

Quality content is conceptually unique content that people would want to read and link at. If you want people to pay attention to you it is important that you create content that is conceptually unique. The following article by Sugarrae explores this topic more in depth:

<http://www.sugarrae.com/permalink/when-unique-content-is-not-unique/>

Writing Ideas to Spread

Rather than being so focused on search that you try to match keywords, you can also market certain ideas with the intent to spread. By writing a headline that is juicy, intriguing, or controversial, you stand a much better chance of seeing that idea spread. Search engines follow people. If you spread good ideas then search engines will trust you.

Brian Clark's CopyBlogger offers great headline tips in his post titled "Magnetic Headlines" at <http://www.copyblogger.com/magnetic-headlines/>.

Multiple Customer Types

I need some people to want to buy my e-book. "Buy my stuff" is not an easy message to spread though. I also need other people to link to my site. Just like I need to sell my e-book to have a business model, I also need to give others a reason why they would want to link to my site because that will market my book.

Working From Your Strengths

I am typically a bit goofy in the things I say or do. It is why I have created many funny or fun-type websites. It is far easier to be myself than to pull off some sort of act.

I am not the best copywriter, and I do not write the best sales letter pages. If you read the *33 Days to Online Profits* e-book that comes as a bonus, it will include lots of content about copywriting. Many of the links are not worth buying from for most people. Much of his information in his report about search engines is inadequate or incorrect.

However, I still note this document because it shows some copywriting techniques that may be helpful. You only need to be great at one thing to be extremely successful on the web. Yanik Silver is good at selling people stuff with compelling copywriting. I do not suggest that you buy most of the stuff he links to in *33 Days to Online Profits*, but I do recommend you glance at how he writes copy.

Write Content to Target the Ideal Prospect

When you write content, you do not want to create something that makes everyone happy. You want to write to the ideal target customer because your writing will have the greatest effect on the people you are trying to target.

If you write too broadly, or try to make too many people happy, then your ideal prospects will not convert as well, as they may become disinterested or offended by attempts to write to less-targeted prospects. The lower quality prospects are going to convert poorly no matter what you do.

The reason many hyper-focused sales letters are still a mile long is because the people who are most interested in the topic are more inclined to want to keep reading.

I did SEO for a customer where we increased his monthly sales from \$3,000 to around \$12,000. I then tuned his page copy for his ideal client. With the same marketing spend and same rankings, we increased his sales from \$12,000 to over \$40,000. Even better yet, he was making greater profit from fewer customers by targeting the larger spenders.

Sales Letters

Some websites are exceptionally transparent in that you can tell they are all about making as much money as possible. By reading through the sales letters of various written-to-sell websites, you can see some of the tricks they use to sell.

A hard sell does not make sense for all people (and may offend some of your customers), but I could probably increase my income by about 50% if my sales letter was harder selling. Sometimes it is a bit hard to balance profitability and being easy to link to.

Clarity is Key

Many organizations aim to manipulate language to make it lose its meaning. If you are small, one of the biggest advantages you have over competitors is that you can put yourself into your brand and ensure that your writing is clear and easy to understand. Since you have fewer stakeholders, it is easier for your writing to more clearly represent your thoughts.

Usability

Real Life Example

Memorial Day weekend of 2003. I decided to take a risk. I drove my car until the gas was just about gone. The engine was sputtering when I pulled off at a gas station near no others and went to fill up. I pulled up to the first pump and it had a “credit cards do not work” sign on it.

I went in to pay cash and the cashier explained it was full service. There was no service man out there. I got rather angry seeing the long line of cars waiting to use the few pumps that worked.

I drove off to find another gas station. I then realized there were no other close gas stations. I went back. I almost got into a wreck on my way back to the gas station. Now I was enraged.

I arrived at the gas station and waited in line again. The car in front of me would not back up to let the person who just finished pumping, out. I had to wait until the van on the other side was done. I then had to wait for the guy who would not move to finish.

Negative Advertising

I was finally ready to pump my gas. I tried to use my credit card, but after about a minute of processing, a warning flashed up at me: “Please See Cashier...System Down.” On the pump it stated “pump then pay.” So I tried to pump. It did not work.

I went inside and asked the cashier what was up. While snacking on his food he said, “(crunch) Sorry, I had not got around to turning your pump on yet.” Mind you it said pump THEN pay. I had been trying for a few minutes at this point.

I went back outside and pumped my gas. I left vowing never again to visit that gas station. It was a Mobile in Mystic, Connecticut (just off the interstate), and I still vividly remember the sign in my head as well as the cashier who was snacking while he should have authorized my pump.

If That Gas Station was a Web site

What was the point of that tangent about a gas station? It took longer to tell the story than it will take to make my point. I was reading *Designing Web Usability* by Jakob Nielsen about the same time I had that bad day, and this nugget of truth came to me—there is no page that is so important that I cannot go elsewhere. If that gas station was a website, I would have left.

Many people find your website through search engines. Other sites may link to your inner pages. There is no way to tell where traffic will come from.

I never see the shopping cart on many sites because they make it a challenge just to get there. I have abandoned many shopping carts. Most websites have miserable usability. I must admit some of my sites needs some work in this area too...it is one of the most neglected aspects of web design.

Web Example

This comes from a usability/design example story found on page 69 of *Taking Your Talent to the Web* by Jeffrey Zeldman.

I left my baby daughter in the car while I went to buy dope. Then I drove away. I'd gone about five blocks when I realized my daughter wasn't in the car anymore.

That story clip was in the main content area of the Narcotics Anonymous website. At the end of it there was another linear link to more stories. The site also had a passive navigation menu.

A large part of usability is quickly connecting with people and then making it easy for them to do whatever you want them to. In this example it would be to perhaps read more stories, to see there were other people like them, to find hope, and seek treatment.

A person is more likely to listen if they feel they belong on your site if they feel the page was written just for them.

Good Usability

Take-with-a-grain-of-salt warning: Bear in mind that my own website does not currently follow all of these examples, but most of them are worth following if you can.

- Allow users to control their experience.
- Do not place excessive text inside images.
- Keep a consistent site design.
- Have clear navigation.
- Use alternative text tags with images.
- Use standards where applicable.
- Keep file sizes small.
- Have search or a link to site-level search on every page. On smaller sites (where site search may typically leave visitors empty-handed), a link to a sitemap will work better than a link to site-level search.

Some large brands, like Amazon.com, may not follow some important usability guidelines, but they have the scale, brand and customer loyalty necessary to get away with making changes that offered poorer usability than some of their previous designs.

Allow the User to Control Their Experience

While creating text elements, it is important to remember various people and the means they will use to view your site. Some people are looking at the web through a phone; some can hardly see; some have text read to them.

When specifying the text size or pallet size, it is best to use relative, not exact, values. If you set the text at eight pixels and a guy has large text turned on, he will see your site at eight pixels (which can be hard to see on larger monitors, especially to a blind guy). He will not see your site.

Setting the page width to 800 pixels might make a PDA user immediately switch to another site. Setting width using percentages or keeping the page narrow makes the content accessible on more devices. However, there is an exception to the rule. If the bulk of your income comes from ads, or controlling the exact layout is

Some of the best opportunities to improve your bottom line are done by improving conversion rates, which can be done by making your site easier to use.

crucial to earnings, then you may want to use a fixed width design to better control the ad integration into the site.

When you design for different types of users, you not only avoid offending these people, but you also are given extra consideration since you are one of the few who addressed their needs.

Placing text in an image is typically a bad idea since it may appear illegible (or overly large) when the user sees the page on a platform different than the one on which it was designed. Think of search engines as visitors with exceptionally poor vision—they cannot read the text in images.

Consistent Site Design

People expect to see things in certain places. The upper left corner usually has a logo and a link to your home page. (Oftentimes the logo is the link.) Search is either right beneath it or in the upper right-hand corner. Remember, people like to feel comfortable.

The most successful ideas are usually just re-packaged successful ideas from the past. Clear navigation also makes it easier for the user to develop comfort and go where you want him to go. Even if you try something risky, at least be consistent with it from page to page.

Site-Level Search

There are hoards of people who love to search for information. It is well worth it to include a small search box on every page **if you have a larger content website**. If you do not know anything about dynamic coding, you can get a third party search engine from Atomz, FreeFind, or Google. Many popular content management and blog software providers also have free built-in site-level search.

On small sites you **should not** have a site-level search, as many of the searches will fail to find the desired information and frustrate the searcher. It is **far easier** to actively guide site visitors than to let them enter random text in a search box.

On top of helping visitors navigate your site, a site-level search can also help you find out what terms and ideas your visitors are interested in that your site may not yet have content about. You can create content around their needs and use these terms for refining your pay-per-click keywords.

With large sites, especially large forums, it may be helpful to highlight the search terms on the page if site visitors arrived from a search engine.

Use Standards Where Applicable

People know “blue underline” means “hyperlink.” Whenever possible, it is a good idea to follow standards. Sometimes deviations may be necessary for site design,

Many sites fail because they do not create substantial value and appeal prior to trying to extract profits.

Many non-commercial sites make greater profits than commercial sites because it is far easier and cheaper to build links into non-commercial sites.

but use them sparingly. It makes it easier for people to do what you want them to without needing to think.

Some webmasters may be more likely to link to a standards-compliant site. If your site is focused toward a geek or techy market, you will likely want to make sure it validates and is standards compliant. Most sites do neither.

If your target audience does not care much about standards, and the time and money it would cost you to make it accessible are too much, then it may not be important to address design and accessibility anytime soon.

JavaScript & Active Client Side (browser-based) Scripting

Approximately 3-5% of web browsers are not JavaScript-enabled for one reason or another. I recommend minimizing the number of pages using JavaScript whenever possible. In addition, you should place your JavaScript in its own external .js file and link to it from within your pages. This can decrease page load time and improve usability. You can link to the external .js file by placing the following code in your page head.

```
<script language="JavaScript" src="filename.js"></script>
```

If your entire page is in JavaScript, some people will not see it; in addition, many search engines will not index it properly. Make sure to use `noscript` tags to define what was in the JavaScript to users with that feature disabled. `Noscript` tags look like this and should be placed just after a script's location:

```
<noscript>javascript description and related links</noscript>
```

Hacks

There are ways to use CSS and other technologies to do many of the things JavaScript does. Additionally, there are some technologies that give more advanced presentations while still using fairly lean code that search spiders can follow. For example, you can use unordered lists to make DHTML menus.

Keep File Size Small

The back button is one of the most used buttons on web browsers. If your file takes a long time to load, you may be kissing your user goodbye before she even gets to see your full hello.

Specify Image Details

To allow quick loading, it is a good idea to specify image sizes on the page so the text can load before the image is rendered.

```

```