

The call to action

Writing web copy that converts

May 31, 2011

What makes good web copy?
(And the inevitable: Making bad web copy good)

What is good web copy?

Events made easy.



Publish

Customize and publish a professional online event registration page.

[More Info](#) ↓



Promote

Use powerful event promotion tools to raise awareness and increase attendance.

[More Info](#) ↓



Manage

Track attendees through our charts and graphs, save time and stay organized.

[More Info](#) ↓



Sell Out

Collect money through our secure credit card processing, PayPal, or Google Checkout.

[More Info](#) ↓

Get Pricing Details

Sign up for a Demo

Create Your Event Now (Free)

Why is this so good?

- ❖ 100% action oriented: tells people what to do and why
- ❖ 100% benefits focused: Explains why it will help
- ❖ 100% you-facing: all copy speaks directly to the user
- ❖ Simple. No fluff. No unnecessary words or information.
- ❖ Informs the navigation of the site
- ❖ Not boring.

Another example...

Will your company
be next?

With just 2 questions and 2 minutes
you can see how Google Apps can help
your company.

Your company name here

Let's Begin

Why is it good?

- ❖ Brief, personable, playful...
- ❖ Tells people what to do and how long it will take
- ❖ Emphasizes benefits, not features
- ❖ It solicits engagement and interaction
- ❖ Inspires curiosity

One, last example

BBC

Dimensions

The area affected by the 2010 Pakistan floods as shown over W12 7RJ



Try this Dimension over your postcode **Go**

Google

Map Data - Terms of Use

Dimensions takes important places, events and things, and overlays them onto a map of where you are.

Type in your postcode or a place name to get started.

Why is it good?

- ❖ Makes highly complex information very simple & usable
- ❖ Easy, direct instructions
- ❖ Voice is light, playful, but informative
- ❖ Delightfully you-facing (brings it back home)

What is bad web copy?

IBM product availability tools

Authentication is required to access the IBM Product Availability tools (ACT - Availability after Configuration Tool, and AWB - Availability WorkBench). **IBM Internal Users, registered IBM Business Partners and registered external users can access these tools.** IBM Business Partners who are entitled to view product availability information should use their IBM ID. IBM Internal Users should use their standard Intranet ID (including the ibm.com part).

External users need to apply for access via the 'Contact us' link (send IBM ID, contact details, and reason for access), and once registered they can use their IBM ID to sign-in.

[Business Partners \(IBM ID / Web Identity ID / IBM Registration ID\)](#)

[IBM Internal Users \(IBM Intranet ID\)](#)

Note: Your userid and password are processed in a secure mode. No one else will be able to view your data. This site uses cookies - you must have cookies enabled on your Web Browser to enable all functionality on this site.

Why is this copy so bad?

- ❖ Instructions are wordy and convoluted
- ❖ Creates barriers... doesn't explain or make things easy
- ❖ Totally unscannable... no bullet points, no headers
- ❖ Language is robotic. Not at all you-facing.
- ❖ Why doesn't this simply say: "Enter your IBM i.d."?
- ❖ I don't care how technically complicated the product/environment is... IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THIS WAY!

It's your job

- ❖ As a web content writer to make exceptionally complicated things look remarkably easy. And interesting.
- ❖ Once upon a time... wordy, convoluted, obscure writing made you look smart.
- ❖ It weeded out the dumb people.
- ❖ Now... and especially on the web... smart people expect more. They expect us not to waste their time.

Fix me! (Real life example)

Virtual Number

Give yourself a telephone presence in other cities.

With [REDACTED] you are no longer restricted to one telephone number per line. You can select additional numbers in other cities throughout North America and many International locations. A call to any of these numbers will ring your main [REDACTED] line as if the caller dialed your primary number. These additional telephone numbers are called virtual numbers. Think of virtual numbers as aliases for your primary number. You can have as many aliases as you like and the number becomes active the minute you subscribe to it.

Ideal for your children who are away at college, your business associates or your family back

home, a virtual number is a way for you to reach out to those who want to reach you.

To sign up for a virtual number login to your [REDACTED] account and select 'Add a virtual number' under [REDACTED]. There is a charge per month for each virtual number.

Thank you.

Virtual Number

One Phone, Multiple Numbers

Easily create multiple numbers that ring your main [\[brand name\]](#) phone line. Now each employee or family member can have a unique phone number.

Choose numbers in North American cities, or in selected international areas.

- Create as many virtual numbers as you like.
- Your virtual number becomes active the minute you subscribe.

[How to sign up for a virtual number >](#)

Reduction: 94 words

- ❖ We cut 163 words down to 69 words
- ❖ Multiple paragraphs were pared down to the core benefit.
- ❖ All instructional text was moved to the Help section.
- ❖ Maybe... just maybe now someone will read it and care.

So what works?

- ❖ You-facing language
- ❖ Emphasize benefits (not features)
- ❖ **Tell people what to do.**
- ❖ Use text links that are calls to action. i.e. [Register online now >](#)
- ❖ Be brief: cut out any text that is unnecessary
- ❖ Simplify language... write in one and two-syllable words
- ❖ Break up large blocks of text... use bullets, headers, short paragraphs

Process: Before you write

Stalk your reader

- ❖ Don't write anything until you know who you are writing for.
- ❖ You need to understand your reader's quest and speak her language.
 - ❖ (Or she won't listen and she definitely won't buy)

Listen first. Then write.

- ❖ Demand (and take the time) to get to know your audience / customer.
- ❖ She is not always who you think she is!
- ❖ We live in micro cultures.
- ❖ You may be surprised by what your customer values / needs / enjoys...

Listen...

- ❖ Listen very carefully to your boss / client / product manager
 - ❖ (Even if you think he / she is wrong)
- ❖ Often he / she has a lot of intrinsic knowledge
- ❖ This person will give priceless nuggets of insight into your target market

-
- ❖ Ask your client/boss/product manager to write you a very short brief on the project, which should include:
 - ❖ His/her wishes and hopes for the new site or copy
 - ❖ Who buys the product/reads the content... profession, gender, income, etc.
 - ❖ Links to relevant industry and competitor websites
 - ❖ (Hint: If your client is intimidated/bothered by the idea of a brief... don't call it that. Just say: let's sit down and talk about what you want to achieve with this website... Or give him/her a short questionnaire.)

Think like your target audience

- ❖ Read blogs, forums, competitor sites.
- ❖ Go places where your customer hangs out.
- ❖ Does the target resemble someone you know?
- ❖ Pay attention to the brands your target loves:
 - ❖ What needs do these brands meet?
 - ❖ What images and editorial voice do these brands use?

Create personas!

- ❖ Once you know who your target customer(s) and market are, create a one-page portrait of each type of person you are writing for (selling to).
- ❖ **Don't skip this process!**
- ❖ This one step will unconsciously guide your writing... it will help you speak directly to your target audience in its native language

What's in a persona?

- ❖ Describe things like:
 - ❖ A day in the life: wake up > workday > bedtime
 - ❖ Describe her family, where and how she lives
 - ❖ Explain her education and professional life
 - ❖ Research to find out what this person does for fun
 - ❖ Which brands does she buy? At which stores?
 - ❖ What is she lacking (time, resources, information)?

Voila, a persona

- ❖ Erica Higgins: Age: 39, Kanata, owns two dogs, owns a small house, lives with her boyfriend
- ❖ Works as a procurer for the federal government; has a BA in systems management
- ❖ Reads trade magazines, tech news sites, self-improvement blogs, attends management workshops and government tech trade shows
- ❖ Fun activities generally include anything that involves her friends and dogs: hiking, cross country skiing, camping, cooking with friends, watching TV and movies
- ❖ Favourite websites: IT World Canada, TechVibes, Design Sponge, Ottawa Dog Blog, MLS.ca, Netflix
- ❖ Erica needs: To find affordable hardware upgrades that integrate with a legacy system.

Get feedback...

- ❖ Run your persona past your client/boss/product manager... whoever knows the product and customer best.
- ❖ Integrate his/her feedback, BUT also be prepared to argue for new personas that he/she may not have considered!

Build your conversion path

Get to know the buying process

- ❖ If you're selling and promoting a product online:
 - ❖ How do people usually purchase?
 - ❖ How much information do people need before buying?
 - ❖ Is there human intervention... or does everything take place online?

Wireframe the steps to purchase

- ❖ Draw or design a step-by-step map of how people will navigate the decision-making and purchase process.
- ❖ This is your writing template.
- ❖ **Everything you write from now on will facilitate this desired traffic flow.**
- ❖ (Which is why I love pairing wireframing + copywriting as a skill set)

Look out!

- ❖ Don't rely on your web designer to structure this process correctly



Own this process.

Create a funnel

- ❖ Map out the process that will lead someone to purchasing
- ❖ Determine which information is necessary along the way
- ❖ The copy IS the navigation. All gently drives to the goal, whether it is:
 - ❖ An e-commerce transaction
 - ❖ A contact or download form
 - ❖ An easy way to complete or submit an RFP

Prioritize the conversion

- ❖ Make product information accessible, but external to the funnel
- ❖ Make it easy for people to gather information, but even easier for them to convert
- ❖ For example, if you are selling a complex technical product:
 - ❖ Provide links to more in-depth information
 - ❖ But make sure that the conversion funnel is first and foremost

What to do with a lot of content

Sure, you say

- ❖ It's easy to create a funnel if you're just selling stuff
- ❖ But I need to put a lot of technical information online
- ❖ And still encourage people to buy



Create levels of information

- ❖ Offer information in small, scannable chunks
- ❖ Invite visitors to go deeper to access more complex information
- ❖ In other words, layer your web copy like this:

1. Top-level benefits & call to action to convert

2. Three-sentence description + call to action to learn more

3. Multi-paragraph, detailed description of the product, including technicalities, links to product sheets, white papers, etc.

For example: Level one

iPhone

[Features](#)

[Design](#)

[iOS 4](#)

[Apps for iPhone](#)

[Gallery](#)

[Tech Specs](#)

[Buy iPhone](#)

Finally.

The amazing iPhone 4. Now available in white.



Watch the
new TV ads 

Watch the
iPhone 4
video 

Level two

FaceTime.

Video calling is a reality.

See family and friends while you talk to them. No other phone makes staying in touch so much fun. [Learn more](#) ▶



Level three



One-tap simple.

FaceTime works right out of the box — no need to set up a special account or screen name. And using it is as easy as it gets. Let's say you want to start a video call with your best friend. Just find her entry in your Contacts and tap the FaceTime button. Or maybe you're already talking on a voice call with her, iPhone 4 to iPhone 4, and you want to switch to video. Just tap the FaceTime button on the screen. Either way, an invitation pops up on her screen asking if she wants to join you. When she accepts, the video call begins. It's all perfectly seamless. And it works in both portrait and landscape modes.

Two cameras made for video calling.

iPhone 4 has two built-in cameras, one on the front above the display and one on the back next to the LED flash. The front camera has been tuned for FaceTime. It has just the right field of view and focal length to focus on your face at arm's length. So it always presents you in the best possible light.



You can do this with any product

- ❖ The idea:
 - ❖ Give people who know what they want to chance to buy / download / commit right away. Make it fast, clear and easy.
 - ❖ If they want to know more, keep them engaged with a quick taste of information.
 - ❖ Then make the meat and potatoes available to those who need to know almost everything. (But remember to deliver this content in an efficient, scannable format)

Write content people want to read

Lots of content: Not like this

Assess – Application Assessment

Focus on **BUSINESS**

Want to learn more?
LET'S TALK 📞

Overview

Discover—Analyze—Decide

The first step is to understand where you're starting from. We analyze the application portfolio from multiple perspectives—cost, usage, risk and technology—to create a clear picture:

- What applications are installed?
- How well do they support your business goals?
- Which ones offer the best payback from transformation?

ASSESS **MODERNIZE** **GOVERN** **MANAGE**

Offerings that help assess your applications:

- » [Application Portfolio Management](#)
- » [Applications Modernization Assessment](#)
- » [Applications Rationalization services \(545KB, PDF\)](#)
- » [Application Transformation software](#)
- » [More about Application Transformation](#)

We often begin with an Application Transformation Experience Workshop where we jointly align future

» [X-ray your applications using visual Intelligence \(4:57 mins, video\)](#)

Featured ▲ Technology Solutions ▲ Industry Solutions ▲ All Solutions

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And not like this

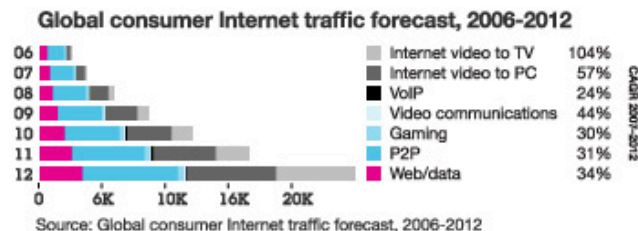
Explore new best practices in communications

It's more than talk

After a decade of meteoric growth, the telecom industry now faces mounting challenges. Not least of which is a need for telcos to rethink their identities as communication service providers (CSPs).

The reason is change. Personal communication technology has evolved from a way to stay in touch into entertainment on demand, an office wherever you go, and social networks and streaming media as constant companions. Industries and municipalities are also coming up with new ways to improve lives using broadband. Simply put, healthcare, education, utilities and other vital services will never be the same, thanks to creative thinking and high-speed data transfer.

On a smarter planet, almost anything can become digitally aware, instrumented and interconnected. We have the [connections, processors, analytics and capabilities](#) powerful enough for trillions of devices to talk to each other and improve the way the world works.



A busy signal is not an option

The infrastructure's need to grow up and the communications providers need to keep up come at great struggle when you consider that worldwide consumer broadband connections are predicted to increase 7.9% from 367.6 million in 2008 to 498.8 million in 2012.

Realizing the potential of smarter communication technology will require the infusion of new capabilities and models into our systems to make it easier for devices to transmit and interpret data, provide more secure connections, and protect identities. And new ways for traditional communications providers to stay strong and relevant—for example, through moving into adjacent markets (telemediacy) such as healthcare and transportation, and maintaining the backbone for two-way smart utility meters, to name two.

Attendees of the [2010 Smarter Industries Symposium in Barcelona, Spain](#), identified three critical actions for communications providers to both meet the challenges of the marketplace and capitalize on opportunities:

- Leverage their unique assets to offer value to adjacent industries.
- Implement cloud technology to increase revenue through the delivery of new services quickly.
- Deploy analytics to differentiate the customer experience and improve customer satisfaction.

[Register now to download The Smarter Industries reports](#) to read more about the results from the 2010 Smarter Industries Symposium.

Like this.

Recyclability

Because iMac is made from materials such as aluminum and glass, it's more likely to be recycled and reused at the end of its long, productive life.



EPEAT Gold

iMac has earned EPEAT Gold status for its responsible manufacture, energy efficiency, and recyclability.



Recyclable materials.

Apple has minimized the waste when iMac reaches end of life through its ultraefficient design and the use of aluminum and glass, which recyclers can reuse for other products.



Free recycling for your old computer.

If you live in the U.S., Apple offers a free recycling program for old computers and displays with the purchase of any new Mac.

[Learn more on the Apple Recycling site](#) ›

The EPEAT Gold rating.

Through its innovative and environmentally friendly design, iMac has earned the highest rating of EPEAT Gold.² The Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool, or EPEAT, evaluates the environmental impact of a product based on how recyclable it is, how much energy it uses, and how it's designed and manufactured.



In other words:

- ❖ Break information into short, scannable paragraphs
- ❖ No more than three short sentences per paragraph
- ❖ Use engaging subtitles above every paragraph
- ❖ Make ample use of pull quotes, bullet points, side panels
- ❖ Visually break up the page, and the information
- ❖ You can do this with the most technical information: Your reader will thank you for it

And finally. Tell a story.

EVERYTHING has a story

You just have to find it.

❖ (Or make it up.)

Every online interaction is a quest

- ❖ Treasure hunt
- ❖ Slay the dragon
- ❖ Get off the desert island
- ❖ Achieve wisdom
- ❖ Fight the invading hordes
- ❖ Build the biggest / strongest / fastest ship

Create a narrative

- ❖ Not literally... Your web copy still needs to be clean & direct
- ❖ Like the personas you created, this is a story in your head that guides your writing
- ❖ Persona: guides the tone you use to get your audience's attention
- ❖ Narrative: the underlying story behind your audience's **quest** (for software, shoes, movie tickets, information...)
- ❖ This is informed by: Your navigation structure + what you know about your personas' needs and capabilities

... Thank you!



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