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Whatever Happened to Proofreading?

By Owen Johnson

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One of the great things about the Internet is it has made us instant communicators, instant authors and instant ad copy writers. One of the WORST things about the Internet is it has made us instant communicators, instant authors and instant ad copy writers. Too many people just type an email and hit "send," including emails intended to sell us something. Or they build a nice looking web page, type their content and immediately go to their FTP program and upload it. They don't bother to read what they've written first.

We see the results of this daily: Email ads so poorly written we instantly delete them and web sites with so many typos we have no confidence in the business' abilities or integrity. In short, lost sales. (The author of a guide I recently read about spotting scams on the Web mentioned that some things they all seem to have in common are misused and misspelled words, misused or missing punctuation and typos—sloppy work.) I've seen web sites that seemed to be written by people whose first language was something other than English and the whole message was lost.

And here's one worth a chuckle—or a shake of the head: While reading an eBook telling me how to write one and stressing the importance of proofreading, I saw more typos and misused words and punctuation than I could count. Now, how much should I trust this man's advice? In fact, I've found that MOST eBooks telling us how to make money on the Internet are put together so haphazardly I'm becoming convinced there IS no way to make money using their methods. Anyone who throws together their information in such a hurry they don't even proofread it doesn't gain much credibility with me. And probably don't with you, either.

I've been told that this sloppiness doesn't matter much to the younger generations, from the "X-Generation" down, and that's apparent by the fact that they tend to be the ones who are most often guilty. But to the older generations it matters a great deal. Now, guess which age group is the fastest growing in terms of Internet use? Which one has the most money to spend? And which one actually spends the most on the Internet? It's the Baby Boom generation, those people 45 to 55. If you want us to buy from you or believe what you have to say, you'd better make sure your copy is well written.

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It also pays to remember that your site design and your writing should be tailored to your targeted market. If you're selling nose rings, use wild backgrounds and slang. But if you're selling fine jewelry, keep it simple, clean and easy to navigate and stay away from the slang. Otherwise, you'd better carry lots of nose rings!

After you've written your sales letter or web content, read it through. (To save yourself some time, you can use a text editor with spell check, and paste it into whatever program you're using.) Then send it to someone else to check it—someone in the same age group as your target market or a professional editor. If it's a sales letter, send the 'finished' product to yourself first to make sure the formatting came out right.

After you've done that and uploaded your pages to your server, do it again. I hope you're going to

check your links, anyway, to make sure **THEY** work. So you might as well check everything else, too. Send the URL to a few friends with different computers and different browsers to see that it looks as good on theirs as it does on yours.

A little time spent assuring it's right will make a huge difference in your site's traffic, and probably in your bank account, too.

Owen Johnson is a webmaster and owner of 1950 Marketing, a service specializing in web site management, maintenance and content editing. <http://1950marketing.bravepages.com>

An Inside Look at Proofreading

By Donna Sweat

This is the ideal topic for us all to think about. We do it everyday, especially those of us that use the Internet the majority of the time. Web pages, business letters, articles, news releases, documentation and most certainly, advertisements.

I have at times found myself proofreading our local newspaper..and suspect their proofreader isn't necessarily paying attention to his or her work. I have found scores of web sites with the same problem. Terrible spelling and common grammatical errors are high on the list. Of course, some of us do not pay attention to these little details, but entrepreneurs look for imperfections in a web page.

Do we all know how to proofread? Not necessarily. Looking for misspelled words is scarcely enough to polish your workmanship and neither is applying capital letters where needed.

I am touching the surface with the most common proofreading DO's. You might think a little differently the next time you do the job.

1] Always proofread when you are at your daily peak. In other words, do not try it, if you are sleepy or distracted. You will definitely miss a number of errors. Proofreading requires concentration.

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2] Read the selection through and then read it aloud. Read it to a friend and have them read it to you. Read it backwards..that's what I said. You'll be amazed at the errors in spelling you will encounter.

3] Use your computer's spell checker, but do not rely on it. Often, there are times the checker will find errors but the word meaning is different, such as "there" and "their". Use a dictionary to be sure of the correct meaning of a word. 4] The thesaurus is helpful, but again the range of words are limited, a book offers a broader list. Your choice of words does make a difference when others read what you have to offer, so go ahead and be choosy.

5] Be sure all beginning letters of a sentence are capitalized. Names of importance, within the sentence are a must to remember.

6] Look for sentence fragments, run ons and match subjects with verbs.

7] Check those simple small words, such as: of, it, in, is, for, be, and I. [I, should be a capital, regardless of where it is.]

Other important points in addition to the ones above are included below. These are not to be excluded and you may think this is a lot of unnecessary work, but isn't your piece important. You wouldn't be writing it, if it wasn't.

1] Do you have enough ideas incorporated into your selection?

2] Be sure you are not wandering away from the thesis.

3] Are you proving your point and is it interesting?

4] Is the content in order and does it flow smoothly?

5] Answer the following questions when you are proofreading.

A. Who?

B. What?

C. Where?

D. When?

E. Why?

If one of these are missing, then you need to go back and revise.

All of the above tips for proofreading are of the utmost importance even on a web page of your web site. The following tips are also helpful in the finishing touches of your site.

1] Start your inspection by checking to make sure all links work.

2] Look at the text and see if it is readable. If you can't see it, others cannot read it. The background may not be suitable.

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3] Verify that all your information is up to date.

4] Is all the information in a sensible order, and delete or add information.

5] Use the scroll bar on the side to view one line at a time, either from the bottom or top. I find this very useful when reading, etc.

Proofreading has a nature of time consumption and if you do not have the time, find someone that does. It will boost your sales and your site will have a look of a professional.

I am not a professional and never claim to be, but I will proofread the following types of content, sent by email if you want a little help. I am not charging a enormous fee for the service. I have an Associate Degree in Accounting, and extensive courses in English, Business Communications, Ethics, and Public Speaking.

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Publisher/Editor
Dee's Helpful Info. Newsletter

New Albany, Pa.

An Inside Look at Proofreading
Working on the Internet: Role of Proofreading and Copy editing OnLine
Working With a Freelance Editor
Proofreading for Profits
Work From Home - You Can Work In The Nude If You So Desire

Scams Exposed
Domain Alarm – Is your site working?
How To Get Reprint Rights Without Paying A Dime
If I Can, Anybody Can!
Say A Few Words

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