

Not Content With Your Content?

*10 Steps to Writing Captivating Website
Content That Engages and Sells*

*by
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Contents

Foreword	3
Why your website's words matter	4
What is copywriting?	6
The 10 steps	9
Know your audience	10
Find your voice	12
Identify your key words	15
Use enticing headlines	17
Make your content readable	19
Build trust	22
Include a call to action	25
Use images	29
Proofread your work	32
Keep your content fresh and updated	35
Putting it all together	37



Foreword

Thank you for downloading my ebook, “Not Content With Your Content? 10 Steps to Writing Captivating Website Content that Engages and Sells.”

I wrote this ebook for business owners who are struggling to craft the right words for their business website.

Since I was old enough to spell, I’ve had a love for writing. It’s something I’ve always enjoyed doing, and I spent my childhood filling countless notebooks and Trapper Keepers (remember those?) with my stories, poems, greeting cards and plays.

As an adult, I have built my business around helping others find the best way to describe what they do, build relationships with their customers, and make sales in a digital world. I write content for websites, blogs, email marketing campaigns, and social media.

I hope this ebook will help you write engaging content for your business website, and ultimately grow your sales.



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Chapter 1

Why Your Website's Words Matter

I think most business owners understand why having a website is almost a necessity. A digital presence is vital to their business. The days of customers thumbing through the Yellow Pages to find what they need have been over for a while, as most people turn to the Internet to find the products or services they are looking for.

Having a website gives your business credibility. It proves that you are for real. Even word of mouth referrals are confirmed by an Internet search of the business name. A business website makes an impression.

A beautiful, mobile-friendly website design is important. A website that loads quickly and comes up on the first page of a Google search is important.

And the words you place on your website are just as important, if not more. Why?

Because the words on your website have power.



If the content is boring, your audience will leave.

If your content doesn't make sense, your customers will leave.

If it takes too long for your customers to find what they are looking for, they will leave.

Customers today are educated and knowledgeable. They know how to conduct online research before they make a purchasing decision.

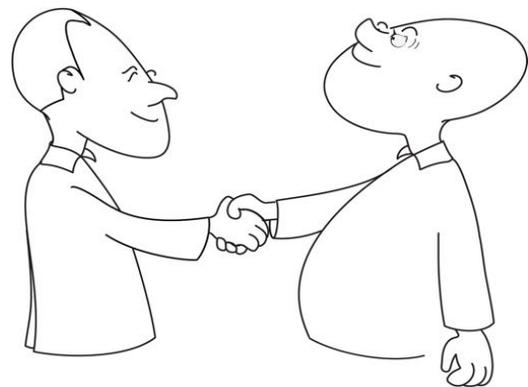
Your website is often the first encounter your potential customer has with your business. They will read your information, and draw impressions of

your business based on the words you choose to use in your marketing efforts.

That is why it is so important that the writing on your website is strong. It's as critical as a firm handshake.

When you have good content, it draws your audience in, and gives them what they want quickly. It encourages them to click on links, and interact with your pages.

Good content builds trust and makes sales, and is achieved through a writing style called **copywriting**.



Strong writing is as critical as a firm handshake.



Chapter 2

What is Copywriting?



Copywriting is different from other types of writing, such as news writing, feature writing or fiction writing.

Copywriting persuades your readers to take action. You are encouraging them to call you, buy your product, sign up for your email list or tell others about you.

Copywriting has a purpose and a desired result, and is the type of writing you need to use on your website.

You may not have the “sales person” or “sales manager” title, but as a business owner, that is what you are. It’s one of the many hats you wear, and whether you know it or not, it’s a hat that never comes off. You sell your business every day in the things you say, the way you conduct yourself, and in the things you write.

Copywriting Do’s and Don’t’s

To help you understand copywriting, I’ve compiled a list of do’s and don’t’s.



Copywriting Do’s:

Get your readers’ attention quickly. This is the job of your headline, photo or graphic, or the first few lines of your page. You will use this to draw your readers in. If your headline is boring, confusing or uninteresting, your readers won’t get past the first few words, let alone make it into your content. Find a way to make your headline irresistible. Pose a question, offer help, play up a limited time offer – do whatever you can to make it more compelling.

Not Content With Your Content?

Copywriting Do's *continued*....

Identify their problem. Your customers have questions and problems, and are searching for the answers online. Show that you understand what they are looking for by identifying their problem early on in your content, or better yet, in your headline. Finding the problem they are looking for will almost guarantee they will read on for the answer.



Demonstrate how you can meet their needs. The classic features vs. benefits struggle...don't just plug your product or service, but describe how and why it will help your customer. Identify how their problems will be solved and their questions will be answered. Use examples, site testimonials or offer money back guarantees so there is little risk to your customer.

Have a clear call to action. Specify what it is you want your customer to do. You may not be going for the big sale right off the bat. Most customers need at least "seven touches" before they buy, meaning they need to have several interactions with you and your business before they use your services. So maybe your call to action is signing up for an email list, clicking on a link to download a white paper, or having a live chat to answer their questions.



Copywriting Don't's:

Dump content from other marketing materials to your website. I'm all for reusing something you've written for other marketing projects on your website. This is called repurposing your content, and is a smart way to manage your content. However, that doesn't mean copying and pasting brochure or annual report content directly to your website. It needs to be reworked and tailored for web consumption, using white space, catchy headlines, bulleted lists, hyperlinks, etc. More on this later.

Copywriting Don't's *continued....*

Copy someone else's work. If you see a writing style you like on someone else's website, don't copy it, change a few words, and make it your own. That's called plagiarism and is against the law. You can get ideas about writing style and voice from other companies' websites, but you'll need to create an original work.



This seems like an obvious statement, but I worked with a client who took paragraphs word for word from competitors' sites, and used it on their own. My work has also been plagiarized, and let me tell you, it's not a compliment. Just because you can access it online does not mean it's available to use.

Promise and not deliver. If your headline promises something, make sure your content provides it. Nothing will frustrate and anger your audience more than to be scammed into clicking on your link, only to be fed a sales pitch.

Copywriting is purposeful and measurable, and when it's done right, can be very effective.

Chapter 3

The 10 Steps

The remaining chapters of this ebook will be dedicated to the 10 steps I created to help you write captivating website content that will engage your audience and sell your products or services.

Here are the 10 steps:

Step 1: Know your audience

Step 2: Find your voice

Step 3: Identify your key words

Step 4: Use enticing headlines

Step 5: Make your content readable

Step 6: Build trust (sell but don't sell)

Step 7: Include a call to action

Step 8: Use images

Step 9: Proofread your work

Step 10: Keep your content fresh and updated



Chapter 4

STEP 1: Know Your Audience

Your first step in writing strong website content is knowing who you are speaking to.

The group of people who will buy your product or service is called your target audience. It is a specific group of people who **need** or **want** the product or service you are selling. It's who you will tailor your message to, and whose specific needs you will meet.

Why is Knowing Your Target Audience Important?

A business cannot be everything to everybody. Targeting your business to a specific group allows small businesses to compete with larger companies.

Once you know who needs your product or service, you can become the expert in your industry and be more strategic in your marketing efforts.

For example, the medical profession has hundreds of target audiences.

A general practitioner can provide initial care to address your overall health. But if you had a heart condition, you would want to see an experienced cardiologist who spent years focusing on the heart and who can provide you with the most specialized care.

If you were having a baby, you would go to an obstetrician.

If you needed medical care for your child, you would make an appointment with a pediatrician.



One doctor cannot be all things to everyone, just like you can't offer products and services to every type of customer.



How to Identify Your Target Audience

Here are five steps to determining who your target audience is and how to best reach them:

1. Evaluate what you are selling. What unique benefits do your products or services offer? How do they benefit the customers who purchase them?

2. Look at your current customers. Where is your business coming from? Where are you making the most sales, and who is buying what you have to sell?

3. Identify your customer profile. Study the characteristics of the people who need your product and the customers who are currently buying it. Then create a customer profile. What is their age? Gender? Education level? Geographic location? Income level? Consider sociological information as well, such as lifestyles, behaviors, hobbies, and interests.

4. Research the market. Read everything you can online about your target audience to determine if it's growing. Conduct surveys, interviews or focus groups to assess the need, and get opinions from local experts. Research what your competition is offering. Is there enough of a need to support your business?

5. Know how to reach your target audience. Once you have determined there is enough of a need, find out what websites your target audience visits, blogs they read, and social media outlets they comment on. Use this information to compose your message and determine the best way to deliver it.

Identifying and studying your target audience makes you stay focused, helps you to be more effective in your business, and allows you to develop your niche.

Chapter 5

STEP 2: Find Your Voice



Over the course of your day, you may write countless emails, project proposals and articles for your company’s blog or newsletter.

Although it is **you** writing all of these things, they shouldn’t all be written the same way. They shouldn’t all “sound” the same.

To be most effective, you will need to consider your audience and purpose, and adjust your “voice” accordingly.

The second step in writing captivating web content is finding your writing voice.

What is a Writing Voice?

Much has been written and debated about our writing voice, or the way we “sound” when we write. Some believe we are born with our own unique style. Others believe we learn it. Still others are certain it’s as individual as our personalities, and we can’t learn it, escape it or change it – we just have to find it.

Yesterday, I wrote an email to a potential client. Afterwards, I wrote a blog post for my website. Later, I wrote a sympathy card to a close friend. My voice was behind each of these items, but my email was businesslike, my blog post was informative, and my card was sympathetic and personal. All were written by me, but each had a unique tone and style.

I do believe each of us portrays a bit of our own personalities and personal styles into what we write. But I also think we can and should adjust our voice to better communicate with our audiences. Sometimes we do this naturally. Sometimes we have to consciously make it happen.

Not Content With Your Content?

How to Identify Your Writing Voice

Not sure how you should “sound”? Here are five steps to consider when deciding on your writing voice.

1. Define your audience. Who will read your writing? What are their ages, backgrounds, and education levels? You will write differently for an educated audience than you would to a group of elementary school students.

2. Know your purpose. Are you trying to educate the audience about your cause? Are you trying to persuade your audience to buy a product or support a candidate? Know what you want to accomplish before you start writing.

3. Consider how well your audience understands the topic. Are you writing for a trade organization where everyone knows the industry? Or are you writing to the general public who may not know the specifics of your subject? You will need to explain things more and avoid industry jargon if the audience is not familiar with your topic.

4. Understand the outlet you are writing for. A press release written for the media will need to have a journalistic style, with the most important information reported first. A blog may take on a more casual, informal tone. A newsletter article will be customer-focused and friendly.

5. What action do you want your audience to take? What is your call to action? You will need to use a persuasive voice if you want your audience to buy something. You will be more instructional if you want to educate your audience about new information.

Following these important steps before you begin writing will help identify your writing voice, and make your audience feel like you are speaking directly to them.

Why is Voice Important?

The voice we use when we write helps the audience understand our purpose. It gets their attention and keeps it. When our audience feels we relate to them, it establishes credibility. We become the professional or authority. It ultimately helps us sell our products and services.

If you work at a bank, you may want to use a professional, informative, and trustworthy voice. If you own a funeral home, your voice might be sympathetic and reassuring. Using humor, trendy expressions or a casual voice would not be appropriate for either of these industries. You would sound unprofessional, and possibly even offensive.

However, if you were writing for a young rock band, a hip teenage clothing store or a mommy blog, a casual or humorous voice would speak well to your audience. Anything professional or formal could be ineffective and come off as stuffy and out-of-touch.

Chapter 6

STEP 3: Identify Your Key Words



There are many ways businesses can increase traffic to their website and be found in an Internet search. This practice is referred to as search engine optimization (SEO), and would require an ebook of its own to cover it in its entirety. And since Google changes its algorithm 500-600 times per year (<https://moz.com/google-algorithm-change>), it wouldn't stay current for long.

Google changes its algorithm this often to benefit its users. It wants its users to get quality results when they use Google. Unfortunately, many unscrupulous businesses have attempted to game the system in order to appear higher in search results than what they actually deserved.

There's no magical formula that will guarantee you high search results, but writing quality content on your website will help.

In addition to the steps mentioned so far (knowing the target audience and finding your voice), you can create engaging website content with step three — using key words.

Key words are the words readers use to find what they need in an Internet search. As a business owner, you should know what words your customers are using to find what you have to offer.

There are many tools available to help you with this, such as Google's Keyword Planner, Majestic SEO and Ubersuggest, just to name a few.

Key words have the added benefit of helping with your business's SEO. Once you know what they are, place them strategically in your web content so you can increase traffic to your website.

Where should you place your key words?

- **In the headline.** Incorporate key words into the title of your article. If you control your own website and can add a bit of HTML, label the headline as an “H1” headline (Headline 1), or have a web designer do it.
- **In the meta description.** This is the short paragraph that explains your web page to search engines. It appears as a snippet of text to a researcher in an Internet search. Adding your key words to this paragraph will help with your SEO.
- **In the subheadings.** Subheadings are the headings that are used to break up text on a website page. They are often in bold, or are a larger font size than the rest of the text so they stand out more. Have a web designer label your subheadings as “H2” or Headline 2, and place your key words as close to the beginning of the subheading as possible.
- **In the content itself.** Use your key words frequently but naturally within the content.
- **In the “alt” tags.** Alt tags contain the text that describes an image for blind or visually impaired people, or if the image won’t load for some reason.

No Key Word “Stuffing” (i.e., Don’t Overuse Them)

Businesses have gotten in trouble with Google for using their key words too often for the sole purpose of SEO. The writing sounds awkward and unnatural, and often doesn’t make any sense. That’s a good way to lose your reader, and that’s exactly why Google has to keep us guessing on what will give us better rankings.

But it’s safe to say, if you place your key words in the above contexts and don’t overuse them, they will help you with your SEO. They will also make your page more focused, contributing to quality content that engages and sells.

Chapter 7

STEP 4: Use Enticing Headlines

A headline has an important job. It's the first thing your audience sees before deciding if they want to read more. It's responsible for catching your readers' attention, capturing their curiosity, and enticing them to click on your link or open your email.

That's a tall order for such a short line of text, and that's why it's step four in creating engaging web content.

A headline is your first impression, and as they say, you only get one chance to make it.

So here are several examples of headlines that can draw your readers in and make them want to learn more.

- **A headline to identify the benefit.** In as few words as possible, your headline should summarize the content of your article, and make it clear to the reader what he or she will gain.
- **A headline to ask a question.** A headline that starts with a question such as, "Do you know the secret to beautiful skin?" may cause the reader to wonder if they know the answer. They may read to find out.
- **A headline to identify the audience.** If you have a specific audience in mind, a headline can identify those readers for you and get their attention. "Calling All Stay-At-Home-Moms!" Or "For All Those Over 65!" are both examples of a headline that identifies an audience.



"A headline is your first impression, and as they say, you only get one chance to make it"

- **A headline that has a time factor.** If you are offering a big sale, but only for a short time or for your current inventory, your headline can create urgency for your readers. “50% off through this Friday only!” or “While Supplies Last!” may be enough to get your audience buying before it’s too late.
- **A headline that offers to help.** Most people are open to learning about things that would help them or make their hectic lives easier. “Healthy Cooking Made Easy” or “Steps to Getting Organized this Holiday Season” both identify ways the reader will be helped if they read your article.
- **A headline that promises important information.** “What You Need to Know About Life Insurance” or “A Brand New Drug that Boosts Metabolism” promises to reveal information or an answer to a problem your readers may have.
- **A headline that identifies a list.** People love to know how many facts to expect when reading an article. “Five Tips for Successful Blogging” or “The Top 10 Most Popular Books for this Year” may make readers want to know what those five or 10 things are.

Whichever headline or combination of headlines you decide to use in your website, remember to keep the headline short. A wordy headline will lose your audience.

Also be sure the content delivers on the promises your headline has made.

Use strong, clear, concise words that will draw your audience to your content, then pull them right in.



Chapter 8

STEP 5: Make Your Content Readable

Now that you have identified your target audience, your writing voice, your keywords and have written your enticing headline, it's time for step five — making sure your content is readable.

What does readable mean? If the content is written in the reader's language, can't it be read?

Yes, of course it *can* be read, but the question is *will* it? If it's too copy heavy, you've just wasted a lot of time attracting the right audience only to lose them because of poor formatting.

Internet readers are bombarded with information. Most people skim or scan web content first before deciding if they want to invest the time in actually reading it. We need to break through all the “noise,” make it clear what our article is about early, and format the content so it is as readable as possible.

Here are nine ways to make your web content more readable:

1. Use numbered or bulleted lists. Short lists of bulleted or numbered information are easy to read. Readers can scan a list and take in a lot of information quickly.

2. Write short paragraphs. No one wants to read heavy copy and long paragraphs, especially on a computer screen or a mobile device. Keep sentences short and make your paragraphs about three to four sentences long.





3. Bold key words for emphasis. Bolding a few of the important words within your web content will help make the copy stand out. Use this sparingly, or it will lose its effect.

4. Choose a large, dark font. If the font size is tiny and the color is faint, it will be hard to see and you may lose your readers. Be sure the font size is large enough and the font color is dark enough to be read easily.

5. Use lots of white space. White space breaks up text and makes the web content easier to read. Put ample space between paragraphs and lists.

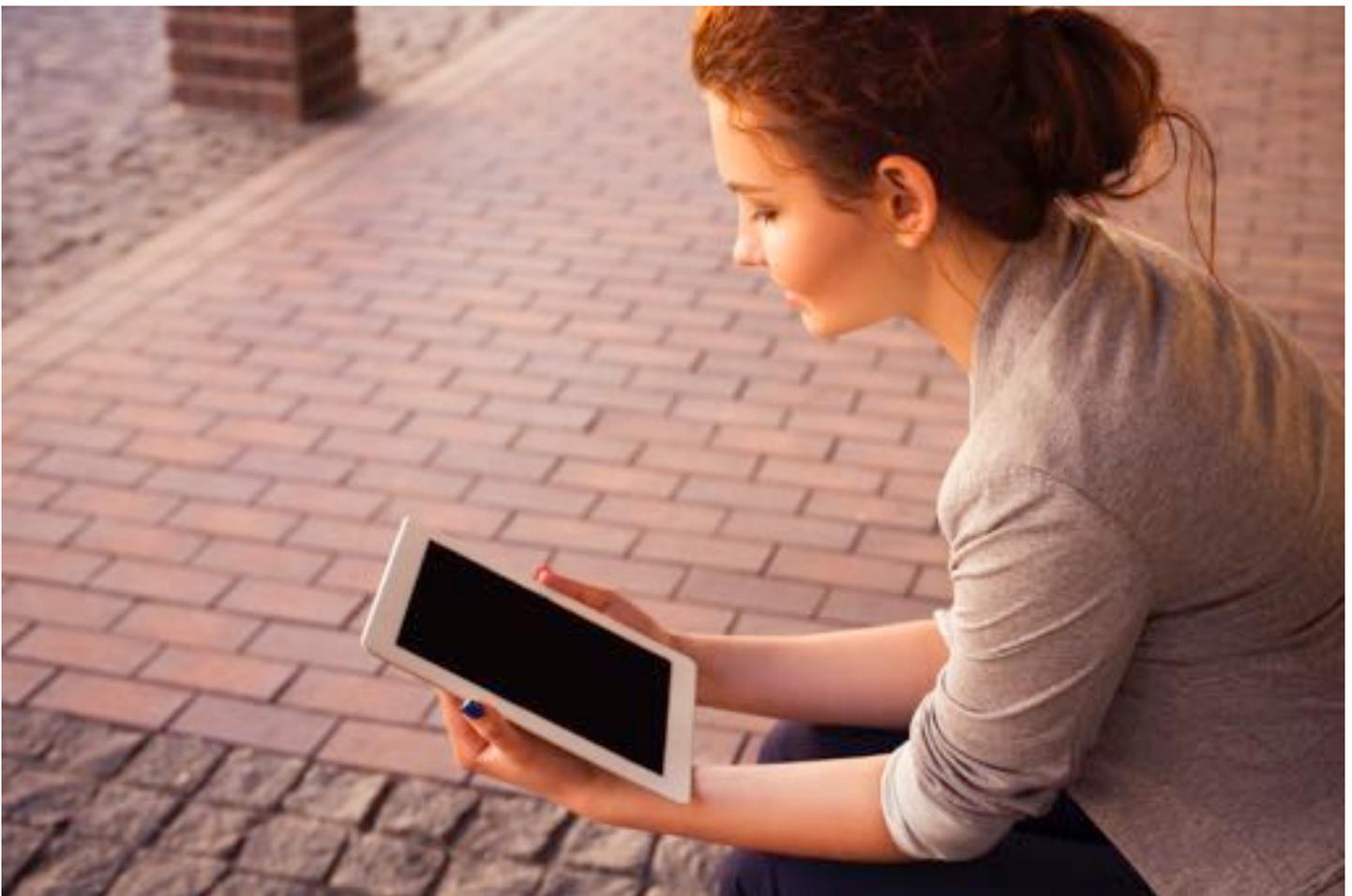
6. Add headings and subheadings. Using headings and subheadings within your web content helps to organize the content and make it more readable. Readers can scan the article, read the subheadings and get a good idea about what the article is all about.

7. Watch your word count. Long blog posts are usually not read as much as shorter ones. Get to the point, choose powerful and effective words and eliminate extra words you don't need. If you are writing a blog post, aim for a length of 300-500 words. If your blog post gets much longer than that, consider dividing it into two separate posts.

8. Use photos or graphics. Most people are drawn to visuals. Adding relevant photos, graphics or infographics to your web content will help to increase the readership.

9. Avoid dark backgrounds. It is harder to read text on a dark background. Using a lighter background color — at least where the text is — in combination with a larger, dark font will help with ease of reading.

Making web content more readable will get your point across, establish that connection with readers, and move you one step closer to writing effective content that engages and sells.



Chapter 9

STEP 6: Build Trust (sell but don't sell)



Bob Burg has shared countless nuggets of advice in his career, but the one that resonates most with me is the Golden Rule of Networking. (<http://www.burg.com/2010/04/all-things-being-equal.../>)

“All things being equal, people do business with, and refer business to, those people they know, like and trust.”

Bob said that if you were to keep only that one sentence in mind when meeting people, you'd be steps ahead of the game. That brings us to step six: Build trust. Sell, but don't sell.

I live in a neighborhood full of school-aged children who are involved in a variety of activities. They are sometimes charged with the task of going door-to-door, selling something to raise funds for their organizations, schools or groups.

If I open the door to a child I know,

I buy whatever it is they are selling. I may not need another box of Girl Scout cookies or a magazine subscription, but I buy it because I know them, I like them, and I want to support what they are involved in.

I'm not suggesting you buy something for your business that you don't need just because you know the seller. But in business, I am much more likely to buy a product or service from someone I know and like. Someone whose integrity I trust. Someone who I know will do what they say they are going to do.

I was in a networking meeting recently, and introduced myself to the person beside me. She immediately launched into her sales pitch about her skin care products, asked me if I ever used them, and gasped in horror when I said I hadn't.

As she spouted out the latest statistics about recent breakthroughs and fumbled through

her phone for before and after photos, she offered to send me a free bottle to sample.

We're all trying to sell something and earn a living, and I respect her aggressiveness in some ways. In other ways, I was annoyed by her failure to find out what I needed, and lack of establishing any kind of dialogue with me before laying on the hard sell.

I know plenty of people who sell what she sells. If I ever decide to buy, it will be from someone I know, like and trust. Not someone who uses a free product offer (of something she hasn't taken the time to determine if I need or not) as a reason to continue to contact me.

So here are a few tips for establishing trust with your connections through your content:

When you meet someone, make it about THEM. People love to talk about themselves. Ask about their business, their hobbies, their recent travels. Strive to get to know the person behind the business before you talk about yourself. And PLEASE don't think that giving you a business card grants you permission to add them to your email list. Invite them to subscribe when the time is right.

Fill your blog and website with informative content. Give away advice for free on topics your readers want to know more about. Why for free? Because as your advice becomes valuable, your reader will think, "All this for free? What will I get when I'm actually paying?"

Use social media to showcase your expertise. Post suggestions, tips and helpful bits of information. Share articles that are relevant and meaningful to your followers.

Do what you say you are going to do. You wouldn't believe how many professionals are not accountable for their work, drop the ball, or don't follow through. We all get busy. That's not an excuse.



Stay in touch with your connections. If you see an article they might be interested in, send it to them. Ask about an event or accomplishment they told you about in a previous conversation. Comment on their updates on LinkedIn or retweet their relevant tweets.

Be consistent. When you do what you say you're going to do, follow up, and fulfill promises, you'll build trust. It takes time and patience, but once it's there, it will be your company's biggest asset.

Trust is a key attribute that takes time to establish and earn, and it impacts every relationship you have in your life. Do what you need to do to establish trust with connections through your content.

When people know who you are, like what you represent, and trust what you say, you will be successful in growing your business.



Chapter 10

STEP 7: Include a Call to Action



A beginning, a middle and an end; a topic sentence, supporting details, and a summary.

Much of what you write contains these components, but there is one important item that is often left out of the content you create.

And when you leave it out, you miss the opportunity to develop a relationship with your audience.

The missing piece is called the **call to action**, and it just happens to be step seven in creating web content that engages and sells.

What is a Call to Action?

A call to action is a statement or invitation that accompanies your content – usually toward the end – that asks your reader to do something.

It's a request, an offer, a suggestion or an encouragement for your audience to take a certain action. A call to action entices your readers to connect, learn more and engage with you at some point in the future.



Why You Need a Call to Action

A call to action is an opportunity to present more information to your audience, build credibility and establish yourself as a trustworthy expert in your field.

It benefits you because it is a way to identify your target audience. The readers that take you up on your call to action offer are the ones who are interested in what you have to say, would like to learn more, and have found value in the content they've read so far.

A call to action is the first step in developing a relationship with your audience, and leading them through the sales cycle.



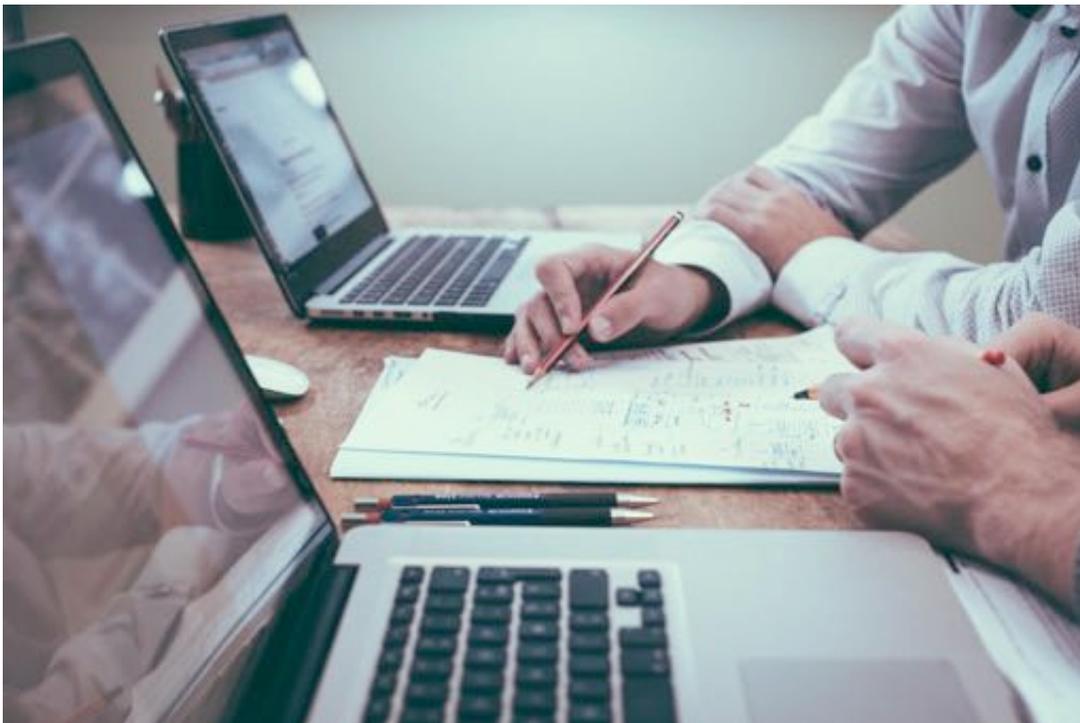
Types of Calls to Action

Calls to action come in many forms; some are more forward than others. Your ultimate goal is to make more sales, but in order to do that, you have to take the time to prove yourself trustworthy, and develop an ongoing loyalty with your customer. A call to action is an invitation to your customer to begin that relationship.

Here are different types of calls to action you may want to consider adding to your content:

- **Invite them to sign up for your blog.** By simply entering their email address, your audience can receive an email notification of your new blog posts as they are published.

- **Ask them to opt in to your email list.** By signing up, they will receive your email newsletter and other important announcements.
- **Encourage them to leave a comment.** Especially for your blog, ask readers for their thoughts, questions and input on the topic you wrote about. Be sure to acknowledge and respond to all of the comments in a timely manner.
- **Follow you on social media.** Include a link to your LinkedIn profile, Facebook business page, Twitter account, or any other social media profile you have. Be sure to like or follow them back, and respond to any questions or comments they may post on your page.
- **Invite them to email or call you directly.** Perhaps the most personal, including your email or phone number is a great way to invite questions and comments and be accessible.
- **Include a link to your website.** Encourage your readers to click on your website link to learn more about you, your business and the products or services you offer.





- **Fill out a form.** Be sure your form has required fields, such as an email address, so you can respond quickly.
- **Download a white paper or ebook.** Content such as a white paper or ebook also confirms your credibility as a trusted resource. When they provide their email address in order to download it, you can follow up with them at a later time.
- **Last but not least: Ask them to buy your product or service.** This is your ultimate goal, but depending on your business, you may not ask for that right from the start. You might need to take baby steps by starting with the other calls to action. This allows customers to get to know you and trust that you are worthy of their investment of time and money.

Don't just create great content and leave it hanging. Use a call to action to connect with those who need what you are offering, develop a relationship, and ultimately make more sales.

Chapter 11

STEP 8: Use Images

We've all heard the saying a picture is worth a thousand words. And it couldn't be truer when it comes to including images with our content.

Images play an important role in whatever we are writing, and that's why it's step eight in creating web content that engages and sells.

There are countless advantages to using images with the things we write. According to JeffBullas.com, articles that include images get 94% more total views. Sixty percent of consumers are more likely to contact a business if an image appears in their local search results.



What Types of Images Should You Use?

There are several types of images you can use to accompany your content. The ones you choose will depend on what you are writing. Images can be used to further describe your event, provide more details, or display statistics. They include:

- Photos (stock, royalty-free or ones you take yourself)
- Animated graphics
- Infographics
- Screen shots
- Charts and graphs
- Hand-drawn graphics





Why You Should Use Images

Using images is an important part of your marketing and content creation because:

People are visual. They are drawn to pictures. Your readers will be more likely to notice the article if it has an image included, and then take the time to read it.

It provides additional details. A picture or image can provide details, emotions and a deeper understanding that words alone cannot.

It breaks up the copy. No one likes to read long paragraphs of copy, especially on a computer screen or a tiny mobile device. Photos have a unique way of spacing out the information so your readers can scan, making it easier to read the article in its entirety.

It showcases your product. If you have an ecommerce website or are writing about a particular product, customers can get a better understanding of your product if there is an image included with it. A picture may also help them feel more comfortable about purchasing it.

Images are appealing and memorable. Readers are more likely to remember the content of your article if there was an impactful image that accompanied it.

It makes it easier to digest information. With an infographic, for example, you can visually display details and information in a format that is easy to read and comprehend.

Images get shared. Especially on social media, if images really hit home with someone, it will be shared with friends and followers.

Make sure to include images with your content. Content with images are read by more people, are visually more appealing and will help your content to be shared and remembered.



Chapter 12

STEP 9: Proofread Your Work



Technology is at our fingertips, and many of us have immediate access to edit our own websites. Because of the ease and familiarity, there are a lot of opportunities for errors. That's why it is so important that we pay close attention to step nine – proofread your work.

Before you publish something to your website, always proofread it for errors. Make sure what you've written makes sense, there are no blatant spelling errors, and you haven't left a word out.

Mistakes happen and nobody's perfect, but a website with spelling and grammatical errors leaves an unfavorable impression with your customers. It sends a message that you are not detail oriented, and do not take the time to make sure your work is the best that it can be. Writing is often our first impression, and we need to make it a good one.

But I understand that it is especially difficult to proofread your own work. We tend to not catch our own mistakes. Sometimes it's because we don't realize something is wrong, and sometimes our brains just fill in the missing word. We're just too close to it.

A co-worker, a spouse or a friend can offer a fresh set of eyes and the perspective you need to make your content better and catch those silly mistakes. But if you're under a deadline, you'll need to do it yourself.

Here are a few tips to help with editing your own content:

Observe the overall structure. Is your content well organized? Does it make sense? Does one idea or paragraph transition smoothly to the other? Read your content for the meaning and the flow first to make sure it says what you intended for it to say.

Check your links. If you refer to a website, social media accounts, blogs or an email address, make sure your links take your readers to the right place.

Don't rely on spell check. Spell check in most word processing programs will catch the major mistakes, but won't identify words spelled right but used incorrectly. It won't be able to tell you if proper names are spelled correctly.

Beware of autocorrect. Your word processing program may try to guess at the word you are attempting to write. Disable this. The Internet is full of examples of embarrassing communications when a device's auto correct function tried to help.

Take some time away. If you are not on a deadline and have the luxury of stepping away from your content for a while, do it. It will allow you to take a mental break, gain perspective and catch errors missed because you had been looking at it for too long.



Read it out loud and like a robot. Slowing down and reading your content out loud in a short, choppy voice (like a robot) is a great way to catch missing words. Missing words happen when your brain thinks faster than you can write or type, and words get missed. Even when you reread, your brain has a way of filling in the words you neglected to type on the page.

Print your content and underline each word as you read it. For many people, there is nothing like reading on paper — and it's easier to find mistakes. Use a pen and underline each word as you read it. This will help you to find spelling errors and missing words.

Start with the last word and read to the first word. Reading the words of your content in reverse order will take the focus off the meaning of the words and allow you to more easily identify spelling errors.

Change the font size. Make your type bigger and reread it. Your mistakes will be more glaring.

Break it down into small chunks. It can be overwhelming to proofread a large document. Break it down into smaller portions, like paragraphs, and focus on one at a time. As you proofread the paragraph and correct any errors, put a big checkmark in the margin. This will help you feel assured that the paragraph was looked at and approved.

Proofreading is an important last step to publishing your content on your website.

Take an extra few minutes and make sure your message is as perfect as possible.



Chapter 13

STEP 10: Keep Your Content Fresh and Updated



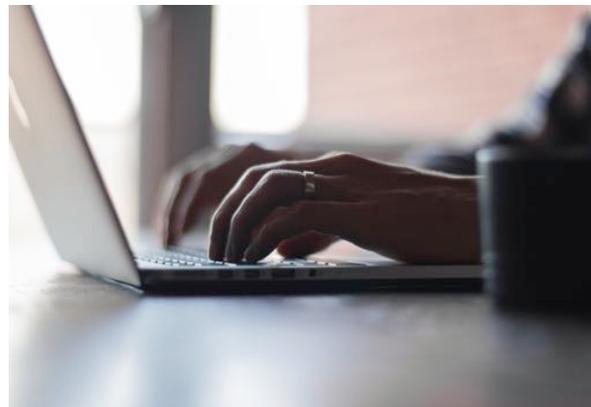
You have the first nine steps towards creating website content that engages and sells. The last step – step 10 – is keeping everything fresh and current.

Keeping your website fresh and current means updating it with the most timely information. If you're promoting an event and the

event has passed, remove the event from your website.

If you have a listing of your board of directors and one has resigned or retired, remove his or her contact information and update accordingly.

Don't launch your website and let it go stagnant. You should give your customers a reason to come back.



A blog is one of the easiest ways to keep your website fresh, current and updated. A blog is a page on your website where you can add relevant articles. They are usually listed in reverse chronological order. Blog articles about valuable topics related to your business are a great avenue to your website. Readers will stumble upon your articles in their Internet search, and find themselves on your website.

When your website is refreshed with new content regularly, it is favored more by Google. It adds value, and makes your website relevant.

This seems like such obvious advice, but I've been on many websites that contain outdated information. It leaves me with the impression that the company went out of business, or they are so disorganized that they don't have time to do a good job. It raises doubt and makes me question if I'm comfortable doing business with them.



Chapter 14

Putting it All Together

You've reached the final chapter.

Congratulations!

Hopefully, you have a better understanding of what makes website content engaging, interesting and valuable.



To review, here are the 10 steps:

Step 1: Know your audience. Determine who your target audience is, and write specifically for them.

Step 2: Find your voice. Identify how your website will “sound,” and use that voice consistently throughout all your marketing materials.

Step 3: Identify your key words. What words are your customers using to find you? Use those words in your content.

Step 4: Use enticing headlines. Draw them in using just a few words.

Step 5: Make your content readable. Web friendly content is imperative to keep your readers reading.

Step 6: Build trust. Be consistent, deliver on your promises, respond to all comments. Be an open book.

Step 7: Include a call to action. Ask for the business.

Step 8. Use images. A picture is worth a thousand words, right?

Step 9: Proofread your work. Check and recheck. Get another set of eyes to make sure you haven't overlooked anything.

Step 10: Keep your content fresh and updated. Always add something new, and make sure what is there is accurate.

I hope this ebook has helped you understand the importance of writing quality content for your website. And I hope it has given you the building blocks to get it done.

Your website tells your brand's story. Make your website more than factual – make it captivating, inspiring, and engaging. Let your words do their important job of selling you and your business!





- Website Content
- Email Marketing
- Blogging
- Social Media

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Writing's Not Your Cup of Tea? I LOVE this stuff!

A cup of tea, a thermos of coffee or an oversized water bottle is at my side as I create captivating content for my clients.

I love to help clients find their voice and tell their story.

If you have questions or need more information about writing content for your website, please feel free to contact me!

All My Best,

Laurie