

Seven things to consider when writing a website or brochure

by Amy Kurland

A well-written website or brochure, one that gets people to perk up and call you, is like having a 24-hour salesperson on staff who pretty much works for free. But to get those readers to call you, your website or brochure needs strategy. This means its every sentence should be written to emotionally entice your specific target market and prompt them to action.

The first step in this process is devising a strategy. Usually this is done before you begin writing because your strategy will determine what you're going to write and how you're going to write it. Strategy is the backbone that guides the copy. That said, below are seven questions to ask yourself to help you develop a strategy for your website or brochure:

- **What is the purpose of your website or brochure?** Is it to give your consumers a general introduction to your company? To actively sell your product? To simply give your business credibility? Whatever your reason, you need to decide on a distinct purpose before you can determine just how the website or brochure will be broken down, and what your strategy will be when writing it.
- **Who are your consumers?** What is their lifestyle? What are their pains, their desires? What problem do they have that your product can solve for them? Once these things (and many other details) are determined, only then can you specifically write copy that psychologically targets this consumer.
- **Is it clear what the benefits of your product are?** Particularly with websites, it's not uncommon to see ones that offer details about the company—its history, size, awards, etc.—but don't tell you how being their customer will benefit you. Unless you want a strict credibility website with no selling (which is rare), you have to emphasize and clarify the benefits of your product for the reader. Which means the site has to be mainly about the reader and their needs—not so much about the company.
- **Is it clear what your product is?** Again, this is more commonly seen with websites than brochures, but it's alarming how often a website will tout the benefits of working with their company or buying their product, *but it's not clear just what it is they're providing or selling!* For a consumer to know whether they're interested in what you have to offer—regardless of the benefits—it has to be clear what your product is.
- **Do you want to include a special offer?** This goes back to what the purpose of your site is. If you want more of a soft sell/credibility site or brochure, you may only want to include your phone number and email on your Contact page. But if you want to actively sell your product (which is what I recommend), you'd benefit from being more aggressive and including a special offer and call-to-action.

- **How well do your readers already know your product?** If you're selling shampoo, there's really no need to explain what shampoo is—you just need to highlight the benefits of using your particular shampoo. But if the product is an original product that's the first of its kind on the market, you'll need to explain what it is before someone will know if it's something they'll want to buy.
- **How will your readers be receiving or finding your brochure, or finding your website?** The way you choose to make your brochure or website accessible to your consumer has a powerful impact on its success. Will you leave the brochure in your office, only making it available to existing customers? Will you send it out through the mail to a new prospects? Will people find your website through a search engine, or will they visit it because you've personally handed them your business card? All of these factors will help determine the state of mind your reader will be in when they read about your service, which will help shape your writing strategy.

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