

Creating Content for Your Website

Overview

Creating content for your website is very different than creating content for print. What may be applicable for a magazine article or brochure may not always translate well on screen.

- **Surfers** want to find information quickly.
- **Search engines** need to identify key topics on your page.

This means using succinct, effective writing techniques and including a high frequency of key words in your text. Your website should provide users useful information quickly and efficiently: in cyber-space, attention spans are very short. Paragraphs should contain no more than 150 words and total text per page should not exceed 500 words.

Goals

The goal of a website is to serve your users, not your business. It is not uncommon for a small business owner to want his or her face on the company site or prominently show off something of note (a store facade, perhaps). The majority of surfers have no interest in such things. Such features lack focus, direction, and goals - they have no place on a well-planned site.

Customers and information hunters have one goal in mind when they visit a website: to fulfill their own needs. Whether this is to browse through products or look for event dates, if they cannot accomplish their goals quickly they will leave your site and try somewhere else. To serve your business' needs, you must first serve your visitors' needs. Developing user-centric content is the single most important factor in a successful web site.

Use the attached **Content Creation Worksheet** to help form the goals and direction of you content.

Writing Techniques

Present your most important concepts first. Doing so allows readers to find information immediately. This can be described with a pyramid metaphor: start with a well defined point, and become more broad as you go down. Viewers want to quickly scan a page and understand it with minimal effort. If they cannot accomplish this they can and will go to a competing site for information.

- Sentences should begin with the subject, rather than transition or filler words. This allows a scanner to identify if the sentence is important or not
- Bulleted lists efficiently organize information
- Organize content into well-defined sections, sub-sections, and paragraphs
- Ask "How does this benefit the reader?" when writing each paragraph
- "Marketing fluff" and buzz words are not effective on the Internet

Key words play a large role in your site's popularity. "Key words" are words or phrases that define and summarize your site and business. These are the words that users will type into search engines when trying to find the information or services your website provides. If you deal in apparel, your key words might be "Ralph Lauren," "Tommy Hilfiger," or "Eddie Bauer." A bad choice for key words would be "Shirts," "Jackets," or other words that are too broad in scope.

Before writing content, identify your key words and use them often. Instead of creating a section called "Jackets" and listing the different brands of jackets you carry, create a section called "Eddie Bauer" with subsections titled "Eddie Bauer Jackets," "Eddie Bauer Shirts," and so forth. Subtle repetition of key words will make your site more popular in search engines and create a stronger association between your company and your products/services.

Content Creation Worksheet

This sheet presents questions that will be helpful to you in the content-creation phase of creating your website. Fill it out and reference it often as you develop content for each page.

Who is my target audience?

Why will they come to my site?

What information do they seek?

What key words will users search for to find my site?

Sections and Subsections

<i>Section:</i> _____ <i>Subsections:</i> _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	<i>Section:</i> _____ <i>Subsections:</i> _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	<i>Section:</i> _____ <i>Subsections:</i> _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	<i>Section:</i> _____ <i>Subsections:</i> _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
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