

Ask SCORE

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Point, Click, Read: The Power of Good Web Copy

Good writing is the fundamental element of your small business marketing strategy. A thoughtful, well-crafted message that connects with your customers will do more to win and keep customers than any other element.

This is particularly true for Web sites. Although the Web is a visual-driven medium, with sites using flashy graphics, sounds, and other fancy features, success still comes down to what you say and how you say it.

However, Web site copy differs significantly from that of, say, brochures or display ads. With only few seconds to capture and hold the reader's attention, Web copy must be brief and to the point, but engaging enough for them want to see more.

Focus first on establishing credibility. The content on your site must be crisp and intelligent. What you say should grab a visitor's attention, pique their interest and motivate them to action. But avoid sounding like a commercial.

"Don't make your Web site look like an ad" is rule number one of Web copywriting, says Maria Veloso, director of Web Copywriting University. We are all bombarded by ad images daily, says Veloso. The last thing we want to see on a site is another ad.

Yet many small business sites seem specifically designed to look like billboards. Avoid this trap. "People go online for information," says Veloso. "That's why they call it the information superhighway." Your site should provide help, not hype, with the feel of editorial, not advertising. Web visitors consider themselves active participants in a shared online experience, so the writing should speak to them in this way.

Even though you're writing for an infinite number of potential readers, your copy should read like a conversation. That's why many successful Web sites use common, everyday words, not platitudes and overused clichés that show off the writer's knowledge of the dictionary. Using the second-person ("you") in addressing readers also helps create a personal bond with your Web site visitors and helps convey your sincere interest in helping them address their business needs. The more they feel like they know you, the more interested they'll be in doing business with your company.

For more advice on marketing your small business, contact SCORE "Counselors to America's Small Business."

The Fox Valley SCORE Chapter offers *free, confidential* counseling to small businesses, including startups. Affiliated with the U.S. Small Business Administration, SCORE has counselors available in eight locations in the counties and suburbs west of Chicago.

To sign up for an appointment at the location closest to you, go to ScoreFoxValley.org.

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Meet with us to review your Web site. We may be able to give you some copy pointers that improve customer response.

Sincerely,

The Counselors at SCORE