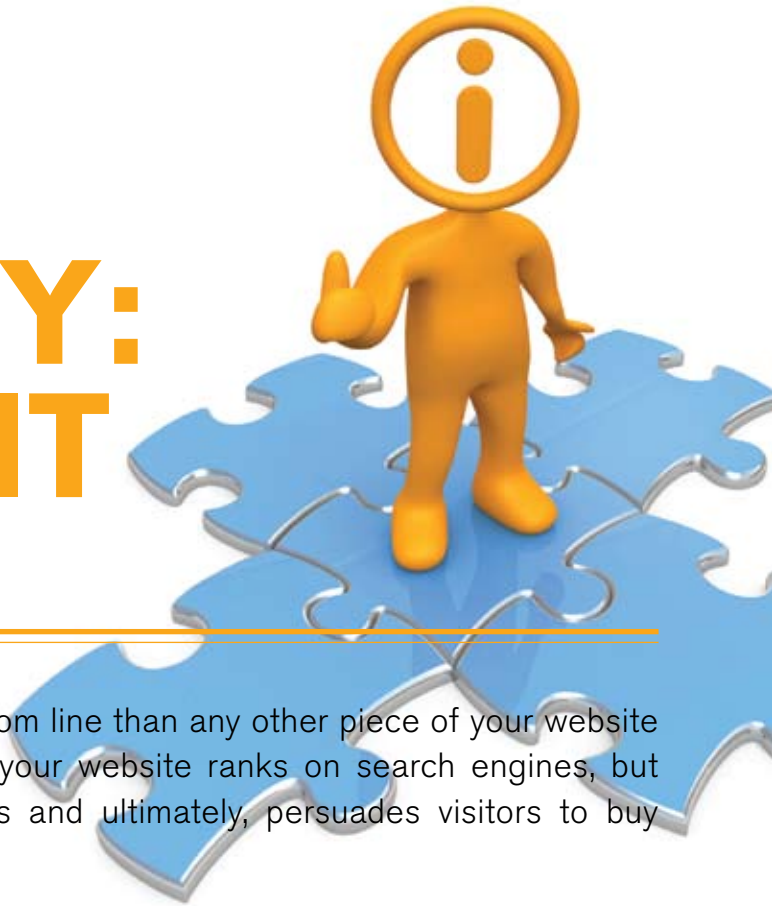# WEB COPY: GETTING IT RIGHT

Website text has a greater impact on your bottom line than any other piece of your website puzzle. Your copy not only controls how well your website ranks on search engines, but also encourages customers to send enquiries and ultimately, persuades visitors to buy your products.

BEFORE considering a rewrite of your website, have a really good think about your customers. Specifically, consider who they are – their gender, age, income, marital status, interests and occupation.

Once you've got a shortlist of your targets, consider the language which appeals to these people. For instance, executives on six figure salaries from Sydney and Melbourne will require a more formal style of language to reinforce your credibility through experience and testimonials. Your text should be brief, to the point and allow for quick and easy scanning. If your demographic is stay-at-home mums with young children and a bit more spare time, your language will be affectionate, flowery and full of excitement.

Your target demographic is the most important consideration of your web copy. If you don't get it right, you'll put off your visitors.

Purpose

The copy on your entire website should revolve around its purpose and push people to do what you want of them. Remember, of course, your visitor has come to your website to do something so you have their complete and undivided attention.

The most common purpose of a website is to make sales. Sales are best driven by strong calls to action throughout your copy. Ensure every word is driving your customer toward your website purpose.

Web visitors are notoriously information hungry and become annoyed if they've come to your website looking for an answer and leave unsatisfied. Don't be frightened of adding more pages to get across your point.

Some traditional marketing tenets apply to your content too. Sell product benefits but also include a list of features. Selling the benefits puts your customers in the picture and allows them to buy your products on an emotional whim. Think about what people want to be in life – happy, sexy, health and wealthy. Use these to your advantage.

Try rewriting the focus of your text to be customer-centric. A sentence such as "Our apartments are cool and comfortable" would be better written as "You'll be cool and comfortable in our apartments." Your copy should answer that all-important customer question – what's in it for me?

Layout and Style

The web is mostly an informal medium and a conversational style will produce optimal results.

There is continuous debate over how long a web page should be. Some people, particularly in the design world, prefer pages not to scroll. Others believe because users are inherently lazy, they will happily scroll with their mouse wheel as it saves them moving their mouse to click. The best results are in between. Here's the lengths you should aim for:

> **Headings: 6 words or less**
> **Sentences: 15 – 20 words**
> **Paragraphs: 40 – 70 words**
> **(2 or 3 sentences)**
> **Page: 250 – 300 words**

Brevity is important as online readers are time-poor and impatient. Deliver your message with fewer words and avoid trying to impress with your brilliant vocabulary. Short and simple sentences will be better understood.

Breaking up your pages with logical subheadings will help your visitors digest more of your text quickly. Use clear and concise language and avoid using adjectives and prepositions (the, a, and, of).

A well-written web page includes all the hallmarks of a great essay – an opening, body and conclusion. The first paragraph should effectively summarise the message of your page, as in many cases it is all your customer will read. Ensure this summary encourages your visitors to continue reading.

Oopsies

There is no excuse for mistakes. Use your spell checker and proofread your text before sending it to your web designer. Ask a friend, associate or partner to read your text in detail, too, as you might not be able to pick up errors you've written yourself. An industry trick is to read your text backwards, you'll be surprised how many errors you find. Most important is to ensure consistency in punctuation, abbreviations and grammar.

Writing to be found

If you want your website to be found in search engines, your copy must include keywords and phrases for which your customers will search to find you.

Before you start your text, sit down and think about the keywords you want to use. There's an art to weaving these words naturally into your copy. Be careful not to make your text unreadable by keyword stuffing, or adding too many keywords.

Good copy will lead to better understanding of your products and services and generate more sales than a website which is poorly worded. Rewrite your text for online success.

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