This book proposal was requested by

Michael Pye

in the email below

Tuesday, March 25, 2008

Dear Wayne,

Your ideas may work for us. Please feel free to send a proposal. Our guidelines can be found at www.careerpress.com.

Best,

Michael Pye
Senior Acquisitions Editor
Director of Product Development
Career Press / New Page Books
Tel/Fax: 201-848-0310 / 201-848-1727
www.careerpress.com / www.newpagebooks.com

WebContentRx.com
Wayne A. English
P.O. Box 114
167 Forge Road
Coventry, CT 06238
Cell: (860) 502-7735
Home: (860) 742-7888
Web: www.WebcontentRx.com
Email: wayneaen@webcontentrx.com

April 21, 2008

Michael Pye
Senior Acquisitions Editor
Director of Product Development

Dear Mr. Pye:

Here is the book proposal that you requested in your email of March 25, 2008, regarding my book on Web content. I write Web content, articles, and media releases professionally for Web masters, Internet advertisers and others.

I hope that you like the book and publish it. I look forward to your reply from you.

Sincerely,

Wayne A. English

BOOK PROPOSAL

WebContentRx
Get Read or Get Lost

by

Wayne A. English

Wayne A. English
WebcontentRx.com
P.O. Box 114
167 Forge Road
Coventry, CT 06238

Cellular Telephone: (860) 502-7735
Home Telephone: (860) 742-7888

Email: wayneaen@webcontentrx.com

Web: http://www.WebContentRx.com

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Best,

Michael Pye

Senior Acquisitions Editor

Director of Product Development

Career Press / New Page Books

Tel/Fax: 201-848-0310 / 201-848-1727

www.careerpress.com / www.newpagebooks.com

Executive Summary

The need for high quality Web content is recognized by industry professionals like Matt Service, of Service Internet Solutions, http://www.SISIntl.com and Tim Laubacher of Laubacher Multimedia, http://www.mywebdept.com. The ability to write, or have someone available to write, high quality search engine optimized, Web content is an asset to business people, Web masters, and writers.

- **Writers** will find this book indispensable for the creation of high quality, search engine optimized, Web content. This is especially true for those writers who wish to add writing for the Web to their list of services.
- **Web masters** will use this book to ensure that they no longer must lose jobs because of a lack of content, as they do now.
- **Business people** will use this book to create and update content cost effectively, while being confident that their Web updates are timely and well done.

The technical material in this book is designed and presented so that someone unfamiliar with technology can use it competently to increase the effectiveness of the message and search engine optimize the text, as well.

There is a section on writing eBay advertisements and on how to create high quality digital photographs in a simple studio with inexpensive equipment. This section will have broad appeal and capitalize on eBay's popularity. This section of the book will be popular with anyone who sells goods on eBay.

The Codex Cybernetica

I have created this name as the umbrella under which this and future books will be published. My intention is to publish numerous books under this banner. This name is unique. I own it, and the rights to use it.

The next book in the series is already largely complete. All titles will relate to computer technology, digital photography, and the technology, writing, and advertising that surrounds the World Wide Web.

The Book

This book will be purchased by

- Writers who wish to add writing Web content to their list of services.
- Business people who wish to write their own content.
- Web masters who need content to complete projects or who wish to bring this service in-house.

Important points that distinguish this book

- This book is a hands on, instructional document that shows the reader how to write high quality, keyword laden, Search Engine Optimized (SEO) Web content. Material is included on ways to make a Web site better and more secure, such as the unspammable email address, a primer on HTML, and what a Web site file actually looks like.

In addition to writing content, I discuss: writing a blog, training, and creating an audio or video podcast. Podcasting is only in it's infancy. Podcasting will only increase in popularity and usefulness with uses across the spectrum of need, from entertainment to training. This section will be well received by anyone who makes podcasts or who wants to do so. Some people believe that podcasting will be even more important than blogging. Personally, I believe that. I think that the true potential of podcasting is vast, especially as a training tool and as a way to place high quality information in the hands of those who service complex equipment. We believe that this has no better application that in industries like nuclear power, electronics, and aviation, where systems are extensive and complex.

Manuscript length

- Approximately 270 pages, double spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, including: front matter, table of contents, glossary, nine appendices, and index. Should the manuscript need to be reduced, we can easily remove one or more of the appendices. Should you need a few more pages of text, I can easily add five or six pages, or more, by including information on Joomla!, http://www.joomla.org, an open source content management system.

Estimated delivery date

- June 1, 2008

Published format

- Paperback, 6.75 inches by 9.25 inches by approximately 0.5 inch.

My credibility

- I write Web content professionally for Web masters; please see my resume and publications list at the end of this proposal. I also write media releases for an Internet marketing firm, the Empire Group, LTD.
- Extensive writing and technical expertise.
- Non-fiction publications in local, national, and international print publications in newspapers, tabloids, magazines and newsletters. My short fiction is published on the Web.
- Designed, developed and wrote the content for numerous Web sites.
- I am starting a Writer's Group.

- See my online photography book:

  http://www.webcontentrx.com/webwriting/photobook/html/photoindex.htm

My style

- Informative, friendly, competent.
- I provide information in depth, from research and knowledge gained with Web masters and clients.
- I explain things, I do not assume the reader already knows the material.

What distinguishes this book?

This book will do more than tell you about content. It will show you how to write high quality, Search Engine Optimized content, by showing you what high quality content is and how to create and present it.

This book discusses the spectrum of content including:

- Writing text
- Writing eBay ads and product photography
- Audio and Video Podcasting
- Content that Trains
- How to write instructions that keep people safe.
- Using numbered and unnumbered lists
- Using white space.
- Words per sentence, sentences per paragraph are spelled out.
- Paragraph topic sentences
- Alt= information for graphics

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- How to write link titles
- <title>, <META>, <H1>, <H2>, bolding and other tags to Search Engine Optimize your text.
- Information on technical, mathematical, and engineering content.

Overview

There are many books available on writing Web content. However, not all of them really do the reader a lot of good, when it comes to actually write high quality Web content. It is the words “high quality” that are the operative phrase. Anyone can create fluff. With my book, some time and effort, any one smart enough and interested enough can create high quality Web content. That is what distinguishes my book from the others. This book is a toolbox, it is equipment, meant to be used, to sit close at hand. When the reader has a need this book will help him or her get the information on the Web.

Marketing WebContentRx and The Codex Cybernetica

This book will form the center of the marketing plan for my professional Web content writing business. I have intentionally titled the book, the business, and the Web site, WebContentRx. A search for any one of the three will reveal the other two. I will market this via media release, with articles published in print magazines, on blogs, and online publications. Also, I will be writing and publishing articles on Web content and my “About the Author” information will list the book and my Web site.

I have an excellent track record of print and online publications, and am maintaining an advertisement online. You may see it at http://www.ctgolftips.com/. My professional relationship with the Empire Group, LTD, which owns CTGolfTips.com, goes both ways, in that, I write their monthly media releases. The Empire Group, LTD is an Internet marketing firm and will likely figure prominently in my online advertising efforts.

Further, I am writing PDF files that will be made available at no cost as an advertising vehicle. These PDFs will be advertised in media releases and can be downloaded from WebContentRx.com.

The first PDF that I will be advertising, relates to using a Web site to increase business in hard economic times. While many people will have no interest in following a link to a book, businesses are always interested in making their Web site more productive. This will increase my professional footprint, provide advertising, and awareness. The PDF is already written, as is the press release. I estimate that this effort will begin in mid May, 2008. This book will be an advertising vehicle and its publicity will begin just before the publication date.

Promotion

Media Release

I maintain a Connecticut wide media list to support my efforts with the Empire Group LTD, ongoing need for media releases. When this book is ready I will publicize it in a national and state-wide a media release. The Connecticut-wide data includes every library in the state. Further, it will be on my Web site and the URL of the book's Web page will be submitted to major search engines. In addition, the book's media release will include online and print business magazines.

As to television and radio, my media list covers those in Connecticut, and my national release will cover them nationally. Additionally, there is a local television station that has a show highlighting artists and authors. While this will not gain nationwide attention, it will form a significant beginning to my television appearance list.

Web site

My business, WebContentRx, already has the URL www.webcontentrx.com. The book will appear here with a link to online sellers and bookstores. The cover graphic of the book will appear on the home page and be a link to the book's page. Further, I have constructed a media room page to make my contact information and a bio easily found. You will find this link prominently displayed at the top of every major page at WebContentRx.com.

Successfully Published Competition and Why My book is Better

- McGovern, G. (2006). Killer Web Content Make The Sale Deliver The Service Build the Brand. A & C Black. London. This book does not show the reader how to write high

quality, search engine friendly content. My book does. I show how to choose the best format for your particular data needs and give concrete examples of description, instruction, and more. This book does not.

- Krug, S. (2000). Don't Make Me Think. New Riders. This is a book on usability and does not deal with the creation of content directly, although the wise use of copy is discussed.
- Redish, J. (2007). Letting Go of The Words: Writing Web Content that Works. Morgan Kaufmann. This book directly addresses content and the creation of high quality content, but does not present the depth of specific examples or the extensive technical material that I do. This book dos not present a great deal of material for e-commerce sites and does not address writing Search Engine Optimized text. My book addresses how to create and SEO enhance text and shows examples of poorly constructed e-commerce text and how to improve it.
- Garrand, T. (2006). Writing for Multimedia and the Web, Third Edition: A Practical Guide to Content Development. Focal Press. This book is a tour-de-force on writing for multimedia needs and for the Web. Unfortunately, writing for the Web is not given the predominate weight. There are no examples of high quality text, no description, no help on how to choose the best format for the needs of your data, no guidance on much that is included in my book.
- Norton, R., McGovern, G., and O'Dowd, C. (2001). The Web Content Style Guide: The Essential Reference for Online Writers, Editors and Managers. FT Press. This book relates directly to content, presenting standards and rules to allow the reader to create high quality content.

- McGovern, G. and Norton, R. (2001). Content Critical: Gaining Competitive Advantage Through High-Quality Web Content. FT Press. Here the creation of high quality Web content is seen from the view of creating a team and Web publishing strategy. My book is not designed to provide a framework for a Web writing team. This book discusses the creation of high quality content.
- Mumaw, S (2002). Simple Web Sites: Organizing Content-rich Web Sites into Simple Structures. Rockport Publishers, Inc. This book concerns itself with Web design and navigation.
- Ash, T. (2008). Landing Page Optimization: The Definitive Guide to Testing and Tuning for Conversions. Sybex. This book discusses optimizing your landing page. It does not target writing content. I discuss this in the areas on the <title>, <meta>, <h1>, <h2> and other tags.
- Veloso, M (2005). Web Copy That Sells, AMACOM. Maria Veloso is a copy writer, like Bob Bly, but her book is not as valuable as Bly's. This book concerns itself with copywriting, and is highly targeted to copywriters.
- Bly, B (2002). The Online Copywriter's Handbook, McGraw-Hill. Bob Bly is the consummate copywriter. He has written over 40 books. His book is targeted to the copywriter who needs to write Web content to maintain his or her competitive edge in the business. My book is not for copywriters, although sections of my book may be of interest to them. I do not target this market. Bob talks about things like direct mail, persuasive copy, internet copy, and internet mail which are outside the scope of my book. My book will appeal to anyone writing for the net who does not write copy. For example: bloggers,

engineers, small business people, web masters and others who need to be able to create high quality material, but do not write copy.

- Maciube-Koppel, D (2002). The Web Writer's Guide Tips & Tools, Focal Press. This book covers a wide range of information from Web statistics, to building a Web site to writing for the Web. While there is little technical material this book is close to mine in the material it presents. However, I show you examples of good and bad description. This book does not. Where this book talks about copyright, I discuss copyright and copyleft and additional material. This book talks about contracts, I present a sample contract and a sample Letter of Agreement, this book does not. The rear cover tells us, "Drawing on the advise of experts in the field, the Web Writer's Guide serves the ideal sourcebook [SIC]...." I am an expert in the field. This is no where better shown than in the material that I've included from my personal experience. Take the Letter of Agreement, for example. I've used it in my business dealings. I am not convinced that Ms. Maciuba-Koppel's book comes from experience; mine does.
- Usborne, N (2002) Net Words Creating High-Impact Online Copy, McGraw-Hill. This book targets copywriters.
- McAlpine, R (2001) Web word Wizardry A Guide to Writing for the Web and Internet, Ten Speed Press. This book discusses writing for the web in a competent manner. It does not contain pertinent examples of good and bad content. My book shows examples of poor content and examples of good content and tells the reader why it is good or bad. There is no technical material here, no discussion of email as a tool.

These books do not provide the mix of writing and technical expertise that my book does.

Sooner or later, my readers will need to write material for the Web and I give them enough material to get them started on the way to a superb product.

I write about writing an eBay add and photographing the product. I have extensive photographic expertise, teach photography, was a contributing editor at a photography magazine. I see no reason not to make photographic material available it teams up nicely with writing ads. Further, I include the HTML tags to make an eBay ad a thing of beauty, with headings, bold text, and words that buyers will search for. This sort of thing is nowhere to be found in any book on Web content that I've seen.

Further, this section will appeal to a vast market. Many eBay items are high ticket goods and this book offers three important things to the eBay writer: the HTML to craft colorful high impact ads, the ability to create high quality pictures, and how to write an ad so it is clear, cogent and effective. All this for the vast eBay sales market.

Blogging software and the advantages of using a professional product over a free blog are discussed and made clear. What the professional software offers and why it is worth paying for are also made clear. Others talk about blogs. I tell the reader the advantages and disadvantages of a blog and how to craft its content.

As to technical content, I include mathematical symbols and how to create them, scientific notation, engineering notation, equations, and chemical formulae. This prepares the reader for almost anything he or she is likely to encounter in the mathematics / engineering /scientific realm. And when some characters can't be easily created, I recommend the use of an advanced wordprocessor to create them and export the material in Web ready format.

Author Biography

Topic credentials

- I write Web content professionally for Web masters and others. I have worked for Laubacher Multimedia, http://mywebdept.com, in support of several projects.
- My online photography book. This is a large project composed of 19 chapters, 6 appendices, glossary, table of contents, and index. The entire book in hypertext linked. I wrote the content, designed the cover, coded the HTML, uploaded it to the server, and integrated it into my Web site.

See some of my publications at www.WebContentRx.com.

Authors Resume

Wayne A. English

167 Forge Road

Coventry, CT 06238

(860) 742-7888

Web: WebContentRx.com Email: wayneaen@webcontentrx.com

Professional Instructor, Writer, and Web Master

Presenting information in an understandable, cogent format is my forte. See my Web site for my publications, clients, and testimonials.

Local, National, and International Publications:

- The Futurist Magazine
- Intercom - The Magazine for The Society of Technical Communication
- Fate Magazine
- Smart Computing Magazine
- Northeast Sun - The Magazine of the Northeast Sustainable Energy Association
- The Journal Inquirer Newspaper
- CTBusiness Magazine
- My fiction is published on the Web
- Travel Photographers Network, London
- Contributing Editor to Snapshot Magazine
- And others

Web Sites Developed or Web Mastered:

- The Corporate site supporting the Imagine 21 training effort at Northeast Utilities
- The Town of Coventry, Connecticut - Web Consultant, Content Specialist
- The Tern Inn
- Rhode Island Motels
- Connecticut Robotics Society
- Charlies Auto Body
- Member of The International Webmasters Association and the HTML Writers Guild

Instructional and Program Development Expertise:

- Facilitated The Pacific Institute's Imagine 21™ Program. This is a program to enhance personal and professional achievement.
- Software Quality Assurance Training Program, which I helped develop and presented. This program was Nuclear Regulatory Commission traceable.
- Taught the Mathematics, Physics and Metric System sections of a training program for Health Physics Technicians.
- Taught Basic Radiological Monitoring, a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Program
- Taught Standard & Advanced First Aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation at the American Red Cross.
- Taught Basic, Intermediate & Advanced Photography at:

  Ashton Art School

Berlin, Connecticut Adult Education

The Lucy Robbins Wells Memorial Library, Newington, CT

The Booth & Dimock Memorial Library, Coventry, CT

- I developed all of the lesson plans for the photography classes and field trips.
- Taught people how to use personal computers in a classroom setting and one-on-one.

Broad Mathematics, Science, Computer, and Technology Background gained from wide experience and education.

Occupational Background

- **Information Technology.** Participated in hiring and job fairs, coordinated in-house training that saved many thousands of dollars, tracked time and dollars for the largest project attempted up to that time. Participated in the development of the Software Quality Assurance training program that supported Northeast Utilities nuclear power effort.

- **Expert knowledge of the electric distribution system,** its construction, maintenance, and repair. Wrote a User's Manual for an in-house software product. Published Nerd News to inform and educate my coworkers.

- **Nuclear power experience** includes photography of a health physics training program used at Millstone and Connecticut Yankee Nuclear Power Plants. Also, I performed experiments to quality NU's Radiation Dosimetry Laboratory; in-plant outage support during outages including being responsible for an NRC Ph.D. during a test costing

millions of dollars.

Education:

Northwestern Connecticut Community College

- Associate Degree, General Arts and Science

Hartford State Technical College

- Associate Degree, Nuclear Engineering Technology

Central Connecticut State University & The University of Hartford

Calculus II	Calculus III	Statistics,
Number Systems	Pascal	Management
Geography	Philosophy	Abnormal Psychology
Child Psychology	English Literature	Physics and others.

Eastern Connecticut State University

C Programming	Mediation	Urban Anthropology

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Publication's List

Nonfiction

Radiation Contamination

Emergency Magazine

"Searching the World Wide Web"

Link-Up Magazine

"Redefining the DOS Keyboard"

"Personal Computer Security"

"Windows 95"

"The Multimedia Personal Computer and the World Wide Web"

Closing The Gap

Cartoons Saved My Life

Fate Magazine

"Are Electric utilities Obsolete?"

The Futurist

Are Electric Utilities Obsolete?

CTBusiness

Article on Sustainable Energy

Northeastern Sustainable Energy Association

"Dealing With The Death of a Pet"

"Buying a Computer For a High School or College Student"

The Parent Planner

"When The Lights Go Out"

" Home Gym"

" Searching The Web"

" Buying A Computer For A High School or College Student"

Journal Inquirer Newspaper

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"Medical Technical Writing"

"Search Engines and Your Web Site"

Intercom The Magazine of the Society for Technical Communication

"Stand Alone Security"

Smart Computing

"Searching the World Wide Web"

Link-Up Magazine

Dealing With The Death of a Pet

Buying a Computer for a High School or College Student

The Parent Planner

Newsletters

Need to Expand Your Customer Base?

Software Review of Jot+

The Freelance Writer's Report

"An Inexpensive Education"

The Dollar Stretcher

"Need to Expand Your Customer Base"

Freelance Writer's Report

"Marketing Yourself"

"Traveler's Camera Bag"

Travel Photographer's Network

(London, England)

"Dealing With Sexual Harassment or Other Illegal Activity"

Net Temps Newsletter

Dealing With Sexual Harassment

NetTemps Newsletter

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Fiction

"Shift World"

(a short story)

sffworld.com and **Dark Planet**

Contributing Editor

Snapshot Magazine

Wrote, and provided the photography for, the technically oriented, monthly column,

Corner 35.

Current Ongoing Professional Writing

Media Releases for the Empire Group, LTD, Newington CT

Writing of Web content for Laubacher Multimedia

A Selection of Published Material

Are Electric Utilities -

Published in The Futurist magazine - March - April 2005

With the advent of worldwide terrorism, oil independence is a matter of domestic security. A side effect may be the end of electric utilities as we know them. For the United States and other oil-dependent economies to migrate to hydrogen-fueled automobiles will require wide-scale hydrogen production and distribution capability. That is so obvious that it almost sounds silly, yet it is that very production and distribution capability that may have far-reaching effects on utilities and their customers. Hydrogen technologies can power a cell phone, automobile, truck, railroad locomotive, house, commercial building, or factory. Further, unlike current electrical systems, hydrogen need not be used in real time. This means that hydrogen can be produced and accumulated for later use.

Hydrogen technologies will provide oil independence for our vehicles in the next twenty or thirty years. The U.S. government is facilitating the transition to hydrogen through such programs as the 21st Century Truck Partnership, the FreedomCAR (Cooperative Automotive Research) and Fuel Partnership, and others programs under the Department of Defense and the Department of Energy. Many automakers are currently operating experimental fuel cell-powered cars. Also, existing internal combustion engines can be fueled by hydrogen with an increase in efficiency of roughly 25% over gasoline and a reduction of tailpipe emissions.

As we migrate to hydrogen, these vehicles and the hydrogen supply will support each other hand in glove, creating each other's market. The production and distribution capability of

hydrogen on a massive scale will fuel a national distributed generation electrical system, in which electricity consumers, who are generating their own electricity using hydrogen, send their surplus electrical power back into the power grid.

Fuel cells and microturbines are capable of providing electrical power to far more than cars alone. In fact, anything that is now powered by electricity can be powered by hydrogen-electric technology. Power is power. Among the projects now under way include the U.S. Defense Department's installation of a one-megawatt (1341 horsepower) fuel cell into a 102 metric ton railroad locomotive. Caterpillar and FuelCell Energy are developing ultra-low emission electric generating products for industrial and commercial use. And Toshiba is developing a fuel cell to power laptop computers. Hydrogen-electric technology and the era of self-powered machines are dawning.

Today's centralized electricity generation-transmission-distribution system was designed by Edison in the nineteenth century and is antiquated. There is no better demonstration of this than the blackout of August 2003 that plunged parts of the northeastern United States and Canada into darkness. The experts agree that one of the contributing factors was the age of the system. The energy industry has called for spending as much as $450 billion on infrastructure improvements. The money will be spent--that is not an issue. The question is whether we spend it on an antiquated nineteenth-century system or on twenty-first-century hydrogen technologies.

Fuel cells for residential markets will generate electricity at a cost competitive with power purchased from the electric grid in regions with high electric rates. The high cost of electricity in the northeast will likely make fuel cells a cost-competitive option for on-site power production. This, of course, will depend on the retail cost of hydrogen. But there, too, is danger, for to charge

too high a price for hydrogen will only drive people and corporations to produce their own. Therefore, it is likely that fuel cells will be a widely available option for commercial applications in the next several years.

New Thinking about New Energy

We think of electricity as a single source entity. Almost all customers have a single connection to the utility. Interrupt that connection and the customer is out of power. In the world of hydrogen, that will change. Consider a small office building of three floors, each floor 100kW of electric power for a total of 300kW. You would think that a single 300kW fuel cell is the way to go, or perhaps one 100kW fuel cell on each floor, but let's not do that. Rather, let's install a 150kW fuel cell on each floor, for a total capacity of 450kW. Why? What this provides is a system in which any one of our three fuel cells can be out of service, because of trouble or maintenance, and the entire energy needs of the building can still be met. No lost productivity. No downtime. No phone calls to the local utility asking when the power will be restored. Business and industry will be very interested in a system that offers uninterrupted power. And when you throw in protection from thunderstorms, downed trees, and the myriad other causes of outages, business and industry will be very interested.

Extend this situation to a factory where the machines are powered by a single-redundancy system, as in our office building example. We know from industrial customers that even a short interruption of several seconds can play havoc with computer-controlled machines, resulting in the loss of thousands of hard, bottom-line dollars. In today's high-technology manufacturing world, electrical outages are not taken lightly. In fact, electric utilities are considering offering

Probabilistic Risk Assessment (PRA) studies in an effort to predict when outages are likely to occur. Offering PRA and other services will help electric utilities compete with hydrogen technologies as fuel cells threaten to take their customers. It is likely that commercial and industrial users will be the first to embrace hydrogen. To predict penetration of the residential market is problematic because of differences in what people are willing to spend for electric generation at home. Fuel cells will most likely get their start in this market in new home construction, just as wall-to-wall carpeting did: by rolling the cost into the purchase price of the home and amortizing it over the life of the mortgage. When this begins, electric utilities will be faced with the loss of their residential customers.

All is not bleak for utilities. They can and will use hydrogen technology for producing additional capacity in substations and other locations close to customer needs. And customers may not want to provide their own emergency and maintenance services and so will farm this service out to utilities or private contractors. Either way, this will be a game in which electric utilities can compete. This competition will not be against other utilities but against new technology. The ability for any utility to retain customers will be up for grabs. Until now, if one company lost a customer, another utility picked that customer up. That may no longer be the case. New world, new rules.

Hydrogen Generation and Transportation

Where the hydrogen will come from to power a country the size of the United States is a valid question. There are two sources for hydrogen:

- The electrolysis of water by electricity, which separates water molecules into pure hydrogen and oxygen. An advantage to this technology is that it can be used almost

anywhere.

- The reforming of the fossil fuels oil and natural gas. These contain hydrocarbons molecules, which consist of only hydrogen and carbon. A fuel processor, or reformer, can remove the hydrogen from the hydrocarbon molecules. The hydrogen is retained and the carbon is discarded. This reduces air pollution but does nothing to help solve the greenhouse gas problem, so this method may be only a temporary solution as we migrate to hydrogen.

The energy for these methods may come from nuclear power plants specifically designed for producing hydrogen and electricity. Also, the clean coal technologies are a viable source of hydrogen. The energy companies have an advantage in that they have been supplying power in one form or another for a long time and have the infrastructure and experience to keep doing so. Whatever technology or technologies we choose to generate hydrogen, oil and coal will not be superseded anytime soon. To assume otherwise is naive.

Renewable technologies to power hydrogen production include solar, wind, ocean wave, ocean current, animal manure, and algae. Cow manure is currently used in a methane digester to power the Haubenschild Farm near Princeton, Minnesota. Hog farms are good candidates for this as well. The price of hydrogen at the retail level will be the final arbiter as to which of these technologies become viable. Algae, for example, produces electricity at 31 cents per kilowatt hour. That is currently far too expensive, but further research could make this technology more competitive. In the future, energy producers may be very different from those currently using coal, oil, and nuclear power. In fact, energy production may even become a cottage industry.

Future Energy Corporations

Ocean front property may soon be in a corporation's portfolio--not as a vacation spot but for energy generation. Hydrogen has one significant advantage over utility-supplied electric power--hydrogen need not be used in real time. It can be produced in an around-the-clock operation and stored, while electric power cannot.

At the seashore, there will be a wind farm and solar photovoltaic cells. In the surf, there will be a wave generator. And offshore, perhaps in the Gulf Stream, there will be an ocean current generator. All of these technologies will generate electricity--some only when the wind blows or the sun shines, while others will generate virtually continuously. All will make electric power to crack water into hydrogen and oxygen. For those corporations where ocean from property is not appropriate biomass or animal manure may be used as is done in the Haubenschild Farm mentioned above.

What you do not hear about in most discussions of hydrogen production is the commercially viable byproduct oxygen, which has medical, industrial, and military uses. The hydrogen, of course, will be used in fuel cells or microturbines for heating or cooling buildings and powering vehicles, laptops, cell phones, and personal digital assistants--all for the cost of the installed equipment amortized over time, tax deducted, and depreciated.

Depending on how well they anticipate the challenges ahead, electric utilities over the next 20-30 years will be either blessed or cursed to "live in interesting times."

Cartoons Saved My Life

Published in Fate Magazine

These events of precognition happened on two separate occasions. Both occurred while riding my motorcycle, a 1971 Triumph Daytona. As motorcycle accidents are vicious affairs, I have no doubt that these precognitions saved me from serious injury. They may have saved my life.

My first experience was in West Hartford, Connecticut while exiting I-84 onto Caya Avenue while on my way to school at Hartford State Technical College. The Caya Avenue exit was a strange one in those days, really strange, because at the end of it traffic did not stop. Rather, you drove directly onto Caya Avenue, a one way street. It was the traffic on Caya that stopped for the vehicles coming off the highway. Like I said, strange.

So there I was on my bike coming off the high way on my way to class. Ahead of me was a large truck. I'll never forget it and can see it now in my minds eye. It was black and rack bodied. That means the cargo area has a fence around it. Suddenly, a cartoonish image flashed in my mind. I am not trying to be dramatic, but there is just no other way to describe it. In the cartoon, a truck stops and the bike and rider hit the truck. The bike's rear wheel comes off the ground and the rider flies over the handle bars and hits head first. Just like in a Saturday morning cartoon. That is one of two cartoons that I will never forget. The third one I'll never forget involves Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fud, but that's another story.

My Triumph and I slowed down in this world and it is a good thing we did because the truck stopped. Stopped where it should never have stopped. Where it did not need to stop. Yes, it did. The truck stopped and so did I, easily and safely, because I was only traveling about 20 miles per hour instead of 40 or so. Had I not slowed down, I would have hit him for sure. That's one.

My second life saving precognition was in Winsted, Connecticut, where I lived in those

days. My Triumph and I were going south on Torringford Street, a hilly, twisty road. It was a lovely summer day and I was enjoying the ride. Again, just as suddenly, a cartoonish image is in my mind. This time a large tree branch swings out of a tree; the butt knocks the rider off the bike. I slowed down because I couldn't see around the curve ahead. As I rounded the turn there in the road was a large limb. Not a branch or a twig, but a limb, five or six inches thick, covered with summer foliage. It took up most of the lane. So much so that I had to go into the other lane to get around it. And that would not have been possible if I had not slowed down. That's two. And this is all true. It happened to me. More than that, it saved me. Twice.

Dealing With Sexual Harassment or Other Illegal Activity

Published in Net Temps Newsletter

This article is not to be construed as legal advice. It is not that. Check your local and state laws and act in accordance with them and your company's published procedures.

Well, it finally happened. The employee sitting across the desk is telling you that the boss came on sexually and now the employee fears losing the job. Now what do you do?

You turn in the boss. Immediately.

You do not protect the company. You do not protect the boss. You do not put forth a blast of hot air, "Are you sure? Why I've know so and so for years...."

You do not make decisions.

Be advised that just because the employee tells you that he or she feels better when leaving your office it is not a resolution of the situation, meaning that you are still liable in a court of law. You are not absolved from having to report this situation. Failure to report this could ruin your reputation.

That's not your job.

Your job is to act in the employee's best interest and to protect that employee. You have just been informed of illegal activity and must act. You are required to act. Not to act is to cover up illegal activity and place yourself in danger of being sued. To cover up, hide, or not report illegal activity is a crime. Think it's not? Suppose I tell you that I just killed someone, robbed a bank, kidnaped a child, beat someone up, threatened someone's life, threatened to fire someone if ... you see, it is illegal.

Ask yourself, "Who would hire a human resources professional that was sued for covering

up a case of sexual harassment?"

Nobody.

Oh, but no, wait! You never attempted to cover anything up, you say. No of course not. All you did was not report it.

Well, what's the difference?

Let's hope you are articulate because you may get the chance to explain it in court. Just remember the child abuse cover-up in the Catholic Church. That's what's waiting for you if you keep your mouth shut.

Once informed, you must act. If there is no one in the company you can bring this to then go outside the company. Where? Start with the local police if you have to. If everything in this article does not motivate you, how's this: lawyers get $150 per hour, $2,000 up front, or more. Should you go to court it will cost you a lot more. Now have I got your attention? This is for all the marbles, my friend.

Even more serious is a situation involving the threat of physical violence to the employee's person. This requires immediate action. Contact security. Here again once informed you must act. To throw this person to the wolves paints you in a vile light.

Here are a few words you may want to remember. An employee comes to you and says, "I have a problem. Can we talk in confidence?"

You say, "Yes, certainly, but you need to understand that if this is about sexual or physical harassment or other illegal activity, I will make the situation known and take whatever actions I deem necessary. Should this be about anything else, you may rely on my discretion."

See what you've done? You have informed the employee that you will not keep illegal

activity quiet. And, more importantly, have not blindly agreed to a confidential conversation of unknown nature. Now, the employee cannot say that you agreed to remain silent because you have no expectation of confidentially. Gosh, you're smart.

As an aside, I have six clauses in my professional contract that pertain to confidentially. The first four do not concern us here. The last two do concern us and they are:

[This obligation of confidentiality shall not apply to information that:]

- Pertains to illegal activity or terrorism.
- Pertains to sexual harassment, physical danger, or threats to the physical person of an employee, vendor, or other individual.

[Confidentiality clauses end.]

We take this seriously and put it in writing so that anyone we do business with knows up front that they cannot force us into silence (fat chance of that anyway, but you see the point). And, for your sake, and the sake of anyone who unburdens themself to you, we hope you take this seriously as well.

Wayne is a professional writer. His material has been published in The Futurist, Smart Computing, Fate, Intercom, the magazine for the Society of Technical Communication, Link-Up and others both nationally and locally. His short fiction, Shift World, is on the Web. He may be reached at: www.wayneaenglish.com.

Chapter Summaries

Part 1

The reader is introduced to Web content. While content can be said to take many forms: video, music, audio, graphics, and others all of these forms need text to be found. We can't yet search on a sound, or an image, or a noise. Everything is found and accessed via test. It is the quality of that text the govern how easily material is located. This is made clear here.

Part 2

Writing the content. The various ways to structure the content are presented. The reader sees the methods of structuring data and which methods work best for various needs. Constructing the words, sentences, and paragraphs all are covered, as well. The reader is shown how to write for maximum effectiveness and ease of reading. Search engine optimization and its needs are dealt with as are keywords, how to find them, and what makes high quality keywords.

Part 3

Automated and content created by others is discussed here. Copyright, copyleft and the advantages and disadvantages of using RSS feeds, and other ways to obtain material created by others are discussed.

Part 4

Email is the true killer application. How to use it for marketing, business purposes, and notification are all presented. In addition, the ability to construct an email link that fills in the subject line, places text in the body of the email, and fills in the cc address is presented. Email is a superb tool. This section shows how to use it to its maximum effectiveness.

Part 5

A blogs are not to be underestimated as a business tool. Blogging is coming on strong and using a blog well is a tremendous asset for any business. We show the advantages of professional blogging software, specifically, TypePad.

Part 6

Having a Web site found is necessary to the success of any online business or organization. Here the reader sees how to find and choose keyword and how to incorporate those keywords into the <title>, <META>, <h1>, <h2> and bolding of words on the site. This is crucial to the needs of search engines.

Part 7

People often want to create and maintain their own content. This section addresses this and presents software to facilitate that.

Part 8

Communication is a two way street. It is imperative that the content creator write to the needs of the reader. This is so basic and so important that it can not be over stated. This part shows the reader how to do that.

Part 9

Podcasting is will only increase in importance. It's uses are only scratching the surface. We discuss this growing trend, show how to design and create a podcast. Software available at no cost to record sound is presented. Also, the equipment needed to record and edit video is presented as well.

Appendix 1

Grammar, modifiers, punctuation, spelling and typographical errors. This appendix won't make you a grammar maven, but it will get you out of a jam when working.

Appendix 2

Photographic and graphical errors. Errors are not only found in text, but in graphics and pictures as well. These run the gamut from embarrassing to expensive. We discuss how to find and fix such errors.

Appendix 3

A sample product description. We said that we show you how to write good content here is booth good and bad. Here is the description of our Mythical Deluxe Toaster two flavors: the very good and the very bad. This shows the reader good and bad construction.

Appendix 4

Web Design and HTML. In line with our philosophy of showing what is behind the words this section acquaints the reader with the HTML tags behind what is seen onscreen.

Appendix 5

Your business. Here is a sample, but excellent, contract and a letter of agreement. Also, some words on determining an hourly rate and how to estimate a job.

Appendix 6

As short style guide that includes words that are commonly confused. This is an invaluable resource for those who do not write every day.

Appendix 7

Online tools. Our favorite text editors, wordprocessors, and graphics engines. All with information on why we like them. Many of which are available free of charge.

Appendix 8

HTML characters and special characters. This is included because there are times when uncommon and obscure characters need to be included in content.

Appendix 9

Unspammable email code. This is a short javascript, but very easy to use and update with the reader's information. It is explained in detain so that even if the reader has no IT experience this can still be used effectively.

Appendix 10

My superb data backup guide. I use this myself to safeguard all of my data, including this book. This scheme will not let you down, even including a CD ROM kept in a safe deposit box to guard against the office being destroyed. This scheme is simple and effective.

Appendix 11

constructing a site search capability with Google is not difficult, free of charge, and highly effective. This method provides a free and powerful search engine for any Web site as long as Google has visited and indexed the that is to be searched. We've used this, it's flawless.

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"Put it to them briefly, so they will read it; clearly, so they will appreciate it; picturesquely, so they will remember it; and, above all, accurately, so they will be guided by its light."

- Joseph Pulitzer

Part One - Get Read Or Get Lost - Your Content Decides

On December 24, 1877 Thomas Edison patented the phonograph. No one ever bought a phonograph. No one ever bought a radio. No one ever bought a television. No one ever bought a Video Cassette Recorder (VCR), a Compact Disk (CD) or a Digital Video Disk (DVD). No. What they bought was a content delivery system. We started by speaking of Edison because he began the electric march into the future. We could have begun with Gutenberg and the printing press because you see, it is not the technology that people want, but the content that the technology delivers. It is the content that is important, that is sought, that is bought and paid for.

The Web is no different than a printing press, or a phonograph, or a DVD or whatever technology comes next. What is important is the content that the technology delivers.

It is the content that people pay to hear, see, or interact with.

It is the content that people want.

It is the content that your customers will pay you to create.

It is the content that pays for the technology that delivers it.

Think about audio content. It was played live, and only live, for centuries. Then it was recorded. While technology after technology that delivered music has gone obsolete, the music endures. Remember eight track tape? Probably not, it's obsolete. Remember vinyl albums and 45 RPM records? They're obsolete too, while recorded music is more successful than ever. Just consider the iPod ™, and the software that runs on computers to play music. The music, the content, is alive and well. While the technology changes, the music endures.

Throughout this book there is one overriding theme. It is, that content is important. There are countless examples of content making its way down the ages. From cave drawings, to painted scenes in the pyramids, to perhaps the most successful content delivery system of all time, books. Don't be fooled by the wiz bang of flash animation. Don't be taken in by the sound of lasers, bells, and electronics as your mouse alights on a link. Don't be fooled by bright flashing colors that supposedly get attention and make you spend money. The messenger is not the message.

The message is the message. And the message is content.

It was always about content and it will always be about content. Content is king. Even when you hear, and read, that content is not king. That is a ruse, read what they have to say. Those who say content is not king quickly add that the user, the reader is king. In that, your majesty, there is no doubt. Content is the only thing that matters. If you doubt that think of:

- The Bhagavad Gita
- The Bible

- The plays of Shakespeare
- The Prophecies of Nostradamus
- The Art of War, by Sun Tsu
- The Constitution of The United States
- The Bill of Rights
- Countless other texts that have withstood the test of time.

The technology that the content resides on has changed and will continue to change. The content itself will not. It's not the Web that is important. It is the content that the Web delivers. What makes the Web superior are the Internet services that run on it, its ability for interactivity, email, File Transfer Protocol (FTP), the vast array of audio and video capability, the programming languages and scripting tools that allow for the plethora of material available to people everywhere. And, of course, hypertext links. The Web allows unparalleled communication and the ability to move data quickly and easily. This and high speed connectivity make the Web a superior environment for the delivery of content on that, we would never disagree. However, those services are icing on the cake, not the cake itself. Sure, on the Web, you can shop in real time, instant message, and download everything from software to songs, but how did you do those things before the Web existed? You shopped, got information, and listened to music. Is the Web a major step forward? Of course, but the Web also brings the dark side of human experience. Brings it right into your home; right into your mind, often unbidden. That too, is content, but content that we do not necessarily want. The World Wide Web is quite literally like the Wild West. There are

good guys, bad guys, cops and robbers and just plain folks working and living and wanting nothing more than to raise their children in a safe place. And it is the content running on the Web that helps and hinders all those things. Whether you think it is good content, bad content, protected speech, or vile hate, it's the content that is good or bad.

And, having said all that, as far as we are concerned, content is text because text is what search engines find at least for now and the foreseeable future.

Search Engines Find Content

Never in human history has so much content been accessible by products that exist only to find something. If you think that because your favorite search engine can not locate what you are looking for means that it does not exist, you are wrong, so very, very wrong. A search engine sends its robots to scan the Web and bring back data on what is found and the Web address where it was found. No search engine searches the entire World Wide Web when you issue a query. Your query searches only the data available to the search engine in its data warehouse. Keep that in mind next time you can't find what you know is out there. That is why using more than one search engine is a good idea. They do contain different information in their data warehouses. When search engines fail, you hit the books in the library because not everything is on the Web. Good libraries can't be beat. Research librarians are worth their weight in gold when you need information that is hard to find.

It is the ability of search engines to index, retrieve, and create hypertext links to content

that makes the Web as we know it possible. Can you imagine the Web without search engines? It would be like looking for a leaf in a forest; chaos. The Web would be a morass of disorganized data. Rather than the superb resource that we know and love, the Web would be worthless without search engines because you could not find anything.

While it is true that video, audio, and images can be thought of as content, search engines cannot find them directly, or index their content. It is the associated text that search engines find, read, record, and work with. For the foreseeable future, search engines will remain text based hunter-gathers wandering the Web following the links they find. If you think you can find music without a title to search for, or the words to a song, try entering a few musical notes and see how far you get. The same goes for pictures, you can input text and have the search engine find a picture related to that text, but you can't input a picture and have a search engine look for a similar or different picture. Not yet anyway. When looking for photographs by Brassai, Ansel Adams, or for the Wright Brothers first airplane you execute a text based query. For the foreseeable future, and for our purposes, content is text, words, sentences, paragraphs, headings, <title>, <h1>, <h2> tags, and META data, and keywords. While this may not be wholly satisfying, it is a workable definition.

Podcasting and Flash Animation

Podcasting is only increasing in importance and will likely live for a long time or give birth to its replacement. Either way, it is well worth discussing. Podcasts are in the same boat as

images and all the rest. When you search for a podcast you are conducting a text based query and will find text information associated with the podcast. This only highlights the importance of the words that you use to title or describe your podcast(s).

Flash animation is the Adobe product used to make those gorgeous effects often seen at the opening of Web sites. We do not recommend relying on Flash, because the files that produce it are not readable by search engines. Flash is fine if it solves a problem, makes a point, or shows users something of value. No argument there, but search engines will not find your flash because they simply can't read it. That is why we do not recommend opening pages that consist of flash animation only. It is instructive and interesting to note, that many flash enhanced opening pages contain a link to end the flash and let the user into the site without being forced to wait for the flash to end. If Flash is so great, why is that?

Look at the opening of your Web site. Is it loaded with useless Flash? Flash is useless when it conveys no meaning or contributes no added value to the user. Do you require the user to watch the Flash or do you give them a link to end the Flash and enter your site? If you have a link to end the Flash and enter your site, there's a message there. Flash is not content. The designers of the site know that many users will leave rather than wait for the flash to end. It does, however, offer the creator something - a nice paycheck. And so flash goes on for the best of reasons. Someone's making a buck creating it. We do hasten to add that Flash Animation can be a terrific asset to a site when used properly. For an example of the beauty that flash can add to a Web site see, http://www.sirrebelfilms.com/, created by Mark Coleman. What we are saying is don't use

flash for your entire opening page. As an enhancement, fine. To make the site a thing of beauty, fine. We have no problem with that.

While we are talking about what detracts from a site, let's mention navigational links that are created with javascript. They look great, can be animated, and truly are gorgeous. The problem is that javascript links are not readable by search engines because they don't contain words. For that reason we do not recommend javascript links.

Web pages that are nothing more than a large graphic file are a bad idea because while you may see text on screen there is no search engine readable text. As with any graphic file, it is not search engine readable because the text is only a picture or graphic of text, not actually words and letters. How can you determine if a site is built this way? At the top of your browser window you will see the words: File, Edit, View and others. Select and click on View. Look for Source or View Source and click it. Now you are seeing the nuts and bolts that create what is viewed onscreen. The words you see in the browser should be in the source file.

For these reasons we say, that while sites can and do contain all manner of movies, graphics, directions, maps, buttons, blinking lights, audio, sounds or songs we, in this book, are only concerned with text because text is what allows search engines to find your site. When you search for a video, a picture, or a song, you are finding the text, the description of it, written in letters and numbers. That needs to be clear.

When You Do Not Want to Be Found By Everyone

This seems like an odd thing to place at the beginning of a book on Web Content, but it is a necessary consideration because all Web sites have goals. In the commercial world, you want the potential customers to contact you and buy your products don't you? No, not always. Let's imagine that your client is a pizza restaurant with a large take out and delivery business. You likely know of restaurants like this. Our pizza shop wants telephone calls and business from people in the geographic area that it serves. Pizza shops have an operating area for their delivery people and for customers who will drive to eat there. Customers from within this area are what our pizza shop wants phone calls from. Calls from outside the operating area take up employee time, contribute nothing, and keep bona fide business from getting through. So you see, it is in the pizza shop's best interest to prominently list what town and state the restaurant is located in and the towns where it delivers. Including the local telephone number, with area code, at the top of the opening Web page goes a long way to avoid calls from far away. Keep in mind that many town names are duplicated in other states and when you search for pizza in your town, no search engine will ask you what state you are located in. Search engines are not that smart. Not yet anyway.

Consider a Web site as an employee. It has a job to do. In this case, it is to garner business calls that our pizza shop can fulfill. The Web site's job is to promote calls from within your customer area and eliminate calls from outside that area. So, when we say that the job of Web content is to drive business to you, that's right and wrong. The entire story is this: to drive business to you that you can service and make money from. And to keep you from spending time and money on calls that you cannot do business with. So, if you are a business that caters to local,

state, or regional customers make that clear on your opening page.

Here is an example of unwanted contact. The Town of Coventry, Connecticut used to receive email from people in Coventry, England. This was a time waster for everyone. It took up the time of the Coventry, Connecticut town employees and wasted the time of the people in Coventry, England. Online, with email, the people who contact you can be from anywhere in the world. Take steps to ensure that all contact is quality contact, so that this sort of thing does not happen to your clients. Never hesitate to make absolutely clear where you are located and the business area that you serve.

What You Want Content To Do

The goal of your content is identical to the goal of the Web site. No surprise there. For a commercial site the goal is to generate sales. This is done by a phone call, an online store, or for high end merchandise, a personal visit to a show room, dealer, or brick and mortar store. To go along with this, the site must support the ease of selling its product. Does the site allow for purchase by credit card? How about pay pal? Can users send you a check? Checks are a bad idea when dealing with the online world, but people still use them. A credit card is far more secure. Also don't forget email and the telephone. Do you have provision for an 800 or 888 number? Even though this is becoming less important with the advent of cell phones, your client may want to consider it. The question is how much business comes your way via the phone. As to email, you can easily install an automated response emailer that sends back an email in seconds. That's fine,

but people know that it is automated. Email can be a problem if you are not geared up to handle it. It can make you an email slave. Yes, it can. Adequate staff is needed to handle timely responses. For that reason we never recommend the use of email unless the client is comfortable with the technology and has the personnel, hardware, and connectivity to handle the traffic. If your client uses the telephone for customer contact now, then simply put their phone number prominently on the top of the opening page. On the contact us page, place the client's snail-mail address and fax number. While we are talking about a fax number, you can suggest that the client use an email-fax service where all faxes arrive in the clients email folder. A fax can be sent from a wordprocessor. This will save your client a fax machine and the telephone line that it requires and will result in a nice reduction in their yearly telephone bill and kudos for you. While there is a monthly fee for the fax service it is less than a dedicated phone line as this is written. This is great for political campaigns where political rivals will send a continuous fax to use up all your paper, all your toner, and maybe destroy your fax machine as well, but that's another story.

Writing For The Client

Writing to be successful means writing content that is targeted to the needs of your client. Before you even begin to write you need to:

1. Know the client, meaning who is paying for it?
2. Know what the content is supposed to do. Will it be used on a political Web site or will it be product description? You must know what the content's job is.

3. Know how long the content slated to live. Will it be replaced weekly, daily, monthly or never? Never is the most likely as people seem to have an aversion to keeping material current. This needs to be kept in mind. As a writer, you must exercise great caution to not contradict yourself.
4. Meet with the client personally. This is very important to the quality content you will be writing. You need to know if the company is 80 or 100 years old, a good neighbor in their town, and considers itself a family oriented company that serves the community. Or, is the company a brand new startup. Brash, brilliant, not conservative, stylish and composed of young people. The style of your writing must reflect who you are writing for.
5. Avoid allowing the Webmaster getting between the you and the client. Tell the Webmaster that you want to be involved in any meetings that will discuss content, the needs of the client, or the purpose of the site. From personal experience, we can tell you that this being involved in meetings is very productive. Take your time when in a meeting with the client and listen to the words that people use. You will find the key that you need to build your content around. In one meeting, after a couple of hours, we were told that, “We are a family related business.” Those words told us who we were dealing with and guided our material. Always make an attempt to meet the client. It’s important, when you meet the client to be sure that you present an agreeable, non-judgmental business facade because if the client

does not like you, they won't like your writing. To keep the sympathy of those you write for is smart. You are not manipulating anyone. You are keeping the sympathy of the people who pay you and that is always a smart thing to do..

6. Ask specific questions about who the client's customers are because they are the people who will be reading your content. Develop a general customer and give this person a name. Call him Joe or Josephine Customer if you have to. For ease of writing we will refer to Joe or Josephine simply as Joe and assume that our phantom customer is male.
    a. How old is Joe?
    b. Where does he live?
    c. Does he own a home?
    d. Is Joe divorced?
    e. Is Joe married?
    f. Does Joe have children?
    g. How much money does Joe make?
    h. What's Joe's educational level? Be prepared for Joe's educational level to run from high school drop out to Ph.D. This will be the case for any client that deals with people living over a wide geographic area. Our pizza shop is an example, as are fuel oil companies, and movie theaters. In this case you write for the lowest education level.

i. Has Joe lived here all of his live? Or did Joe move here from afar?

j. Is Joe a military person?

k. What's important to Joe?

i. Price?

ii. Service?

iii. Ease of ordering?

iv. Home delivery?

v. Fuel economy?

vi. An environmentally friendly product?

vii. Consistency of product?

viii. Availability of product?

ix. Quality of product? While this seems a strange thing to consider, there are items for which we are unconcerned with quality. For example: cheap ball point pens, give away products that are made to only look expensive, gag gifts of little or no value beyond a laugh when given.

Now that you know something about the client and the customer the user is no longer anonymous.

7. Look at the design that your Webmaster has roughed out and plan your content accordingly. If you have 30 percent of the onscreen 'real estate' taken up with

photos, navigation, headings and a phone number, you need to structure your words accordingly. Do not send along two thousand words because you know right-well that there is no place to put them all. Do however, be prepared to cut or add to your words should the design change. And change is a real possibility. Even after the design has been accepted. It has happened to us and will happen to you.

8. Do your keyword research. You will need to have keywords before you begin writing because the keywords will need to be included in headings, the body of the text, "alt=" data for graphics, and the META data and the title tags that you will be writing. If you have not been asked to write title, META and heading material bring it up to be sure that this is not your responsibility. To be honest, it is in everyone's best interest to have you do this, but that's another story. With the software on the market to optimize a site, you may not be asked to do the research.

All right, now look at the data you've gained. You have met with the client, seen the business, talked with employees, determined what kind of a business they are, how they see themselves, and their customers. You have worked out Joe Customer and know the demographics of the client's customers. You have made friends and shown the client that you are a top flight professional with the ability, brains, skills and background to do a masterful job with their needs.

So what's next? Start to write, but write for the Web, not for print and write for the reader, the person who pays for the services or goods, the user. You do not write for the client, the client's sales force, the client's engineers or for the Webmaster. Only for the user.

On the Web, you write tight. The fewer words you use the better. Less is more in every sense of the word. You've likely heard that before and I'm sorry to say that you will likely hear it again because it is that important. If you are new to Web writing you have a new skill to master. If you are used to writing or editing theses for Ph.D. students, culture shock is going to come your way. If you have written radio commercials, you're fine. Compared to writing a 15 or 30 second spot for radio, the Web is a breeze. It is all what you are used to. We have included examples that include writing driving directions, how to take something apart, put it back together again, and how to write for those occasions where people could be killed if they don't understand the message.

Fluff Is Not Content

Fluff is not content. Fluff is junk taking up space. It is far better for the client to have a little high quality content than page after page of fluff. No one is going to read the fluff, even if you think it is serving the purpose of bringing additional users to your site. While some people are more comfortable with a Web site that is packed with information they need to evaluate the quality of the information and just how many users are accessing it. This is easily done by using the diagnostic programs that accompany your Web site or ask your Web master for a report.

"Words are like loaded pistols."

Jean Paul Sartre

Part Two - Writing Your Content

Conventional guidelines for good writing hold true for the Web with one major exception. On the Web you “write tight,” using no unnecessary words or sentences. Use commonly accepted language and never simply throw information up and expect users to sort it out and make sense of it. So lets get writing.

The Inverted Pyramid

Those of you who have written newspaper copy will recognize this as will almost anyone who has published anything. It means placing the most important material first. This technique will provide excellent service for you and your users. First, for your client this works because he gets the ‘meat and potatoes’ right up front. You do not force the reader to search the text of the material to find the data. Users like that too.

For you it works well because should the Webmaster or your client need to cut the material, that can be done by removing content from the end of the material. This is why the inverted pyramid style of writing came into being when newspapers were invented. The need to cut material is a daily thing in their world. So, the editors developed a method that allowed them to cut whatever was needed from the end of the story.

Write Tight

On the Web write no unnecessary words, no unnecessary sentences, no unnecessary

paragraphs. Prune your words to the essence of what is needed to convey the message. Here are a couple of examples:

Before:

> The monthly meeting of the AB Model Aero Club will be held on Friday night, August 31, 2008 at the Anytown Public Library, 1200 Main Street, Anytown, Connecticut. We are located across from the town hall building and next door to the police station. The meeting opens at 7 p.m. with a discussion of old business then moves on to new business before our speaker will talk to us. A speaker will talk about the use of the new glue for balsa wood that we have all been wondering about. There will be a question and answer session and coffee will be brought from the pizza house. We expect the meeting to end at 9pm.

After editing for the Web:

> The AB Model Aero Club invites the public to attend its monthly meeting held at 7 p.m. Friday, August 21, 2008 at the Anytown Public Library. A speaker will discuss advances in Balsa wood glueing technology. Questions follow the talk. Coffee will be served.

How to Structure Content

Before you begin writing, think of how you will structure your content and construct a framework that will make it easy for users to find what they're looking for and understand what

you are writing. Draw a picture of what your site will contain. This is called a site map and it will contain all the pages that are to be included in the site. Work with the Web master and verify that your plan for the content works within the framework of the design for the site. Knowing something of the overall design is important. We can not reiterate this enough: work with the Web master closely and be sure that the design is complete and accepted by the client before you begin to crank out content. Why? When you know the design you know how much 'on line space' your content must fill. Should the design change, your content may need to be changed as well to fit the new space allocated for your words. Pay close attention to the site design and make it known to the Web master that you want to be involved in redesign meetings or at least notified of design changes in a timely manner. It pays to stay involved.

The site will consist of several to many pages. Each page will be a separate computer file. So, the content of the About Us page, for example, needs to tell about the business. The Directions page needs to get the user to the business or provide phone and/or email contact options and, perhaps, include a map. The contact us page will be very different for a pizza shop than a software provider. Your product pages will need to explain the goods sold to the buyer, not to the client, or to you, or sales people, but to the user, who is expected to plunk down a bunch of money to buy this stuff. Here are two books on advertising that can be a great help. See, Scientific Advertising by Claude C. Hopkins. We also like How to Write A Good Advertisement by Victor O. Schwab.

Recommendations

Writing for the Web is not like writing for print. People do not read Web content in the same way that they read print material. On the Web people scan for what they want. For excellent material on how users read the Web, see Jackob Nielsen's excellent site, http://www.useit.com/.

Words

"Less is more" in a very real sense. No one is impressed by material that contains highfalutin language. In fact, users hate it. Clarity is paramount. Present a clear message in easily understood everyday words. Write clean, concise text that gets the message across in a cogent, understandable, easy to read manner.

Never use ten words when five will do.

Technical and occupational-specific words and phrases are fine when the audience is reasonably expected to have the expertise to understand those terms. Do not use material that only insiders will understand when writing for the general public.

Use 'You, Your and We' to Personalize the Message

When writing personalize the message as much as you can. This is accomplished by using the words:

- You
- Your

- We

Your prose will sing. It is always a pleasure reading an author who took the time to personalize the message. You are writing for people, so write to them as well as for them. Read our description of The Mythical Deluxe Toaster to see this in action. In sales, this is a wonderful way to act like the user has already bought the item. These three words work.

When using 'We' you place yourself on a par with the user and so become part of and share the user's experience. This is a powerful technique. Use it.

Using 'Not Only' Construction

Many excellent writers use - not only - like this: "Not only does our product do this, but it also does that." If you want to tell what something does or does not do why would you start out with a negative? Think about it. Here is a fictional example, "Our fire truck not only puts out wood fires, but oil fires too." We prefer that the message be placed in the positive form of what the fire truck does, "Our fire truck puts out wood fires and oil fires." To begin your message with 'not only' just seems strange to us. We realize that is only a way of saying that something does more than one thing or that there are more than one reason or consequence to something, and that's fine. All we object to is starting out with negative construction.

Here are a few more examples:

- Our bicycle not only has 18 speeds, but front wheel drive as well.

Versus

Our bicycle has front wheel drive and 18 speeds.

- Not only is this cleaner, but it is simpler to operate.

Versus

This is cleaner and simpler to operate.

- Not only will you get there in less time, but you will use less fuel.

Versus

You will use less fuel and get there in less time.

Write material that is simple, straight forward and easy to understand. There is no need to begin your description with - not only. Describe what something is. Users are smart. They get it, if you present it. Tell them what things are. Remember, on the Web, people do not read as they do in print. Much text is searched for, even within a Web page, by using Control-Find, Ctrl-F. Use - not only - construction at your peril and with full knowledge that it can be confusing to a user because users will not be searching for “not only” but words that convey true meaning. Worst of all is the situation where you user misses the words - not only. Read over some of the examples above and ask yourself how they read should the user miss the words, “not only.” The decision is up to you. We like clear, clean easy to read and understand text.

Not Just Any Word Will Do

Word choice may seem optional or even silly. Nothing could be further from the truth. Word choice matters.

Connotations and How Words Sound

Consider how a word sounds, before you publish. Things may not sound or read with the meaning you intended. Consider a book published by President Jimmy Carter. He related that, while fishing, a salmon took “a ferocious leap at my fly.” He actually had the books still in the warehouse removed and the passage changed to “a ferocious leap at my lure.” Martha Yudkin, after getting no response to a flyer that listed her services as “constructive Critic on Call” changed the wording because the cord critic was too strong and did carried associations of discomfort and pain.

Michigan State University advertising professor Vandal Bergh tells us that most top brand names contain at least one of the “positive” sounds, those being: k, p, b, c, d, t, ch, and j. According to Martha Yudkin in Persuading On Paper, words can also sound masculine, feminine, confident, worried, round, oblong, fast or slow.

- Masculine: socks, cartel, rupture
- Feminine: slipper, peek, flutter
- Confident: lavish, demand
- Worried: pill, stomach
- Round: bubble, Oslo
- Fast: brash, violent
- Slow: damp, hamburger

Positive Words that Boost Response

- Free
- New
- You
- Sale
- Introducing
- Save
- Discover
- Results
- Proven
- Guaranteed

Negative Words that Detract From Your Message

- Buy
- Failure
- Bad
- Sell
- Loss
- Difficult
- Death

- Cost
- Order

Emotional Words Are Better Than Intellectual Words

Emotional / Intellectual

- Speed / accelerate
- Finished / completed
- Because / for
- Bright / intelligent
- Find out / learn
- Answer / reply
- Rich / wealthy

Use the emotional words. It is far better to speed things up than to accelerate the work; to finish something rather than complete it.

Use Present Tense Rather Than Past or Future

Write in the present. What is going on, happening or existing in the present is powerful and interesting. It is not history nor is it a future that may never come to pass. It's now. And what is more interesting than that? So don't say you have delighted or made people happy in the past. Tell readers that you will do so in the present. Remember the old saying, "What have you done for

me lately?" People are much more in tune with present accomplishments than with past performance or future promises. Write in the present. Don't say that the customer will receive a money back guarantee. Say that the merchandise comes with a money back guarantee. Don't say the cost is $100 after a money saving rebate. Tell them that the merchandise comes with a money saving $100 rebate. Always talk about what the product does and what the buyer receives, not what the product will do or the buyer will receive. Write in the present because, in reality, it is where we always are.

Sentences

Use sentences that are short and to the point and maintain proper grammatical construction. Keep your sentences to no more than 20 or 21 words. A sentence length of 15 words is fine. In print, we all use longer sentences. While fine for printed material, avoid long sentences on the Web. Studies relating to how user's read online, indicate that people prefer shorter sentences. Remember that, on the Web, the size of a users monitor is not an indicator of the size of the window that the user will have open onscreen. From our own experience, we routinely have windows of all sizes, sometime resizing on the fly multiple times during an online session, and appreciate short sentences. Further, we use Firefox and routinely increase and decrease the font size. This dramatically changes the way Web pages look.

Construction of your sentences is always to be subject first then verb and always in the active form. See the section on active voice on page 42.

Yes: John ate an apple.

No: An apple was eaten by John.

Shakespeare never used one word when ten would do. That was then; the Web is now. On the Web, Shakespeare's technique would be inappropriate in the context of Web content.

[No disrespect to Mr. Shakespeare intended. He is one of the most successful writers and playwrights in human history and we have great respect for his skill with the written word and his immense vocabulary. He used over 29,000 different words in his works. So, we do not criticize him, we admire him. All we are saying is, wordy technique is not appropriate for Web content.]

Do not write fluff. Your writing needs to be boiled down, the essence of what you are saying. What you want is the 'meat and potatoes' of the idea or concept. You're in the "no fluff zone" when you write for the Web. Here are a couple paragraphs of text that are loaded with fluff. You won't like the sound if it.

At the present time, we believe, that the World Wide Web (henceforth called the Web was created in 1980 by Tim Berners-Lee, who, at the time, was at CERN, The European Organization for Nuclear Research) was designed for scientists, other academics and technical personnel to collaborate computer to computer in what later became knows as 'online.' The Web incorporated the use and concept of what was then called electronic mail or e-mail. This, e-mail, was invented, or implemented, in 1971 by Ray Tomlinson, a programmer. As with many great inventions, at

first this new way of communicating, which came to be called email, was not thought to be a big deal. In fact, when Tomlinson first showed it to a colleague, he is reported to have said, “Don’t show it to anyone! This isn’t what we’re supposed to be working on.”

Okay, that’s enough fluff for you to get the idea. It is wordy, and seems to wander with no specific point. We start with the Web and Berners-Lee, then for no reason we are involved with email and its history and creator. The reader has not a clue what we are talking about and why we have made such major digressions and it is terribly wordy. We most love the opening sentence. It is a true testament to fluff. The very fluff of fluff. “At the present time, we believe ....” This is about the worst construction we could think of. Please don’t write that way unless you need to say you believed something in the past and now believe something else. Simply state what you believe, without using the words, ‘we believe.’ Fluff is filler, and filler on the Web is unnecessary and unwanted.

Use common words. When in doubt of the meaning of a word check it on the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, http://www.m-w.com/. The Web is no place to show the world how smart you are by using words and phrases not in the common usage of the intended reader. When writing for specific audiences that have a technical or job specific vocabulary go ahead and use appropriate vocabulary. Always write for the user because when you lose a user, you loose her forever. There are too many other sites out there that may be easier to understand. And let’s not forget your client. The client pays your salary, and what you want to give the client are words that gain the trust of the client’s customers. So, when you write for the user, you put money in your

checking account. Always a good thing.

Paragraphs

Many people only read the first sentence in a paragraph, so make that sentence count. Be sure that the information in the paragraph is accurately summarized in the first sentence. The first sentence, or topic sentence, in a paragraph tells the user what will be found in that paragraph. Material in the topic sentence simply must be found in the paragraph it introduces.
When users are looking for information, they will scan the first sentence of a paragraph.

Keep your paragraphs short, no more than four or five sentences in length. Target your paragraphs to a single thought or concept. Don't have 'run on' paragraphs that cover anything and everything, because users will not wade though all the clutter to find what they want. In fact, users will not read content like you are reading this page, but will scan it the content. Keep your paragraphs short and use good leading sentences. Your users will be ever so glad you did.

One final note on paragraph length. When writing for children do not hesitate to use one sentence paragraphs. This violates grammar rules, we know, but it makes the material far easier for young people to read. Do not let rules stop you from writing easy to read and understand prose.

Headings

Make sure that the all headings introduce the material that they refer to. Users will leave

and never return should they find that your site cannot be trusted. Headings can be bolded, of course, to make them stand out and to appear to search engines as important text. The best way to indicate a heading is with HTML heading tags. These tags range from <H1>, the largest, to <H6> the smallest. Search engines use heading tags to assign importance to the text they contain. So, use them judiciously, placing the most important material within <H1> tags and less important material in <h2> tags. At this time Google uses only <H1> and <H2> tags. By the time you read this, that may have changed.

Calling Attention to Text

You will always be running across text that you want to call attention to. For that you can simply display the text in bold with the bold tag, <B>. Do not use 'bold' text indiscriminately or overuse it. Only bold text that is important, but less important that what is contained in <H1> or <H2> tags.

Also, it is a good idea to stay away from underlining as a way of calling attention to the importance of text. Remember, on the Web, links are underlined. When you underline text, users will think it is a link and may try to follow a link that is not there. This is confusing and frustrating. Italics do not render well onscreen, in our opinion, and we do not recommend that you use italics to indicate the importance of text. As you have no control over the resolution, size, or quality of the users screen, it is best not to use italics at all.

Some writers place important material in uppercase, LIKE THIS. Avoid doing that. It is a

poor technique, is difficult to read, means nothing to search engines, and just plain looks lousy. Also, many users will read uppercase as shouting. In fact, in chat rooms, on blogs and other places online shouting is precisely what uppercase indicates. Avoid this technique. Users don't like it and neither do we. If you have to resort to shouting your opinion at users, you are in the wrong line of work. As every school child knows, when people resort to shouting it indicates either a weak position or an inability to articulate ideas in a cogent, intelligent manner. You are a writer and far too intelligent to resort to this, so don't.

Links

Be sure that links take the user to where the link's title says it does. It is frustrating to follow links and find that they do not go to their titled location. Links that take the user to unintended destinations are a disaster. Never have a link take the user to an 'Under Construction' page. Rather than insult people, simply do not put the link and the page it refers to online until the material is ready. Be sure that all links are working by checking them. All it takes is one mistyped letter to break a link. When a link is correctly spelled and remains non-working check the spelling of the file the link goes to. If the file name is wrong, simply change the spelling of the link to reflect the file name. Verify that every link on the site is updated to reflect the actual spelling of the file name. Or, you can rename the file to the name that all the links point to. Whatever is easier.

When linking to a file that the user may want to download use this format:
File name, file type, size in bytes. Like this: Antique cars [PDF 5MB]. This way the user can gauge

the download time. Many people use dial-up connections and have much longer download times than cable or broadband connectivity. Another good thing is to indicate when a link will take the user to another web site. Show the link something like this: More about fuel cells at CNN. This tells the user what the link concerns and that the destination is CNN. Also, talk to your Web master about having the link open in a new window. This way, if the user closes the window containing the story on fuel cells at CNN, the original Web site will still remain on their desktop. This is the preferred way to do this because the user can easily return to your client's Web site. Always make things easy for users.

Links are the big gun in the Web's arsenal, of that there is no doubt. This does not mean you should use them everywhere for everything. If you can adequately present the information without using a link, do so. Make your link description crystal clear. If you want to add additional material do this Link description. For more information on formatting a link's title see Links and formatting of title information in Appendix 4.

For cross references or ancillary information that may be nice to know, but not critical, use link titles like this: 'See also ...' or 'For more on widgets.' or 'Background information on widgets.' This does your users a real service because those who want more explanation can get it, and others can avoid following a link that offers them little. On the Web people want specific information, only reading background when it helps them understand the primary data that they are after.

Ambiguous Link Titles

Users want clear, unambiguous link titles. When you name a link ‘Next’ users do not know whether that means the next page or next chapter. This is confusing. Write the link text in straightforward, easy to understand language, that tells users precisely where the link will take them.

Always seek to use keywords in link titles. This is noticed by search engines and will help raise the sites search engine status. See Part 6. Also, it will bring people to the site when they search for those keywords.

Captions

Captions identify graphics, photos and other non-text information. Always caption your material, but do not use words that appear in headings on the page where the caption is located or you will confuse search engines. You do not want people finding the caption when they are looking for information. If your graphic’s meaning is obvious leave the caption out as there is no point in adding redundant material, unless you need to refer to a specific graphic. Avoid labeling graphics as Figure 1 or Figure 2. That sort of nomenclature is not descriptive. Also this is not needed if the graphics are so completely different that no one could possibly confuse them.

Whitespace

Don’t crowd information together. Whitespace is not wasted space, but a bona fide design

element, and a good one. Knowledgeable use of whitespace can make your Web site sing, enhance its readability, and just plain look great.

Bullets or Unnumbered Lists

Set out your information in bulleted lists. Bullets are especially useful when the information you present does not need to be in a specific order. What's a bullet?

- This is a bullet.
- This is as well.
- Hee is another bullet.

You get the idea. On the Web, almost any graphic can be used as a bullet. Ask your Web master about this. Please don't make the site garish by using blinking or flashing bullets. You will just make users crazy. Good taste is paramount when you select your graphics.

Numbered Lists

Use a numbered list when the order of entries is important. When using a numbered list, be sure that the material is in the proper order. The Web browser will number the list from number one to the greatest number required. Should you need to rearrange the content of the list, the numbers will always run from lowest to highest. Your numbered list can be composed of: numbers, uppercase letters, lowercase letters, uppercase Roman Numerals, or lowercase Roman Numerals. You can also begin numeration at a specific value other than one. Like this:

 begins a numbered list

<ol start=5> begins numbering with the number 5

<ol type=A> begins numeration with uppercase A. The next item in the list will be uppercase B

<ol type=a> begins numeration with lowercase a. The next item in the list will be lowercase b.

<ol type=I> begins with uppercase Roman Numerals.

<ol type=I> begins with lowercase Roman Numerals

<ol type=I start="7"> begins numeration with uppercase Roman Numerals at number 7, VII.

Note on quotation marks. If you have problems transposing your wordprocessor's quotation marks, open the file in an ASCII editor like EditPlus or Notepad and substitute ASCII quotation marks. This should not be a problem if you export your file to HTML, but may be if you cut and paste from a word processor directly into an HTML file. Forewarned is forearmed as dear old Mom used to say. We bring this up because small problems like this can cause you major headaches until they are routed out. Limit your online list to nine items or less and to no more than two levels. For instance:

<ol type =A>

First item

<ol type=1> Additional information under First item

 Second item

 end list

In your browser this will look like:

A. **First item**

   1. Additional information under First item

B. **Second item**

Units of Measure

Always include the units of what you are referring to. If you are referring to miles, feet, pounds, centimeters, meters, or kilometers, say so. In mathematical equations list all units and show every item in your calculations. This is true for salesmen as well as engineers. When you put material on the Web that users will use to determine how much of something they need to purchase, leave nothing out.

If your online program determines how many square yards of carpet, for example, are needed to cover a floor, clearly show that the user is to enter the room dimensions in feet and that the calculator determines, and returns, the amount of carpet required in square yards, if that is the case. When writing an equation, clearly include all units and the unit associated with the solution of the equation. Do not simply return a bare number. For example, it is 110 miles from Hartford to our location. It is not 110 from Hartford to our location. The units mean everything; do not neglect

them.

Metric and American Units

When you wish to include both American and metric units place the metric units in parenthesis. Like this:

- 100 statute miles (160 kilometers)
- 1 inch (2.54 cm)

Uppercase M refers to mega, or one-million. Do not use it to refer to micro, one-millionth. For micro use mu, µ. As in 150µm to refer to 150 millionths of a meter. Using lowercase m, refers to milli or one-thousandth and M to refer to million. Do not confuse them. There is a large difference in one million of something and one-thousandth of something. Exercise caution when using M in conjunction with tons, as in MTON because it can refer to metric ton or megatons. Make it obvious what you are referring to. Define the term if you have to or include a key.

How to Write and Present Numbers

When dealing with numbers from zero to ten, write them out. For numbers greater than ten, use the numbers themselves: one, five, ten, 11, 12, 1,000.

- One-million or 1 million. Using the numeral is very effective with large numbers when precision is not required and is easily read on the Web.

Use commas in large numbers:

- 37,165

Use a leading zero in decimals:

- Yes: 0.375, No: .375

Show Numbers as Numerals Online

Online it is best to use numbers as numerals despite what you will read in the style guides. It is far easier for a user who is scanning your site to read, interpret and understand 23 rather than twenty-three. It has been found in eye tracking studies by Jackob Nielsen, http://www.useit.com/alertbox/writing-numbers.html, "... that numerals often stop the wandering eye and attract fixations ...." So, what is more easily read online is what you want. For example:

- Two trillion rather than 2,000,000,000 or $2x10^9$.
- Compromise? Sure. Write 2 trillion rather than 2, 000, 000, 000, 000.

Then there is the international audience where you need to tell them what you are referring to:

- One trillion or 1,000 billion. Why? A billion in the United States is not a billion in Europe. They refer to different quantities.
- When using an abbreviation, like 1TB, to indicate one-terabyte, you had best explain it and other unusual or very large abbreviations as well. Explain that 1TB is 1,000 GB or 1,000,000 Mega Bytes. These explanations inform the user precisely what one terabyte is in terms that are relevant to the user. Also, some units can actually vary from one country to another. By defining what the terms mean can

alleviate a great deal of confusion.

When you need to refer to indefinite numbers, do so this way: Thousands of people attended the rally. Never write: 1,000's of people attended. In this context, the term 'thousands' is not data, it is not an exact or precise measure, but only intended to indicate the magnitude of the number you are talking about.

- The book had hundreds of pages.
- We were held up for hours.

When using numbers to compliment or to complain, precision is far better. When complaining: We were held up for six hours and 15 minutes, or simply, for over six hours.

When using bullets, do not hesitate to open with a number. While this is a no-no in print it is very acceptable online because it is easier for the user to read.

- 3 million were sold

Digits are easier to read and lend an air of accuracy to your data as well. This goes against what you have been told for print material. Like the man said, "Rules are made to be broken." What the man did not say, but what is also true, is "Rules are made to be broken, after you know them and have a bona fide reason to break them."

Time of Day

It is often necessary to include the time of day in your writing. To do so in an unambiguous manner is always what you want. Terms like noon or midnight avoid confusion. Especially when

you think about the confusion that 12 p.m., or 12 a.m. can create. It is much easier to simply state 12 noon. By using 24 hour time you remove all doubt. When writing, 13:00 hours, you refer to 1 p.m., 12:00 is noon and of that there is no doubt, ditto for 24:00.

Writing, 9 a.m. until noon or 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. leaves no doubt as to what time you are referring to. If you want to include 24 hour time, feel free to do so: 2 p.m. (14:00). Do not use 24 hour time alone unless you are sure that your users understand it. Many people do not understand 24 hour time, so never use it alone for the general population. Should you need to refer to time zones do not hesitate to add them. This is especially important for travel sites or where you are dealing with international users. Writing 9 a.m. EST leaves no doubt. This can be particularly important if you are located in the vicinity of two time zones or are conveying arrival or departure time.

Day, Date and Year

The Web is cluttered with a vast amount of out of date material. Do a search for an event and you can easily turn up material that is years, even decades, out of date. Do everyone a favor and include the year in your dates. It is troubling to read about an event only to find out that what you are reading is years old. Sometimes data on a Web site is not updated or removed - ever. Write like this, or some other reasonable format:

Wednesday, October 26, 2007 - 2 p.m. until 5 p.m.

Or

The event runs from October 1, 2007 to October 7, 2007.

This way the reader can easily determine if the information is for the current event or last year's. If at all possible, make it a point to remove out of date material. People want to know when the next meeting will be held. Keep your information fresh and up-to-date. Users will be glad you do.

Acronyms

Acronyms are shortened references to words or phrases. When you use one, define the first appearance of it - always.

- Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)
- Digital Volt Meter, DVM
- VAC (Volts Alternating Current)
- VDC, Volts Direct Current
- mAh (milliamp hour)

There are some notable exceptions to this rule:

- NASA, FBI, IRS, USA

Avoid using mailing abbreviations. CT versus Connecticut. The abbreviation CT is for mailing addresses. Should you need to indicate the name of a state spell it out completely.

As you have no control over how a user enters a Web page, you have no control over what, if anything, was read before the user got there. So, when you use an acronym define it. Do not

assume that the user has read previous material on other pages.

Use the Active Voice

In our society, we like information presented so that we know the subject first, then the action and then the result of that action. In the active voice it is the subject who performs the action. When you write, phrase your message in the active voice, never in the passive voice.

Say: Willie drove the car into a tree. Not: A car was driven into a tree by Willie.

As Willie is the subject of the sentence, he is placed first in the sentence construction. Next comes the verb - the action - and lastly the result of that action.

Say: Nuclear power generates 19 percent of the electricity used in the United States.

Not: Nineteen percent of the electricity used in the United States is generated by nuclear power. While this is not wrong, it does keep vital information to the last words. That is what you do not want to do.

State your position strongly, in the active voice. Your job is to inform, educate, motivate. It is not your job to force users to figure out what point you are making. A friend of ours once wrote: “It seems that the result of using this device in enhanced access to data.” This memo was to be send to a Vice President. He asked our opinion. After editing, “This device offers us the ability to collect and analyze high quality data in real time.” Say what you mean? Do not force the reader to figure out what you are saying. The reader does not know what you mean. Write in clear unambiguous language that is appropriate to the reader’s needs and the decision that the reader is

expected to make from the material. In this case a vice president was depending on an analysis of the device. And he got an excellent analysis. What was lacking was the message that the analysis produced, not the work that produced it. Do you see that wishy-washy writing could cause a complete and utter disaster because it did not convey the result of the work behind it? Always write what you mean in an active unambiguous voice. Always.

Look at It This Way

When people are in trouble, the call, "Help!" They do not say, "At this location we require assistance." Put the message, what matters, first. Tell the reader right up front what you are talking about, what it is that what you are talking about is doing, and the result of what you are talking about just as done. Isn't that a mess? Yes, of course, it is. Would it not be clearer if we had written, tell the reader what you are doing and the result of the action. Isn't that better? Or you could perhaps, maybe, kind of, well you know, say, "Better it is." But then you would sound like Yoda. Not a good thing. Write for clarity and understanding. A good thing that is.

Exceptions to the Rule

Are there exceptions to this? Yes, sure there are, especially on the Web where readers scan text looking for keywords. In fact, studies (see: useit.com) show that users read in an F shaped pattern, often reading the first two words of a paragraph. Knowing this, it is in everyone's best

interest to place the most important words and keywords first. Are we saying to break the rules. Yes, absolutely we are. Your first responsibility is to be sure that the reader can make sense out of and find your content. The rules of grammar exist to make the language readable. Literally, to structure the words into meaningful ideas and concepts. It is the meaningful ideas that the rules are designed to protect and to that end must you bend your efforts. Never let a rule stand between you and the clarity, ease of understanding or ability of the user to find material. Do whatever it takes to publish quality content. That effort includes making material easy to find. It's a fact that we need to get the first two or three words right because that is all that many users will see when they scan a Web page. So, for the elements that stand out on a page, headings, subheads, summaries, captions, links, and of course bulleted or numbered lists, do not hesitate to place what is most important first even if you create content in the passive form. It is better that passive form content be found rather than active voice content be missed.

We are talking about passive headings, not the text of the body of the document. For body text the passive form is to be avoided, but not in the words that users can be expected to scan. First get your material found. Then get your material read.

Lending Credibility to Your Writing

People are bombarded with messages on television, radio, from spam, email, pop-up advertisements on the Web, in newspapers, in the car, on their cell phone, signs on the side of the road, from everywhere. Literally, from everywhere. In fact, soon you will find advertisements on

gasoline pumps. Yes, there are Internet capable gas pumps to show you ads while you fill up. You will hear advertising people say that they have got to cut through the clutter. Meaning that they must craft an ad that people will read, pay attention to and act on. For this to be the case, the material must be credible and cut through the clutter. We writers have similar responsibilities when we create Web content. There are things you can do to lend credibility to the message.

You can have your words backed up by the testimonial of an expert in the field. If you do this the expert must have what it takes to back up the statement in no uncertain terms. To have the man-on-the-street say that something is good means nothing. Choose your experts with care. Then there is always the endorsement from a well known or famous person. Many people in entertainment and sports do this sort of thing. That person could be an athlete, musician or movie star. The fact that someone with name and face recognition is plugging your product will get a lot of people to stop and see what he or she has to say. And, if that is what you are after, it may be enough. For many products it is. Where this breaks down is in medical and other needs of a personal nature. Here you want people that have successfully undergone the procedure and are willing to let their story be told with their name attached. This is very powerful and not to be underestimated. We suggest that a short background sketch be included. Just enough for the user to realize that this person is your normal man or woman-on-the-street. Just like your user is. With the ability to use downloads and audio/video technology, you can easily write up a script and place a video on your client's web site. With a little extra effort you can even include a podcast.

Details

It is said that, “The devil is in the details.” That is certainly true. However, for us, it is not the devil, but credibility that is in the details. The more detail you include in the description, the more credibility the user will give you. This shows people that you know what you are talking about. Nothing pegs you as an expert better than knowing your subject’s details and people with expert knowledge certainly know them. While users are free to agree or disagree with this or that no user will ever say that you don’t know what you are talking about when you have showed that you demonstrate expert knowledge. When you choose someone to quote or to use for a testimonial as an acknowledged expert, be absolutely sure that who you quote truly is an expert. You don’t get a second chance to get this right.

When you listen to someone describe what it is like to sky dive, ski, or win a race it is their details that convey the meaning. How hard the climb, how cold the nights on the mountain, the smell of the camp stove, how bad or surprisingly good the rations were. These and a thousand other details separate the person who actually climbed the mountain from someone who just wants you to think that he or she climbed the mountain. Use details to make your words sing with authenticity. Where do the details come from? Research. Do your homework.

Make Meaningful Associations

There is no finer tool in writing than the use of comparison. When you use this technique be sure to choose things to compare that are meaningful to your readers. This applies especially to

statistics. To say that more people are killed by falling coconuts than die in shark attacks is nice, but just how many people are killed by sharks and what has that got to do with coconuts? Are you saying tropical islands are dangerous places in and out of the water? Or saying that a cannon ball sized coconut dropped from 50 feet can kill you? Gee, there's a surprise. Or are you trying to compare the probability of shark attack to that of getting hit by a falling coconut? Well, if you spend any time in the tropics you soon learn to stay out from under coconut trees. So, to what does this relate? That is the question that you do not want the reader asking. You want your statistics to be meaningful, and by themselves statistics rarely are.

Statistics

Use statistics that mean something and be careful when you use them. We recently received some sales hype and were told that every year 50% of this outfit's customers stayed with the company. Well then, 50% leave every year which seems like some serious turn over. The statistic meant one thing to the salesman and something totally different to us. Statistics matter. They affect your credibility as do the words you use and your ability to write well.

Above we talked about coconuts and shark attacks. Consider:

- For the years 1959 - 2006 the total deaths by lightning in the USA was 1,916. Deaths from shark attack 23. Lightning is a threat everyone on earth faces and it is far more credible than comparing to death by coconut.
- In the years 1990 - 2006 there were 16 fatalities from collapsing sand holes and 12

from shark attack. This, at least, gives numbers that are relatively close in magnitude.

- Bicycles. For the years 1990 - 2006 there were 12,974 deaths from bicycle accidents. In the same time period there were 12 shark attack fatalities in the United States. Bicycles are clearly a far greater threat than sharks. Aren't they?

Now we get to the actual threat posed versus the perceived threat posed. For this there is no better example than smoking and the threat it poses to the smoker and others around him.

Consider these death rate extrapolations for smokers in the United States: 440,000 die per year; 36,666 die per month; 8,461 die per week; 1,205 die per day; 50 die per hour. These numbers are grim, as they were no doubt intended to be. We offer them here to show you that words matter. How you structure content matters. Numbers matter. Sometimes those numbers are people, that you or your user may have known and loved. These numbers are so large that they rival battle field conditions. In world War Two, the United States suffered 416,800 military deaths. Smoking kills more than that every year. Do you see the power of choosing the right statistic? When meaningful to the reader, statistics can be powerful devices that can alter behavior, if you can get the user to pay attention and take them to heart.

Here is something in a lighter tone. Do you remember the Wendy's advertisement, "Where's the Beef?" It was masterfully done and resulted in a 31 percent increase in sales, and elevated the 80 year-old Clara Pellar to the status of a semi-celebrity. This was a successful campaign because on TV the viewer could see what was being talked about. This is the 'see for

yourself' approach of influencing people. Should you decide to use this approach you must be very careful. You need to be sure that the user sees what you see. Remember the salesman and his 50 percent retention rate statistic? It told two stories. 'See for yourself' is a powerful technique when used properly. Be sure that what you ask people to see is what they do see. Do this by testing your content. Also, whenever you ask the user to make a decision, you must be absolutely sure that the decision that they actually make is the one you want them to make.

Predictions

People are not noted for their capability to predict. Don't ask users to make predictions based on the data or argument you present. Think of our favorite salesman again. The one who talks about a 50 percent retention rate. Do not ask users to make assumptions or draw conclusions from presented data. You must make the conclusions for them and tell them what that those conclusions are. Tell them in plain, easy to understand language. Never lose control of your content.

Things to Avoid

There are many things that can hurt your prose. Here are a few to be avoided at all costs. What is written for a Web site can be a thing of beauty and success, or hammer the site and the business who owns it beyond belief. The following is not a complete list of what not to do. It is a list of things that we've run into over the years in print, on the Web and in dealing with highly

intelligent people. This is not an intelligence thing because it is not the lack of intelligence that creates problems. It is the assumption that there is nothing wrong with doing things the way they have been done, and an inability to see the site as the user sees it. The only way to effectively combat this is to have the material proofread and looked at by a wide range of people and then acting on the feedback.

Do Not Use Uncommon Acronyms

Abbreviations made up on the fly are a mistake. Don't use them.

- Do not abbreviate police officer as p.o. this is not common. Yes, we've seen it done in print.
- Never use a commonly accepted abbreviation to refer to something else. For example EMT is universally accepted as referring to Emergency Medical Technician. We have seen it used to refer to Emergency Monitoring Technician.
- Small, or lower case, m refers to milli or one-thousandth. Uppercase M refers to mega, one-million.

Cute or Non-standard Spelling

While it may be very cool to write things like: the number "4" rather than using the word 'four" or 'for' creates a disaster online, lowercase 'l' rather that upper case 'I,' made up abbreviations that are fine for a small segment of the population such as the drivel that is used in text messaging.

Do not write this way. When used in content it is absolutely without redeeming value. When used in a Web address it's deadly. When people look for a Web site they will spell things correctly. Should a Web address not be spelled right it will never be found. Just think of all that work and effort wasted. Spell words correctly. If the Web address you want is taken, find another one that you can spell correctly. Never intentionally spell words wrong. Many people will be reading your words. Write for everyone. If you don't, you will alienate all the people who can't figure out what you are saying and that is the Kiss of Death to your client, your reputation, your future and your check book.

Insulting, Vulgar, Obscene, Hate Filled or Derogatory Language

This only turns people off. They will leave your site, your client, and you forever. To gain widespread support, readership, and an airing of your views your content must be read. Always write for the reader in a manner that the reader does not find offensive because if no one reads your words no one gets exposed to your ideas. And ideas are important. You are an intelligent articulate person or you would not be creating Web content. There is no need or excuse for you to be vulgar and insulting. It only makes you and your content look bad.

Under Construction

Never put a page on the Web with this as its content. Wait until the content is complete and then put the page up. No one wants to see Under Construction when they follow a link that is supposed to contain information.

Welcome To ...

Do not welcome users to a site. We do not say this to be rude. It's simply offers the user no value and takes up precious on-screen real. Professional Web developers know better. Also never place 'Welcome to ...' in the site's <TITLE> tag. To do so is deadly. Search engines will never find the site. Think about it: how many people will search for 'Welcome to ...'? None, because those words have nothing to do with the business. Many Web sites make this mistake. Try going to any search engine and searching on 'Welcome' you will get hundreds of thousands of hits. To find one particular site is impossible.

Humor

Use it with caution. What is funny to you may not be to your users. Also, what is funny locally may not play well in another part of the country or to international users. Puns are especially dangerous to use if you expect international users to visit your site. Here is aan example, we published a short piece with a newsletter based in London England and used the word 'pants.' the editor changed it to trousers because in England 'pants' refers to under ware. When dealing with international users it is imperative that your content be proofread by a knowledgeable person who knows the culture(s) that will be reading it. Take nothing for granted.

Jargon

Do not use jargon. It is job specific and may or may not be in use industry wide. Further, people just starting out in the business may not recognize it or know what it means. All industries have jargon. If you need or wish to use it, then define it. There are many ways to do this, including making what looks like a hypertext link which pops up a definition of the word. Or better yet, make a definitions section on the page. This is actually done in procedures and other industrial and occupational documents. By placing the definitions section at the front of the document, the user see it before the body of the material is read. So, if you use jargon, define it. Should you find more than one definition for a term, be very careful. Some documents are so important, that if misunderstood, someone could be killed or seriously injured. When this happens, stop the job and get the information straightened out by a subject matter expert, SME, who knows the industry.

Names and Positions

You will need to refer to people, titles and the positions that they hold in a company or organization. Keep in mind:

- People come and go from positions. Should a user inadvertently ask for someone by name, the user may be told that the person is no longer with the company. This creates confusion and needless problems when the user only wants to speak to the position, not necessarily the person in that position.
- When people leave the company or are promoted, the Web site must be edited to reflect that. Until the edit is completed the Web site will be out of date.
- Some sites list the names of senior management and their email addresses and some

do not. This can be a sensitive issue. Find out what the customer wants before you chase around for hours getting names and email addresses only to find that the client does not want that information on the Web.

- When publishing telephone, cellular telephone, or fax numbers triple check them and have them verified for accuracy.

Sometimes it is best to list people's title and not their name. Here is an example: If you are interested in joining our club, contact the Membership Committee or attend a meeting. Also, there are times when you need only state: Contact customer service at .... Or, see our FAQ. These comments provide the necessary information and mention no specific name(s).

Having said all of the above, there are times when then the names of top executives and others will need be placed on the Web. There are good and valid reasons to do this, including showing the world that your company has expertise and experience onboard. When using the names, and sometimes pictures, review the information that is included. Be sure to tell the people who have their names online to expect to receive resumes, letters, and sales material in their published mailbox. Consider using the unspammable email code in Appendix 9. This will go a long way to keep the email addresses you list from being read by a robot and added to spam lists. The people who have their email addresses listed will appreciate that. Also, you might suggest that any publically published email addresses go to a special mailbox and not be used as a main email address. Also, this email address needs to be checked regularly because there could be an email there that leads to more business.

Technical Content

You may be called upon to write for scientists or engineers, or simply to make a technical report Web ready. While you can simply save the material in HTML format from within your word processor, we don't recommend depending on that because sometimes things just don't get rendered correctly. This is one time where a technical background will serve you well. If you are a technical person with a mathematics or engineering background this sort of thing will pose little problem. Should you not have technical background what follows may be of help. In mathematics, science, engineering and chemistry, equations are everyday stuff. They are literally the language of science.

You are not going to have to do the mathematics or the science, but you will need to be able to put the equations and report into Web ready format. Luckily this is not terribly difficult. You will make extensive of your $^{\text{superscript}}$ and $_{\text{subscript}}$ functions.

Superscript and Subscript

Your wordprocessor (we specifically refer to WordPerfect, Microsoft Word, and other advanced products) has the ability to place text into superscript or subscript. This can also be done in HTML with the <sup> and <sub> tabs. The entire tag looks like this: ² and ₂. The second tag, the one with the slash [/] ends the super or subscript and returns the browser to its previous text setting. So when using HTML to make x^2 your tag will look like this: x². In a wordprocessor it will simply look like this: x^2.

Chemical Symbols

Chemicals are represented in terms of their molecular make up. For example water is commonly referred to as H_2O, meaning two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom have gotten together to create water. By using nothing more complex that the subscript and superscript you can write any molecular formula. What you will not be able to do is draw a picture of the molecule. For that you will need a graphics engine. We recommend you let the client do that. Have them make the graphic and send it to you for inclusion into your text. Be sure to coordinate this with the Web master so that the graphic and its caption are properly placed on the page. If the caption and text are highly technical, have it verified by your subject matter expert, SME, for accuracy. The people who will be seeing this will be technically savvy and this needs to be absolutely correct.

Mathematics

You may at sometime work for professionals who will need to place technical, mathematical or other such material on the Web. When that day comes, what follows may just get you the job. Don't turn down the gig because you don't have a great technical background. It is your writing skills that are needed. They'll do the math.

The table below contains some mathematics symbols that you will be likely see in the client's data. Some of these symbols are easily created, like arrows or the plus (+) and minus (-) signs. Others you will find are beyond HTML's ability to create. What to do? Use your wordprocessor's equation editor and export the material to HTML. Once you have the material in HTML format you simply incorporate the file into your material. Note, do not expect to be able to

edit your equations once they are in HTML format. When an edit is needed you will most likely need to do use your equation editor and do another export to HTML. So, be sure what you export is finished and ready for final use. You will most likely not be able to open this in an HTML editor and make changes.

Some Mathematical Symbols

≥ Greater than or equal to	→ Arrow right
≤ Less than or equal to	← Arrow left
≈ Approximately equal to	↑ Arrow up
± Plus or minus	↓ Arrow down
× Multiply	$\int$ Integral
÷ Divide	$\sqrt{}$ Square root
+ Add	$\sqrt[n]{}$ Nth root
- Subtract or minus	⟌ Long division
$\sum$ Summation	∴ Therefore
∋ Such that	$^{Superscript}_{Subscript}$ Superscript and Subscript

On the keyboard you will find:

= Equal symbol

\+ Plus or addition symbol

\- Minus or negative symbol

x Multiplication

/ Division, written 10/5 to indicate that 10 is divided by 5. Using parenthesis and spaces makes this easier to read and understand: (10 / 5) = 2.

% Percent symbol

$ Dollar symbol for United States currency

( ) Open and close parenthesis

[ ] Open and close brackets

{ } Open and close braces

It is interesting to note that the cents symbol for United States currency may not be found on your keyboard. When listing prices this can be a problem as you can't easily show how many cents something costs, so for a 50 cent item write, $ 0.50. Be sure to include the leading zero and the dollar sign so that the user does not mistake the price for 50 dollars. The actual symbol for cents, ¢, can be likely be found in your wordprocessor's Typographic Symbols listing.

Engineering Notation

This notation expresses things like this:

$2.00\ (10)^{3}$ meters is two kilometers. Engineers like their exponents in multiples of three. Like this: $(10)^{3}$, $(10)^{6}$, $(10)^{9}$, $(10)^{12}$, $(10)^{-3}$, $(10)^{-6}$.

In the example above, $2.00\ (10)^{3}$ meters, the exponent 3 means that you have a one followed by three zeros - 1000 - or one-thousand. 2.00 multiplied by 1,000 is 2,000.

Scientific Notation

Scientists often use very large or very small numbers, requiring the use of exponents. For example when they write the speed of light in space they do so like this: $2.998\ (10)^{10}$ centimeters per second. So, where an engineer would have the exponent, in this case the ^{10}, an engineer would prefer to see something divisible by 3. An engineer would write it: $29.97\ (10)^{9}$ centimeters per second.

You won't be responsible for the mathematics, but you will be responsible for being able to write out the equations. Now you can, with little more than using superscript and subscript.

Some Examples

Below are some examples of content. They include material on writing instructions for a lawn mower, a non-working computer, writing directions, making assumptions, and writing directions.

Instructions

Instructions need to be presented in a coherent, logical format and in the sequence that the activity is to be accomplished. When you are writing instructions to sharpen the blade on a rotary lawnmower, you first need to ensure user safety so that the user does not inadvertently kill or seriously injure him or herself when following your directions. This information is vital and needs to appear first.

Always tell the user what to do. Never tell the user what not to do. Let us digress for just a minute to giving directions to someone who is to drive from one place to another. When giving driving instructions you always tell the driver where to turn, what to look for. Have you ever had someone tell you, don't go left when they mean go right? Never tell people **what not to do** because sometimes they misread or do not hear the word 'not.' (To say or write 'don't' is far worse because the apostrophe t (do**n't**) - can be missed when read or not heard when spoken. The consequences of this can be disastrous.)

When People Could Be Killed

Consider: Don't Enter When Red Light Flashing

Versus: Your Death or Serious Injury will Result From Entrance When Red Light Is Flashing - This Door is Locked. Obtain Key at Control Room.

Which is more powerful? Would you walk past a flashing red light? But what if the light is not working or burned out? That eventuality is planned for. The area is locked and the key is only available at a single location.

The word 'Your' is added to the sign to personalize the message. It is you who may die or be seriously injured. It gets your attention, and may save a life or lives because many people cut corners and do things they should not do. That is why the door is locked. This is not fiction. Industrial facilities routinely lock people out of dangerous places. Where people lives are at risk, do not beat around the bush, tell them so in clear language.

This is the ultimate example of writing for the reader. Here is 'What's In It For Me,'

WIIFM, in action. What's In It For Me? You get to live. You may think that what you write on the Web may not be that dire. That may not be the case if you are writing maintenance or equipment replacement instructions for industrial facilities. That may not be the case at all.

In general, instructions need to convey:

- What the job is or what will be accomplished when the job has been completed.
- The tools required, including test and measurement devices, paperwork or permission to enter the work area, current data on air quality, radiation levels, and other pertinent area conditions that can affect worker health and safety.
- The replacement parts required, including cleaners, solvents, materials to absorb water or oil - that sort of thing.
- The relative difficulty for a homeowner or other novice. This can be omitted for professionals.
- The approximate length of time it will take to accomplish the job, how many people are needed, and ancillary services like security, a crane, truck or equipment that will be supplied by others. This is important for professionals as well as novices.
- Safety information and instructions on how to take equipment safely out of service and tag it as such, if appropriate. Tagging is beyond the scope of this book. In any facility that uses colored tags it is of paramount importance to get them absolutely correct. People can be killed if the tagging is not correct and we do not exaggerate for effect.
- Also, if needed, include information on how to test equipment to verify that it is

safely out of service or no longer connected to electric power, steam, water or other hazard. Any equipment that needs to be taken out of service must be specifically listed as to what it is and where it is. Also, the procedure to do that must be referred to by name, number, or title. Never simply tell someone to go somewhere and turn something off. Things must be done right or not at all. The impact of doing things in an uncoordinated manner can be dire, dangerous, and expensive. Safety is of paramount importance. Never cut corners in your writing. Never, ever, say to yourself, "They know that," and leave something out.

- List each step logically and tell the reader of any parts that are to be retained for reassembly or reuse.
- Should reassembly include fine adjustments, specific tolerances, voltages or other specific instructions, be sure to include the specific readings that are to be attained in reassembly including their units, as well as the tools and equipment necessary to attain those readings. For example: 'Adjust voltage to 18VDC,' not 'Adjust voltage to 18. Further, if a technician is required for the operation of test equipment, be sure to list that in the document. It's not enough to say that something must be accomplished; you must list the devices and competencies needed to accomplish the task.

Examples of Properly Detailed Instructions

Example 1: How to Sharpen the Blade on Your Rotary Mower

ATTENTION These instructions are fictional and written for this book only.

Do Not Follow Them To Work On An Actual Mower

The blade your Fictional Gasoline Powered Lawn Mower will become dull after use and require sharpening.

Attention: Your Fictional mower is equipped with a gasoline powered engine and may start when the blade is moved by hand. This can result in death or serious injury.

Remove the spark plug before proceeding.

Wear heavy gloves and safety glasses.

Read these instruction completely before you begin. Be sure that you understand them and that you have the required tools to remove the spark plug and the blade, to sharpen the blade, and to reinstall the blade and spark plug. Under no circumstances should you go forward if any step is not crystal clear to you. This mower will be dangerous to you and others if this is not done correctly. A loose or improperly tightened blade and cause severe injury or death. **Do not start the engine until you are absolutely sure that the blade is properly tightened when it is reinstalled.**

You will need:

1. Heavy gloves and safety glasses.
2. A 13/16 inch wrench to remove the spark plug.
3. A support, or assistant, to hold the mower up while you remove the blade.
4. A wooden block approximately two inches by three two inches by six inches to

wedge the blade against the body of the mower.

5. A 7/8 inch wrench to remove the nut securing the blade to the mower.
6. A shop vise to hold the blade.
7. A heavy file or blade grinder.
8. A screw driver or other circular metal shaft to be used for balancing the blade.

Procedure:

A. Be sure the mower's engine is not running.

B. Put on your heavy gloves and eye protection.

C. Remove the spark plug wire and, using the 13/16 inch wrench, remove the spark plug so that the mower cannot start. Also, removing the spark plug will make it easier for you to rotate the blade.

D. Lift and support the mower.

E. Using the wooden block wedge the blade against the body of the mower. This holds the blade so you can remove the bolt holding the blade to the mower.

F. Wearing heavy gloves, use the 7/8 inch wrench to remove the nut and washer that secures the blade to the mower.

G. Carefully place the 7/8 inch nut and washer aside; you will need them later to reinstall the blade.

H. Wearing safety glasses and your heavy gloves, place the blade in a shop vise and sharpen with a file or grinder. The cutting edge should be about 1/64 inch in

thickness.

I. Check the balance of the blade by removing it from the vise and hanging it on a round shaft. (A screw driver works fine.) Should the blade be out of balance the heavy side will sink lower than the light side. Grind or file the lower side (heavy side). Repeat until the blade hangs roughly horizontal.

J. Reinstall the blade finger tight, then using the wooden wedge tighten securely. If you are unsure of how to accomplish this, get help. **Do not start the engine until you are absolutely sure that the blade is properly tightened. An improperly tightened blade can result in severe injury or death.**

K. Remove the box or have your assistant put the mower down.

L. Reinstall spark plug and spark plug wire.

We intentionally used numbers to list the equipment and letters for the procedure. This way the user can readily see where one ends and the other begins. Further, the user will not inadvertently read the equipment list when looking for the next step in the procedure. As rotary lawn mowers are dangerous in the real world, we begin the instructions by telling the user to read the instructions all the way through before starting the job. What we want most to avoid is to have someone not be able to competently reinstall the blade and then start the engine with the blade loose. This could kill somebody. Rotary lawn mowers are nothing to toy with. So, it is vital that the user be strong enough, able enough, competent enough and have the tools to tighten the blade securely.

Example 2: For a Non-working Computer

Note: some computer equipment on and off switches do not read On or Off. Instead they list a zero (0) and a one (1). The one (1) is the On position and the zero (0) is the Off position.

- Verify that the electric supply to the room is adequate and functioning. To test this, plug in a lamp that you know works and turn it on. If the lamp lights and is as bright as it should be, your electric supply is working. Unplug and remove the lamp.
- Plug your computer into the wall outlet that you just tested with the lamp.
- Verify that your monitor is connected to the computer's video-out port and that the monitor has power from a wall socket and is turned on.
- Verify that your keyboard and mouse are plugged in. If wireless, verify that their batteries are good, are properly installed, and that these devices are turned on.
- Turn on the computer.
- Turn on the monitor.
- Wait two minutes.
- If no response, call 1-800-PhoneNumber.

These instructions verify that the user has a working electrical connection. Many people overlook this and simply assume that their electricity is working. We've heard of a user who called for help when his building had no power. This means that you must literally spell everything out. Assume nothing when dealing with equipment that can be expected to be in the hands of a novice.

It is humorous to note that when we first heard this story of user calling for help when the

building had no power, it supposedly involved an actual technician and a user calling for assistance to get the PC working. When asked if the PC was plugged in, the user said that he could not determine if it was or not. When asked why, the user responded that the lights were out and that he could not see in the dark. The technician reportedly said something like, “You’re to stupid to have a computer.” Or words to that effect.

There are two messages here for us. One obvious, the other less so. Never use condescending language or the like when you write. And second, write instructions for the user who truly is a novice. Assume nothing. This is hard to do because you have every right to assume that someone knows that electricity is needed for the operation of a computer. There lies the problem; you assumed. An assumption cost the American taxpayer 125 million dollars. Read about NASA and an assumption that lost a Mission to Mars.

Assumptions, NASA, Miles, Kilometers and a the Loss of a Satellite

Here is an example that cost the loss of the 125 million dollar Mars Climate Orbiter spacecraft, September 1999, http://www.cse.ohio-state.edu/sce/now/mars-orbiter.html. What happened? Well, it seems one group of scientists used miles per hour and another group used kilometers per hour. The satellite was lost because of this. Why? Because people, very smart people, assumed. They did not know. They did not ask, verify, require or stipulate. They assumed. They did not write their specification properly. When that happens, machines are lost, projects damaged, people killed and injured. Don’t even assume that a user knows that when the lights are out the computer is out. If you can do that, and write accordingly, you will be a good and

competent writer because your writing will be crystal clear prose that everyone can understand. And that literally separates the good from the not so good.

Words have consequences. Normally, we are only worried about the return on investment of those words, the click through rate, and the conversion rate from visitor to paying customer or how much money the site produced. Write to get inside the head of the harried user, the employee who just needs to do one little thing. Even cutting one tiny corner can be dangerous. Protect people by writing for clarity and understanding. Write tight with no fluff.

Writing Driving or Travel Directions

When you are writing directions always tell the driver what to do, how far to travel, what to look for. Couch your directions in the positive. Never write what is not to be done.

YES: Go to the end of the street and **turn left**.

NO: Go to the end of the street and do not turn right.

YES: Continue 1.2 miles

Turn left on Main Street.

At the first intersection

Turn right on Elm Street

NO: Take any left. Go to Elm Street and turn right.

Always write directions that tell the driver what to do. Remember, the driver is on unfamiliar ground or the instructions would not be needed, and that he or she may not have anyone

to assist, may be lost, in a hurry, confused, or afraid of becoming lost. Hence, the bolded text where turns are to be made.

Give complete directions from the North, the South, the East and the West. Resist the temptation to lump everything in one large, terrible, chunk of impenetrable text. And never refer the user elsewhere. You know, those instructions that say something like: From the North Take Interstate 91 South to Interstate 84 and follow instructions from the East. Gee, thanks. Now the user has to go elsewhere and begin reading again. Give complete directions in their entirety.

Content That Raises Money for a Charity

Your client needs money and they are going to use the Web to raise it. That puts you in the hot seat because it is the quality of the message - your message - that either brings home the bucks or does not bring home the bucks. Here are some success strategies.

Feelings inspire people to act, to donate. Think about the TV ads that raise money. Do they talk about the millions of people in need? Never; what could any of us do to help millions of people? Nothing, but we can help one person. You, and those around you, can each help one person. You can feed and educate one person. And therein lies your success. You want the reader engaging their emotions. Bringing the user's calculating brain into the mix is counterproductive to your goal. It is the user's emotions that will generate your donation.

In their excellent book, Made to Stick, Dan Heath and Chip Heath relate several stories about raising funds and how people make decisions. While these stories are beyond the scope of

this book, the writing is not, and so we will discuss this from a writer's point of view. You want to keep the focus of the user on one person, be it a child or other worthy and needy soul that your organization is trying to help. Here, pictures, or better yet video, will assist greatly.

Content That Sells

When the web site you are writing for is a strategic business tool and your client's livelihood is directly connected with the site's ability to make a buck, the client will be most interested in content. One of the best things you can do, is make the site a tool for the client's customers. While this is likely beyond your involvement as a writer, you can certainly suggest ways to do this to the Web master and the client. Some ways are to: offer pertinent targeted news related to the product or industry, information on advancements in technology, or product tips and perhaps technical material, so that when customers have a problem, this site is the first place they turn to for help.

Offer free content. An excellent way to do this is in the form of Portable Document Format (PDF) files. You can create them and structure them to cover the most popular products and most common questions. Another good thing is an extensive FAQ, videos, and maybe podcasts as well. To see a site with excellent information, search capability and the ability to choose topics, products, and languages, see the Linksys technical support pages http://linksys.custhelp.com. This site is truly superb, excellent technically, is well written, and what you need can be located in numerous ways. Using multiple paths to find information is not to be minimized, as people think

and search differently. To be seen as a resource when users have a problem is high praise indeed and enhances the worth of product(s) because professionals and novices alike need technical data to make your product function. Giving excellent service and access to data can spell the difference in the decision of why your product is purchased over your competition. Those who buy, install and maintain your products will know that you are there for them. This alone will have your products recommended because the technicians who must maintain it know that they can go to your Web site and get the information they need to keep the product(s) working. While true for just about anything, it's vital for complex devices.

Make the Web site a destination. A site that does this is Amazon.com. How many times have you gone there for information on a book or product? Did you then buy the product? You probably did. Amazon also provides product reviews, access to used goods, free shipping if you meet their requirements, and a powerful search engine.

To gain Trust. When buying online, people need to be confident that you have the goods, will ship in a timely manner, and can be trusted to provide merchandise in the condition advertised. When customers have problems don't hide the ability for them to contact you. Some businesses actively avoid customer complaints by burying the link to their complaint department somewhere on an unrelated page. This is a mistake and lousy customer service. Place a link for those who have a problem where it can be found on the 'Contact Us' page. You won't call it the complaint department, of course, but you can title the link something like Having a problem or simply Contact us with questions or problems. Customers with problems will not go away and are best dealt with in an open and honest way.

Availability of customer service. Will the phone be answered by someone in the same country as the caller? Or is it answered by someone half the world away who barely speaks English? When our Dell computer needed help we were connected to fantastic customer service in the United States. These people were absolutely crack. Our experience with foreign customer service has been erratic. One woman was so bad that we had to continually tell her that she was doing fine, to literally shore her up, so that she could do her job. Meaning, to read the solution from her computer screen. She was not doing fine. This is not good customer service, but exists only because it is a low cost solution. Some companies are training people to speak without an accent so that you, the caller, won't know who you are talking with. This won't make up for the lack of technical expertise, but hey, you aren't supposed to be smart enough to know that.

Just how good are these people? This is important with complex products like computers, test equipment, automobiles, software and networking, or something as simple as a kitchen water faucet. Recently our Delta kitchen faucet needed to be rebuilt. It came with a lifetime guarantee. A single phone call took us to a competent American who sent us the parts for free. Superb customer service by a competent English speaking American. Their products we will buy again without hesitation, even if more expensive than the competition. People will spend the extra money to buy competent service.

Availability of replacement parts, manuals, tools and the ability to locate and obtain them is important. Our Case garden tractor needed major work, parts and service. One call to their customer service people found uncommon expertise. The man we talked to gave us real time parts availability and emailed us several PDF files. We have never encountered better customer service

anywhere. Knowledgeable, helpful, not-in-a-rush-to-dump-the-call customer service is worth paying for. While you will have no control over where customer service is located, you may be writing the instructions that they will be reading.

Methods of payment. Credit cards are ubiquitous, of course. Also consider accepting PayPal. When we sold an article to a newsletter in London, England, payment was made via PayPal. The money was transferred internationally without a problem.

Search capability. People love search capability on a site. Many problems can be avoided by simply including search capability. You can use Google to do this for you. See Using Google to Search Your Site in the Appendix11. However, be advised that for the Google option to function, Google must first visit and index your site. When you add material to the Web site, it will not appear in Google's search results until the Google robot has revisited and re-indexed your updated site. Having said that, it works great - once your site has been visited.

Your writing must stand on its own. Do not expect the user to somehow know what you are referring to and do not expect that the user has read material on another Web page. On the Web a user can easily find a page without having read any previous material. Calls and emails report problems with a page being understood need to be taken seriously and fixed. Customer feedback must not be overlooked, ignored, or assumed to be from people who just don't get it. Your job as writer is to make the material easy to read, easy to understand, and easy to act upon. Failure to do this will drive business to competitors who operate an easy to use site.

Design. The design, look, feel and content of the site can make you appear competent and

trustworthy - or not. Take a look at infomercial sites that scroll on and on giving you more and more sales hype. Besides the fact that this is terrible design, customers don't like it and will not read all of that impenetrable text. They simply will not read it because the Web is not a book. Write your Web material for the Web.

Testimonials. One of the best things you can offer customers are testimonials from people who have done business with you and enjoyed the experience. Here too, appearance means everything. What is more meaningful?

Great. Loved doing business with you.

A. Smith, New York

Or,

Good price, competent staff.

Joe Customer, President XYZ Corporation

See the difference? The first testimonial could be from anyone from almost anywhere in New York state. The second is from a particular person from a specific business. A testimonial like this really and truly paints your business in a beautiful light. The people who read your testimonials aren't stupid. Bogus testimonials are worse than no testimonials at all.

One note on testimonials; always ask for them. And be sure to tell the person you are asking that you may want to edit what they send you because, while people may enjoy doing business with you, a direct quotation may not read well. Always ask if it is okay to edit the quote. Then send it back for approval of your edit. We do not recommend publishing an edit of someone's words without their approval.

Testing. When you write sales related information use an opening title that will arouse interest. The more tantalizing, different, or attractive the better. When you list prices, the order in which they appear makes a difference. Customers will likely buy a $10 item if you show it after a $100 item and a $1,000 item. Showing the most expensive items first is the way to go. This is an old trick advertisers have used forever. Look at catalogues and online to see for yourself.

Give the user additional items to consider. Your offer will have more appeal when you include additional items rather than list one large item with bundled extras. Make sure the user knows that there are extras included at no extra cost. Always give alternatives.

People love savings. When you call attention to the amount of a discount, customers perceive that amount as earnings rather than as part of what they will be spending.

People hate surprises. When customers expect to pay $21 and do, they're much happier than when they expect to pay $20 and encounter an additional one-dollar charge. It's not the money itself, but people do not like surprises that are money related because it makes them question your honesty. You do not want the customer to leave. Remember, in the online world your competition is only seconds away. Once you lose a user, you may well have lost them forever, especially when they perceive you as a dishonest seller, or indulging in 'bait and switch' tactics. Online you must be painfully honest, or you are out of business, simple as that.

People dislike separate charges. It hurts more to pay $50, plus $100, plus $75, totaling $225. To make the payment disappear from your users mind arrange for that $225 to be deducted automatically from expected income, as from paychecks or tax refunds or an existing account

balance. Do that and the payment psychologically disappears. This is a powerful motivator to buy right now. Also, rebates are good. People see the bottom line cost after the rebate and lose touch with the fact that they are paying full price up front.

In general, when you write advertising, use:

- Fewer multi-syllabic words.
- Short sentences, with simple sentence structure.
- Carefully consider the age, vocabulary, educational level and occupation of your targeted customer. When you are selling to teenage males you will write far differently than when selling text books to graduate students.
- Use less jargon.
- Never use profanity. This turns people off. The people you turn off won't buy your products. Always write in a manner that casts the product and your client in a favorable light. Remember, that much merchandise is purchased as a gift. Do you think parents, grandparents and other adults want to read profanity in the description of the gift they are planning to purchase for a teenager?
- While we are on the subject of what not to use, don't say that something is 'insane' or use trendy wording to refer to the way something operates or performs. Your audience is worldwide, country wide, state or region wide. What may be fine for your neck of the woods may be an insult or complete nonsense somewhere else.
- Use shorter paragraphs. Be sure the opening sentence of your paragraph introduces what is covered in that paragraph itself is no more than five or six sentences in

length.

- Use subheads and bullet points, when appropriate.
- Use white space.
- Don't require personal information in order to get something extra, for personal attention, technical support or to simply contact someone in the organization.

Write summaries. Consider magazines and how they get you to read them. Below each article's title, the magazine offers a summary or teaser that draws you into the story. Jazzing up online articles with this technique pulls in readers and provides fodder for search engines. Sidebars, lists and captions enable you to repeat keywords naturally and increase the keyword density of the page. To identify the most powerful keywords, test headlines against each other or query buyers. Then track the responses and develop a map of how people found you and why they bought from you. This is invaluable information that is available for little more than the labor to collect it.

Give options. People like choices. Avoid a take it or leave it mentality. This is perhaps best evidenced in high end computer sellers. Go to any of their sites and you will find that you can custom build your own computer. A good tactic is to offer goods in several price ranges. One that is low in price, one moderately priced, and the most expensive top of the line item. This is particularly important for any store catering to professionals because they will pay for the best, longest lasting item with the most options. Tell the user what the item comes with or how it is configured.

Consider these two scenarios. They both refer to the same car:

One: The car is loaded. This is how car sales people talk. They mean that the car includes

just about everything that is offered. You don't have to write this way, because while fine in conversation where a person can expand on what is being said, online you can't do that. What you see is what you get online.

Two: This beautifully maintained, one-year-old, pre-owned, low mileage, late model beauty wraps you in high performance, climate controlled luxury. At the beach, in the mountains, or at your favorite five star restaurant, this car tells the world that you've arrived. In showroom condition; you also receive a one year bumper to bumper warranty. Features include:

- A 300 horsepower, six cylinder engine
- Automatic transmission
- Air conditioning
- AM/FM stereo radio, 6 CD changer and 300 watt, 13 speaker sound system
- Power moon roof
- Alloy wheels
- 60,000 mile radial tires
- Power windows
- Power, heated mirrors
- Power, heated seats
- Heated windshield wipers
- Fog lights

The car is referred to as pre owned, not used. We use the term showroom condition to indicate like new condition. You could also use 'excellent condition.' We have listed features from the most

important to the least important. To shorten the ad and to save space the Web master, or car dealer, only need to cut from the bottom.

As you can see the difference between the two descriptions is dramatic. On the Web you are using the written word, and only the written word, to get your message across. Yes, a picture is included, but the picture can not present the wealth of information available through competent description. In high-ticket items like automobiles, the chances of buying sight unseen require you to spell out specifically what the vehicle includes. Include enough information to generate a phone call or email to get the dealer and buyer in communication. And please, impress on the dealer the importance of ensuring that emails are competently written and don't contain spelling errors. People in the market for high end merchandise will judge the quality of the writing in email and letters.

The Psychology of Selling

There is much to say about selling and most of it will not be said here as we are concerned with content, but it is only proper to at least touch on the high points. Indecision in others is something you can do nothing about. You can, however, move people from sitting on the fence to making a decision to buy. So, what are you going to do? You are going to allay their fears, doubts, and concerns. Fears, doubts, and concerns about what? About being cheated. About receiving inferior, counterfeit, or inferior goods and services. Do that and you are most of the way to a sale. Think about the things you buy, how you decide to buy them, and where you buy them. So what to do?

Let's start with reassurance. There is no better way to do that then with a guarantee. An unconditional, 100% money back guarantee for any reason is best of all. For some reason, according to Marilyn Ross, the stronger and longer your guarantee, the fewer returns you will receive. The fewest returns come from a lifetime guarantee. Why? Buried somewhere in our head is the thought that if it thing carries a lifetime guarantee, then it must be of good quality.

Then there is the old adage, "It's too good to be true." You must be sure that your sales prose do not create this opinion, because if you do no one will buy your goods. People will shy away from offers that seem too good to be true. That's a fact. When goods are offered at substandard prices, there has got to be a reason why. And most people do not want to own the item to find out what that reason is. When offering goods at a substantial discount, this must be taken into consideration to move the goods. Also, be careful of creating a situation where the customer will wait for a yearly inventory sale or other periodic low price sales event. When you need to move a product have the event you use be a one-of-a-kind nonrepeatable event like a ten year sale or an overstock sale. This is especially important in the online world, where you do not want to develop a reputation for the lowest price at certain times of the year. That sort of reputation can put you out of business.

Your address is important, as people will trust a street address more than a post office box. To use a post office box, place your street address above the post office box information. That way you don't lose reader trust. That's always a good thing.

You will likely have need for photographs, graphics and other images on your site. Photographs are best, as they show specifically the product and the details of that product. The user

can see that nothing has been added, left out, diminished or enhanced.

Ever heard of buyer's remorse? Ever been sorry that you bought something? What did you do? Likely you returned it. Why? Not because you did not like it, but because you simply changed your mind about the product. It was too big, too small, the wrong color, last years model, or this years model and last year's is cheaper. Maybe it did not offer any significant improvement, in your opinion, over something else. The reasons are legion. You need to address buyer's remorse before the sale, not later. A good way to do this is with information supplied with the product or available online. If you do not want to spend the money for an insert to be packaged with the goods, then at least provide information online where buyers can read about the product.

For example these items require after purchase input from the buyer. Think about anything with a gasoline engine that will need maintenance. Also, high ticket items like pianos as they may need tuning or re-tuning after some time. And what about computers? Technical support is almost a necessity to keep from being deluged with machines that "don't work" because they have software problems. This type of information is not to be kept hidden if you want your products to stay in peoples homes and their money in your bank account. You can also use a FAQ to this end. If you know that certain situations with products will be difficult to correct, tell the customer that up front, and put the information online as well. When people know, that because of the way their product has been maintained, stored, or used that its life may be shortened you avoid problems later on and reinforce what needs to be done to protect the product. This is also true for repairs. When the customer is informed up front that a repair may not last long, an informed decision can be made that protects you from an irate customer later.

Explain the process, the product, and the maintenance up front. Let people know what to expect before they buy. This is best for high ticket items that need professional installation like an in-home theater. Conspicuously list the steps from initial consultation to installation. Even include financing information, if appropriate. When you and the client are on the same page, things go much smoother. And then there is the reason for the purchase. Is it to be used privately or by a business or corporation? According to Bob By, people would rather indulge themselves when buying for their personal use and care only that the device get the job done when buying for a business. So, when selling to consumers, appeal to their needs; when selling to a business, don't.

Encourage people to act now rather than later with these proven techniques:

- Limited quantities.
- Offer a reward or premium for those who act fast, meaning act now.
- Put a deadline on the price, offer, or configuration of the offer.
- Discount the price for fast response.
- Make multiple methods of response available; use email, fax, telephone, and postal mail.
- Create a fill-in-the-blanks coupon or Web form.
- Make your contact information available on all email, Web forms, coupons, and paperwork so your customer can easily find you.
- Accept credit cards, PayPal, and checks.

When you format your sales material, break it up with subheadings. This makes the material far easier to read and offers the user the advantage of knowing what comes next and

facilitates finding specific information. Indent your paragraphs. This is easily done in HTML with a style sheet, if you want nonstandard indenting. Talk to your Web master. Open your paragraphs with larger size text. This is called drop caps when used in print and increases readership, as does indenting. Keep paragraphs to five or six sentences. Avoid like the plague, solid appearing, impenetrable blocks of text. Caption photographs and graphs. Do not expect the user to figure out why a photograph is included. Photographs and graphics must fill a need or perform a function or they will just confuse people. Never include photos without a good reason to do so. Organize your selling points with bullets or a numbered list, which is more powerful than bullets, and introduce the list with a keyword laden heading. And never end your heading with a period. As David Ogilvy, one of the best advertising men in history, tells us, another word for a period is a "stop." Keep columns narrow, to 40 characters or so. Any wider and they become difficult to read as users will have trouble locating the next line.

Writing eBay Ads

As many people who use eBay are not writers and would never hire or even think of hiring a writer, we thought that this section might be a good idea. We will discuss some techniques that work well and mention some HTML, because a little HTML can make an eBay ad really pop.

List what you are selling right up front in words that you know people will search for. You find this out by searching for similar items. Be sure to get your search terms into your ad, or it will not be found. For items that may be listed under several terms, simply place each term in your ad.

If you are selling dishes, then get the word dish in the add. If the dishes are porcelain, list that. If for a special use, be sure to say that. This is important because you want people to be able to find your specific product. To expect users to spend hours wading through thousands of ads looking for a sherbet dish is unrealistic.

When you write your add, include some HTML to make the description a thing of beauty. Here's an ad we recently ran and the HTML we included. How the ad appeared on the Web you can see below.

```
<h1>Hasselblad Winding Crank for 500CM and Others For Manual Shutter Cocking and
Film Advance
<br><font color="red">Compare with new Winding Cranks costing more that
$100.</font></h1>
<h2>Excellent Condition.
This rapid film winding crank features a folding handle. It will serve you well. Genuine
Hasselblad made in Sweden.
<br><br>Email questions to <a href="mailto:Enter Your email Address Here">Wayne
English</a></h2>
```

This offers you some advantages. Our first line is a description, which we verified at photographic sites, as this is a photographic accessory for a Hasselblad camera. Then we placed in red text that a new winder costs more than $100. Next, in <h2> heading, we listed a few words on condition. And finally, we include the email address in the tag and ended the tag with a .

None of this is difficult or hard to do. All that is required is a little practice and your eBay ads will sparkle. The above HTML renders like this:

Here is a use for your Web site that you may not have thought of, place your eBay pictures there. You will need a link in your eBay ad to take the user to your Web site. This link will do that: <a href=http://www.yourwebaddress.com/ebay.html target='_blank'>.

Your image tag(s) will look like this:

<img src=photo1.gif>



<img src=photo2.gif>

<img src=photo3.gif>

These three image tags will display three image files, photo1.gif, photo2.gif, and

photo3.gif. Of course, these names are fictional, as is the address above, and you will insert the actual names of your picture files and Web address. Be sure to keep your pictures small, two or three inches by four or five inches and display them at 72 dpi. Avoid images of 300 dpi as they will be huge and take more time to render on the user's computer. In the link to your site you will see target='_blank' this statement opens your Web site in a new window. That way, should the user close the window containing your pictures, your ad at eBay ad will still be onscreen.

Making High Quality Pictures for Your Ad

You do not need an expensive digital camera to make high quality photos for your ads. If you have one, so much the better, but any digital camera that will get an image into your computer will do the job. What we suggest is a simple in-home photography studio made from a white bed sheet or a towel, masking or duct tape, an ironing board, and an iron. Be sure to read the caution below about using tape on painted walls. If you have a tripod use it, but it is not required.

Let's start with the caution on using tape on a painted wall. You need to be very careful because you can easily pull the paint off the wall when removing the tape. That's why we suggest masking tape and not duct tape. If you use duct tape bend the tape completely over on itself and gently remove it. To avoid this all together, use a table or other surface to hold up your background.

Locate your studio near a well lighted window or near another light source. You do want a strong light source and one that does not make a lot of shadows. Do not hesitate to combine a window with home lighting or use several lamps. Multiple sources of light will create a largely

shadow free background. The time taken to set up your studio will reward you with excellent photos.

You will use the sheet or towel as a seamless light-colored background. Pick one that is white or beige, or some other very light color. If you are photographing something that is light colored a darker color for the background is in order so that your product does not disappear into the background. Now iron the background to remove wrinkles and fold marks. Then place the background on the support and tape it securely. Depending on the size of the background and the size of your merchandise, you may want place the background on a table or on the floor. Now, pull the background forward and place it so there is a smooth curve where it transitions from the horizontal to vertical and tape it securely to keep it in position. If using a table top, you may not need to tape the background at all. Your studio is now complete.

Place your merchandise on the background roughly half way between the edge closest to the camera and the smooth curve. Turn on your lights or open the window curtains. Your item should look great with no obvious shadows. If you have a shadow and it does not hurt the picture, leave it there. If the shadow interferes with the picture, add another light or move your existing light(s). Remember, when you stand at the camera position what you see is what the camera sees. There is no need to take test photos, and waste a lt of time to see what things like in the camera, unless you are using the camera's flash. Just stand where you will take the picture from and look at your merchandise. Shoot a half dozen pictures and you are done with that item. Photograph additional items while you have the studio set up. Here is a professional photographer's trick: do not take the studio down until the pictures are in your computer. This way, if you need to re-

photograph anything your studio is still set up and ready to go. This is far easier and faster than setting everything up a second time.

Maximize Your Chances of a Sale

These tips are paraphrased from the eBay Web site.

No reserve auction. Sell your goods with a no reserve auction (the minimum price that a seller is willing to accept for an item) to make getting the first bid easy. Other people are far more likely to bid once someone else has, and a reserve price can put you out of the running if your price is thought to be too high.

Shipping. Include a reasonable cost for shipping. Be careful when listing an item, in that international shipping is far more expensive that national shipping. Also be aware of the fact that the greater the distance, the more the shipping will cost. To get an estimate of your shipping charges with UPS go to: http://www.ups.com/. For Federal Express (FedEx): http://www.fedex.com/.

Payment. Accepting funds online is the way to go. We use PayPal exclusively. PayPal sends you an email stating who deposited the funds, how much was deposited, and when the deposit was made. Best of all, you know the money is there. PayPal charges you a fee for their services. Visit them at: https://www.paypal.com. Note the additional letter ‘s’ in their URL, it signifies a secure connection.

Description. The eBay search engine is excellent, but no search engine can find items that

are mislabeled or misspelled. Include keywords that buyers will search for and verify that your description is accurate and that there are no misspellings in it.

Pictures. We've shown you how to create a serviceable studio to make high quality pictures of your goods. Like the man said, "a picture is worth a thousand words." Use pictures to tell the story and enhance the sale. Don't forget to add pictures to your Web site and link to them from your eBay ad.

Communications. The more customer- friendly your policies are the more likely you are to convert potential buyers into loyal customers. Clearly state your returns policy in your listing. Simply by having one will increase customer confidence. If needed, include a customized FAQ on your Ask a Seller page and respond to emails in a timely fashion. Include extras or a handwritten note to surprise and delight your customers.

Be an Expert. When your customer knows you're an expert, your ability to sell is much greater. Establish your own blog, write PDF files and place them on your Web site to establish your bona fides and showcase your products. Establish yourself as someone that can be approached for an expert opinion. When this becomes a burden on your time charge a fee to answer questions. People will pay for expertise. Sharing your knowledge and expertise will drive business to your site via your eBay listings and from search engines. Be sure to create About Me and My World pages to establish your presence in the eBay community.

Another thing to do online is to write posts on blogs other than your own that feature your top-selling products. When you blog be sure to leave the complete address of your eBay site and include your business email address. What to blog about? Write a review of your top product.

Get Free Boxes, Online Postage, and Pick-up: USPS offers a variety of free shipping supplies which can be delivered directly to you. Also you can create and print shipping labels from your computer and schedule package pick-up. This saves you money, time, and a trip to the post office.

Content that Trains

Should you become involved in training, there are two things you need to know: what is it that the training is going to accomplish or what behavior will people be expected to perform after being trained, and how do you prove that they are able to do that?

Sounds simple, doesn't it? It's not. Hopefully your end of this will be to put the training material in Web ready form or make the training documents themselves pretty. If you find yourself being drawn into the actual design of the program, keep the above two things very much in mind; for here be dragons. Actually, it's a good idea anyway, because without knowing the goals of the training and how those goals will be tested, you can't write the program. If anyone doubts that or tells you otherwise, he or she has a major disconnect from reality. Training cannot be developed unless you know what you are training for and how you will determine if anyone is learning. Think about it; do you really want to fly on a commercial jet plane with a pilot who was never tested on taking off, flying and landing? In the world of training the two questions above are mandatory. We know this because....

We have done a great deal of training: first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation; Software

Quality Assurance; Radiation Protection; the Mathematics, Physics and Metric Systems sections of a health physics program; and a vast amount of photography. When you write up your training program, be sure that it contains everything needed. Define all terms and list materials required - even paper and pencil. List the outcome expected and how the instructor will test, to be sure that the training was effective. Include a test in your lesson plan with the answers and verify tat all answers are presented in the course. Remember, if the students are not successful it points to the quality of the training, not to a failure on their part. You, as writer, in conjunction with the training developer, are responsible for developing and writing a program that accomplishes its stated objective. Some training is traceable by state or federal agencies. This training will include a paper trail of all items, including the lesson plan, student names, and maybe Social Security Numbers, and the original tests with grade. If this is the case, be sure that the instructor is informed on how to handle the paperwork so that it gets to the proper location for archiving. It is best that this be prominently listed in the lesson plan.

The instructors lesson plan. Instructors need special handling. Tell them if an electric outlet is needed or whether they will need a video monitor, a DVD, CD, or tape player? How long the program expected to last in hours per class, total number of classes, and how many meetings per week. Will a white or black board be required? Will an overhead projector and screen be needed? Does the instructor need a computer with a digital overhead projector? What about special cables to connect all this technology? Be sure to include notes for the instructor to mention where the men's and ladies rooms are locates, how to find fire and emergency exits, where one can find a water fountain, where lunch will be served, if appropriate, and how best to set up the room. The

instructor should not expect anyone to set the room up. In all the teaching we've done, we always arrive an hour early to get the room ready. Oh yes, an extension cord 25 feet long, or so, is a good thing to suggest the instructor bring along. Advise your instructors to visit the room and facility a couple of days in advance to see the room and to find where things are located. While this seems like overkill, it's not. Further, you have given your instructor(s) the information they need to be successful and so are off the hook. Should they not heed your sage advice that's is their decision. You will never hear that the training failed miserably because the instructors were not adequately briefed. Here we are not referring to computer based training (CBT), but classroom training which you may be asked to write and place on the Web in support of a far flung outfit with people in numerous locations.

For CBT needs, your training will not contain instructor materials because there is no instructor. In this case, you need to ensure that the material presented does contain the answers to the questions asked and that the material and questions are written in a manner and language that is appropriate to the level of the user. Test, test, test before you put the material live on the Web. It is embarrassing for the outfit paying for the training to hear from employees that the training contained misspelled words, terrible grammar, and bad punctuation. Be sure that the training passes muster with the Subject Matter Expert (SME). This may need to comply with state or federal regulations and everyone in a corporation will be required to take it. When writing this type of material, having it seen and approved by knowledgeable persons is mandatory. Under no circumstances do you ever want to present to the client material that is incorrect, dated, or does not address the latest regulations.

Training - What It Is and What It Isn't

Training is not education. Training gives those who are exposed to it, the ability to do something, to affect change in something, to reach a predetermined outcome with something, or to be made aware of specific material, and to attain an acceptable level of competence or knowledge. Education does not, necessarily, do that. That is why there are highly educated, highly intelligent people who can't get a job. They are educated, yes, but they are not trained. We note that many highly educated people are also highly trained, such as doctors, dentists, computer programmers, engineers, scientists and others as well. We do not imply that education and training are mutually exclusive. All we are saying is, you may be called upon to write up a Web based training program. It is unlikely that you will be involved in a Web based education program as that usually falls into the province of the instructor, the SME, the university or college or other educational institution. In the realm of education, students demand contact with their educator. The SME will take care of the technical needs of the subject matter and you, as the content writer, will likely write up or edit the course materials for the Web.

Training is specific. It is designed to impart a particular skill or information. Education is broad based and supplies knowledge. If you doubt that, read any college course description. They tell you what will be covered. They do not tell you what you will be able to do after taking the course. That's because the goals of education and training are different.

Content for an Intranet

Intranets are Web sites available only to employees of a business. As the name implies, they are accessible available from within the organization's computer system and not necessarily available to the general public. They may be of great value or totally useless, depending on the philosophy of the company. If the Intranet is used to provide high quality company wide information, it can be of immense benefit. One thing that can contribute mightily to the success of an Intranet is the search engine that employees use to find specific material. While search engines like Google, Yahoo, or AltaVista can be used to search a site, they man not be a good solution if you want to keep your Intranet private and hidden from the Web. In that case a search facility will need to be added to the Intranet.

As to writing for an Intranet you can use jargon because the reader knows the territory. In this case, jargon is appropriate and saves you the time and embarrassment of defining terms that users deal with every day. When placing company-confidential material on the Intranet, be absolutely sure that it is password protected. For highly confidential information consider using a specific server and taking additional precautions. If the information is so sensitive that its release could cause devastating economic effects or other dire results, consider not placing it on the Web at all. Ever.

Some Intranets are formatted terribly, with text literally running from one side of the screen to the other. There is no need for this sort of thing. All it does is make reading difficult. If you have pages and pages of this sort of thing, check your usage statistics and see how many hits your Intranet is receiving. Part of your Intranet's job is to be presented in a manner that allows people to read and understand the material easily. Use white space, numbered and unnumbered lists,

headings and bolding of important concepts and words, to make your Intranet a good one. Otherwise you are just wasting a lot of money on people, server(s) and connectivity.

Content for 'About Us' Pages

'About Us' pages are found in most business sites and writing them can be lucrative for you. This is something you will want to keep in your professional tool box, perhaps advertise on your Web site, and maybe include on your business card as well. For sure, add it to your brochure. Here's a tip for you. Make your brochure out of heavy stock and have a perforated business card in it that can be torn out.

An 'About Us' page has specific goals. Be careful here, remember that what you are about, is passing on information that is important - to the reader. To someone likely and hopefully to be a prospective or potential client or customer. This is no place to tell everything or to write a company history. Tell the reader about the company.

1. Include the benefits of doing business with the company.
2. If you want to attract families, tell the user that the company is a good neighbor who will be there for them when needed. That's important. Especially if you offer 24 hour service. Mention the training or professional certifications that service personnel hold.
3. Set the company apart from the competition in concrete, solid language. Show the user why he or she should do business with you.
4. Include how long the company has been in business and the full range of products

and services that are provided.

Company Background and History

Even if the company is new, you can write its background by listing the accomplishments and credentials of the company's officers and senior personnel. Include where they worked, awards, patents, publications, inventions they have received or published.

- Depending on the size of the company, you may want to include a short bio of each member of the senior staff.
- Listing senior management makes contacting them easy by prospective clients, if their email address is included.
- Awards and other professional recognition are powerful and go a long way to show prospective clients that the staff has the professional qualifications to provide a prospective customer with what is needed.
- Remember, prospective clients need reasons to contact someone and showing that this company is well led will go a long way toward convincing people to do business there.

Content for a Newsletter

Think of a newsletter as though it is a small newspaper targeted to a specific group, industry, technology, or slanted to a specific point of view. In fact, newspapers and leaflets are examples of newsletters. A newsletter is likely to be designed to keep the readers informed on

current happenings, technology, software and other things that are of interest to those who work in or have other interest in, the area that the newsletter covers. Also, newsletters are shorter than an eZine, being only a page or two. Newsletters may be composed of many short bullets, each of which is a smattering of information on industry wide news. Newsletters hit the high spots as they are not designed for detailed, in depth, reporting on an issue. If that is required, an article can be written or referenced in the newsletter. On the Web you can include a link, but be careful using links. People want the newsletter to contain information. They do not want it to contain only links to information located elsewhere. Please note that newsletters do not need to be distributed by email. Many organizations send their monthly newsletter by postal mail as well. Some even offer the choice of postal mail or email. As the Web becomes more and more popular, we expect that email will become the method of choice as it is far easier and cheaper.

Writing for newsletters can be lucrative for you. It is well worth adding this skill to your bag of tricks and offering your clients this service. For examples of some excellent email newsletters, see the section on Email Newsletters.

Content for an eZine

An Ezine is a periodic publication distributed by email and likely posted on a Web site. The tendency in ezines is toward interactive content. An ezine will be structured more like a print publication, in that it will contain content that is relevant to its mission. For example, an ezine on short stories will contain short stories and perhaps articles on short story writing, plot construction, character development, dialogue and other things that are of interest to the subscribers of the ezine.

Ezine readers are knowledgeable and savvy. So, should you write for an ezine be sure that your material is pertinent, accurate, and up to date. If you have written articles for print, you can write them for an ezine. Like all writing for the Web, write tight, no fluff allowed. Be careful about including links that take the reader outside the ezine as they might not return.

Writing Portable Document Format Files (PDFs)

Portable Document Format is the format created in 1993 by Adobe Systems for document exchange. The Adobe reader, available free of charge, used to view or listen to PDF files is Acrobat. You can download the latest version of Acrobat Reader® at, http://www.adobe.com. These files are a fantastic way to make written or graphical information of all types available to your users. PDF files are able to be read by just about anyone, anywhere. How to create them? Your wordprocessor can likely export what you have written data to a PDF file. If that is not the case, there are third party and Adobe software you can use to do this. When you write for an Adobe file, you do so in the same tight, no fluff way that you write for the Web. PDF files are the perfect solution when you want to place information in a format that the user will download. They are a fantastic tool. The user can read them, print them, and even listen to them. Yes, the Adobe software will read the file to you. This is perfect for visually impaired people or someone who wants to listen to your words while he or she does something else. Acrobat can present information in different ways and search the file for specific words or phrases. To listen to a PDF using Acrobat click View, Read Out Loud.

Writing the Content

Okay, you're ready to write the material. You've met the client and perhaps talked with an employee or two. You know what kind of a company or organization they are and how they see themselves. The Web master has shown you a preliminary design and you've sat in on their meetings. You're ready to write. Begin with the keywords you will be using. If you have been asked to write the title and META tags, begin with them. For the title, craft your words so that the total number of letters and spaces is in the range of 40 to 60 characters. The title must contain pertinent keywords that will lead someone searching for them, the keywords, to the Web site. Now come the META tags, specifically the META description and META keywords tags. The description tag is a human readable sentence of a dozen words or so. The keywords tag is a comma separated list of keywords. As the site will contain more than one page, so to can the contents of these tags can vary from page to page. This way, you cover all the needs of the site. No single page need contain all the keywords you will be using. In fact, it is in your best interest not to do this, as the more pages there are, the more chance there is that one will be found by users. With the title and META tags complete, you move on to the text that will appear on the user's monitor.

Begin with the H1 tag. This is given the most weight of all the heading tags. Be sure that it includes the keywords that are in the title and META tags. Craft your H1 tag with care because search engines will weight it heavily. Do not put words like 'Welcome to our site' in heading tags. Nor should you place other such drivel there. Use keywords that are pertinent to the mission of this particular Web page and the mission of the entire site. This holds true for the H2 tag as well. Place related keywords that are not as important as the keywords in the H1 tag, but still heavily related to

the site's mission. Remember, the H2 tag is also read by search engines. When we say that tags are read by search engines, we mean that search engines take that material into account heavily when determining if a Web page is to be included in the returns of a search.

Next in importance to search engines is bolded text. Use this for material less important than H2 tags, but still important to the site and search engines. Last is the body test itself. Write five or six sentences per paragraph. Five sentences if they are a little long and six if they are a little short. As always, no fluff. Never sacrifice understanding and competent explanation for brevity. Use as many words, sentences and paragraphs as it takes to cover the material.

Using headings and subheadings are excellent techniques. Take care that your headings do actually introduce the material that follows. While you would never make this kind of error intentionally, with the ability to cut and paste information, it is all too possible to move text and not move the heading that introduces it. This is also true for the first sentence of a paragraph. Add keywords where you can and still have the material read well. This will increase the keyword density, which is total number of a specific keyword divided by the total words on that page. There are tools on the Web that will calculate this for you. To find one, search for keyword density calculator in your favorite search engine.

Having seen the design for the page now becomes a real benefit for you because it gives you a rough idea of just how much text you will need to fill the space allotted to content. Write and send the content to the Web master. If the design changes you can do an edit.

Sprinkle links in with the prose, if that is appropriate, and the links have been approved. In general, links leak your ratings in search engines and can take users elsewhere. So, use them with

caution. When a link takes the user somewhere else in the client's site, that is not a problem. Title links appropriately. Never use: 'Follow this link,' 'Click here for,' or other such foolishness. Rather, include specific text that tells the user where the link will take him or her. Never intentionally misrepresent the destination of a link. The default on most browsers is to underline them, so refrain from underlining text. Users will think that underlined text is a link and be confused and frustrated to find that it is not. Rather, bold the information or present it in a different color.

Graphics. When photographs, graphics, charts and tables are used be sure that they present information which enhances or makes clear what the page is dealing with. Always caption these entities. Never expect the user to figure out what a graphic is and why it is included. When using tables, place heading at the top and, for long tables, at the bottom as well. If the table takes up more than one screen make it a scrolling table with fixed headings. (Note, here headings refers to table headings not H1 or H2 tags.) Nothing is worse than getting into a table and not knowing what the column refers to because the heading for that column has scrolled off the screen.

Placing Print Material on the Web

Many organizations simply take an article that was written for print and put it on their Web site. If you are in the business of placing your print publication on the Web, that may serve your needs, but it may not serve the reader's needs. What works for print does not work online. In general, the Web needs to be written much tighter than print does, and the Web needs white space, short paragraphs, short sentences, and headings that are designed to do the job of providing for the

needs of the user and for the needs of search engines. Unaltered material written for print is not the best thing in the world to place on the Web, but it's cheap and maintains congruity with the print and online world of the organization. So, things are just done that way. If you are going to do this, at least format the material for the Web. Start by removing underlined material so it will not be confused with a link. Edit paragraphs to shorten them or create more paragraphs. Pay attention to whitespace. Make the background white and the text color black or navy blue. Don't get cute and use color combinations that offer reduced contrast, else your users will suffer massive eyestrain.

Choosing an Information Format

There are numerous ways to present information. The determining factors are the needs of the user and the purpose of the content. We review several tried and true methods of putting your words in print or on the Web. There is no best format as needs differ. Simply pick what you think works best. We thank Diana Reep and her excellent book Technical Writing Principles, Strategies, and Readings as it contributed to the material in this section.

Order of Importance

This works well for information that is best presented in an ascending or descending manner. Be sure to pick what order the user will find most useful. The descending order begins with the most important item and moves on to items of lesser importance. The ascending method begins with things of lesser importance and moves on to more and more important concepts, things, or rationale. By ascending and descending we do not mean the numbers in your list, but the

importance of the items on your list. Here is an example of descending order of importance:

1. The most important point
2. The second most important point or a point of lesser importance
3. The third most important point or a point of lesser importance than number two above
4. And so on.

When you choose this form of presentation it is important to be sure that the order is maintained throughout the list. When a list like this is edited, that's fine; when the order is changed, that's not fine.

Here is an example of ascending order that we can all relate to. Your money. Let's say that you want to show the reader that it is in their best interest to keep money invested for five years. You might tell your prospective investor that if they invest $1,000 at 5 percent, after five years their money will have grown to:

1 year	$1,050
2 years	$1,102
3 years	$1,157
4 years	$1,215
5 years	$1,276

By using the ascending order of importance, you show clearly that the longer the money is left invested the more it will grow. You would never show this from the fifth year to the first year, as it would appear that the amount is getting smaller. Even though you plainly indicate the years

and the amounts. Showing years 5 to year 1 does not plainly show what you want it to. Be careful how you present information.

Cause and Effect

When you need to show a relationship using cause and effect is an excellent way to do so. This technique allows you the freedom to show specific relationships and how one leads to, influences, or causes the other. When you need to show the consequences of a failure of equipment, what leads to an accident, or other consequences of an action, this is very effective. Further, you can do this in reverse and show the consequences first and then back track showing how the agents that caused or produced the result, accident or effect acted. This is effective when you need to show the effects of poor maintenance or other neglect that leads to an event. In this way, you show step by step, the chain of events and how each specifically acted to bring about the event you are analyzing.

Presenting Material Chronologically

This technique places information in the format of first to last in time and is terrific for showing how things are to be done or how things have changed over time. When it is important for users to understand the order in which events take place, this is the technique to use. For added clarity, use a numbered list. Placing information in steps from first to last works well for instructions, recipes, procedures, tests, or processes, especially when the reader will need to follow a sequence of steps. When dealing with complex material, just add more steps. Never hesitate to

include everything the reader will need to know. It is better to include more material than to assume that the user already knows it. If the reader knew the material, he or she would not be reading it. See our description of how to sharpen the blade of a rotary lawn mower.

Classification

You have seen this used in science to group animals, insects, stars, students, cars, or you name it. It is superb for grouping like things together and showing the similarities within the group. Here, the classification is what is important. A group may be classified in different ways for the needs of different readers. Automobiles may be classified by manufacturer, by weight, by miles per gallon of fuel used, popularity, performance, horsepower, or reliability. The classification will vary by what it is that the information is intended to show or relate. In all cases, choose the classification that will be most helpful to users needs. On the Web, it is possible to construct tables that can be sorted on the fly by the user. This sort of thing can be a real asset in that the user can choose how to present information. Ask your Web master about including database capability if you want to do this.

Tables are a great way to present information. We mentioned scrolling tables. You can also make every fifth row a different color to add to ease of use, or you can simply make the entire table of a different color so the it stands out visually on the screen.

In a Partition

When you partition information you place information about it in terms that are important

to several aspects of the device or product. For example, information on a car can be presented for sales people, maintenance people, buyers, and even perhaps those who race the car or those who will provide after market parts. It is the reader's purpose in needing the information that should be your guide. It is far better to partition information so that your users can easily find what they are looking for, rather than make readers wade through a vast amount of material to find what they seek. This goes a long way to making your Web site a resource for users. This will bring vast rewards in the number of users who visit your site.

Compare and Contrast

Here you will show how things are the same or how they differ. You will find this useful when writing about complex topics because you can compare or contrast the topic with concepts already known to the reader. (Personal note: we use this successfully, and have for years, in our photography classes. To use knowledge that people already have in the explanation of new material is very effective.) You will need to set up the comparison or contrast in relation to the reader's knowledge and to what the reader needs to know about the new material you are presenting. Be sure to set up your material so that the comparison and contrasting is obvious. Here is an example relating to digital cameras in relation to digital single lens reflex (SLR) cameras

Ease of use:

1. Camera A
2. Camera B

Availability

1. Camera A
2. Camera B

Accessories

1. Camera A
2. Camera B

This way the reader can easily see the advantages and disadvantages.

Or you can choose to list the material by cameras

Camera A

Ease of use

Availability

Accessories

Camera B

Ease of use

Availability

Accessories

The method you choose is determined by the message. While we have used a list to illustrate our example, this technique is not limited to list format only. It is perfect in paragraph form, to show how things relate to each other or how something is created in comparison to other known processes. Here is an example of comparison that includes analogy. An analogy is a comparison of two things that are not truly similar, but that share qualities that help the reader

understand the less familiar object because that is the information, training or thrust of your writing.

Here

Example begins:

The f-stop in photography is an often misunderstood and confused concept, and that's a shame because knowledge of it can add greatly to your ability to make pictures. Think of window blinds. As you open the window blinds, more light enters the room. Closing the blinds reduces the light entering the room. Simple? Yes, of course. Well, in your camera the f-stop does the same thing as window blinds. It lets in more light when opened and less light when closed. On your lens you can find the f-stop referred to with numbers like this: 2, 2.8, 4, 5.6, 8, 11, 16, 22, and sometimes 32. As a window blind admits more light when open ½ of the way than it does when open 1/16 of the way, so too does your lens admit more light at f2 than it does at f16.

An f-stop is called an f-stop because back in the days when photography was in its infancy, lens makers literally made a piece of metal with a hole in it to control the light entering the camera. To reduce the light, smaller and smaller holes were drilled into the piece of metal. These metal devices became knows as 'stops' because they stopped more and more light from entering the camera as smaller and smaller holes were selected. So, while f-stops are largely misunderstood, a knowledge of how they work and what they do will make your pictures better, because in addition to controlling the light that enters the camera they also control depth of field and that is something well worth spending time to understand.

Example ends.

You can see that we have used comparison, in that an f-stop is likened to a window blind and it is safe to say that the reader does know what a window blind does. However, we still describe the action of what a window blind does and then compare this to the f-stop. We also show how the f-stop control can be identified. Next we give a short history lesson as to how the f-stop got its name and lastly mention that it determines depth of field, which significantly, we do not explain as this is about the f-stop. Being a good writer includes knowing when to stop as well as knowing when to write. It is up to the reader to run down the information on depth of field. (Authors note: we have used this analogy/comparison in many photography classes. It works beautifully, making what can be a very difficult concept easily understood.) Combining techniques is very effective. Also, we use short sentences. That was not an accident. Long sentences do not enhance explanation.

Using Definitions

Defining terms is nothing new. The technique works because the user can read or ignore the material as needed, but it is there if required. You can use the informal or formal form of a definition. The informal form simply indicates what something is while the formal form indicates what group the term belongs to and what special features it has. For an example of formal definition see the excellent online dictionary by Merriam Webster at http://www.m-w.com. A superb resource, their definitions of words include the history, derivations, and pluralizing as well.

If you feel that the user will need more than a basic definition, add whatever it takes to provide the information. Feel free to include an example, analogy, or any of the other techniques

we list here. Whatever you do, it is imperative that the needs of the user be met. You do not want users to need additional research to understand a definition. And we do not imply that highly scientific or technical material should be understandable by a novice, but it should be understandable to the intended reader. Any novice to the field is expected to do the background research to learn the discipline. You, as a writer, are not responsible to make everything understandable to everyone. This is nowhere more evident than in the definitions surrounding electricity, computers and engineering.

Spatial Arrangement of Information

Here you will group material according to the physical arrangement of the subject. You may describe a device or machine from the top down for the user's ease in locating information relating to a specific part. This also makes it easier to see how parts fit together and interact with each other. This way, one can easily determine what parts need to be removed and in what order to get to a specific part, place, or action. Other ways to use this technique are from the inside out, side to side, top to bottom, bottom to top, north to south, nose to tail, wall to wall, door to door. Well, you get the idea. You literally choose a method of explanation based on the physical layout of what you are describing.

To enhance your description, include dimensions in appropriate units, with metric units in parentheses. Indicate height, width, depth, diameter, radius, mass, weight, voltage, or whatever is appropriate to the needs of the reader. Should you not be familiar with the units in question, be sure to verify their spelling and their proper abbreviation. Do not include definitions because you

yourself don’t recognize a unit. Only define terms that the user is not expected to know.

Revising the Content

There are many ways to revise material. You can read it backwards or read it out loud. You can print the material and simply give it a good edit. Whatever method you choose, there is one thing that is good to do and one to be avoided. The good thing, is to wait a day or two before you attempt revising. To revise too soon after writing is a mistake because you won't see what is there, but what you want to be there. What to avoid? Reliance on your computer's spelling and grammar checker. While these tools are certainly to be used and will identify much that needs identifying, they cannot find the wrong word in the wrong place or mistakes that a human editor will find. And speaking of a human editor, having a trusted colleague or person of known editorial expertise read and comment on your words is the very best way to scour your prose for mistakes. Our favorite method is to wait a few days and then reread the material. Then after that we have it read and edited by someone else.

Your Mouse is Your Friend, Usually

Cutting and pasting has got to be the greatest asset any writer could want. How else can you move whole sections of material so easily? Have you ever done this and lost a vast amount of work? This blessing is a double edged sword. Before you move a huge amount of material - read that as hours of work - save the file and iterate the name. If you are currently working on a file named 'customer-content,' save the file as '1customer-content.' That way, if you damage the file you are working on, you lose nothing. Just reopen customer-content and you are back where you were. No harm done, but skip this simple step and damage the file and you're - well let's just say

you have got a lot of work to do - again. Save your work. Note: here we refer to a file name that includes a hyphen. This is for your working file name only. Do not place more than one hyphen in a file name that is to be uploaded to the Web. Search engines do not like that. Should you be wondering why we named the iterated file 1customer-content, we did that so that in a sort the file named 1customer-content will appear just below customer-content. With the '1' as the first character, you can easily see which file is which.

Have you ever pasted content from your Web browser into a word processor and gotten this great, demented disaster placed in the word processing document? That happens because of the 'behind the scenes' Web tags that are included with the text. The way to get around this is to use the Paste Special function in your word processor and insert the material as unformatted text. That leaves out all the HTML tags, and your pasted text will look just fine. When you need to copy an email address from the net, simply right click it, choose the copy email address option, and paste it into your document. This way you avoid the possibility of typing it incorrectly, a real advantage, as many people like to use cute and silly spelling.

Global Revision

Globally revise the entire document using your wordprocessor's search and replace ability. Should you need to change the term 'nuclear fuel' to 'nuclear material' simply do a search and replace. Here again, we recommend using the Save As ... function to save the file with a different name. As older files will float to the top of a file name sort, all you need do to get the newer material to the top is to invert the sort or sort by latest date. Be advised, when you use the Save

As... command you do two things: 1) Save your data to a different file and 2) make the new, i.e. different file, the active document. Be sure to do Save As ... again to get back to your original document. If you do not, when you open the first document again it will not contain all your hard work. This can be disconcerting until you realize that the second document contains all those hours of work. Then you feel better, as you climb down from the ceiling.

You will also want to back up your work. For an excellent back up scheme see Appendix 10.

Detailed Revising

In this step, you will be reading and revising sentence structure and your choice of language. To verify that your message is clear and presents the message that you want to convey in a tone that is appropriate to the needs of the reader. You will be looking at grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Take special care with terms that are specific to the client or the industry. If you find that you have spelled a word wrong consistently, do a search and replace on the entire file. To verify that all instances of the misspelled word were changed search for the misspelling to verify that none are found.

Revising On-screen

This is an advantage that we writers have had since 1980 or so. Sure, before that those who worked with mainframes could do on-screen revision, but for the rest of us that was not the case. Revising on-screen is something we all do. It is far easier, simpler, and faster than printing out the

material and reading it, at least initially. And as to working on a typewriter, there is no comparison. Our early work was done on a typewriter. We don't miss using one. Computers have not made them obsolete for nothing. Your computer cannot tell you that you've made an error. At least not yet, but with more and more powerful computers and software this will probably not be the case for long. The advantages of using spelling and grammar checkers and the ability to revise and revise again without needing to print the material is a tremendous asset. Your word processor likely includes a way to view two pages. If so, use it to view formatting, tiles, headings, page headers and page footers. Remember that when placing information on the Web, headers and footers will not be used. They are fine for use during your initial writing, but delete them before sending the material to the Web master. Also, be sure your material is not page numbered. Should you be writing material for the Web in the form of a PDF file, then you will use headers, footers and page numbering because these files are a stand-alone, finished product and will not be placed within an HTML file.

Evaluating Your Content

Take a look at what you have written. Is there enough content to fully develop your point of view? Have you included enough detail so the reader understands what is being presented? Are all the names, dates, facts, phone numbers, email addresses, URLs, and locations correct? Are the abbreviations for states correct and their zip codes as well? When writing, we often use the mouse to cut and paste data from one place to another and then edit it. Many times we are in a hurry or distracted, so that the edits may not be fully complete and do not read well. Now is the time to

review these things and fit them. Do all graphics contain Alt= data and a caption? If not, be sure that you provide it for the Web master. Remember, graphics and photographs should fill a need, else they will only be confusing. Also, do not use graphics for purposes other than what they were created for. If you are going to illustrate a point, be sure that your graphic specifically shows that point or concept, not something like or similar to it. Do not expect readers to look into some corner of a graphic or photograph and discern what you are writing about. Information presented graphically, or in a photograph, must dominate the image. Be sure your graphics and photographs do that. If you wish to bone up on your photographic composition skills read Principles of Composition by Andreas Feininger. Written in 1973, it remains the best book on photographic composition we've ever seen. It is also the shortest. Our copy remains in our library to this day. You can get it used for about three bucks online.

Definitions

When you use terms, consider defining them. On the Web a 'pop-up definition' can be created like this: Word to be defined. When the user places the mouse on the underlined Word to be defined the definition will pop-up. In this case the words, Definition is placed here, will pop-up. This is an excellent technique to use. The only draw back is that it looks just like any other Web link because it is a link that goes nowhere. To get around this, speak to the Web master and have your definition links double underlined. When working with material that contains numerous words that you would like to define, never hesitate to create a definitions page or section where you include them alphabetically. This technique is

excellent and particularly welcome in scientific, technical, and procedural material. If you have never written procedures, you will find that even the format of the procedure is defined in a procedure and likely will include a definitions section.

Emphasis

Have you emphasized the important points? In our description of how to sharpen the blade on a rotary mower, we make certain and obvious the dangers associated with doing this. We emphasize that because it is critically important to the life and safety of the operator of the mower. This emphasis is not to be glossed over. While emphasis for the purpose of clarity may not always be a life and death issue, it is needed to make things understandable. Read your material for clarity. Does your content make easily understood the important points and the purpose of the work? If not, rewrite it.

Paragraphs

Is there only one concept in every paragraph and do you introduce that concept in the opening or topic sentence? Your readers will be scanning for what they are looking for and will expect that paragraphs contain what is in the topic sentence. Do not introduce something in a paragraph and then get to it three or four paragraphs later. When you place something in the topic sentence cover it in that paragraph.

Headings

Headings in Web content are important. Very important. Always pick your heading for clarity and when possible have it contain one or more keywords as well. This increases the keyword density of the page and makes finding the material easier via search engines. Be sure to place your most important headings within H1 tags, then use H2 tags. Lesser headings can be bolded. Write headings so that important words are first. If this makes a heading that seems to be in the passive voice, so be it. That's fine. This is one very important exception to the rule of not using passive voice in your writing. There are times when the rules need to be broken to create high quality content and this is one of them.

The Format of The Content

Does your content look good? Is there proper white space? Do you have vast blocks of impenetrable text? This is a no-no. Are your topic sentences introducing material in that paragraph? Do your paragraphs contain five or six sentences? Are the sentences about 14 words in length? Have you defined terms? Are you consistent with how you present acronyms? Do you tell the reader what an acronym is? Do you use a consistent format for you acronyms? Do you write Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and later write NASA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration? Pick a format for your acronyms and maintain it. Readers will notice inconsistencies. Be consistent. Your content will help no one, if the user must hunt for information. Always organize your material so that users can find what they are looking for.

Web Versus Print

The needs of Web content are not those of print content. The Web is highly visual containing links, video, audio, color, photos, and even advertisements. In print, text is the dominant method to get your message across. Not so on the Web. That is one of the reasons we do not favor links that take the user to another site. Your user may never return. On the Web you are fighting a myriad of distractions, competition, music, radio stations and more. So, your content has got to be strong, targeted, easily used, and designed to provide what it says it will provide. On the Web it is easy to be deceptive. User's know that. The users that you want to attract are getting more and more savvy. Those sites that engage in deceptive tactics to trick people into visiting them, offer users nothing but wasted time and aggravation. Never engage in deceptive tactics. When done to extort money, all you will be is a visit from the cops.

Passive Voice

Writing in the active or the passive voice indicates whether the subject of the sentence performs the main action of the sentence or receives the main action of the sentence.

Active: The driver noticed the oil pressure drop.

Passive: The drop in oil pressure was noticed by the driver.

In the active voice the subject, the driver, performs the main action, noticed.
In the passive voice it is the subject, oil pressure, that receives the main action.

Passive voice requires more words than the active voice and on the Web using more words than necessary to convey anything is to be avoided like the plague. While you may say that this is

only a word or two in this case, over an entire document this will cause hundreds or thousands of additional words that add nothing only fluff. Don't try to get around this by eliminating words from your work to make the passive voice less wordy. The passive voice requires you to say by whom or what, by the driver, you may be tempted to leave those words out of the sentence. Doing so creates this: The drop in oil pressure was noticed. You have left out who noticed it. You have left out critical material. Who noticed the drop in oil pressure? Never force the reader to assume who or what noticed the drop in oil pressure. Was it the driver or his team? Do not omit crucial facts. Write in the active voice.

Jargon

Use it with caution or not at all. If you must use jargon, define it. Use the pop-up method if you have to, but do something so readers are given the meaning of the term. What is jargon? It is industry or topic specific words or phrases, that those working in an industry use routinely. For example, those people who work in the computer industry routinely use RAM to refer to Random Access Memory. Look at almost any ad for a computer, its RAM is listed. That's jargon. Medical people talk about BP when they mean blood pressure. Jargon. This can also extend to equipment, materials, and specifications. If you use jargon, define it.

Sexist Language

This shows a bias against women, against their competence, or against their importance. Do not write this way. While you would never intentionally include a racist or ethnic remark, many times sexist language creeps in inadvertently. Here are a few examples:

The girls in customer service. That is sexist. Those people are not girls. They are women. Revise the sentence to: The customer service clerks.

When referring to a particular woman do not write: Mary Smith, an attractive blond, chaired the meeting. Revise to: Mary Smith chaired the meeting.

Using He or She

Do you find that you write like this? We need an experienced operator. He must .... Try this instead: We need an experienced operator. The person must ....

When referring to a nurse, do not write: We need to hire another nurse, she will be responsible for .... Nurses are also of the male gender. Revise to: We need to hire another nurse who will be responsible for ....

Using the term ‘he’ to refer to all people. This is done by many writers. Instead of this: We are hiring a new clerk, he will work in the mail room. Use this construction: We are hiring a new clerk to work in the mail room.

Using Man

When you refer to mankind, using man is acceptable. As in man-hours, when you need to refer to the amount of work to accomplish a task. In this context, you can use the term he, as well, but you must be referring to mankind. This is not sexist, it is a reference to an individual human. We all together comprise mankind, that is humanity, and because it is not intended as a bias against women it is not sexist, in our opinion. However, not everyone may agree with that and you may want to word your material so that this ambiguity never arises.

Use Concrete Words - Not Abstract Words

Do not take your users on a trip through the tulips, down the garden path, or some other such odyssey into the land of obfuscation. Words that are abstract in general refer to ideas, conditions, and qualities, not to solid concepts and form sentences that contain little solid information. This fools no one, any more than a speaker who attempts to pass off verbal pap in lieu of specific hard data. Rather than writing:

Our performance was better in 2007 than in 2006 ....

Write:

In 2007 we did 15% more business and increased our client list by 4% ....

Be specific. Use hard data. Do not pass off information that is wishy-washy, incomplete, or that forces the user to verify your data.

Gobbledygook

This is writing that is vague, pompous, longer that it needs to be, and difficult to read. It is public enemy number one on our not to do list. People who write this way do not care if the material will ever be of any use to anyone. And it is a good thing they don't care because this trash is of no use to anyone except the person who wrote it, because it shows them how smart they are and how much jargon they know and, of course, the jargon is not defined. Why define it? If the reader can't figure out my oh-so-brilliant rumblings, then the reader can just leave and go where the rest of the not-so-smart people go. Look for:

1. Jargon
2. Words that are longer than necessary. For instance: utilization, when use is far better; interface, when meet with is more descriptive; marginalize, when ignored describes this far better; and other multi-syllabic intellectual treats for your reading pleasure.
3. Flowery language. Shakespeare is famous for this and for never using five words when ten would do. Flowery language contains more words than what are required. The words contain more syllables than what are required. On the Web, this is a disaster, because on the Web you must write tight, compact, prose that accomplishes its purpose. Shakespeare was brilliant, one of the best writers ever, but he did not write for the Web. We do. Don't write like Shakespeare because not even he, we suspect, would write for the Web the way he wrote for print and stage. He was too smart for that. You can be too.