

WEB PRO

Search

The best way to get people to visit your site is to write compelling copy that's tailored to your audience, says **Mark Buckingham**

Optimise your copy for maximum readability

Getting stuck into SEO, but overlooking the importance of punchy, compelling copy? Are your visitors actually reading your words? No one likes reading marketing spiel, so what can you do to stand out from the crowd, while bolstering your search engine fortunes?

More and more companies are getting on the SEO bandwagon, but it seems many overlook the vital importance of getting their copy right. This means you must think carefully about your audience, and don't be afraid to ask for help. Sites that read well have usually always been crafted with the helping hand of a seasoned copywriter or editor. This will ensure that your site is primed and presented for optimum readability, and help you strike an important balance between keyword density and clarity, without compromising the tone and balance of your text. Above all, always think about your reader and field-test your copy.

Words matter on sites. It's fair to say that being verbose with your target search terms is a good rule of thumb, but never at the expense of disjointed, prosaic and repetitive copy.

You want to hook your potential customers and inspire them to browse your site. It's easy to create absorbing content if you're passionate about it, but it's just as easy to overcompromise with SEO.

Your text should flow and be persuasive and each page should be as tightly focused as possible with a handful of relevant key phrases inserted naturally. Try reading your copy aloud first.

Even in a saturated market, great copy enables you to rise above the competition using SEO. But without good copy to back it up, you'll be fighting a losing battle to get people to stay on your site. ●

Mark Buckingham is a search marketing specialist, freelance writer and proprietor of netseek.co.uk.

This month's recommended ...

Keyword tools

Name Google's AdWords Keyword Tool
URL tinyurl.com/2w9z74
Info Google's keyword tool should be part of any optimiser's toolkit. Find popular synonyms, variations of key phrases, and sort by search volume or advertising competition.

Name Wordze.com
URL wordze.com
Info Wordze compiles daily, weekly and monthly search terms from net portals, and ISP logs worldwide.

Name Wordtracker
URL wordtracker.com
Info Wordtracker is a powerful free-to-trail keyword tool. As well as the usual stuff, it cleverly allows you to organise different SEO campaigns into their respective keyword projects.

How to... Build brand recognition online



Expert advice

Name Gemma Hornsby
Job title Account Marketing Manager
Company Michon
URL www.michoncreative.co.uk

Many people think branding refers only to your logo and strapline, but this is only part of a successful brand. Your brand should be reflected across everything you do, from the behaviour within your business to how you present yourself visually to the outside world, both on and offline. It's important to establish brand recognition and cohesion through consistency of design, styling, messaging and tone of voice. Your website offers a chance to let your market experience your brand in a unique way.

1 Who are you?

Be clear about who you are and what you do. The user wants information fast, so you need to drive traffic to your site, have a clear brand proposition and provide incentives for repeat visits.

2 Positive experience

You can't simply transfer your print identity to the web – you must create a positive experience for the user or you risk diluting your brand. Think of the different ways you can use the

technology as a tool to develop your business.

3 Signposting

Think about why the user is there. What do they want to find? And perhaps more importantly, what do you want them to find? Think about the structure: it should be quick and easy to navigate and use effective signposting. Guiding people to your website and through it offers an excellent opportunity to cross-sell products/services. This

is relevant to search engine results too.

4 Keywords v key phrases

Keyword research is essential to knowing what your target market is searching for. Think about the keywords you use, how do they reflect your brand? Think about using defined key phrases instead of generic search terms.

5 Brand management

Don't expect your web marketing activities to take care of themselves.

Websites need to be continually reviewed: it's worth getting a good analytics package so you can monitor how effective you're being. Google Analytics provides a good starting point for this.

Contact us ...

Do you have a suggestion or question about search rankings? Use the subject line "Domain" and email us at netmag@futurenet.com

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