive page on the reader's computer screen. As F. Scott Fitzgerald said, overusing exclamation points is like laughing at your own jokes.

6. What is it? What's in it for me? What's my next step?

Readers should be able to answer these three questions about your product or service after reading your copy. Answers these important questions quickly, along with another one if it's appropriate – How much does it cost?

7. First the horse, then the cart.

Have you written to share ideas and insights, change behaviors and build relationships...or to close a

single sale? In writing copy for Web sites and e-mail, many marketers make the mistake of trying to jump from introduction to sale too quickly. Building customer trust is a powerful, but fragile process. Asking for a sale before you have clearly established trust and demonstrated value is a sure way to alienate potential customers. Know where your readers are in the process, set realistic goals and target your words accordingly.

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When You Give A Gift, It's The Thought That Counts, Right?

By Gina Stathopoulos

It's a no-no to tell someone you don't like their gift because it's the thought that counts, right?

Sure, but just how 'nice' are your thoughts towards your gift giver who doesn't listen in order to know what your likes and dislikes are?

How disappointed are you when with anticipation you unwrap your gift to stare down at an ugly pair of socks, or when your husband of four years decides his wife would absolutely love a broom for Valentines Day?

Gift giving is more than just the thought. It's the thought, the gift, the intention - the whole package. The best gifts are ones that directly think of the recipient, that's truly when the thought counts.

If you know your boyfriend will just about die for the whole collection of South Park, then why buy him a tie? What value would your girlfriend find in a pretty package of art supplies when she has no interest in painting?

Web copy that counts:

We've devoted a whole page on our website with "Horror Gifts" Received.

Take for example the man who received a box of chocolates from his girlfriend who should have known that he was allergic to it. Or the man whose girlfriend gave him tickets to a show he didn't want to see.

When it comes to your loved ones, gifts shouldn't be given out of obligation but from the heart. Gifts that are appreciated can be practical or they can be impractical. This depends on what your recipient wants or would like.

When I was at college I really needed a text book on C programming. I kept borrowing a copy from the library but there were times when they were all taken.

At that time, I couldn't afford to buy one for myself. How would I have loved a text book as opposed to the sterling silver bracelet my then boyfriend gave me? It was a lovely gesture but...

To find the perfect gift, we have to tune into that person. Listen to what they have to say. Did you watch the Friends episode where Ross bought Rachel the broche she had seen in a shop window some months ago?

What's what I mean by tuning in. Find what the person wants and then give it to them. That's when the thought really counts.

You know when you have done a good job with your gift selection when you absolute astonish your recipient.

There are times when we don't know what our recipient would like.

There are `safe gifts' we can give. Safe gifts are flowers, a gift basket perhaps, even a bottle of wine – something that is popularly considered `nice'. Safe gifts are what we give people we don't know too well.

>From someone that has been disappointed many times and astonished others, if you are to give, listen to what your recipient wants. You will find they will treasure you and your gesture 100 fold.

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Looking for a gift? Let Gina and Nick show you what we buy for friends/family and each other. At our site you will find popular gifts, gift information and stories from our readers. Come have a look

When You Give A Gift, It's The Thought That Counts, Right?

How To Write A Killer Sales Letter

Are you in Autoresponder Heaven?

10 Eye Popping Ad Copy Secrets

Sneaky (But Legal) Places To Insert Keywords For Higher Rankings

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Inside The Minds of Winners
Profit-dot Com eBusiness Training Center
20 Dreamweaver Templates



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