

# screen play. a step-by-step guide to **effective copywriting for the web**

Let's start with a simple question.

## **Q. Why is writing for the Web different than other media?**

Here's the simple answer.

### **A. Because the mindset of your audience is different.**

Once you've absorbed this, you're well on your way to understanding how, by implementing a few basic measures into your web pages, you can dramatically improve the impact your Web presence has on your site visitors.

But first of all, ask yourself this.

Have you ever felt compelled to glimpse at an advert on the telly? Listen in to a spot on the radio? Glance at a magazine ad? Or tear open a mailing piece in curiosity? You have? Well you may not realise it... but you've just been distracted. In other words, you've been interrupted.

The Web, however, is fundamentally different in that respect.

## **An audience looking for you**

When visitors arrive at your website for the first time they have just one thing on their mind, "Is this the right place to find what I'm looking for?" The immediate impact must therefore elicit the following response from your first time visitor,

"Great! I think I can find exactly what I'm looking for here!"

So writing to answer the needs of someone who knows exactly what they are looking for is different from writing content that's designed to capture the attention of someone doing something different at that particular moment.

## **So what measures can be implemented?**

The following list is by no means exhaustive but it does provide some important considerations that the website owner must bear in mind if they want to add value to their website visitors' experience and make the visit a mutually rewarding one.

### **1. Clearly define your key differentiators**

Whether you call them unique selling propositions or unique selling points, tell your audience what sets you apart from competing sites.

### **2. Clearly communicate your core value proposition**

Stay focused on your key business areas and core competencies. If you write to please everyone you'll probably end up saying little of interest to anyone.

### **3. Learn the language of your prospects**

Avoid supply-side terminology. Using words or phrases that your customers don't habitually use or understand can be a mistake. It's not about what's important to you but what's important to them.

### **4. Answer the 'silent questions'**

Pre-empt what the key questions your site visitors are likely to have. What's really important to them? Address their biggest concerns.

### **5. Make your headlines work**

Your headline grabs attention, sets the tone, raises hopes and creates surprise. It's the most powerful text on your page so make it work hard.

### **6. Get personal**

Talk less about how you conduct business and more about how your business products or services have changed your customers on an individual level (e.g. career, lifestyle, etc.).

### **7. Create a strong start and a strong finish**

Like a good film, speech or concert, you need to start strong and finish strong. 'Top 'n tail' your copy to

grab attention when you begin and make them gasp when you finish.

#### **8. Get 'inside' your customer's head**

Don't focus your mind solely on your product lines or services but on the wants and desires of your audience. What will engage, interest and excite your prospects?

#### **9. Don't make me think!**

If you've included instructions on how to search or navigate your site - change your site. It should be evident to your audience what they should do and what results they can expect.

#### **10. Always stay positive**

Portraying negative aspects of your business is easily done - very often without even realising it. Keep any negative messages out of your copy.

#### **11. Tell your website visitors something about who you are**

Avoiding long passages of self-serving text is always a real plus, but make sure you say something to give your site visitors a real sense of your business' character.

#### **12. Tune into the power of empathy**

Strive to make sure your site visitor thinks "Wow. I can really relate to that," but always remember to express genuine sincerity when 'feeling their pain'.

#### **13. Create urgency on your key web pages**

Create time limited offers, limited supplies, seasonal specials, free gifts, deal of the day / month, etc.

#### **14. Use the same voice, but different tone**

Write in a way that is very close in tone to how you'd talk over a coffee or a glass of wine. Address your site visitors in different ways but keep your voice the same.

#### **15. Keep your home page current**

If returning visitors find the same home page on every visit they may get the impression that 'no-one's

home'. Find an element or text block that can be updated regularly to indicate that your site is alive and kicking.

#### **16. Add emphasis where appropriate**

Don't be afraid to use plenty of subheads. They break up text, provide an outline of your story and convey key points.

#### **17. Reduce visual clutter**

Enhance readability to help your visitor scan and navigate your website as easily as possible. Give your key copy plenty of space to 'breathe' .

#### **18. Get serious about capturing e-mail addresses**

When asking for e-mail addresses, give your readers a very good reason to share. Remember, these aren't free - they cost your visitor their time and they are parting with sensitive, personal information.

## **confidence in your business brings benefit**

By implementing these initiatives into your overall web strategy in general and your web content in particular, your site visitors will feel reassured that they have indeed arrived at the right place, that it would definitely be in their interests to read more about what you have to say and ultimately, that engaging with your business will be extremely beneficial for them.

The ultimate aim is to complete a cycle that starts with a basic search term.

By doing all the 'little bits' well, you can soon find yourself well on the way to writing in a style that delivers strong, convincing and compelling reasons why your audience would become increasingly confident in your business along with the benefits you can provide them.

**Be Visible. Be Informative. Be Prosperous.**

### **The Escape**

Loddon Business Centre, Roentgen Road, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG24 8NG. United Kingdom  
**t:** +44 (0)1256 334567 **f:** +44 (0)1256 470700 **e:** ideas@the-escape.co.uk

**www.the-escape.co.uk**