

Top 10 Tips for Successful Copywriting

How targeted content can bring you business in 2012

Industry Article



First impressions count. And the first impression that your prospective clients will have of your business will be through the content you produce, be it on your website, twitter feed or press release. In a digital world where an abundance of information is available at your fingertips, the challenge is producing content that helps you stand out from your competitors.

The good news is that, once mastered, every company can develop remarkable content that will build your brand and increase your incoming business leads. From the essentials that every copywriter should know, to the secrets of SEO and social media, here are our top 10 tips to success:

The Essentials

1. Know Your Audience

This simple fact cannot be overstated. If you are really serious about building your brand and attracting new business, then your content **must always** be created with your target audience in mind. To create really great content, the emphasis must never be on what your business wants to say, but on what your audience **wants to read**. To achieve this, you need to ask yourself the following questions: Who are your ideal customers and prospects? What are their biggest interests and concerns? Where can you reach them – on social media, forums, or blogs – and what types of content do they prefer? Research is at the heart of this.

2. Aim to Inform, not Impress

Brevity is key. No matter how pleased you are with your clever use of superlative, trust me, your audience won't be. Time is precious, and all your prospective clients really want to know is what you can do for them in as few words as possible. You don't want to put any obstacles between them and a potential sale or lead. Although this is a general rule, this is very much dependent upon your industry sector and your audience. Sometimes jargon and superlative language is necessary, in which case please refer to point 5.

3. What Does it Do for Me?

That little nagging question inside every consumer's head. Answer this and you are that much closer to winning that new client. As Theodore Levitt, famously states, '*People don't want to buy a drill. They want a hole.*' In practice, this means that instead of focusing on the features of your product or services, you should focus on the benefits for your end user. A simple way of achieving this is by adding 'which means that' to the end of your feature list, eg: We offer 24 hour customer services **which means that** our expert team are always at hand to offer you support. Once mastered, this simple conversion of features to benefits will significantly improve your incoming business leads.

4. Persuade, don't Push

There's a very fine line between copy that persuades and copy that tries to force a sale. You only have a few moments to convince your prospects that your content is reliable and worth reading, so you have to make every word count. Engage your audience with relevant, persuasive content and avoid including a

barrage of calls to action, marketing clichés and exclamations. This will only scare them away. Trust is a valuable commodity, and you want to build a relationship with your audience that will lead to them returning to you for more business in the future.

5. Perfect Your Tone of Voice

Warm, formal, friendly, professional. The way in which your content comes across to your audience is key. Address your audience in the wrong manner and you run the risk of alienating them. So before you write any content, you must always decide upon the appropriate tone of voice for the piece. This is dependent upon both the type of content you are producing and your target audience. As a rule of thumb, industry whitepapers, press releases and case studies should always be authoritative, impartial and professional, whereas social media, blogs and articles can display more warmth and personality. However, this is very much dependant on the industry you are in and your target audience. For example, a software company and a fashion blogger would address their clients in very different ways. So, as always, research into your audience is an essential pre-requisite to writing.

Creating Remarkable Content

6. Cover all Bases

Get your whole team involved in content creation to make sure that every aspect of your business is represented. It doesn't matter if they don't know their ps and qs. Find inventive ways to encourage them to contribute. Interview them and post the video on your social media, or take notes and develop into prose. Encourage graphs, bullet points, infographics. Anything that can get the main facts across. It is then your job to do the fine tuning.

7. Make it Relevant and Readable

Once upon a time, we were all led to believe that keywords were the secret to that elusive high ranking Google spot. Now we realise that Google is far too intelligent for that. No matter how many keywords you manage to fit in to your website page or press release, all that Google picks up on are the really relevant ones. Therefore you must always write for your reader first, and the search engines second. No prospect is ever going to convert after reading an unintelligible keyword salad. So before writing content, what you really need to ask yourself is: 'what is the real purpose of this content? What information is your audience looking for? And does your content answer their questions in a relevant, succinct and engaging way?' This is the real secret to search engine success.

8. Share Your Expertise

You know that your company is great. The challenge is communicating this in a way that makes you stand out from your competitors. Case studies are an excellent way of showing potential clients just how good you are at whatever it is you do. Think about what problem it is that your product or service is trying to solve for your client, and write a case study outlining how you successfully solved this problem before for a past customer. Remember that its purpose is to satisfy all of your prospective client's

concerns about your company, so it must be authoritative, fact based and backed up with testimonials where possible.

9. Be Creative

Be innovative with your content. Don't just write about the same old tried and tested industry topics that your audience would have already read about. Live and breathe your industry news and think about what interests and affects your audience not just now, but in the future. Arrange monthly or quarterly thought leadership meetings with members from all departments to discuss upcoming industry trends. Decide upon a topic, thoroughly research it and create an in-depth industry report or whitepaper to distribute to your whole community. This will establish you as a trusted, industry leader in your field, strengthening your relationship with your audience.

10. Build a Community

What good is remarkable content unless you have a community to share it with? Social media, blogs and online forums are not only a great way to build your brand's presence and attract new leads, but also a way to improve your search engine ranking. An engaging piece of content can go viral in an instant, spreading your content to 1000s of people, and Google recognises how many external links you have linking back to your content and ranks you accordingly. It's free and easy to set up, but that is not to say that social media is suitable for everyone. You must first assess where your target audience is, be it on Facebook, LinkedIn or a niche online community, and then build your strategy from there.

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