

Don't Welcome Me To Your Website

Here's a "Bottom 10 List" of things that seemed like a good idea at the time ... but may have ended up hurting your site's effectiveness. So what can we do about these web worst practices? Read on.

1. Don't 'welcome' me to your website.

Hey, I appreciate the sentiment. But you might want to use that first headline, that prime piece of home-page real estate, to tell me instead why your product is awesome. Remember, I'm a Googler on a mission and I have a surprisingly short attention span.

2. Don't tell me what your company is committed to.

You're committed to excellence? So are all your competitors. The thing is, I'm the customer here. Learn what I'm committed to, regarding my business or my family. Then explain how your offerings will help me fulfill my commitment better. Okay, now you have my attention.

3. Don't start every sentence with the word "we."

Think your website should be all about your company? Think again. As a web visitor, I'm concerned with my own issues, not what the company employees think about themselves. Start some sentences with the word 'you' to refocus your message on my favorite person — me.

4. Don't assume I know what you're selling.

I'm amused by sites that jump into product features without explicitly telling me what the product is. You could call it insider bias: sellers reckon that I instinctively know what they know. Bad call. Unfortunately, everyone at the company has it, so no one catches the problem.

5. Don't emphasize how many years you've been in business.

It's worth mentioning somewhere, but it's not a reason to buy from you. Plus if you got your start in 2007, then you're suggesting that a competitor who started in 2002 would be a much better choice. Hmm. In an age when brand new startups are changing the world, put your emphasis on what truly separates you from the pack.

6. Don't include a long page of long testimonials.

Okay, I'm guilty of this one too. All those nice words about me, gosh, I'd hate to leave any out. But if I were smarter, I'd pick out the best brief, punchy bits, and add them in a large font size to the sidebars of relevant pages. Where someone might actually read them.

7. Don't just sit down and just start writing your content.

Oh, no, no, no. First, make a list of real-world benefits, from the buyer's point-of-view. Include logical and emotional points of persuasion. Address their general turn-ons and turn-offs. Then start building your content around this prioritized list, crossing off each item as you go along.

8. Don't use video for the sake of using video.

Video is hot, right? Well...it depends. Is a smiling CEO going to stand there and tell me how wonderful their company is? If so, warn me so I can hit Mute. Otherwise, use video to teach me something useful, which happens to connect with your product benefits.

9. Don't depend on that tiny "Contact Us" menu link.

If you don't display an eye-catching call-to-action on your page, trust me on this, potential buyers ain't gonna spend a lot of time figuring out their next step. Make your main response button so clear and prominent that even your drunk web visitors will get it.

And my personal favorite...

10. Don't add up the combined years of experience of your employees.

Seriously? What I really want to know is how they're going to use all that experience to give me an advantage. Otherwise, I'll assume they haven't learned anything in those 87 combined years. Oops, jump online and change it to 88 — someone just had a work anniversary.

We've all seen these web worst practices on the world wide webbernet. And at one time or another, we've all contributed to the madness. But as smart people we learn from our mistakes; though if we can learn from the mistakes of others, we save ourselves the trouble.