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Writing for the Web

By Elena Fawkner

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"Today's readers and Web browsers demand frankness and verisimilitude, so your written communications require exacting professional integrity with accurate and adequate research.

"For concrete, colorful and dynamic written material that willfully attracts customers, Bob Tony* will work with you to develop unrivaled written communications for your marketing materials, grants, newsletters, Web site, or other publications and articles. To ensure your writing tasks with pacesetting presentation and unparalleled, consistent editorial power, give your deadlines to Bob Tony*."

* Name changed to protect the ostentatious and largiloquent. Good grief. "Verisimilitude"? I had to look it up. I'm sure you all know what it means but in case there's another ignoramus out there besides me, it means "the quality of appearing to be true or real". How ironic. "Willfully" attracting customers? And does that last sentence even make sense?

Consider that a shining example of how it's NOT done (writing for the web, that is).

Before we get to *how* to write well for the web, a brief pause to consider *why* it's important to do so at all. The reason is that the Internet is an information medium. As a general rule, people are looking for information about something when they come online. You have to supply some of the information sought by part of that market (i.e., your target market) if you want your

share of traffic to your website. You do that by creating quality content. In order to create quality content, you need to be able to write for the web. Is writing for the web really all that different from writing generally? Yes. And here's why.

WHY WRITING FOR THE WEB IS DIFFERENT

The first thing you need to understand is how users read on the web. Unlike reading a book, online readers scan, or skim, the page, looking for particular keywords relevant to the subject about which they are interested. They don't start at the top of the page and work their way down, reading every sentence.

Some other things you need to know about your typical site visitor (let's just call him Sam to make it easier): Sam detests hyperbole. Nothing turns him off faster. So keep the marketing hype to a minimum and instead make your content objective and somewhat restrained.

Sam is also an impatient sod. He's going to quickly scan the page (as we've seen) and he's going to rely on your headings and subheadings to orient himself. And he doesn't want to have to hunt for your point. Give it to him upfront. Also, because Sam really hates this, avoid lengthy webpages that make him have to scroll to keep reading. And keep the whole thing short and to the point besides. If you don't, he's out of there in five seconds flat.

So, now that we understand a little bit about Sam, what can we do to capture his attention and keep it long enough to give him what he wants?

SCANNABLE TEXT

To help Sam scan your text and find what he's looking for quickly, highlight keywords and phrases (either by bolding, using color, a different font effect, whatever will catch his attention). Make sure you use meaningful subheadings, i.e. ensure your subheading makes sense without having to read the text below to put it into context.

Avoid lengthy paragraphs and make sure each paragraph deals with only one idea. Instead of long paragraphs, use bulleted lists containing short, high-impact sentences.

Another crucial point is to use the "inverted pyramid" principle. This just means that you state your conclusion or most important information up front, and then use the rest of the body of your text to elaborate and explain. Kind of like a newspaper story.

And because Sam hates to scroll, break your text into logical stand-alone sub-parts of no longer than a single page (or screen) and then link (with a meaningfully-worded link) to the next section which starts on a new page.

FEWER WORDS THE BETTER

Make sure your writing is not woolly. You need to write with the precision of a surgeon wielding a scalpel. No superfluous words allowed. Write for effect, by all means, but get to the point and fast! In other words, be succinct.

CREDIBILITY

Nothing gets that mouse finger itchier than the perception that the author of the work lacks credibility. The top three culprits are hyperbole (avoid marketing hype at all costs and go for restrained objectivity instead), typos and grammatical errors. Sam likes to think you've done your homework too so make sure you include links to reputable sources elsewhere on the web (but not too many or you risk losing him for good).

tone

One of the major differences in writing for the web compared to other forms of writing is the inherently impersonal nature of the medium. Instead of holding a comfortably reassuring book in his hands, or getting black smudge on his fingers from the newspaper, Sam's only contact with you is your words on a computer screen. You need to overcome the impersonal nature of the medium if you expect to reach Sam with your words. It is for this reason that "write as you speak" is so much the norm on the Internet.

Be informal and conversational in your writing (note, this is NOT a license to churn out shoddy, unprofessional work— writing conversationally and informally is every bit as demanding as writing formally, if not more so) and be personal while you're at it (use "you" and "your" a lot). Most importantly, allow your personality to come through. You need to connect with Sam

before he will invest in you so make sure you reach him with your writing.

DESIGN AND LEGIBILITY

Finally, just because it's less comfortable to read from a computer screen than a book or newspaper doesn't mean you can't make it less uncomfortable. Choose the font you use with care. Times is a common default font for a lot of web pages but it doesn't "pixellate" well. Better choices are Arial or Verdana.

Consider your choice of color and contrast carefully too. A dark font on a light background is best for lengthy reading sessions but a light font on a dark background can be effective if used sparingly.

So there you have it. Some relatively quick and easy steps you can take today to make it more likely Sam will get your message. And come back for more.

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Outsource Web Site Content Writing To India and save costs!

By James Marriot

Are you aware of the great potential that India offers in the field of web content writing requirements including technical writing, journalistic writing, editing of manuscripts, proofreading or any other related work? If you outsource your web content writing to India you will get the best possible research and web content writing that will enrich your website considerably. However, before you consider such a step, you need to find out why you should outsource your web content writing to India. The first step is to answer the following questions:

- Is there any instructive and educational web content in your website?
- Are the visitors to your website able to benefit from it?
- Do you think that the visitors to your website develop confidence in the web content provided there?

If the results of the above introspection are in the negative, you should realize that the web content in your website needs to be revamped at the earliest as it is not achieving the purpose for which it has

been posted on the Internet. You can give the web content a complete makeover if you outsource your web content writing to India and the reasons why you should select India for this work are as follows:

1) Apart from having top-class software engineers who have made their presence felt in the whole world, India can boast of brilliant writers who have an excellent command over the language. There are innumerable novelists whose works have been appreciated by people all over the world, people with doctorate degrees in English language, writers of technical subjects, editors of repute, poets, world-famous journalists, writers of textbooks, published scientists, technology writers and so on... the list is endless.

2) Outsourcing your web content writing to India will be beneficial to you as the content writers are extremely professional and creative and they are very skillful in the field of rewriting and reorganizing your existing web content in such a way that it is correct and following a logical sequence of thought.

3) The web content writers of web content writing companies in India are experts in creating finished documents with the utmost clarity and know how to polish the same with a personal and professional touch so that the website attracts a large audience.

4) A large number of researched articles have been created by the web content writing companies in India in various subjects that would be of interest to most people with the result that the web surfers gain a considerable amount of confidence in the website.

5) The web content writing companies in India are also very helpful in offering the proper business ethics that are required to market your products and services to various customers.

6) The web content writers of web content writing companies in India are properly trained in the art of writing for search engines. All the data relating to your company is thoroughly researched and an

appropriate content is developed that is ideally suited for the search engine.

7) Last but not the least, the cost of content development from an outsourcing web content writing company of India is considerably lower than what other countries and sources charge. The main factors determining the cost of web content writing in India are the size of the site and the amount of technical complexity of the project.

What are you waiting for? If you want the attention of a large number of web surfers and gain their confidence in your products and services, just contact any web content writing company in India.

RNCOS offers complete e-publishing solutions for your business. We provide personalized world-class content development and management solutions that are qualitative and result-oriented.



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