The Business Owner's Guide to Better Web Marketing Copy

Make More Sales. Increase Traffic. Build More Links. Do-it-Yourself Copywriting Tips to Keep Them Coming Back for More!

EXCERPT: Chapter One - Web Marketing Copy

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Web Marketing Copy

Web marketing copy exists on just about every single website you visit. Sometimes it's right in your face -- "Buy now!" Other times it's far more subtle. Most sites have a combination of **hard sell and soft sell** Web copy. How do you know which approach will be most effective for *your* website?

Before you can improve your Web copy or write *new* **high-conversion copy** for your site, it's important that you understand what Web marketing copy actually is, what it can do for you, and how you can make it appeal to your site visitors.

What is Web Marketing Copy?

Web copy and Web content are often confused. So let's start by separating them:

> **Web content** is designed to inform, educate, or entertain the reader. **Web copy** is designed to *influence* or *persuade* them.

Sometimes content and copy are easy to distinguish from each other. An ad or sales letter, for example, would obviously be marketing copy. A simple how-to article on a blog would generally fall within the realm of Web *content*.

It isn't always so clear though. For example, you might assume the About Us page on a company's website is basic content because it provides information. It does more than that though. The only reason we include an About Us page is to provide additional background to convince people to **buy** or **trust** us more (showcasing experience or credentials, emphasizing how long we've been in business, etc.). The information there is about lending credibility and inspiring

Remember: Web Copy should always *influence* or *persuade!*

trust. That makes it Web copy, even if it's subtle. It's not just about the facts -- it's about how those facts **influence** or affect your company's image in the minds of visitors.

Here's another common example that might help you differentiate between the two: article marketing. When you write an article and publish it on article directories, that article generally has two parts: the content and a resource box.

When done well the content will be true *content* rather than a sales pitch, designed to offer valuable information to entertain, inform, or educate the reader. This is how you suck them in. The marketing copy is in the resource box. That copy lends credibility to the article itself by demonstrating that you're an authority source, and it also contains a call to action -- "visit this site," "sign up for this newsletter," "buy this product," etc.

What Your Web Marketing Copy Should Do

Now that you hopefully have a better understanding of what Web copy is, let's talk about what it can actually do for your business.

Web marketing copy (a term we'll use to collectively refer to ad, marketing, and PR copy for the purposes of this e-book) should help you **convert website visitors** into something more substantial. You want them to take some kind of action or form a particular opinion. Here are some of the things well-written Web marketing copy can do:

1. Increase sales of products or services.
2. Increase newsletter subscriptions.
3. Increase registrations on membership sites.
4. Increase click-throughs on ads or other links.
5. Increase exposure and visibility.
6. Increase [backlinks](#) *naturally.*
7. Counteract existing negative opinions about a company, product, or service.
8. Build new positive opinions or foster goodwill towards a company, product, or service.
9. Inspire trust in a company, product, or service.
10. Position a company or product as a market leader in the eyes of customers.

Don't make the mistake of thinking Web marketing copy is solely about increasing sales. While sales figures are important, so are all of the other benefits of effective copy, many of which indirectly increase sales anyway.

What You Need to Know About Your Audience Before Writing Web Copy

If you want these benefits from your Web copy, it needs to appeal to your specific target market. Copywriting strategies that work for one product or company won't necessarily work for another. Let's look at a hypothetical example of two software manufacturers.

> **Company A** is selling SEO software to small businesses and independent webmasters. They sell the software entirely on the Web, and the price is set at around $50.
>
> **Company B** sells a financial software suite targeted to corporate clients and other large organizations. While they want to use the Web to market the software, it might only be a *supplement* to their overall sales strategy. Their software sells for thousands of dollars and includes setup on the corporate network and employee training.

Even though both of these companies are selling software, it's highly unlikely that the same kind of Web copy will work for both of them. Why? Because they're targeting entirely different markets. That's key. When it comes to writing effective marketing copy it's not about what *you* like. It's about what works for your target market.

In this case, Company A might opt to go with a traditional long-form sales letter with instant online delivery. Company B, however, has to be able to make a better case for their software. They'll be more likely to have to appeal to multiple decision-makers within a company before a final purchasing decision can be made, and they might have more one-on-one contact with prospective customers. In that case, their Web copy might be focused on supplementary material like a white paper, .pdf product brochure, and virtual tour of the product features.

"It's not about what *you* like. It's about what works for your target market."

Before planning your own Web copywriting strategy you need to know how purchasing decisions are generally made within your own market.

To help you do that, first make a note of who you're actually targeting (what size businesses, where your buyers are located, what age group they're mostly likely to fall into -- a demographic profile). Then answer the following questions:

1. **What factors are most likely to influence your target market?** -- For example, if you target teenage males your Web marketing copy might focus on benefits like popularity and sex appeal. If you target mothers in their mid-30s you might touch more on family-oriented benefits.

2. **How does your target market use the Web?** -- Are members of your target market more information-gatherers or social networkers for example? What they do on the Web can determine whether or not your own website or ad copy will appeal to them.

Which group is really your target market?
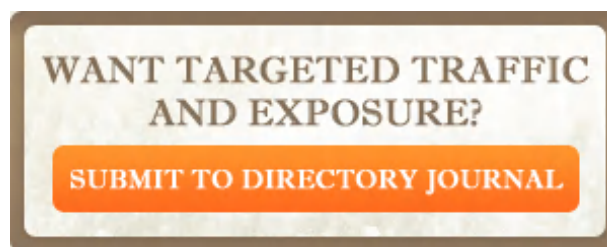*Credit BigStockPhoto.com*

3. **How familiar are members of your target market with your company and product (or similar products)?** -- Current familiarity can heavily influence whether your Web copy focuses more on educating the audience in general or more on persuading them that your solution or company is simply **better than the competition**.

Once you have a better feel for who your target market is and what kind of Web copy is most likely to influence them, you'll be in a better position to map out an actual **copywriting strategy** within your marketing plan. At this point you should have an idea about whether you'll use a hard sell or soft sell approach and what types of copywriting you'll use (sales letters, email marketing copy, digital brochures, fact sheets, etc.).

Tips For Writing More Effective Web Copy

No matter what type of Web copy you choose to create and no matter who your target market includes, there are some basic copywriting "rules" that apply. These tips won't turn you into a pro copywriter overnight. They *will* give you a solid foundation to tackle your **do-it-yourself copywriting projects**.

1. **Focus on benefits, not features.** -- Feature lists might be fine for a technical document where readers want specs, but in marketing copy it's all about how your company, product, or service *benefits* someone. A feature is just something that happens to exist or be true -- a simple fact. A benefit is why someone should *care* bout that feature -- what it's going to do for them. For example, if you were selling that SEO software in our previous example a feature of the software might be the ability to see competitors' backlinks. The

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   Web marketing copy showing benefits and a call to action - DirJournal.com

   benefit of that is that you can make your site more competitive, know what sites to target for backlinks, and rank higher in search engines.

2. **Show, don't tell.** -- Paint a picture in the minds of your readers with stories, case studies, and examples. Don't just tell them how your company, products, or services will benefit them. Show them exactly what kinds of benefits they can expect to see. For example, rather than saying your software is innovative due to new features and their corresponding benefits, show it with a case study from a past customer (someone who saw significant results with your SEO software) or show those "innovative" features in a video tutorial.

3. **Grab attention with catchy headlines.** -- Headlines aren't just important. They're enough to make or break the rest of your marketing copy. If your headline doesn't make people want to read more, they'll click away from your site. While it's vital for your headlines to **grab attention**, make sure you can actually deliver on their promises. A headline promising buyers a

strategy for earning $20,000 per month isn't going to help you if you infuriate your buyers by actually giving them a product that barely helps them earn *$200* per month. Remember, word spreads, and negative feedback spreads much faster than positive. You also risk losing future sales to those customers during your next product release.

4. **Write for your audience, not yourself.** -- Don't write marketing copy that appeals to *you*. Your copy has to appeal to your target market. **Avoid big words.** Avoid too many long sentences. Avoid industry buzzwords. Your product or service might "implement," "engage," or "utilize" whatever, but readers don't care. Simplify. Could an 8th grader read and understand what you're saying? If not, tone it down.

5. **Include a call to action.** -- The entire purpose of marketing copy is to persuade or influence the reader. You want them to do something -- vote, buy, sign up, register, join, call, etc. Tell them! Don't ever assume the reader knows what you want them to do. Include a call to action -- "Buy now!" or "Call us today for a free quote!" for example.

How do you know if your copy is effective? You test it! There are different ways you can do this. For example, if your copy is replacing old material you can track basic conversions after the switch and compare those statistics to the ones based on the older copy. Another option is to **split-test** multiple marketing copy options -- run them both at the same time and track conversion stats to see which converts a greater percentage of visitors into buyers (or sign-ups, or whatever it is that you're tracking). If you don't test your copy, you have no way of knowing how well it's doing its job.

> "How do you know if your copy is effective? Test it!"

While it would be ideal to hire a **professional copywriter** with a proven track record, that isn't always possible. You *can* write your own Web marketing copy from time to time, and now you have some fundamentals to point you in the right direction. If you're ready to get started, you can move on to the action steps below.

Action Steps: Write Your Own Web Marketing Copy

This three-step action plan will get you in the right frame of mind for writing your own marketing copy:

1. **Create a brief target market outline.** Who do you want to sell to (or appeal to)? Where do they live? How old are they? Are they end consumers or B2B customers? What's their income range. What factors might influence them to make a buying decision?

2. **Chart your features and benefits.** Features are easy. They're what you offer. Create a simple T-chart listing features on the left. In the right column list the corresponding benefit. For example, you might be selling a 12 megapixel digital camera. List that as a feature. The related benefit would be that the buyer can capture higher quality, crisper memories to cherish forever (assuming you're targeting end consumers who would be using the camera for travel, family photos, etc.).

Features	Benefits
12 megapixel	Higher quality photos to better preserve family memories

3. **Craft a call to action.** Before you even think about the bulk of your marketing copy, figure out what your call to action will be. What do you want the reader to do? Should they call or email you for a quote? Should they buy immediately online? Should they add their email address to your list to get a freebie? You know what's going to influence them to act, so decide what exactly you want to influence them to *do*.

You now have a starting point for writing your very own high-converting Web marketing copy. Keep these tips and activities in mind the next time you write sales or marketing copy for your business website.

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