THE TEN RULES OF COPY WRITING FOR WEB SITES

Writing for websites is not like writing for brochures. In a brochure you have the freedom to sell your self a lot more than you do on a website. You see, when someone picks up your brochure, you have got their attention, at least for a little while.

On a website your competition is just a click or two away and you have to be far more focused on heaping value into every headline, paragraph and sentence. And what makes things even more difficult is the fact that you have to write for two audiences, not one.

That's right, you have to write for the user and the search engines. If your copy is not rich in keywords you will have difficulty getting good rankings for your website.

Follow these ten rules to get found, and get your message across to your users fast.

1. Avoid complexity or confusion, especially on the home page. Although users of the Internet are well educated they are not looking for a challenge when they visit your site. They want information delivered simply and quickly.

2. People like to scan a website for information make sure your website copy is scannable. Break-up information into small pieces with headings and some space around them.

3. Be consistent in how you deliver information. First person or third person, it makes little difference to your visitor. Make sure it's consistent; a mixed delivery is annoying to read.

4. Feature, Function, Benefit. Your visitors really don't want to know how many widgets go in to making your mega-widget. They don't even really want to know about just how special and unique your mega-widget is. They really want to know what it can do for them. Keep your message simple, your visitor's primary question: – What's in it for me?

5. Key-words and Key-Phrases should be included in your copy. Many search engines look to the copy or text of a site rather than the meta information. Be sure to use keywords in your headings and hyperlinks.

6. Be emotive, tell stories, connect. You want your visitors to say to themselves, "that's for me", or "that's the type of company or product that I want". People still buy on emotion.

7. Copy should invite the user to dig deeper into the site. A teaser paragraph with "more......." or, "learn more" is an excellent way to lead your visitor to a sale.

8. Don't make visitors scroll to read the information on your site. There are of course some exceptions to this rule. Logic will tell you that things like spec sheets should be presented in one piece, in these instances scrolling is absolutely correct. Users hate scrolling horizontally.

9. Ask for the sale. Ask for the visitor's email address. Ask them to call if they need more information. People like to be invited to take action.

10. Write for your target audience. Use insider language and terminology. Visitors from your target market will expect you to use "expert" language. On the other hand try to use plain language where possible.