

THE

WEBSITE CONTENT

Workbook

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE
TO GETTING THE PAGES

→ YOU NEED ←

BREW CITY
MARKETING™

The Web Content Workbook

Worried about filling your new website with content?

Don't let the idea of coming up with a few pages stress you out. In this short guide, we're going to walk you through the process of outlining, writing, and refining your webpages. Composed by a veteran copywriter with more than 15 years of experience and 1,000+ websites written, it's designed to be simple, easy to follow, and most importantly, to get you the professional-quality web content you need with a minimum of time and hassle.

What You'll Need to Write Your Own Website

To get the most from this workbook, you should have:

- ✓ A good working knowledge of your company and its products
- ✓ Access to word processing software (and possibly a spreadsheet)
- ✓ Anywhere from 3 to 10 hours, depending on your working speed and the size of your website

This last point is important. Even if you don't write the pages for your website all at once, you should try to block off a period of time within two or three days to finish the job. The reason is simple: Momentum matters a lot when it comes to writing.

For many people, the idea of putting words onto pages, especially blank ones, can feel overwhelming. Working continuously makes it seem less overwhelming, while starting and stopping can leave you feeling as if you aren't making any progress and cause you to delay for weeks or months... and hold up the launch of your new website in the process.

With that word of caution out of the way, let's get started...

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Should You Write Your Own Website?

If you're reading this, I'm assuming you're not a professional copywriter. The question then is whether you should write your own webpages at all.

Only you can make that decision. If you're interested in saving time and turning as many visitors as possible into customers, then it's certainly worth paying a professional to get the messaging right on your webpages. Think about it this way: If just 10 people a day visit your new website, that's *thousands* every year. An experienced copywriter can help you turn a bigger percentage of those visitors into paying customers, so over the long run professional persuasive writing tends to pay for itself.

And there's the fact that a lot of people hate writing. For some people, it can remind them of being back in school, staring at a blank page while trying to finish a boring paper. If that sounds like you, then why put yourself through the stress of writing your own webpages?

If you're still reading, though, there are other factors to consider. For one thing, no one knows your business like you do, which means your perspective as a business owner or manager could be invaluable. And in certain industries, it can actually be faster to write your own web content than it would be to explain the details of your business to an outsider.

And let's not forget that good copywriting costs money. In fact, it's very much a "you get what you pay for" kind of

proposition. So if you're already stretching your budget just to pay for a new web design, there might not be money left over to pay a professional writer. In those situations, writing the pages yourself might be your best — and your only — choice.

Finally, remember that deciding to write your own pages doesn't mean you can't hire a professional to do a rewrite at some point, or even get them to tune up your work once you're finished (more on this later). For now, we're going to assume you're interested in saving a bit of time and money and want to write your own pages.

Why Is Web Content Important?

As anyone who's worked in the Internet marketing industry for a while could tell you, it's not unusual to see a business owner or executive spend thousands upon thousands of dollars – and dozens of hours – getting the perfect layout for a new website, but wait until the very last minute to pay any attention to the content on their pages.

In short, they tend to think of the actual words on their websites as being secondary to the look and feel. It's only human nature; we tend to form strong emotional connections to images, even though text is often relied upon to convey actual features and benefits.

Before you can start writing new pages, it's important that you understand just how much of a difference having the right content on your website makes. So here is a very brief recap of the reasons you should take the time to get your web content right:

Your Messaging Is an Important Part of the Marketing Mix

A strong layout can only take you so far. No matter how impressed people are with the designs and images they find in your website, you need words to tell them what you sell, why they should be interested in it, and what actions you want them to take next.

Search Engines Read Text but Not Photos

Google and the other search engines (not to mention social media sites) can read and understand text, but not images or animations. So if you want to attract customers to your website, it's important that you have lots of content, and that it be in the right format to appeal to Google's automated software (we'll show you how to write search engine-friendly pages later in this guide).

Good Website Writing Is Persuasive

With the right words, you can inform visitors, pique their interest, and convince them to take the next step, which might be to make a purchase, schedule an appointment, or visit your retail store. Without good copywriting, you have an interesting set of images at best, but no persuasive power.

Getting Ready to Write

Contrary to what a lot of people think, getting “ready to write” doesn’t mean locking yourself away in a cabin, putting on a smoking jacket, or drinking until you discover a flair for the dramatic. Instead, it’s about finding short, understandable answers to three important questions.

Let’s look at each one...

Planning Question #1: What Is the Purpose of Your Website?

Beyond the fact that you “know you need one,” what is your website really for? How would you like it to impact or improve your business?

For example, the purpose of your website might be to increase sales directly through product pages and e-commerce, to generate more foot traffic for a brick-and-mortar location, or to generate leads for your company. It’s absolutely *critical* that you understand what the purpose of your website is before you start writing, since that’s going to affect the way you structure your pages and writing at every step.

Activity: Create a new folder in your documents and start a word processing file for your project (you might want to name it “web content notes” or something similar).

On the first page, write down the purpose of your website, using two or three sentences at most. Consider

copying the same thing onto a sticky note and place it somewhere that you'll see it while you go through this workbook.

Planning Question #2: Who Are Your Customers, and What Do They Want?

Another way to say this might be: What kinds of people do you want and expect to visit your website?

Think about what they look like, how old they are, where they live, and what kinds of problems or issues they're facing. Also, consider how much they may or may not know about your industry and products. You can't write great pages until you understand your audience and know what kind of language is appropriate to them. Think about whether they're buying for themselves or someone else, what their motivations are like, and whether they'll understand jargon, acronyms, and technical language you could include in your webpages.

Activity: On a new page, write a paragraph about the kind of person you want to read your website. Note their age, education, job title, and income. Start brainstorming other factors that make them easy to identify. Think about the motivations and considerations that matter most to them when working with a company like yours.

If you have more than one type of customer, write separate paragraphs for each one.

Planning Question #3: What Kind of Marketing Tone Do You Want to Set?

Does your business have an established marketing personality? Is there a tone, voice, or style you prefer?

You want your customers to feel like the pages you're writing were meant just for them. And it helps if your marketing isn't generic – that is, if it doesn't sound just like something you'd find on a competitor's website. Think about who you really want to be, as a business, and how that image or personality relates to the answers to the first two questions.

Activity: On the next page of your document, write a few things about the personality of your business. How do you want to come across to customers and website visitors? What separates you from the competition?

Once you're sure you understand what your website is for, who your customers are, and what you want your marketing personality to be like, jot down a few notes about each. These will help guide you through the process of writing your webpages.

Planning and Outlining Your Website

You'll have a much easier time finishing the writing for your website if you begin with an outline. Don't worry, we aren't talking about anything detailed or substantial here – you can probably finish outlines for your pages within 15 minutes each at most.

We'll break that process into a few easy steps...

Make a List of All the Pages on Your Website That Need Writing

If necessary, you can break this list into different sections. That's because some pages will need general content (like your "Home" and "About" pages), while specific product pages might require a different kind of writing. Additionally, you might assign different pages to different people. For example, perhaps you're writing the main content pages, but you're having team members assemble their own bios. Don't forget that some pages (like a "Contact" page) typically require just a few sentences.

Activity: Use a new page in your document to make a list of all the pages on your website that will need to be written. If some pages have content already, or at least some beginning thoughts, note that on your list.

Create Files for Each Individual Page

These can be simple word processing documents that give the title of each page (e.g., *Home*, *About*, *Services*). On each page, leave a section for a headline, body text, and a call to action.

*Activity: Create separate files for each page that will need to be written. Underline page titles (e.g., home page, about us page). On each page, write **HEADLINE** in bold letters, “body text” a couple of lines below, and “call to action” at the bottom of the page. You’ll fill these in with actual content later.*

What Is the Purpose of Each Page?

Just like your website as a whole has a purpose, each page on your website has a job to do. Make a note on each file of what the purpose for that individual page is.

For example, the goal of your Home page might be to let people know what kind of company you have and where it’s located, to impress them with your credentials, and to direct them to the appropriate sub-page. The purpose of the About page might be to tell the history of your company and list some of the things that make your business different from the competition, and so on.

Activity: At the bottom of each page, remind yourself of the purpose. These notes will be deleted when you

finalize your pages, but can be very helpful to have on screen while you're writing.

For instance, your note might say something like: The purpose of this page is to inform customers about our services and how we emphasize personal, one-on-one interaction.

List a Few Important Points on Each Page

These don't need to be complete thoughts or sentences, just a handful of concepts or ideas you want to be sure to mention on each page or section. List out as many as you can off the top of your head, without editing your thoughts. You can always cut them down and turn them into actual sentences later.

Activity: For each page on your website, list at least five important points or details that have to be mentioned. The more you can come up with, the better (it's easier to edit down than it is to add writing when you don't have enough).

Don't be afraid to use rough, grammatically incorrect bullet points. Ignore typos. Do research on the web if necessary, or talk to others in your company. The more ideas you can put onto the page, the easier it will be for you to actually write later.

Start Organizing Your Pages

After you have the main ideas and concepts for each page listed out, reorganize them so that the most important concepts are at the top, and the less important or supporting ideas are lower on your list. Then begin grouping different ideas that naturally go together into different blocks. Again, don't worry about putting them into sentences now, just see which ideas are related and list them in a way that makes it easy to see the connections.

In doing so, you'll inevitably come up with a few "chunks" of ideas. Later on, these will become the headlines, subheadings, and paragraphs you'll use to fill out your web content.

Activity: Using a cut-and-paste technique, start moving or dragging the notes you've made into an order that makes logical sense. Make sure each page of notes begins with the most important idea, followed by any supporting details.

Play and experiment as much as needed to move them into an order that flows well for you. When in doubt, ask yourself this: "If I were explaining things to a customer, what would I say first, second, and so on..."

Decide Whether Each Page Needs a Call to Action

A call to action, or CTA, is simply an invitation for the reader to take the next step. Here are a few good examples of CTAs:

- ✓ “Call us now at XXX-XXX-XXXX to learn more!”
- ✓ “Click here to find more product details.”
- ✓ “Subscribe to our newsletter using the contact form below.”
- ✓ “Buy today and receive a 5% discount with our limited-time coupon code.”
- ✓ “Call us today at XXX-XXX-XXXX to schedule a free consultation with a member of our team!”

Most of the pages on your website should have a call to action that gives the reader an option to take the next step (and increases the chances that they’ll become a customer). These can be simple, but are important. Think about what you want customers to do when they finish reading (or scanning) your page, and whether that’s a reasonable next step.

Activity: Decide which pages on your website will need a call to action, and what that should be. For the best results, try to use one consistent CTA throughout your website so that every page leads a visitor towards the desired action.

Understand the Parts of a Webpage

With your webpage outlines and files in place, you're almost ready to start writing. It's important to know, however, that your webpages are more than just blocks of text. There are a few distinct pieces of content that every page should have:

Page Titles

Your page titles simply tell viewers, and search engines, what a particular piece of content is about. This is the text you will see at the top of your web browser when you open a webpage. It should be short, descriptive, and search engine-friendly (don't worry, we'll help you to search optimize your pages shortly).

Headings

The main heading on your page fulfills a similar role to the title, but should also be engaging. In other words, it has to tell the visitor what's about to come, but also make them want to read more. These can be simple (*Welcome to Our Website, About Our Company*, etc.) or can be centered on specific products, services, or ideas.

Subheadings

On most webpages, you'll have a main heading, and then several smaller subheadings that break up text into more specific topics and details. For example, if this were a webpage, *Understanding*

the Parts of a Webpage would be the main heading and *Page Titles* would be the first subheading.

Using subheadings is important because it breaks up what would otherwise be long blocks of text that would feel overwhelming to customers. Additionally, they allow readers to scan your pages more quickly to find the information they're looking for, and have search engine optimization value that we will discuss shortly.

Body Text

The body text on your webpage is simply the normal text where you convey information and ideas. It usually isn't bolded or underlined, and it makes up the majority of your web content.

Within the body text you might have several different paragraphs, as well as bullet points that highlight specific features or ideas. These can be great for directing a visitor's attention and showing off a few quick features and benefits. For instance, with bullets you can:

- ✓ Quickly make or reiterate key points
- ✓ Highlight statistics that show the value of what you're selling
- ✓ List different product options in a succinct way
- ✓ Set off important ideas so they're easy to notice

Calls to Action

As we've already discussed, calls to action are important to your website content because they provide links to other resources and drive visitors to action. You might have different calls to action on separate webpages, or none at all. Use them as needed to help customers figure out what they should do next.

Meta Descriptions

Meta text is essentially a description of your webpage that doesn't actually show up on the page itself. So why write it at all? Because most search engines will display meta descriptions within search results, so it can increase visits to your page.

For example, if you search for the name of a product or business within your industry, you'll notice that Google will display at least two lines of text with each result: the first will be the page title, and then the meta description below. So it's important that this be an accurate description of what the searcher will find on your page, and be something that makes them want to click through to the link.

Example: The Xanadu Coffee Shop in Portland, Oregon, features special blends that are fresh-roasted daily. Visit our website for menus, location, and weekly coffee drink specials.

In two short sentences we've managed to tell potential customers what the business is, where it's at, and why they want to try it, all while giving the reasons to click through to the website. Feel free to copy this example and apply it to your own business.

Write Drafts of Your Pages

It's finally time to write your pages! The great thing about this workbook, if you've followed along this far, is that you're not going to be starting from scratch. In fact, even though you've just been "outlining" and "making notes" up to this point, your pages are probably almost written already, even if what you have isn't in complete sentences or is out of order.

Here's a secret all professional writers know: *It's much, much easier to begin with a half-finished page of text and clean it up than it is to stare at a blank screen and wonder what to write.* By putting your most important thoughts and ideas together already, you've turned the job of writing into a simple process of turning notes into more fluent ideas.

The other hard part about writing is *just doing it*. That's it – there aren't any secret tricks once you know what you want to say. You just have to sit down and get started.

Before we get into the step-by-step mechanics of writing your pages, let's set a few ground rules:

Say Something Meaningful to Your Customers

Don't try to write like a poet or salesman; instead, imagine that one of your best customers brought a colleague along to the business luncheon, and you want to tell this person about your company and its products or services. Avoid hype and simply

give them the important details. You'll get much better results that way.

Write Like You Speak

A common mistake in writing is to use big words and flowery descriptions when you'd be better off going for a plain, clear sentence or description. Write like you speak, naturally, and you'll avoid coming up with convoluted sentences that are difficult for readers to follow or understand.

Don't Worry About Spelling and Grammar for Now

The important thing about the writing process is to turn ideas into sentences. There will be plenty of time for editing later, and you don't want to censor your thoughts, or trip yourself up, by worrying about things like spelling and grammar. Concentrate on getting your ideas onto the page, with the knowledge that you can make adjustments before your web content goes live.

Save Your Files as You Go

This is a small point, but an important one. Be sure to save your files continuously. And if you make major changes that you aren't sure about, be sure to save different versions so you can go back and review your thoughts later.

Turning Ideas into Content

Now that you know how the pros do it, let's get down to the business of turning your ideas into polished webpages.

Begin by Turning Notes into Sentences

The difference between making notes and writing webpages isn't as significant as you probably think. That's especially true if you take things one line at a time, without worrying about where everything is going to end up in your finished draft.

Activity: All the important notes for each page should be laid out in order of flow and importance. Start taking them and turning them into complete sentences. Don't worry about turning those sentences into paragraphs just yet – just write complete sentences for each important thought. If you need to break an idea into two or three sentences, go ahead and do so.

Don't worry about making your writing creative or interesting. You can edit later, but for now you simply want to have ideas that are clearly expressed in easy-to-understand sentences. When in doubt, make things as simple and straightforward as possible.

Start Stringing Different Sentences Together

A paragraph is nothing more than a few sentences that have been put together in a logical order. On the web, you don't want yours to be too long, so grouping two or three related ideas allows you to get a good start.

Activity: Cut and paste your complete sentences so that they are in order. As a rule of thumb, put any two ideas that are closely related, or follow naturally upon one another, next to each other. If something doesn't fit, just leave it on its own. Go ahead and delete anything that seems overly redundant, but don't worry too much about editing right now.

Add Extra Ideas and Transitions

Often, the sentences you write won't paste together in a way that makes perfect sense. Now is the time to smooth out the transitions a bit so that your writing is easier to follow and understand.

Activity: Read through your new paragraphs out loud. When you have ideas that don't seem to flow smoothly from one to another, consider adding transitions (words like "also" and "however"). If new thoughts come to you while you're forming paragraphs, feel free to add in new sentences or ideas.

If your paragraphs become too long, add in extra breaks (to start new paragraphs), or consider moving some ideas onto a new page. Take your time, and don't be afraid to experiment. You already have the important ideas and concepts you need on every page, now you're just looking for the best way to present them clearly.

Insert Subheadings Between Big Ideas

Long blocks of text can be intimidating to readers, and make it hard for website visitors to scan your page. Subheadings help break up ideas, organize thoughts, and make your website easier for search engines to analyze and catalog.

Activity: Look for parts of your pages where ideas seem to go off in a different direction. Typically, this will happen every two or three paragraphs or so. Anytime you're about to make a fresh point, or highlight something that's interesting or important, insert a subheading.

*Subheadings simply give the reader a sense of what they're going to find within the next block of text. So, descriptions like **Why We Roast Our Own Coffee**, or **In-Office Catering Specials** are descriptive, and help website visitors to find the information they are looking for quickly.*

You may want to bold and capitalize your subheadings, as I've done here, to be sure your web designer knows how they are intended to be used.

Consider Using Bullet Points

Not every webpage has to use bullet points. They are most commonly found on home pages and product pages, where you want to make it easy for readers to scan key points at a glance without having to dig through lots of text.

Used properly, bullet points and numbered lists can:

- ✓ Highlight important ideas
- ✓ Break up long blocks of web content
- ✓ Draw attention to important ideas
- ✓ Save space on a webpage

See what we mean?

Activity: Consider whether you have any ideas that are best presented as bullet points, and insert them into your webpages where needed. Usually, you'll only want three to five bullet points on any page. Any more than that, and readers might become overwhelmed or miss key bits of information.

Give Your Pages Headlines

Earlier, we advised you to leave bolded placeholders for headlines on your webpages. Now, it's time to fill them in. Your headline is the most important bit of writing on your entire page (followed by your call to action). So, why leave it until the end of your writing?

There are two good reasons. The first is that a lot of business people feel overwhelmed when it comes to writing headlines. The pressure to come up with something clever or insightful leaves them with writer's block. That's easier to overcome when you have drafts of your webpages that are nearly finished.

The second reason is that you might not be completely sure what your pages are going to be about when you first start writing. Your headlines need to describe the page *and* get visitors to take notice. That's easier to accomplish when you already have the framework for your content.

Activity: Try writing a handful of different headlines that would make someone want to read your page while giving them a sense of what they will find or learn. Don't be afraid to study other websites, as well as leading publications, to get a sense of which headlines grab your attention.

Start a new word processing file named "headlines." Make a section for each page you are working on, so you can brainstorm ideas without listing one after another on your existing draft.

For some pages, finding headlines will be easy. Using text like Xanadu Fresh-Roasted Coffee on Main Street, About Our Company, or Contact Us might not be flashy, but it can be effective.

Remember: Professional writers will often go through dozens of headlines for every page they write, working on variations until they find one they love. Take your time and experiment with different themes or ideas.

Insert Your CTAs and Clean Up Your Pages

The last step to turning your notes into a complete draft of your webpages is to make sure the calls to action you inserted earlier are still relevant, and to take away any notes or ideas that don't fit.

This isn't the same as editing – we'll get to that in just a minute – it's just stripping away anything that isn't meant to be read by website visitors. For instance, if you took our advice earlier and wrote out the purpose of each page, now is the time to take that content away, along with any sentences or paragraphs that no longer fit the message you're trying to convey.

Activity: Look for any extra content on your webpage drafts that isn't needed. If you have blocks of text that don't seem to fit and aren't sure whether you want to delete them or use them later when you're editing, save them in a separate file that you can come back to while you're refining your writing.

5 More Professional-Grade Writing Tips

Still having trouble putting your thoughts into actual paragraphs? Writing can be difficult, even for the professionals. Here are a few expert tips on filling pages and bringing out your creative best:

Work in Successive Drafts

Few things are as harmful to your writing as trying to be a perfectionist. Don't worry about getting everything just right on your first draft, or even your second. Just keep making small improvements, one pass at a time, until you have something you like and that you think will resonate with your customers.

Make (and Keep) a Writing Schedule

Writing gets harder if you try to do a lot of it at once. Block off 30 to 60 minutes at a time (over the course of a week, for example) and you might find it easier to get motivated and stay focused.

Clear Your Desk (and Your Mind)

Speaking of focus, multitasking isn't a good idea when you're trying to write. Clear off your desk, close other apps and software, and devote your attention to one page at a time. You'll make faster progress and will write more clearly.

Beat Writer's Block Like a Pro

Creative professionals know that writer's block doesn't come from being mentally stuck — it comes from not knowing what to do next. If you find that you just can't put any words on the page, make a more detailed outline until you have a clear idea of the thought you need to express.

Don't Be Intimidated

Writing is only scary to people who haven't done it. The great thing about web content is that it doesn't have to be brilliant, or even grammatically perfect. It just has to tell customers about your business and why they should work with you.

Editing Your Pages

To paraphrase Ernest Hemingway (whom you probably had to read in high school), “The first draft of anything is terrible.” That’s maybe a little harsh, but then again, he wasn’t really known for his cheery personality.

The point to be made here is that editing is where “writing” turns into something that’s clear, informative, and consistent. It’s mostly a matter of trimming down what you’ve got on your pages until it’s easy to follow and understand.

Editing can be easy or difficult. If you’ve taken your time to outline and write the pages as we’ve recommended so far, you’ll probably have a pretty easy time improving your writing. If you’ve rushed through any of the earlier steps, you might have to go back and write something new before it’s ready for editing. Either way, here’s how it’s done:

Try Reading Your Pages Out Loud

The biggest writing errors are usually obvious once you read your pages out loud. Your eye might skip over words that are unclear and sentences that are incomplete, but you’ll often hear them even if you don’t see them.

Activity: Read through your webpages out loud to see if they sound natural to you. Make changes as you go to smooth out any rough edges.

Look for Clarity First

It's worth reiterating that you want to inform readers clearly and naturally, not show them how clever you can be as a writer. When in doubt, always go for the more straightforward word or phrasing. The most important thing is that customers be able to understand you.

Activity: Rewrite any sentences or sections of your web content that seem to be unclear. Remember that your first job is to inform website visitors, not to impress them with your literary talent.

Don't Be Afraid to Cut Mercilessly

The hardest part about editing is cutting things you have written from your pages, especially if you like a particular sentence or paragraph. But the shorter your web content is, the more likely it is to actually be read by customers. And being redundant and repetitive is a big turnoff for readers.

As you edit your pages, look for what you can cut instead of what you can keep. It's difficult, but you'll end up with much cleaner pages at the end.

Activity: As difficult as it might seem, try to make your pages as short and concise as they possibly can be. The more content you have on your pages, the less likely it is that someone is going to read everything. Strive for 300

to 500 words for a normal webpage (depending on the layout provided by your web design team), and see if you can fit all your pages into that uniform length.

Edit for Content First and Grammar Second

Understand that there is a difference between editing and proofreading. Editing is all about making sure that you have the right ideas, expressed clearly, and in the correct order. Proofreading, on the other hand, is about checking spelling and grammar.

Edit your pages first before you worry about proofreading them. If your pages don't say what you want them to, all of the proofreading in the world won't help you fix it.

Activity: Go through your web content once more, looking for typos and grammatical errors. If you aren't sure about a word, phrase, capitalization, or piece of punctuation, highlight it within your document so you can look it up and make corrections as needed (or get help from someone with more editing experience).

Borrow a Second Pair of Eyes

When it does come to proofreading, consider getting help from a friend or colleague (preferably one with great spelling and grammar skills). Most of us – professional writers included – have a hard time spotting the errors in our own work. Borrowing a

second pair of eyes is a good way to prevent typos and other mistakes from creeping into your pages.

Activity: Make sure at least one other person reads your webpages before you move on. It's incredibly easy to overlook even simple errors when evaluating your own writing.

Fine-Tuning Your Pages for SEO

Search engine optimization is the art of attracting more visitors to your website by improving your visibility on Google, Yahoo, and Bing. It's a big topic, and entire books and seminars have been devoted to the subject.

For the terms of basic website writing, however, there are a few things you can do to help your pages rank more highly on search engines:

Understand How Google Reads Your Webpages

When someone goes online and enters something into a search engine, Google matches the most important words in their phrase – called keywords – with webpages it knows also contain those same words. So if you don't have keywords on your pages, Google can't understand what those pages are about, and won't send visitors to them.

Choosing Search Keywords

If you don't already have a list of search keywords included in your pages, there are two good ways to find them. The first is simply brainstorming: If you were searching for a business like yours, what kinds of things would *you* enter into Google?

Another good way to find search terms is by seeing what Google recommends to you (since it catalogs common search queries) using its autocomplete feature. Just enter in a few of

the phrases you brainstormed, and the tool will show you other common search terms, along with a rough idea of how popular each one is. There are also other similar tools available for free use on the Internet if you search for them.

Using Your Keywords

Understanding keywords and finding them is the easy part. Figuring out how to use them within your website writing requires a little bit of a balancing act. That's because, even though keywords are a good thing, using too many of them will cause Google and the other search engines to ignore your webpages.

With that in mind, here are a few good guidelines you can follow:

- ✓ Make sure to use important search keywords at least once in your page titles and main headings
- ✓ Additionally, you can use search keywords and subheadings if they fit naturally
- ✓ Try to use an important keyword once or twice (but no more) within your body text
- ✓ See if you can find a place for one or two keywords within your meta descriptions
- ✓ Don't forget to use your city or area name as a keyword, since Google pays a great deal of attention to these and lots of people like to work with local businesses

As you follow these steps, keep in mind that Google doesn't read your page the same way a person does. It will ignore certain common words (like *the*, *and*, *in*, and so on) as well as punctuation. So you don't need to shoehorn in an awkward phrase that ruins your writing just for search engine optimization purposes. In fact...

Never Sacrifice Your Messaging for SEO

Don't ruin a perfectly good, or clear, piece of writing just to cram in more or different search engine phrases. First, it probably won't be effective – Google is getting better at spotting unnatural text, and it's more important for your pages to appeal to customers than it is for them to draw search engine traffic.

And second, most search engine optimization is now contextual and individualized, meaning that Google doesn't match *exact* keywords and phrases all the time, but looks at a user's location, search history, and other factors when making a match. Overdoing it with search keywords won't help you attract more visitors, but it may stop you from winning a new customer.

Activity: Using the search phrases and keywords provided by your web design team, review your web content to find places where they can be inserted into your text.

Important search terms should always be used in page titles, headlines, and meta descriptions when

possible. Additionally, you may want to use them once or twice within subheadings and body text.

Don't forget that geographic locations are important search keywords. Use them to show customers (and search engines) where you're located and the areas in which you do business.

Submitting Your Pages

Once you've outlined your pages, written them, and done any editing/SEO fine-tuning that's needed, you're ready to add them to your website! Simply save the latest versions of your files (with the appropriate names so you can find the ones that have been edited and proofread if you need them later), and then send them to us.

Congratulations! If you've finished the writing for your website, be sure to take a moment to celebrate and pat yourself on the back. If not, read on to the next page where we'll give you a few tips for bringing a professional in to finish the job.

Working with a Professional Writer or Editor

Sometimes, in the process of trying to write their own webpages, business people find that writing is something they really don't enjoy, or that it isn't really within their skill set. Conversely, they may find that they are able to write the webpages they need, but that the resulting content doesn't have the kind of polish or marketing power they were hoping for.

That's fine. Just by following the steps outlined in this workbook, and making the effort, you'll be far more ready to work with a writing or editing professional.

Although it involves an additional expense, hiring a professional writer (or editor to clean up what you've already done) can save time and be more convenient. If you decide to go this route, here are a few things to keep in mind:

Get a Recommendation

There are a lot of writers out there, but many of them are hobbyists who don't have much more experience than you do. For that reason, it's a good idea to seek out a recommendation from a colleague or your creative team.

Stay Involved

Even if you aren't writing or finishing your pages, it's important for you to stay involved in the process. As we've already mentioned, no one knows your business better than you do. Be sure your

writer understands the key goals, concepts, and calls to action we've outlined so they can be incorporated into the final drafts.

Look at Samples and Style

Before you hire a writer or editor, look at their samples to see if the style is a good match for the marketing tone you want to establish. Do their samples read like something you'd want to have on your website?

You'll Get What You Pay for

This is old advice in any business, but it rings true for writing. Look for the cheapest writer you can find, and you'll probably get the lowest-quality work. Remember, your website will be seen by *thousands* of people every year – it's important that your content be clear, informative, and persuasive, regardless of whether you write it or someone else does it for you.

Refining Your Web Content

Allow us to be the first to congratulate you on finishing your web content. By going through the (sometimes tedious) process of writing your webpages and optimizing them for conversions and search engine visits, you've given yourself a big advantage over your competitors who haven't taken these steps.

Remember, however, that websites are living, evolving entities. It's a good idea to revisit your content from time to time, ensuring that you still like the way it reads, that it's presenting the right information to your customers, and that none of the important details in your business have changed.

Editing and updating your web content is much easier than starting from scratch. Besides, you should now have the confidence to know you can handle the job if revisions or extra pages are needed.

Enjoy your new website, and great job getting your content together!

BREW CITY MARKETING™

Brew City Marketing is the leading local SEO and WordPress design company in Milwaukee. We've created hundreds of websites and happy customers. We specialize in creating easy-to-maintain websites and nearly all aspects of internet marketing, including search engine optimization, website analytics, social media management, blog writing, and more.

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