



Benefits not Features!

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How to write content for your web site

Writing - and the layout - for your web site requires a different approach to most other forms of writing.

Our e-Business Advisers tell how to make sure your readers carry on reading.

1. "Begin at the beginning; go on until you come to the end; then stop."

Web site visitors would be grateful if web site writers always followed the above piece of advice!

Too often, web site writers do nothing of the kind.

Instead of beginning web content with a clear statement about what you can expect to read, and how it will benefit you - (the web site visitor) - they will often begin with superfluous information about the firm - "here at XYZ Ltd we have been at our present premises since 1975.

We employ 12 staff, and we're a leading member of the UK Widget Makers Association....."

Perhaps worse, many continue this pattern with page after page of arcane technical features of their products.....

2. What are web site visitors really looking for?

People on the web are usually looking for information, often to solve a problem their business currently has - they are looking for the

benefits to them, not immediately at the **features** of your products.

You need to think like a marketing professional - a colleague involved in this area of work describes the process as "selling the sizzle, not the sausage!" by which he means "sell the benefits, not the features!"

If you make your solution to their problem easy to find on your web site, (the **benefit** that they are looking for) they will thank you - and maybe contact you to do business.

If you make it hard to find by burying your solution to their problem deep in your site, no one may read your solution at all.

Research shows that web readers scan pages before they read anything: they may scan right past your writing if it doesn't have a straightforward "headline" that includes key words about your topic.

Likewise, relevant navigation helps enormously - think about what your visitors are likely to want to achieve, not how your company is arranged internally, and reflect this in your web site navigation menus.

3. Why are some web writers indirect?

Writers opt for indirect leads because they are insecure.

They fear that what they have to say will be so unexciting that potential readers will be turned



Fact Sheet

off, so they try to find an indirect but more interesting way to draw the reader in.

Sometimes they are so immersed in the features of their own firm or products that they forget other people are actually looking for a solution to a problem!

If you're writing about widgets, selling the benefits of using your widgets, and the reader isn't interested in the benefits to them of widgets at all, it's better to get it over with fast.....

Readers who've had to wade through several paragraphs or web pages before finding out that they're in the wrong place will be all the more irritated.

Indirect openings for articles are fine for certain kinds of writing. However, in most web writing, the best way to begin is with the shortest and clearest statement you can make about your topic.

So be courageous when you sit down to write, and don't blame yourself if it takes a while to come up with an opening that works.

As anyone who's tried to write knows, beginning is often the most difficult part of the writing process!