



WRITING CONTENT FOR YOUR WEBSITE**FORGE** WEBSITE



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INTRODUCTION

Today it is possible for anyone to conduct business online. Whether you already have a brick and mortar store or you simply want to take advantage of the opportunity to engage in e-commerce, it is important to understand the building blocks of establishing a successful e-commerce site. One of those building blocks is the content that is placed on your site. Perhaps more than any other element, the web content on your site not only drives traffic to your site but also drives your customers toward taking specific action upon arriving on your site.

In today's highly competitive world it is not enough to just simply build a website. It is critical that you build the best website possible. In this guide we will cover several important areas related to the content that should be placed on your site. While this guide is not intended to cover every eventuality, as every business is different, it will give you an idea of the basic areas that should be addressed in your web content to ensure that you are able to attract and entice customers to the products and/or services that you sell.

In the next several pages we will cover some essential rules that should be covered when creating web content in order to provide you with a highly polished and professional business image. In addition, we will also address some of the basic pages that should be included in your site and guidelines that should be followed when creating those pages.

Let's get started!

CHAPTER 1

WHY YOU NEED CONTENT FOR YOUR E-COMMERCE SITE

When running an e-commerce site you might not think that content is that important. After all, in most instances, you are selling either products or services, not information. Even so, when you want your e-commerce site to succeed, one of the critical keys to success is making sure that you have the right content on your site and that your site is developed properly.

Consider for a moment some of the most successful e-commerce websites you will find on the web today. This includes sites such as Amazon and eBay. If you browse through those sites you will find that while they do contain a hefty amount of sales and marketing techniques, they also balance those techniques with quality content as well. The presence of quality content not only ensures that interested customers find their sites and buy products, but that they also return in the future as well.

What would happen if you were in a brick and mortar store and made no attempt to talk to your customers at all as they walked through the door? What would the result be if you ignored their questions and provided them with no information about your products and services at all? Chances are, you would not make very many sales.

The same is also true when you are conducting business online. In order to sell online, you must position yourself and your site so that you can talk to them. It is important to keep in mind that approximately 95% of the prospects who arrive at your site for the first time will not actually make a purchase during their first visit. They may be browsing for information, comparing products, or even comparing companies. This means that in order to make a sale from those visits, it is critical for you to give the customer the information they need and make a good impression so that they will visit again and



make a purchase in the future. This is also particularly important when it comes to developing customer loyalty and prompting return visits from customers that have already made a purchase.

There are many different elements that go into making a successful website, including graphics, pictures and content. The pictures and graphics create the look that you want for your site but it is the content that drives the site. This is the true heart of your site and much of your site's success relies upon the quality of your content.

When you are attempting to sell either a product or a service to a prospect, whether it is online or in a brick and mortar store, you must make a good first impression. The moment that a customer arrives at your site, he or she immediately begins to build an impression about the site and consequently about you and your business. Those first few seconds are critical in determining whether the customer will stay and look around, possibly making a purchase, telling others about your business or whether they will click away.

This is where the graphics and pictures as well as the functionality and navigation of your site come into play. No doubt, those are all important elements. They 'hook' your customer. What happens next?

Once you make a strong enough impression for the customer to decide to linger on your site, this is when it becomes imperative for you to have substance to back up that good first impression. This means quality content. Unfortunately, many businesses tend to make the same mistakes when it comes to the content on their websites. Some of the most common mistakes made on websites today include:

- Grammar errors
- Spelling errors
- Run-on, drawn out sentences





- Run-on paragraphs that are difficult on the eyes
- Lack of vital information
- Lack of important search engine optimization (SEO)

Even one of these mistakes can have a negative impact on your business but when you put them all together, you put yourself in a position of watching your business fly right out the proverbial window, in this case, the online window.

So, what can you do about it?

The real key to snagging the attention of customers and keeping it is to make sure that you are giving your customers precisely what they are looking for. That sounds fairly simple. That's the premise of any business success model. In order to do that in terms of e-commerce you need to identify what it is that your customer is looking for and then deliver what they want in the easiest to understand and quickest way possible.

That is only one part of the equation; however. When it comes to online business, you not only need to make sure that you are satisfying your customer but you also need to make sure that you are satisfying the search engines as well. After all, without the search engines, you would have no customers to satisfy. There is really no point in offering the best products and services possible, if your customers cannot even find you.

Location has always been one of the keys to succeeding in any industry. Your customers must be able to locate you and that is no different when conducting business in cyberspace. The difference is that instead of looking for the most visible piece of real estate with the easiest access points, you must make sure that you have a website that is optimized for the search engines.

Search engine optimization, frequently referred to as SEO, is often viewed as being extremely difficult to master. No doubt about it, it can be quite complicated but that





does not mean that it is an entirely impossible concept to understand and put into practice.

The main thing to keep in mind when it comes to the search engines is that the look and feel of your site will not nab the attention of the search engines. Today's search engines utilize robots crawl your website and review the information that is there for the purpose of ranking your site in the search engine results.

Ultimately, this is how the user will find you, so the importance of ranking high in the search engines becomes clear. The higher your site ranks in the search engines, the higher your chances will be of reaching your targeted customer.

Throughout this book we are going to examine what you need to in terms of having the content your customer is looking for as well as the optimization that the search engines are looking for in order to help your site succeed.



CHAPTER 2

WRITING EFFECTIVE WEB CONTENT

As we have seen, effective web content is one of the building blocks of a successful business. You know that you must engage the user and provide them with what they want in order to convert them into a paying customer. How do you go about doing that?

First, you need to be very clear about the type of industry or business that you are engaging in. This sounds quite elemental, but you would also be surprised at the number of websites that completely overlook this and avoid stating their purpose. If you have found a particular niche, you need to let the customer know about it.

Communication with your customer is critical in the early stages and is one of the best things that you can do to ensure that they stick around. There are several different ways that this can be done. First, you might think about clearly stating your purpose directly on your homepage where the visitor will see it as soon as they arrive.

It is also important to ensure that you provide an About Us page to let the customer know something about you, why you are in business, how you do business and what you hope to provide for the customer. We will go into more in-depth detail about the About Us page in another section, but for now it is important to understand that this is something that should not be overlooked in your website.

You also need to let the customer know exactly why they need your products and services. What kind of benefits and advantages will the customer gain when they purchase your services or products? You must clearly demonstrate to customers how they will be able to improve their lives through the purchase of your products/services. If you expect a prospect to lay down money on what you are selling, you need to be prepared to show them what they will get for their hard earned money.



Along the same line, you need to demonstrate to your customer that your product or service is worth the price. Often, the best way to do this is to provide quotes or testimonials from customers who have actually purchased your product or service. Do not worry if you do not already have testimonials on hand. Simply go to your customers and ask them.

Many customers will be quite willing to provide you with a glowing testimonial once you ask. If you sense hesitation on their part, consider sweetening the request by providing them with an incentive, such as a discount on future purchases. Keep in mind when obtaining testimonials from customers for your website that the best testimonials will state not just how much the customer liked your product or service, but also state the problem the customer experienced and how your business provided the solution to that problem.

You must also think about what action it is that you want your customer to take. Many websites do a great job of leading customers to the right conclusion, but fail to tell them what they need to do to take advantage of all those wonderful benefits. You must be absolutely clear about what you want your customers to do. Whether that means having them call you, buying your product, requesting a quote; whatever, it is you need to tell them and then ask them to do it.

In order to attract and retain more customers to your site your content must be compelling.

WHAT MAKES COMPELLING CONTENT?

In considering what makes compelling content, think for a moment about the sites that you personally visit repeatedly. What is it about those sites that keeps you coming back





time and time again? While everyone is different, more than likely, what keeps you coming back to those sites is content that is timely, relevant and compelling. This is the type of content that you need to shoot for in order make sure that your users not only come back to your site repeatedly but perhaps even tell their friends about your site as well. These are typically the same sites that are also ranked highly in the search engines as well. What do all of these sites have in common? Let's take a look:

- Content that is unique, interesting and well-written
- Links that direct the user to other areas of the site for even more content
- Content that is updated on a regular basis as well as content that will not become quickly outdated.

You also need to consider how much trouble the user is going to need to go to in order to find the information that they want. If the user must go through multiple clicks in order to find what they want then the chances are greater that they will move on to another website. Ultimately, compelling web content must not only be easy to find but it also must be interesting and relevant.

EASY TO READ CONTENT

Content that is easy for the user to read is a must as well. In this regard, it is important to keep in mind that reading online does not necessarily translate to the same meaning as reading offline. When a user surfs the web they more often than not tend to scan rather than read. The web is comprised of millions of pages of information and options. As a result, users must be able to quickly scan pages to determine whether that site has what they are looking for. In order to do that they often quickly scan the page and look for words that stand out to them and are relevant to what interests them.





There are many different ways in which you can make your content scannable. One effective way to do it is to utilize headlines to break up text as well as highlight important points. This makes it much easier for users to immediately see the critical points of a page without the need to read through the entire page. It would be hoped, of course, that they would actually read through all of your content, but scanning headlines is a great way to draw in readers and help them to save time as well. When you have long blocks of text on your page that are unbroken the result will usually be visitors that decide to click away from the screen. Such layouts are difficult to read and unattractive.

Another way that you can draw in readers to the critical points is to utilize bullets to your benefit. Bulleted items are an excellent way to let the visitor know what the advantages are of your products and services.

In addition, you need to make sure that you avoid the temptation to cram as much information as possible into a page. In the end it is really what you say rather than how many words you take to say it in. Keep it short and simple.

BENEFITS, NOT FEATURES

One of the critical mistakes that many people make in creating the content for their e-commerce sites is focusing on the features of their products rather than the benefits. The customer is not nearly as interested in what the product does as what it can do for them. What kind of benefit can it provide to them? What value will they receive from the product or service? Compelling e-commerce website content must clearly address the customer's needs and stay focused on those needs.





In the end, the more that you can associate the content on your site with the needs of your customers as well as their interests then the more efficient and effective your website will be. Remember that the primary focus of your website should be the thoughts and needs of your customer instead of your company or your products and services. This is certainly not to say that you need to ignore your products and services on your website. That would defeat the purpose of your website, which is to make sales. The key lies in how you present your products and services.

The tone that you use is also important in creating compelling content. When choosing the tone that you will use on your website you must consider the way in which you want your website to be positioned and the relationship that you have with your customers. Assuring that you have the appropriate tone in your website will take your content to the next level and also make your website even more effective.

In order to gain the right tone, you need to put yourself in the shoes of your customer and think like they would. You must empathize with them and think about the ways in which your products or services can benefit them and improve their lives.

In addition, you need to maintain a tone that is natural. The most effective content is most often the type that sounds just as though you would if you were sitting down to have a conversation with a friend. Content that is too formal will often strike customers the wrong way and cause them to go to a website that they deem to be more personable.

This should not be confused with unprofessional content. Quite to the contrary. This is a balance that may seem as though it would be difficult to strike, but your ultimate goal should be to create content for your website that is professional in structure, yet personable in tone. One way that you can do this is by injecting some humor and perhaps even some personality into your content. This technique demonstrates to

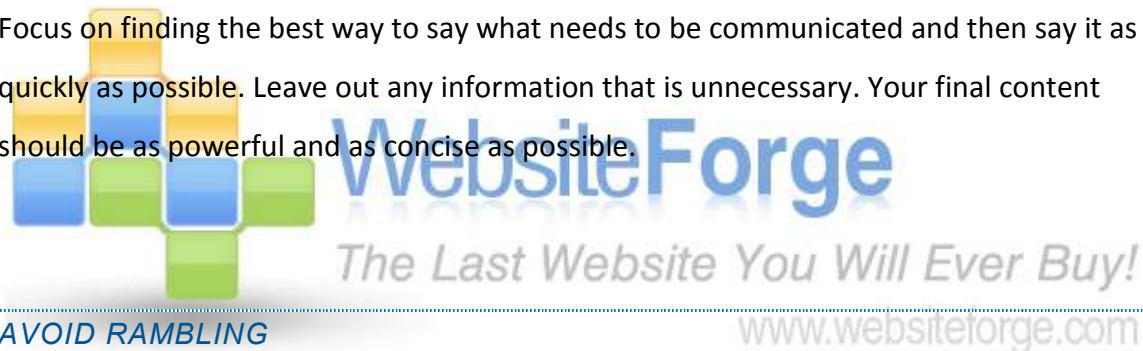




customers clearly that you can relate to them, empathize with their problems and understand their needs. This is the first step to building trust and ultimately, customer loyalty.

SUCCINCTNESS IS IMPORTANT

You may recall that we discussed earlier the importance of keeping the content on your site short and simple. Remember that your customers are looking for vital information in as little time as possible. This means that you should avoid adding any additional padding to your content and should also particularly avoid information that is repetitive. Focus on finding the best way to say what needs to be communicated and then say it as quickly as possible. Leave out any information that is unnecessary. Your final content should be as powerful and as concise as possible.



AVOID RAMBLING

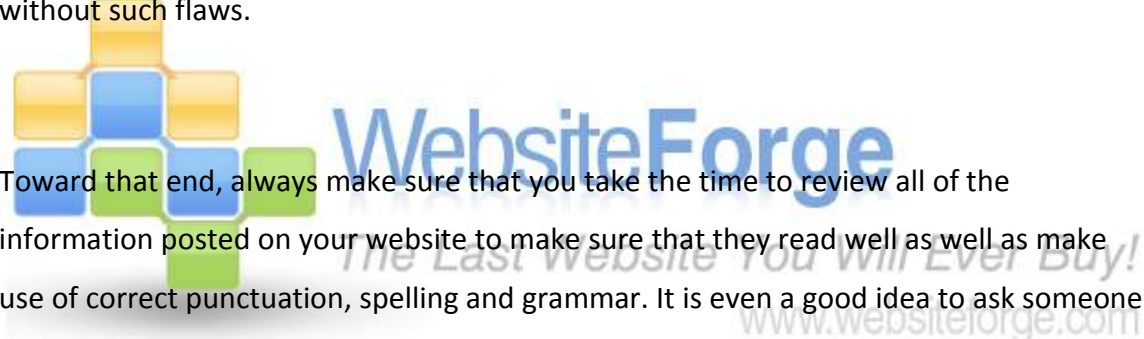
Another key point to keep in mind is the need to avoid going off topic. If you keep your content as concise as possible there will be less temptation to ramble. When creating the content that will go on your site, always make sure that you stay focused on the headlines. This will help to drive your content and keep it on track.

Once the content for your website has been created, make sure that you go back and review it to determine whether you have been able to communicate your point in a precise manner without veering off the point.



THE IMPORTANCE OF GRAMMAR AND PUNCTUATION

Consider for a moment how much a potential customer will trust you as well as your products and services if they scan through your website and find numerous punctuation, grammar and spelling mistakes? You might not notice them but you can be certain that there will be a prospective customer who most certainly will take note of them. When that happens the customer is likely to make one of a couple of assumptions. They may assume that you did not care enough about the website to create quality content or they may assume that you simply did not know how to create better content. In either case, the result is usually going to be the same. When given a choice, a customer will generally choose a company that has taken the time and the care to create a website without such flaws.



Toward that end, always make sure that you take the time to review all of the information posted on your website to make sure that they read well as well as make use of correct punctuation, spelling and grammar. It is even a good idea to ask someone else to read over it just in case you have missed something.

A WORD ABOUT COPYRIGHT

Anything written online is protected by copyright. You cannot copy web content from another company's website. Contrary to what many people believe, you do not have to file for copyright nor do you have to include the copyright symbol on your website to claim copyright. Anything that is created by another person, whether it is written words, pictures, graphics, etc. are all protected by US Copyright Laws. You can surf the





web and look at your competitor's website for ideas, but you cannot copy that content. All content that you write for your site must be unique.



CHAPTER 3

EFFECTIVE SEO AND KEYWORDS

The language that you use in the content on your website is extremely important in ensuring that you are targeting the right customers, those who will be most interested in your products and services. In addition, utilization of the right language also improves your ranking in the search engines.

Keyword optimization is an element that should never be overlooked in creating the content for your website. Keywords are those all important words that search engine robots look for when crawling your page and which determine the websites that will be delivered in search engine results when a user searches for something. In order to make sure that you have targeted the right keywords for your niche or industry, you will need to do some research. The ultimate goal is to consider the way in which prospective customers who would be interested in your products or services think. What words would the customer who would be most interested in buying your product or service use when looking for it online?

Using keywords that are target specific in your web content can greatly improve your standings in the search engine and deliver more highly targeted traffic to your website. With that said; however, it is important to keep in mind that there are rules regarding the use of keywords in relation to search engine optimization. The natural instinct of most businesses is try and stuff as many targeted keywords as possible into their content in order to deliver the best results. This can actually cause you more harm than good.

Remember that while your goal is to sell your products or services, no customer appreciates a sales tactic that is over the top and that is exactly what happens when you

engage in keyword stuffing. In addition, you run into the very real risk of having your website banned by the search engines. This is naturally a mistake that you would want to avoid in order to ensure that your site performs well in the search engines.

Correct use of keywords is a delicate balance. On one hand you want to make sure that you have used them often enough that they will be picked up by the search engine spiders and robots, but on the other hand you want to make sure that you do not overuse them.

One of the first rules that must be followed when using keywords in web content is relevancy. The keywords must be relevant to the site content. If your website sells shoes then it makes no sense to use keywords that are unrelated, such as 'new release DVDs.'

While you might have users arrive on your site, once they realize that your site is completely irrelevant to new release DVDs they will immediately leave. In addition, you may be penalized by the search engines for this type of baiting tactic.

In addition, you must make sure that the use of keywords is fairly balanced. A general rule of thumb is to use your keyword or keyword phrase that you wish to target about every 100 words or so. This should provide a good natural flow without running into the risk of stuffing your site with keywords.

It is also important to make sure that you make use of keyword variations. Remember that while one user may search for one particular search term, another user might search for a variation of that term. Ensuring that you use all possible variations of relevant keywords will cover all of the bases and guarantee that regardless of how your prospective customer looks for the products or services that you sell, they will find you.

In the previous section we discussed the importance of using headlines to break up large chunks of content and also to make the content more scannable for users. In order to make your content more attractive to users as well as to search engines, keywords



should also be used in your headlines. Remember that headlines are one of the primary places that search engine robots as well as actual users will look to determine the relevancy of content. Using keywords in your headlines will greatly improve the chances of your website being found as well as having targeted customers remain once they have arrived on your site.

Along the same lines, it is also important to try to make sure that keywords appear toward the beginning of paragraphs, toward the middle and toward the end. Remember that when users are scanning content to determine whether a site will provide them with the information they seek, these are the three primary locations they are going to scan in a paragraph.



TOP SEO WEB CONTENT MISTAKES

Now that we have taken a look at what you need to do in order to have the best quality web content possible, let's take a look at some of the most common mistakes that most people make in the content on their websites.

NO TARGETED KEYWORDS OR PHRASES

This is perhaps one of the biggest mistakes that many online businesses make. The use, or lack of, targeted keywords as well as phrases can literally make or break your website. The correlation is simple. When a user goes to their computer and types a keyword or keyword phrase into their favorite search engine, if the search engine cannot find those keywords on your website then the user will most likely not be able to find you because your site will not be in the search engine results.



CONTENT THAT IS POORLY WRITTEN

While the use of keywords is clearly important, it does not take the place of ensuring that your content is well written. The lack of quality content can also doom your website as well. Content which is just poorly written, is irrelevant or is never updated is a turn-off to both search engines as well as users. One of the main keys to getting high search engine rankings is to have quality, well-written content with targeted keywords.

THE USE OF BLACK HAT SEO TACTICS

Black hat search engine optimization techniques are those techniques which are generally looked upon with disregard by professional search engine optimization experts as well as the spiders and robots that drive search engines. These types of techniques can vary but often include keyword stuffing, invisible text and doorway pages. One of the most important things to understand about the use of these techniques is that while they may temporarily improve your search engine rankings, once the search engine spiders become aware of them in your site, it will most likely be banned. This is a risk and a gamble that is simply not worth taking. Ultimately, it may provide a quick solution but over time it will do you no favors and will most likely make the situation even worse.

CHAPTER 4

SAMPLE WEB CONTENT PAGES

In an earlier section, we addressed the importance of having several critical pieces of information on your website. While everyone's website is different, if you browse through several websites you will find that most of them, and all of the successful websites have a few pages in common.

These pages include:

- Home page
- About Us page
- Privacy Policy
- Shipping and handling page
- FAQ page
- Return and Refund policy
- Terms and Conditions page
- Contact Us page



- Product Descriptions

These pages are presented for important reasons. They let the user know more about you, helps them to become more familiar with your business and the products/services that you offer and helps to build upon the idea that they can trust you to do business with you.

In the next several pages we are going to address several of these pages, look at specific reasons why you need to make sure that those pages are included in your web site content and look at example pages.

PRIVACY POLICY

Regardless of what industry you happen to be involved in, what kind of products or services you sell, you need to have a privacy policy on your website. This is because, if you are in business, then you will be collecting information about your customers and in order to meet both state as well as federal regulations, you must provide a privacy policy to your users.

At its most basic, a privacy policy lets your users know that you will respect their privacy. It also lets users know the type of information that you will gather from the website, how that information will be used and what you will do to keep that information secure.

SAMPLE PRIVACY POLICY

The purpose of this privacy policy is state the way in which [business name] uses as well as protects information which you provide [business name] when using this website.





[business name] may elect to change this privacy policy from time to time through updating this page. It is important that you check back on this page from time to time in order to ensure your understanding of any changes made to the privacy policy. The current privacy policy is effective from [date].

What Information We Collect

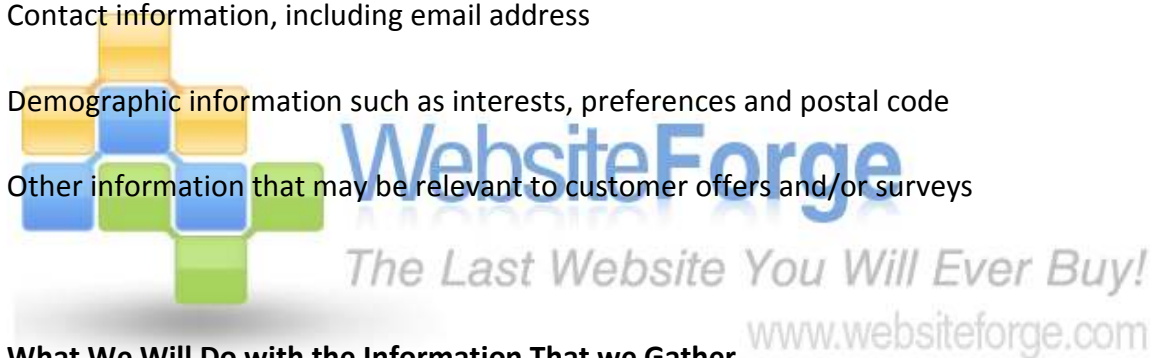
[business name] may collect the following information:

Name and job title, if relevant

Contact information, including email address

Demographic information such as interests, preferences and postal code

Other information that may be relevant to customer offers and/or surveys



What We Will Do with the Information That we Gather

[business name] requires this information in order to better understand your needs as well as to provide you with the best service possible as well as for the following reasons:

Internal record keeping

Information may be used for the improvement of services or products

Information may be used to send promotion emails regarding special offers, new products or other information which we believe you may find interesting by utilizing the email address which you provide



Periodically we may also use the information provided to contact you for the purposes of market research. We may contact you by phone, mail, fax or email. We may also choose to use information in order to customize this website to better suit your interests.

Security

[business name] is committed to ensuring that the information you provide is secure. In order to prevent the unauthorized access or disclosure of information we utilize appropriate physical, managerial as well as electronic procedures for the purpose of safeguarding and securing all information collected online.



How we use Cookies

A cookie is a small file which requires permission in order to be placed upon your computer's hard drive. Once you have agreed for the cookie to be added, the file will be added and the cookie will then analyze web traffic or notify you when you have visited a particular site. Through the use of cookies, web applications can then respond to you on an individual basis. The web application may customize its operations according to your likes or needs by gathering and recalling information regarding your preferences.

[business name] uses cookies in order to identify the pages that are being used. This assists us in analyzing data regarding web page traffic and to ultimately improve our web site so that we may customize it to the needs of customers. We only use information from cookies for statistical purposes. The data is then removed from the system.



Cookies give us the ability to provide you with the best website experience possible by making it possible for use to determine which pages you have found to be useful and which pages were not useful. We do not gain access to your computer through the use of cookies not to any information about you with the exception of the information that you choose to share with our company.

It is your option to either accept or decline the use of cookies. You should know that most web browsers today do accept cookies on an automatic basic; however, you may modify your browser settings to automatically decline cookies if you prefer to do so. This may prevent you from being able to take complete advantage of the website.

Links to other websites

Our website may contain links to websites that we feel may be of interest to our users. Once you utilize the links on our site and have left our site you should know that we cease to have control over the websites you visit. As a result, we are in no way responsible for the protection or the privacy of any information which you provide while visiting such web sites. Such websites are not governed by this privacy statement. We recommend that you exercise caution regarding the provision of information to other websites and always review the applicable privacy statement to any websites in question.

Controlling the use of your personal information

You may elect to restrict the collection as well as the use of your personal information in one of the following manners:

When asked to complete a form on the website, please look for a box which will indicate that you do not wish for the information to be used for direct marketing purposes.





You may elect to change your mind if you have previously agreed to the use of your personal information for direct marketing purposes by writing or emailing us [email address].

Please note that we will not sell, lease or distribute your personal information to third parties without your permission or unless we are required by law to do so. We may elect to use your personal information to send you promotional information regarding third parties which we believe you may find helpful or interesting if you agree to this.

At any time you may choose to request details regarding all personal information which we hold regarding you under the Data Protection Act of 1998. Please be aware that a small fee will be applicable. If you would like to obtain a copy of the information that is held on you, please write to us at [address].

If you have concerns that any information which we hold on you is incomplete or incorrect, please email us or write us as soon as possible. We will take action and promptly update or correct any information as needed.

PRIVACY POLICY TIPS

When posting a privacy policy on your website you should be aware that it should contain the following information:

- The date of the policy
- What information is collected
- How information is stored
- To whom information may be disclosed under what circumstances
- How the consumer may have information deleted or revised



You should be aware that all uses for data should be honestly disclosed to users. According to the Federal Trade Commission, the FTC, links to privacy policies should be placed strategically throughout your website so that they are easy for consumers to locate.

In the event that your website has users who are younger than age 18, it is a good idea to consult an attorney regarding privacy policy regulations regarding minor users.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

When you have a commercial website you will also need a terms and conditions page. The purpose of this page is to provide information regarding the content on your website and the ways in which visitors to your site are allowed and not allowed to use that content.

SAMPLE TERMS AND CONDITIONS

[business name] would like to welcome you to our website. By continuing to browse as well as use this website you agree to comply with and be bound by the following terms and conditions of use of this website. These terms and conditions, along with our privacy policy, govern [business name]'s relationship with you regarding this website.

The term [business name] or "we" or "us" refers to the owner of this website whose registered address is [address]. The term "you" refers to the viewer or the user of this website.

The use of this website shall be subject to the following terms of use:





The content on the pages of this website is intended for your general information and use only. The content of this website is subject to change without further notice.

We do not nor shall any third parties provide any guarantee or warranty regarding the timeliness, accuracy, completeness, suitability of performance of the materials and information that is offered or found on this website regarding any particular purpose. You acknowledge that such materials and information may contain errors or inaccuracies and we expressly exclude liability for any said errors or inaccuracies to the fullest extent permitted by law.

Your use of any materials or information on this website is entirely at your own risk, for which [business name] shall not be liable. It shall be your own responsibility to ensure that any services, information or products available through this website meet your specific requirements.

This website contains material and/or content which is licensed to or owned by us. This material includes, but is not limited to, the layout, design, look, graphics and appearance. Reproduction of said material is prohibited other than regarding copyright notice, which comprises part of these terms and conditions.

All trade marks reproduced within this website which are not the property of or licensed to us are acknowledged.

Unauthorized use of this website may result in a claim for damages and/or be a criminal offense.

Periodically this website may include links to other websites. These links are provided only for your convenience in order to offer additional information. These links do not signify that [business name] endorses these website(s). We shall have no responsibility regarding the content of the linked website(s).



You are not allowed to create a link to this website from another website or document without prior written consent from [business name].

Your use of this website as well as any dispute that may arise out of said use of this website is subject to the laws of the United States of America.

ABOUT US PAGE

The About Us page is another extremely important page that should be included within your website. The purpose of the About Us page is to provide information regarding your business and engender trust in your customers. Generally, the About Us page will provide a brief background regarding you and/or your company.

This is also a good place to include a mission statement as well, which will help to add even more credibility to your site and your business. Other items that you may wish to feature on this page include how long you have been in business, why you have chosen this industry or line of business, what you have accomplished, etc. The About Us page is a golden opportunity to let your customers know that your business is not just a faceless entity in cyberspace, but is run by real people who care about their needs and concerns.

While the About Us page is often an afterthought that many businesses post on their site, it certainly should not be. In fact, this page is one of the most visited and clicked on pages on an e-commerce website. In terms of clicks, it ranks second only to the home page.

By failing to give proper consideration to this page, you miss out on an excellent opportunity to let your customer know more about you, build customer loyalty and ultimately sell your products and services.





Below are some tips that will help to guide you in developing your About Us page. In addition, there will also be a sample About Us page as well.

ABOUT US TIPS

Keep your About Us page brief and concise. Ideally, this page should be brief but should provide sufficient detail to add to your credibility and give the reader an idea of what your company is all about. Remember the important W's that apply to journalism: Who, what, where and why. Keep those in mind when writing this page:

- **Who:** Provide sufficient information regarding the owner or even the team of principles that drive the business
- **What:** Provide a summary of your business including services and products that you offer
- **Where:** Let the customer know where you are located and either provide contact information or provide a link to a separate Contact Us page
- **Why:** Remember that your customer's needs are paramount. Address those needs here by letting the customer know why they should choose your company, services or products.

The About Us page is the perfect opportunity to let your visitors get a look at the people behind the business so that they will feel comfortable doing business with you.

Remember that business is built on relationships and that does not change just because you are doing business online rather than in a brick and mortar store.

The most important information that you can include on your About Us page is what is in it for the person who visits your site. You must take care to stress why the visitor should buy your product, hire your company, etc.



Try to inject some personality into your page. This page should be memorable and should in some way help your business to stand out above the competition. There are many different ways that you can do this. Be humorous. Tell a story. Above all, let the visitor know that you care about them.

Also, update your About Us page occasionally and as needed. This is something that many companies forget to do in the day to day rush of simply trying to operate their business. An outdated About Us page can be just as bad, if not worse, than having no page at all. Keep it fresh and current.

SAMPLE ABOUT US PAGE



You can reach us at [contact information].

Why Choose Us?

1. [why someone should choose your business]
2. [what you offer]
3. [your strengths]
4. [what sets your company apart from the rest]





Our Guarantee

We promise to [enter your guarantee].

HOME PAGE

Your home page will vary according to what it is that you are trying to accomplish through your website. Remember that the home page is usually the first page that visitors will see when they arrive at your site so it should be strong enough to make an impression and contain the right balance of information to convince your visitor to stay around for awhile and look at what you have to offer.

Generally your home page will contain links to other pages of your site because your site will not be comprised of just one page. This allows visitors to quickly find the information that they need, particularly if your website is extensive and offers a lot of information, including product lists.

In most cases, the information that is included in your home page will be organized in a hierarchical fashion based upon importance and the possible usefulness of the information that you have presented on your website.

The structure below represents a good way to organize the information on your home page.

Contact Information

- Company name
- Photograph or graphic



- Office location and business telephone
- Mailing address of business
- e-mail address with link

Services Provided

This is the area where you capture the customer's attention and let them know how you can meet their needs through the services and/or products that you provide. Remember that you will have a more extensive listing of your products/services in another area of your website, so be sure to keep information regarding your services/products brief in this section. From this information, you can then link to more extensive pages within your website.



You can also use your homepage to inform customers about events and activities that will be connected to your business.

Target Audience

You may also wish to specifically provide information regarding the target audience for your business.

News Items



If you have a news item, the home page is a great place to include it. Possible news items might include links to press release, information regarding publications in which you have appeared or recent accomplishments.

PRODUCT DESCRIPTIONS PAGE

When you have an e-commerce page, your product descriptions serve to persuade prospects to take the next step and purchase your services or products. In order to accomplish that goal, you must inform the prospective customer about your products/services and then entice them to make the purchase by telling them how the products/services will improve their lives, solve their problems, etc.

The biggest mistake that most businesses make when it comes to product descriptions is using a rather generic text description which is usually provided by the manufacturer. The problem with this is that manufacturers have a tendency to include numerous features in the descriptions. These descriptions are often dull and boring and steer far away from the customer's needs, which is where you need to make sure that the focus remains. Plus, if you and a hundred other websites use the manufacturer's description, there's a lot of duplicate content out there, which can work against your SEO.

The key to writing effective product descriptions lies in moving away from dull and boring and creating something unique. The last thing that you want is for a prospective customer to read a product description and come away from it thinking that it is just more of what they have already heard. You do need to highlight the benefits of the product/service, but at the same time you need to do it in a way that focuses upon how those benefits will meet the needs of the customer. This is ultimately what will compel the prospect to become a paying customer.





The people in the best position to most effectively describe the benefits of your products/services are those who have already used them. This is where testimonials from prior and existing customers can become indispensable. Customer reviews and testimonials should always be taken very seriously and incorporated into your website. This information provides a third-party, un-biased opinion of your company's products/services and provides even more reason for a prospective customer to believe in your products/services.

Ultimately, you need to keep in mind that you are not trying to sell the product/service, but rather the benefits of the product/service. For example, suppose that you were selling a parental filter for online use. More than likely the manufacturer would list one of the more important product features as password protection. A customer who had used the product; however, would most likely state that the reason they like the product is the peace of mind they gain from knowing that their children are protected online.

The peace of mind is the real feature of the product that you should market on your product pages and will prove to be far more of an incentive to the prospective customer to actually purchase the product than the password protection feature. It should also be understood that when you highlight the benefits of a product rather than the features you are not only providing motivation for the customer to purchase the product but you are also providing more value as well. When you create a combination of benefit plus value, you create something that the customer will not be able to resist.

If you find that you are having difficulty in differentiating between the benefits and the features of a product, try using a fairly simple test. Ask yourself 'so what?' when looking at the features of the product. In the end, customers will only buy products or services which they need and which they feel will be useful to them. Most similar products also have the same benefits. You must find what sets your product or service apart from the



competition and makes it unique. Find what is different about your product or service, what it is that other products or services simply will not be able to provide.

In the real estate profession it is often said that you are not selling a home but instead you are selling a lifestyle. You must market the home so that the prospective buyer can imagine himself or herself living in the home and enjoying a particular lifestyle. The same can be said for any product or service which you might have for sale.

Another method that can be used to entice the customer is to appeal to their sight, touch, hearing, taste and smell. Use words that are related to the five senses and will conjure up pleasurable senses and emotions when describing the benefits of the product.

Keep in mind that not all of the features associated with a product will automatically translate into strong benefits. The goal is to identify the benefits that will most appeal to the customer's needs who will arrive on your site to consider your product for purchase.

It should also be understood in addition to making sure that your product descriptions are user friendly, they must also be search engine friendly as well. In another section we discussed the importance of search engine optimization, but remember that it does not stop when it comes to your product descriptions. When you integrate highly targeted keywords into your product descriptions you will be able to nab not only the interest of prospective customers but also search engines as well, which will in turn help to generate more highly targeted traffic for your website.

This is one reason why it is important to make sure that you do not have duplicate information on your site from the manufacturer's site. All of the information on your site, even your product descriptions, should be completely unique.



Finally, you need to make sure that your product descriptions are concise and simple. There can be a temptation to become overly wordy when describing the benefits of a product. Such product descriptions can quickly become overwhelming to the average user. When content of any type becomes overwhelming you increase the chance that the user will simply skip right over it and move on to something else. One way to do this is to make sure that you eliminate or at least limit technical wording and details within your product descriptions when possible.

The final goal is to create a product description that will allow the customer to quickly determine the benefits that the product will provide to them. Many businesses have found that an easy way to do this is to provide a bulleted list of benefits that can be enjoyed from the purchase of a particular product or service. This increases the scanability of the content and makes it possible for the customer to quickly scan the information rather than spending a lengthy amount of time reading it.

Lastly, as with all other content you need to make sure that you update your product descriptions on a regular basis. Keep in mind that even if much of the information is the same, it can help you to change the angle or the tone of the way in which the information is provided.

CONTACT US PAGE

Even if you have your contact information listed on your home page, and you certainly should, you should also have a Contact Us page. Customers will inherently trust you more when they see that they can easily contact you. If you do not list information regarding how the customer can contact you the customer may wonder what it is that you are trying to hide.





SAMPLE CONTACT US PAGE

[business name] takes your business seriously and welcomes your comments, questions and concerns. You may contact us at the address, telephone and email below:

[business name]

[street address]

[city, state and zip]

[telephone number]

[fax number]

[email address]



SHIPPING AND HANDLING PAGE

If you do not already have a shipping and handling page and you have noticed that customers place items in their shopping cart but then never complete the purchase, this could be the reason why. Customers generally want to know how much they will need to pay for shipping and handling before they commit to a purchase. If you do not provide them with this information upfront they will likely go somewhere else. An easy way to resolve this problem is to provide a shipping and handling page.

On the shipping and handling page, you need to make sure that you provide information regarding the shipping options that are available when a customer makes a purchase



from your business. Also, you need to make sure that you state whether you do or do not ship to P.O. boxes as well as AFPO boxes and military addresses. If you offer multiple shipping options, be sure to mention that as well.

You also need to provide information regarding how sales tax will be provided. The best way to do this is to add a line stating that residents of the state in which your business is located will be charged the applicable state sales tax amount and then list that amount.

SAMPLE SHIPPING AND HANDLING PAGE

Below you will find information on shipping and handling policies for [business name].

When will my order ship?

Your order will ship within [number of days] of receipt of payment.

What shipping methods do you offer?

You may choose from one of the following shipping methods for orders that are shipped within the continental United States:

- USPS First-Class Mail
- USPS Priority Mail
- USPS Express Mail PO to Addressee
- UPS Ground
- UPS 3 Day Select
- UPS 2nd Day Air
- UPS Next Day Air Saver
- UPS Next Day Air





The following methods are available for shipping to Alaska, Hawaii and outside the United States:

- USPS Express Mail International
- UPS Standard to Canada
- UPS Worldwide Expedited
- UPS Worldwide Express

Do you ship to FPO/APO addresses?

Most of our items can be shipped to FPO/APO military addresses. Orders that must be sent to military addresses will be sent through the Postal Service due to the fact that UPS does not deliver to PO boxes. In some cases, bulky and oversized items are not able to be shipped to military addresses. We will notify you by email if any items which you order cannot be shipped to your address.

What are your charges for shipping?

Please see our [shipping calculator or shipping chart] to determine the shipping costs associated with items.

RETURN AND REFUND POLICIES

Most customers also want to know what your policies are regarding refunds and returns. Providing this information upfront can help to generate more customer trust and confidence in your business.

Areas that you need to make sure that you cover on this page include the following:



- The amount of time within which the customer must notify you in order to receive a refund/return. For example, seven days, thirty days, etc.
- Whether refunds are available on digital products if your products include digital products.
- Whether shipping costs will be included in the refund.
- The circumstances under which you will honor a refund/return

SAMPLE RETURN AND REFUND POLICY PAGE

At [business name] we stand behind the products and services we sell. All items purchased at [business name] carry a [number] day no questions asked money back guarantee. If you discover there is a product that does not work for you, please contact us and we will help you with the return of the product. We do encourage all of our customers to inspect products as soon as their order is received to ensure they have ample opportunity to benefit from our [number] day money back guarantee. We will not be able to issue any refund after our [number] day guarantee has expired.

Upon receipt of your return, please be aware that it will take us [number] business days in order to process your return. Your return will be processed against the original form of payment. We will notify you via e-mail at the time that your return has been processed.

[business name] does [not] pay for the shipping fee that is associated with the return.

[name of product] cannot be returned for store credit or a refund.

BASIC FAQ PAGE





When conducting business online you will frequently find that many customers tend to have the same questions. One way that you can cut down on answering the same questions over and over as well as provide an easy way for customers to get answers to their questions is to provide a basic frequently asked questions or FAQ page.

In addition to answering the most frequently asked questions on your FAQ page, it is also important to make sure that you provide an easy way for customers to ask questions which may not be covered on your FAQ page. One way to do this would be to provide a link to your Contact Us page or you could just include an email link. You might also include a form which would allow the customer to send you an email directly from that page detailing their question.



This site is owned by [name]. For more information about [name] please see the About Us page.

Who maintains the site?

This site is maintained by [name] with assistance from [name]. For more information about the team members behind [business name] please see the About Us page.

How can I contact [business name]?

Our contact information can be found on our Contact Us page.

What is the privacy policy for this site?





Our privacy policy is outline in detail on our Privacy Policy page.

May I link to this site?

We appreciate links and would be happy to consider a link. Please contact us with the details. If a link is approved, we do ask that you link only to our home page. Please do not link directly to other pages.

What is your refund policy?

Please see our refund and return policy page.



CONCLUSION

The quality of your web content is a direct reflection upon your business and ultimately will help to determine whether you are found by customers and the type of action that they will take once they arrive at your site. Taking the time to develop quality web content that focuses upon professionalism as well as the customer's needs and search engine optimization guidelines will help you to gain the highest degree of success possible when conducting business online.

The Internet has truly revolutionized the way in which businesses are able to engage in commerce today, reaching global markets and offering products and services in a completely new and unique manner. Understanding and implementing the guidelines presented in this guide will allow you to take advantage of the many benefits that are offered through e-commerce today.

