Writing for the Web, Your Web Site, and Social Networking

What is Web content? In general, it's anything you put on your Web site. However, the term refers to the text, the writing on your Web site. Writing high quality Web content starts with knowing who your reader is. Then you ask the question that your reader will ask: What's In It For Me? Answering that question successfully spells the difference between successful content and disaster, because your content will either, "Get read, or get lost." The deciding factor is how well you answer WIIFM. Always write for the target reader in simple, easy to understand language and you'll be successful.

Before you begin your Web site, your literature, or your social networking campaign, closely consider your goals and who your target audience it. Likely you will be writing for the general public, certainly the book buying public. Inaccurate targeting will result in spectacular failure. Is your goal to sell books, to increase revenue, to increase Web visits? Be careful what you choose.

Choosing the proper goal is critical to your success. If you want more revenue, make that your goal not more Web visits. One does not imply the other. Then design your Web site, brochures, lectures, business card, and social networking campaign to reach that goal. Now, implement the program and be happy. You are well on your way to success.

1.   **Writing for the Web is not like writing for print.** People do not read the Web, they scan it.
2.   Use whatever number of words you need to deliver your message. You can use multiple pages and to them, if yo need to. There are lots of ways to make a large amount of material readable, attractive, and accessible to the most important person in the world; your customer.
3.   Write tight. Do not use more words than necessary. This is important.
4.   Define all terms and acronyms. When you find yourself saying, "They know that," disaster looms. No, "They" don't know that unless you are writing for a specific industry or audience. Even then, you are wise to define your terms.
5.   Write at an eighth grade level for the general public. This is not my opinion, but advice from the best in the business of Web useability.
6.   To specifically define your customer, do a customer profile. I like the "Joe and Josephine" technique, or simply Joe Customer. This will make your customer crystal clear in your mind.
7.   <u>How to write for experts and the general public simultaneously.</u>
        a.   Opening paragraph for the novice
        b.   Subsequent content for the expert
8.   Include detail to establish yourself as an expert. Knowledgeable people know the details.
9.   Use lists when you need to present data.

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a.   Use a numbered list when then the order is important
b.   Use an unnumbered list when the order does not matter
c.   Should you need to use two lists, number one and alphabetize the other.

10.   The first sentence in a paragraph needs to introduce material in that paragraph. Do not refer to something in a paragraph's opening sentence that is not in that paragraph.

11.   Do not write more than five or six sentences per paragraph. Five sentences if they are long, six, if short. Write sentences of 15 or 20 words. Do not write long sentences.

12.   Words per page. Try for 250 to 500 words per page. A sales page is an exception as a book sales page can be one very long page with a high word count. The site I built for my book is an example of this. Avoid long pages and avoid long passages of text unless you have a good reason not to..

13.   Long pages that require the reader to scroll extensively are not a good idea. While fine for sales sites, they are not recommended for almost everything else. Break up an extensive amount of information into several pages. Use the cliff hanger technique to invite the reader to click to the nest page. This also provides more pages for search engines to index and allows you to search engine optimize each additional page for a different keyword or key phrase.

14.   Your Web site's links. Do not title a link something like this: "Click here," or "follow this link." That is a search engine optimization (SEO) disaster. Use keywords in your links and make your links pertinent to the material that they refer to.

15.   Never mislead the reader with links that are intended to be misleading. That destroys your credibility instantly. Your reader will leave and never come back.

16.   Use bold headings and subheadings that include the keywords you are optimizing for.

17.   What's a keyword? Search terms that people will use to find sites like yours. Research your keywords with Goggle's excellent keyword tool: https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal

18.   Do not write impenetrable blocks of text. Use paragraphs, white space, graphics, and photographs to make your site interesting.

19.   Graphics and pictures. Upload your photographs at 73 dots per inch (dpi). The GIMP (Graphic Image Manipulation Program) http://www.gimp.org, is free of charge and very good. Caption your images, and always inform the reader why an image is important, what it is, what point it makes, and why it's there.

20.   Link to other people's content, if you wish. This saves you a lot of work. Email the author and tell him or her what you are doing. If you feel the site may not be maintained, mirror the material to your Web space, and link to that.

21.   Your Book's Web Site and Social Networking:
a.   Overall design
    i.   Pick an attractive background color, or use white. You can use The GIMP to make a background image.

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        ii.   Avoid rotating, blinking, things. They look just awful.

        iii.   Do not use black background with white text.

        iv.   Do create maximum contrast between your background color and the color of your text, called foreground color. There is a reason that books have been printed white paper with black text for centuries. Great contrast. You can also use navy blue text, if you wish. It looks great.

        v.   Do not use tiny text. Consider the resolution of the reader's monitor. This is important if you develop your site on an old computer.

        vi.   Do use white space. White space is not wasted space.

b.   Main page:

        i.   Include your book's endorsements.

        ii.   Be sure to show your book's cover.

        iii.   Link to book sellers.

        iv.   Make it colorful and well designed.

        v.   Include 'About the Author' information or link to an 'About the Author' page.

            vi.Testimonials - make them short, sweet, specific to a person and business.

            (1)   Do not do this: "Lovely book." M. Smith.

            (2)   Do this: "Excellent work. Insightful, helpful, and well written." Wayne A English, President, Web Content Rx.com LLC

c.   About the author page

d.   Media page

        i.   Include your full contact information. Make it easy for a reporter or blogger to reach you.

        ii.   Make your bio pertinent to your book, by mentioning the skills and expertise that it took to write it.

        iii.   Include several press releases in PDF and Web format. List the title of the media release and link to the PDF and Web versions. You can send the media releases out with services like PRWeb. Even if you don't send them

            to traditional media, Google will find them. Do not underestimate the power of having press releases on your site.

e.   Link to the specific page where booksellers are marketing your book, not to the bookseller's main page.

f.   Socialnetworking. Link to your blog, Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and anyother sites you are using, and be sure that your campaign leads to your Web site and to the rest of your campaign.

        i.   Your blog

            (1)   Blog posts of up to 1,000 words are fine. Over 1,000 words and you have a short article.

            (2)   Include pictures, graphics, and links in your blog posts to make

your blog inviting and visually stimulating.
(3)   Include keywords in the title of your blog posts and in the body of the text as well.
(4)   Write a signature block that contains your name, email, Web address, and book title. You can also use this to sign your email.

ii.   Articles
(1)Publish articles at Technorati, Squidoo, and other online locations.

iii.   YouTube. Make and place your videos here. Keyword pack your account information.
(1)   You can purchase a 'flip' video camera for about $150 that will record your videos, plug into your computer's USB port, and upload the video to YouTube. What's does 'flip' mean? The USB (Universal Serial Bus) plug flips out.

Very short glossary

ISP   Internet Service Provider.
URL Universal Resource Locator. Your Web address.
HTML Hypertext Markup Language
   FTPFile Transfer Protocol. This program you use to send your updated Web site to the server located at your ISP. Blog Portmanteau word made created from Web and log.