

WDL

CONTENT101

How To Write Engaging On-Page Content

Prepare To Engage



ISSUE #3

Content Informed Structure

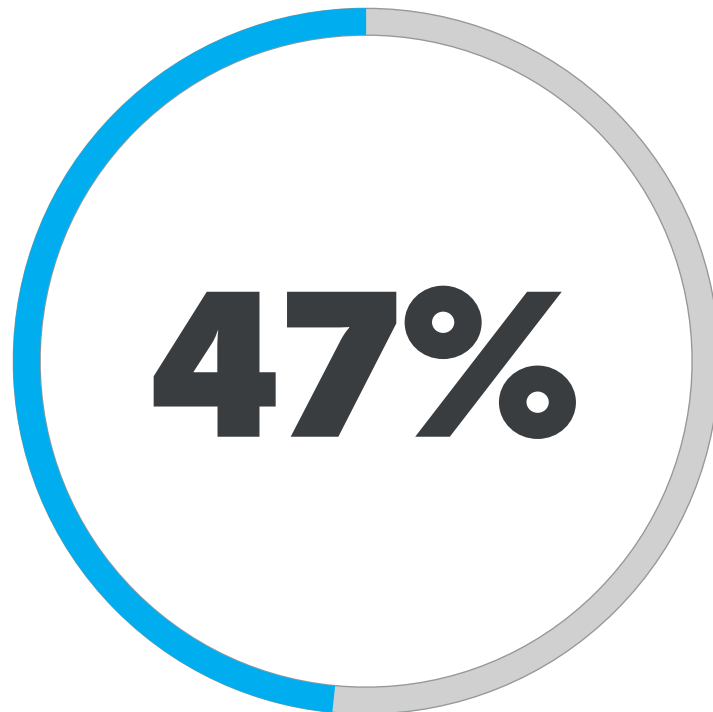
Writing is hard. Writing engaging and informative content that drives a specific purpose is harder. Is it any wonder, therefore, that during the web development process on-page content is so often banished to the darkest corners of our minds, when in reality it should be at the forefront informing design, with functionality developed primarily to exhibit intelligent and welcoming syntax?

Whilst writing content for a website can so often feel like a hugely daunting process, it is imperative that we praise those that buck the trend, and must follow suit if we wish to drive continual online success, no matter the industry.

If your website's design is the face of your business, then your content provides the brain - the emotional, logical and critical hub through which you can convey communication, illicit responses from those you engage with, and manipulate visitors to complete valuable actions. A pretty face without a brain can only get you so far. (Kim Kardashian is the exception, not the rule).



Writing *anything* can be a challenge, but what it's important to realise is that struggling to write something doesn't necessarily make you a bad writer. Conveying your business history, your aims, goals, and more importantly, what you have to offer your users, can be considered an impossible task at first, but once you overcome the initial hurdle, you're already on the home stretch.



...Of buyers viewed
3-5 pieces of content
before engaging in
communication.

(Demand Gen Report, 2016)

Consider Your 'Elevator Pitch'

Whilst on-page content is to be considered one of, if not the most important aspect of your website, the harsh truth of it is that users aren't going to spend too much time reading it all. The average reader will only spend around 37 seconds reading your web page, article or blog post (News Cred Insights). Whilst this statistic may be disheartening, in reality it means simply that your content needs to be as attention-grabbing as possible without falling into clickbait territory.

As with any standard 'elevator pitch' consider getting to your primary business USPs (Unique Selling Points) within an initial 20-30 seconds of reading time, falling well within the aforementioned 37 second window.

It is important to be both concise, but detailed in your approach, writing about how your customers can benefit from engaging in your services, but be mindful of reserving comprehensive lists for detailed content pages.

Don't Underestimate the Importance of the Written Word

Design is important. Functionality is important. Imagery is important. The one thing that most people tend to underestimate is the value of written content. On-page content can have any number of purposes, from providing information regarding specific products or services, helping to inform the user journey and drive traffic to specific parts of the website, or invoking an emotional response with a view to providing a particular outcome.



Your Content Is Valuable

Your content is valuable. Treat its creation as such, with as much time, effort and as many pairs of eyes as it takes to create something that will inspire your users.

Nuture Your Content

Treat your written content as a living, breathing entity that needs care and attention in order to make it do as you intend it to. You can't make a monkey perform without feeding it a banana every once in a while. Just like design, your writing can stagnate if left to do so. Try to identify which parts of your written content work, and refresh the parts that don't.

It is quite common for your business aims or short term objectives to change, and so fresh new content needs to reflect this. New content will also help to capture interest from your existing audience.

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THE FIRST
DRAFT OF
ANYTHING
IS S**T

”

Ernest Hemingway

Maintain Your Humanity

You're only human. Top quality writing reflects that, and displaying your humanity through your content should be seen as a sign of strength; it helps to improve brand trust and will help your users open up to you on a more personal level, as well as in business. Some of the world's largest organisations will use humour, and take a more personal angle to their content writing, in order to promote a fluid and conversational discourse. When trying to adopt a more corporate angle, it is important to be more formal, but there will always be room to adapt your written voice into one that not only reads well, but feels warmer and more inviting. Write for your audience, but maintain your humanity.

Substance Over Style

Don't be tempted to write to 'fill gaps', especially if the end result isn't coherent, and doesn't drive a purpose. You're not writing a story or an instruction manual. You have only your own knowledge of the business to tap into, and so it is important that your writing is limited to just that - write what you know.

If you write in detail about your organisation and the benefits of your product or service, then you will inspire those who want, to have. That's what marketing is.



WARNING!

Don't be tempted to write to 'fill gaps'.

“

You can also rank well with short content, too. Long form content is not always the answer.

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Gary Illyes (Google)

Consider Your Writing as a Tool

Marketing is a process of manipulation. It might be a cruel thing to say, but once you adopt that as part of your writing technique then you can begin structuring your writing in a way that drives the primary purpose of your business.

Calls to action will be one of the most fundamental tools in the process of creating a user journey and driving conversions, but we won't dwell on button text here - See our Content 101 Guide on writing CTAs here - as body text is primarily considered the first step of populating your website's content.

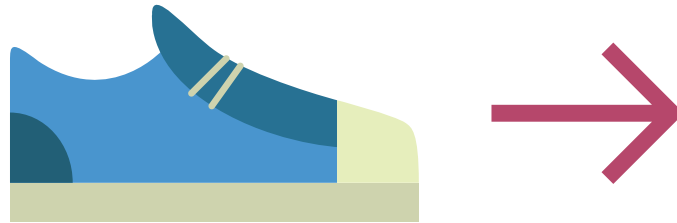
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Don't Jump the Gun

It is important that you write to create a user journey. Try and think how your users think. If you were to visit your own website and be confronted with large portions of information serving only to get you, as a user, to convert (whatever that conversion may be) then it could feel like you're being rushed, and can sometimes be off-putting. Take it easy, serve to inform, and write to create a process.

Create calls to action that bounce across several pages, before finally taking the initiative to provide access to the final step. There's nothing to say that you shouldn't provide conversion functionality at an earlier juncture in the user journey, but keeping a user's options broad early on will give them the freedom to choose to access more information themselves.

The First Step is the Hardest



Sometimes getting the creative juices flowing can be the toughest step in creating your website, and this can impact both the design and the content creation process. Ultimately, there is one way of getting over the fear and opening the gates, and that is to sit down and start writing. You aren't necessarily looking for a Pulitzer, or even a LinkedIn skills endorsement for your writing, and whilst you're writing to inform and (to an extent) impress, so long as you're backed by confidence and passion in your own product or service, then you're armed with everything you need to write as much as you need, and to the standard that you need to craft your user journey.

Remember, as well, that the more time you have dedicated to sitting down and creating your content, the better you're going to write.

Extraordinary Content can Come From Ordinary People

In a world where 54% of small businesses currently have a website, and 24% actively plan on creating one (clutch.co 2016) it's important to account for the fact that a lot of online ventures will fail; and that's a scary thought. But whilst some will fail, others will succeed, and succeed in style. Having the confidence to enter the online world is the first step in giving your user experience a digital platform, and whilst you don't need to include detailed functional elements straight away, your content is going to be the primary driver of success.

It is imperative that you do not neglect your onsite content. Without it, you could have the most beautiful site in the world, but miss out on dozens of opportunities because you simply aren't driving an effective user journey. As the SEO mantra rings true, '**content is king**'.