



BUY BUTTON
OR
BACK BUTTON

HOW **WEBSITE WRITING** CAN
ENGAGE—OR *DETER*—CUSTOMERS



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INTRO

Q: *What turns a website design into an active business website?*

A: Copy that's optimized to convert.


A professional, contemporary-looking site is important, of course.

But have you ever responded or bought online *because* of the design?

When you've engaged with brands, it was likely because the *words* brought you to the conclusion that this was a smart choice for *you*. It *connected*.

Too often, though, the copy on Home pages and product pages sounds like everyone else, with no unique message to define the brand. Plus yesterday's tired marketing approaches just don't resonate with today's online buyers.

Come explore 13 often-surprising insights on how thoughtful message strategies can convert web searchers into web customers. And learn why writing that 'sounds fine' to business owners can make *buyers* click bye-bye.



Smart web copy isn't just about how awesome your company is.

It's about how awesome the *customer* will be, if they choose you.



When you land on a company website, you want to read a lot of self-centered boasting, right? Well, no. You want to see if *they* truly understand what *you're* trying to achieve.

Guess what. The most compelling web messages don't start with the company. They start with the customer. They *connect*, logically and emotionally, to overcome obstacles and empower buyers. Today's best sites don't just focus on selling. They focus on *helping*.



We can't *make* anyone buy. But showing we understand and share peoples' sensibilities and values identify us as a good 'cultural fit'—and a comfortable company to do business with.

What do buyers *really* think—and feel—about the thing they're trying to achieve? A touch of empathy can balance out that bullet point list of features. Genuine understanding creates trust, and trust is a prerequisite for them to take the next step.



Persuasive writing doesn't just push what we *want* buyers to think. **It** authentically connects with what's *already* important to them.



Quality. Value. Experience. Such overused words now come across as *blah-blah-blah*. **Good** marketing shouldn't sound like, well, marketing.



If companies want to stand out from everyone else, why do they insist on *sounding* like everyone else? Find a more creative way of showing what your benefits mean in the real world. And keep reinforcing them on your website so visitors can't possibly forget what makes you unique.

Buyers respond to specifics, not salesy generalities. So tell 'em, specifically, what you mean by quality. Don't just claim value; build a case for it. And everybody has experience; how will you use yours to help *them* achieve amazing things?

Copy written by company insiders naturally has an insiders' perspective.

Unfortunately, that's a point-of-view that *outsiders* are unlikely to relate to.

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The trick is to push past how *we* see 'our customers', and understand how they see *themselves*. What are the competing influences and considerations in their universe? If you want to be their solution, start *there*.

Try this: rewrite a page on your website, sprinkling around the words *you* and *your*, instead of just using *we* and *our*. This will reorient your message and put buyers where they want to be—in the middle of the picture.

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Treat your Home page as a brief intro for first-time visitors and early-stage buyers.

Detailed information pages are for people closer to making a final decision.



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Like it or not, you have two different audiences, and they have to be handled a little differently. Folks who have just identified a need start out with a broad search for simple answers. They tend to be more emotionally driven, thinking ahead from the pesky problem to the happy outcome.

As they progress in their search for a solution, buyers are looking for deeper info, so they can carefully compare the most workable options. Things are more logic-driven at this point, with an emphasis on the *process* they need to get there.

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Sorry to have to say this, but anyone who simply sits down to write copy is already doing it wrong. **First**, make a prioritized, categorized list of customer-focused benefit points. Okay, good job. That's your foundation.

Then use that list creatively, to get me to think about *my* issue in terms of *your* solutions. Sure, I need to know what your company does. But a dry 'what we do' statement, by itself, doesn't pass the 'so what' test.

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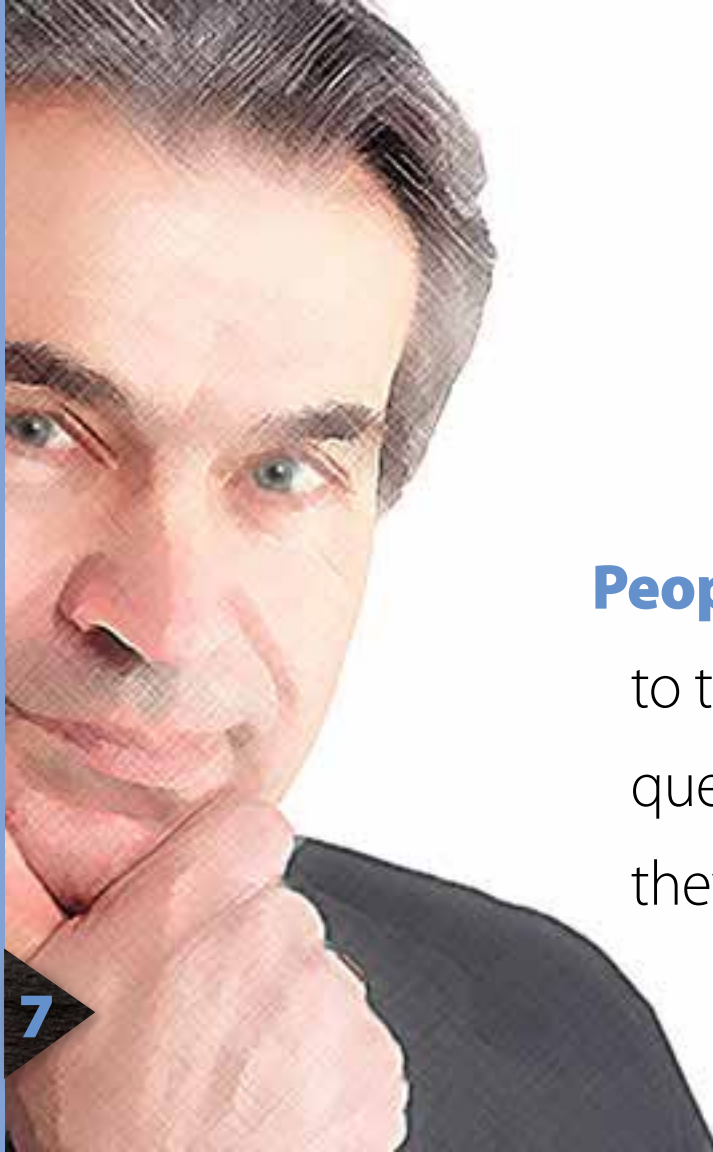
First, carefully consider what buyers need to hear. **Then**, find a fresh, compelling way to say it. Too many sites leave out at least one of those steps.





The website for a chain of car repair shops reads, “Your vehicle needs a complete maintenance check.” Visitors aren’t convinced. Instead, the company could ask, “Do you know the 27 Checkpoints that keep your family car safe?”

Since the inevitable answer is, “Um, no,” the car owner sees this is something they can’t handle on their own. You’ve planted the right seeds; let your readers connect the dots. They’re more likely to act on their own conclusions than on what some company is telling them to do.



People don’t like to be told what to think. **But** asking a strategic question can help them realize they can’t live without you.



Probe deeper to go beyond a superficial approach. **Dig**, dig, dig to unearth the one nugget that makes folks go, “hey, this company *gets* me.”



Every business has something special to offer, though that sweet spot might not be obvious on first glance. But it’s important, because even cheap people will spend more on an advantage that resonates in just the right way. Happens all the time.

Surprisingly often, companies do have an edge, from the customers’ perspective, but employees are too close to it to see the strategic big picture. Good writers can help with the digging, and can help polish the gems. Because if you don’t stand for *something*, you stand for...nothing.

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I do it. You do it. Everyone does it. When visitors land on a web page, they first do an overall visual scan, to see what captures their attention. They'll tend to read headlines, but not text. So build a 'scannable' design around prominent core messages.

For example, 'Why We're Different' is a pointless headline. Use that space to convey what that difference will mean in *their* lives. If it's intriguing enough, scanners will turn in to readers—and buyers. Saying a lot in a few words is the copywriter's challenge.

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Boy, people are lazy. They don't read; they 'scan.' **But** benefit-focused headlines help even *scanners* walk away with your advantage stuck in their heads.





Helpful blog posts are a great way to draw readers. **But** smart insights and tips on your main marketing pages show you're *really* here to help.




Customers expect

you to try to sell, so brief but genuinely useful tidbits up front make you seem refreshingly different. Teaching them something that gets them closer to their goal proves you really do know what you're talking about.

Of course, those ideas can be crafted to draw folks toward your company's particular approach. The thing is, you've already started helping the prospect with their challenges, giving your company the inside track. Cool.

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Are they hung up on the initial price? Explain how they'll save money down the line. Are they afraid it's going to be too hard to assemble? Then remind them that it's 'Ready to go in 3 minutes.'

Not addressing common buyer's questions or real reasons for hesitation can doom even a great product. People gravitate toward options that resolve their original need *and* any hurdles that come up along the way.



If buyers haven't bought yet, figure out where they might be stuck. **Be** the hero and address those obstacles up front, whether they're real or imagined.

Buyers do want to hear your story

—to see if it relates to their *own* story.

So even *your* About page needs to be approached through *their* eyes.



Don't think of your About page as a detailed resume. And don't use it as a self-promoting sales page. Instead, take this opportunity to tell your story.

What were the obstacles or influences you encountered in the course of your professional development? Tell me about the lessons you learned, in arriving at what you know now. And show me how you have embodied the values that you and I both share. Making a sale is easier if you've first made a *connection*.





Pay attention to the next time you're considering a purchase. Does your mind ever jump ahead to you successfully using the product or service? Do you picture others approving of, or even envying, your choices?

Don't tell me what your company 'prides itself on'. Know what will make your *customer* proud, and tie into *that*. Crafting an inspiring scenario makes your solution more 'real'. If they're not inspired, well, they figure that's what the *Back* button is for.

You can paint a picture with words.

Help people imagine a happy outcome, and watch their hand reach closer to the the *Buy* button.



CLOSE

Good design makes an impression.
Good writing makes people *respond*.

Isn't that the point of a business website?

Whether you're working on a website for yourself or someone else, you know that coming up with the right words and messages can bog down the entire process.

Let's make this easy. Rather than just 'filling the site with content,' or letting an underperforming site sit there, let's take your website marketing to the next level.

Plus, Optimizing for Search today depends on insightful, impactful SEO writing. It not only helps get people *to* your site, but gives them a reason to stick around.

Thinking of bringing a **writer** on board? Let me know what you're trying to achieve. I'll offer cost-effective ideas & options.

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