

Revealed: 7 Simple Web Writing Secrets For Business Owners





| By Bernadette Schwerdt |

Writing web text (or copy) that gets people's attention and converts them to customers can be tricky, but there are lots of ways to make it easier.

Here are a few techniques professional copywriters use to compel people to stay glued to a website and to eventually part with their money.

1. Do not use clever headlines that force people to think.

Tell the reader what the page is about. They have come there for information and will click out in seconds if they do not get it quickly. For example, if you have an online dating site, your headline should not say, "Are You Looking For A Romantic Walk On The Beach, Dinner By Candlelight And Passion Under The Stars?"

When you dilly-dally around with a headline, you force people to decipher who you are and what you do – are you a cruise liner, a beach restaurant or a dating site?

Get straight to the point and tell the reader who you are and what you offer – like this, "Find Your

Soul Mate Using 'Soul Mates R Us', Australia's Largest, Most Successful Online Dating Service".

2. When quoting numbers, always use an odd number.

Take the test. What sounds more believable? "90% of farmers use Zitrus Fertiliser" or "93.2% of farmers use Zitrus Fertiliser"? The second one, right?

As crazy as it sounds, research has shown that using even numbers sounds too neat and tidy to be believable. Woe betide me to suggest you manufacture statistics, but if you have odd or even numbers to choose from, always choose the odd number.

3. Make it simple.

For some reason when we write copy, we tend to use long and complicated words, when short and simple words would do. Maybe we think we should sound intelligent or we feel we need to impress the reader with our sophistication?

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All this really does, however, is confuse the reader and waste their time trying to decipher it. Here is what I mean:

On a recent camping trip, I saw this sign at a caravan park, "Illumination is required to be extinguished on these premises after nightfall". In other words, "Lights out after dark".

Have faith that you are intelligent and try to write as simply as possible.

4. Make sure there is plenty of white space on the page. Layout is important and makes all the difference.

The page has to catch the eye before it catches the brain. When people see a large slab of text with no headline, no sub headlines, no formatting or bullet points, it can be so off-putting that they do not even bother reading it.

Here is an example; which looks more appealing to you?

This:

"Make them an offer they cannot refuse: To differentiate yourself from the competitors, come up with an offer that is interesting, relevant and, most importantly, useful. It could be a free report, a free CD, or an invitation to a seminar. The offer does not have to be expensive either. Why not add a free box of chocolates when selling flowers – they probably cost \$3 wholesale yet most people spend \$80.00 on flowers. It is a no-brainer: investing \$3 to make \$80.00 is good business.

Or this:

Make Them An Offer They Cannot Refuse:
To differentiate yourself from the competitors, come up with an offer that is interesting, relevant and, most importantly, useful.

It could be a:

- free report
- free CD
- an invitation to a seminar.

The offer does not have to be expensive either.

Why not add a free box of chocolates when selling flowers – they probably cost \$3 wholesale yet most people spend \$80.00 on flowers.

It is a no-brainer – investing \$3 to make \$80.00 is good business.

All that I have done is add some bolding, a headline, italics, a few bullet points and a bit of white space in between sentences. This way, it not only helps the reader take in the ideas being presented, it makes it more appealing for them to read it in the first place.

5. Rewriting is the key.

Writing copy and uploading it to the web instantly is like writing a love letter under the influence of alcohol. Both can lead to embarrassment, regret and bad outcomes. What we think to be Booker-prizewinning the night before is often not in the morning, so it pays to write, wait 24 hours, re-write, wait, and then re-write again. Despite popular opinion, the first draft, and often the second, is almost never the best.

6. Vary the length of your sentences.

When you write sentences that all have the same number of words in them, the text tends to come across as dull and boring, even if the topic is interesting. But when you mix it up with sentences of all different lengths, the rhythm of the piece almost drives you along, willing you to keep reading.

Here is an example. "Annette, you are a liar. I know you do not want to hear that. But it is true. And so am I. And man I hate to say that. But it is true too. We all lie. To ourselves. Now in our defence, we do not mean to. And not only do we not mean to – we do not even know we are doing it. Because we are in a state of denial.

If you look closely, you will see that there is a diverse mix of sentence lengths, which makes this paragraph so easy to read, creates the rhythm and therefore makes it compelling.

7. Delete fifty per cent of your text if transferring it from print to web.

Writing for the web is very different to writing for print. When we read a brochure or advertisement, we tend not to skim or scan, but read it from start to finish. With web copy, however, it is a completely different process. For example, do you read every word on the web page or do you scan the page looking for key words that are relevant to your search? Chances are, it is the latter.

So, if you think you can take printed copy and just dump it on your web page, you will be in for a rude shock, because people just will not read it.

Here is what you can do to make it more scannable:

- break paragraphs into sentences and add a space between them.
- add headlines that indicate what you are about to talk about
- add sub headlines that break up long sections and make it look more attractive.
- turn long lists of benefits or features into bullet points.
- put statistics or figures into a graph so the idea being presented is instantly understandable.
- show photos of the products instead of talking about them.
- use colour, bolding, italics and other formatting devices to add movement and texture (do not use underlining or people will think it is a link, click on it and be subtly annoyed they were led astray).

Take a few moments to review your website and see if you can put some of these tips into practice. It will be time well spent. **ABS**

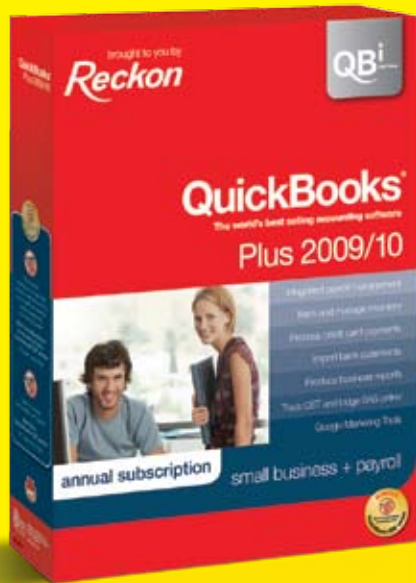
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