

How to create a business website that sells

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HOW TO CREATE PERSUASIVE WEB content to increase your online sales—in one succinct page.

Think before you write

ASSUMING YOU'RE DEVELOPING an entire site, work out a structure with as few pages as you can reasonably have while still dividing everything up logically. The more pages you have, the more times your reader ('Tenderfoot Sam') has to click; so the more opportunities he has to disengage.

1. Each page should answer **three** questions within **seven** seconds:—

- Where am I?
- What can I do here?
- Why should I do it?

2. The answers to these questions will reflect the page's objectives. A page may have several objectives, but should only have *one* primary one.

3. Gradualize. The purpose of your copy is to get Sam from what he believes about your offer when he arrives on your site, to the belief that he would be an absolute dolt to not accept it immediately. Use the 'Four Ps':—

- Promise him something;
- Picture that promise fulfilled;
- Prove that you can fulfill it;
- Push him to accept your offer.

4. Start with writing your homepage. Keep it short: you're meeting Sam at your front door, reassuring him he's in the right place, and showing him into your business.

Be yourself

DON'T BE AFRAID of turning some people off; be afraid of *not* turning the right people *on*. Know who Sam is and connect with her genuinely. Stories are ideal. Here's a good example: www.saddlebackleather.com

Labor over your headline

SPEND HALF YOUR writing time on the headline. It has to make Sam read your copy; if it doesn't you won't get any sales.

1. Engage with what Sam is already thinking. Take a question, problem, fear or desire already on his mind, and appeal to his self-interest there. Be urgent. Promise something useful, unique, and specific.

2. Curiosity inflames urgency. Use questions, open-ended statements, secrets & paradoxes; or start with words like "how", "why", and "which".

3. News pulls. Headlines starting with "now", "announcing", "finally" and the like are proven winners.

4. If your solution is quick & easy, say so. This will generally get Sam to at least scan your copy.

5. Call Sam out directly. If you were Fox Mulder, could you resist reading copy headed up with: "For The FBI Agent Who Wants To Believe"?

6. Long headlines sell more. As a rule of thumb, ten words is ideal; but a longer headline that says *more* is better than a shorter one that says *less*. You can always break your headline up into a head and subhead over several lines.

7. Use numbers and other specifics. It increases both credibility and curiosity.

Your lede

THE LEDE IS WHAT DRAWS Sam into your copy and gets her interested in what you're about to offer. It follows the headline directly.

1. Don't muck about. You need to make a promise and paint a picture that gets her to visualize her problem solved.

2. Homepages are just ledes. Your homepage serves no other purpose than to persuade Sam to be persuaded. Do not try to sell her here; it won't work.

3. You can approach a lede in basically six ways. These can be combined for maximum effect:—

- make a big promise;
- tell a story to get Sam engaged;
- offer a solution to her problem;
- solicit her into something exclusive;
- make a relevant prediction;
- hint at a big secret.

4. Surprise is your ally. Twists and novelties are interesting, engaging, and memorable.

5. Delete your first few paragraphs. Even experienced copywriters 'bury the lede' because it's natural to warm up to a topic as you write. Your first few paragraphs are probably fluff—remove them and you'll find your copy more immediately engaging to Sam.

6. Be enthusiastic, use lots of facts, and few adjectives.

Don't try to write

ALMOST EVERYONE who tries to write copy has the idea that it must be a certain style: editorial, stuffy, faux-formal. This kind of writing persuades *no one*. It's actually better if you don't try to *write* at all.

1. Copywriting is salesmanship in print. No one would buy from a salesman who spoke like a corporate website. So be yourself. Write as if you were talking.

2. Imagine having a chat with Sam about your services. If he's a consumer the conversation will probably be light and informal; if he's a business prospect you might take a more serious approach. Either way, you'd speak naturally.

3. Imagine his reactions as you talk. How does he respond? Is he interested? Then what do you say to keep his attention? Is he skeptical? What do you say to overcome his unspoken objections?

4. Record yourself. If you can, record yourself talking to someone like your ideal prospect about your offering. Then transcribe the recording as a starting point for your copy.

Feel your way through

DON'T JUST *think* through your copy. Sam buys for emotional reasons which she rationalizes. You must engage her emotions. You cannot argue her into buying. When you read over your copy you'll sense places where you need to reignite her desire. These intuitions are invaluable.

Don't sell. Inform

WHEN YOU'RE WRITING copy about something you want Sam to buy, don't focus on selling. You're not an advocate for your offering. You're an advocate for *Sam*.

1. Genuinely care that he makes the choice which is best for *him*. Then explain how you believe your offering is best for him. He'll respond.

2. Don't try to sell. People hate being sold to. They know when you're trying to do it, and they resist. But they love to buy, and they love feeling they've been helped to make a wise decision. If you can make Sam feel that way, you'll get many sales.

3. Long copy blows away short copy. The more complex or costly your offering, the more you need to describe, for Sam to be sure his commitment is worth it. He wants to know as much as possible about what he's thinking of buying.

4. Try to engage all Sam's senses. If he can see, hear, feel, smell and taste what you're offering, he's more likely to convert.

5. Don't be predictable. Keep Sam wondering 'what's next?' as he reads. If he thinks he knows, he won't read it.

Edit

EVERY WORD must pay for itself.

1. Sleep on your copy. You can't start cutting until you've got some perspective.

2. Have someone read it aloud. Take notes: write down where they stumble; repeat themselves; run out of breath.

3. Replace big words with small ones. Wherever possible, cut out 'impressive' language. Speak simply. Jargon kills copy.

4. Delete your favorite passage. The passage you're most pleased with sucks.

Squint

HOW DOES THE PAGE LOOK? Dense, intimidating, ragged? Open, inviting, even?

1. Use a single column. Several blocks of text side by side is like several people talking at once. It reduces sales.

2. Use subheads. They break up copy and, written right, draw in skimmers.

3. Use lists. A paragraph which itemizes is more effective as a list.

4. Use sidebars. They're excellent for calling out testimonials, benefits, proofs, guarantees, illustrations—anything which doesn't readily fit into the body copy.

5. Use sane typography. Reversed text is twice as hard to read as dark-on-light. Font sizes below 16 pixels are *very* hard for many people; as are columns wider than 75 characters and line-heights below 130%.

Use a call to action on every page

EVERY PAGE SHOULD have a call to action asking Sam to fulfill its objective.

1. Weight them. If you have more than one CTA, make the *primary* one dominant.

2. Three or fewer. Too many choices will overwhelm Sam and lead to inaction.

3. It's almost impossible to make call to action buttons too big. As their size increases, so do conversion rates.

4. Use action words. Start your CTA button with verbs like "click here".

Images

MOST WEBSITES' images smother their copy.

1. Illustrate or tease. These are the only two legitimate reasons for an image to exist. Other kinds of images will get *attention*; but it won't translate into *sales*.

2. Use a hero shot. A photo of the author always increases readership.

3. Action shots. Photos of a product or benefit in action are very compelling.

4. Proof. Graphs and charts can be taken in at a glance & are very persuasive.

5. Captions. All images should have them—they get twice the readership of body copy. Use them to *sell*.

6. Direction. People in photos should always be looking towards the copy. It increases readership significantly.

Clarity converts; doubt doesn't

ALWAYS BE MORE CLEAR than you expect you'd need to be.

1. Spell everything out. When writing your offer, say exactly how much it costs, how much Sam will save, and so on.

2. Give a reason why. Things that seem too good to be true usually are. Make sure to explain *everything*. Catches are good for this ("there's just one catch...")

Is this everything?

PUTTING THIS information to use could yield many thousands of dollars in returns. I've seen it happen. But it's just one page—a tiny fraction of what I reveal to customers.

Imagine a full program dedicated to improving your website's sales. What could that be worth to you? To find out more, click on over to:—

www.attentionthievery.com/full

If you'd like this cheat-sheet in a multi-page format suitable for printing on letter paper, just write me:—

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