

## **TRADITIONAL WRITING SKILLS DON'T WORK ON WEB**

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Most Web content is overwritten; too much content, too much context, not nearly enough focus on the action. Unfortunately, we're taught to write this way.

How often are you presented with content on the Web that begins something like this: "Exciting, compelling, and effective user experiences result in high levels of customer loyalty, satisfaction, and referral." On the surface, this seems like an okay sentence. It's how we're taught to write: set the scene, establish the context.

However, it's utterly useless. It's like saying: "Every business is an end-to-end network of interrelated people and processes. The more seamless and flexible the network, the more successful the business." Or: "Your people are your most valuable resource. They contribute to the success of your company." Or: "Even during the best of times, companies are always looking for ways to trim costs, optimize processes, drive efficiencies, and create greater value for their clients."

The problem with the above sentences, other than the fact that they are utterly useless, is that they are utterly useless. (Not to mention the fact that they are utterly useless.) They don't tell you anything you don't already know, and they give you no real sense of what the product or service is actually about.

If someone is at your Web site they already have the context. They have made a deliberate decision. They are in an active, doing mode. They want to dig deeper, compare, price, to get detail, detail, detail.

Write Web content from an elevator pitch perspective. Your customer has walked into the elevator, the doors have closed, they turn to you and say: "Convince me before the next stop to buy your product." Design your website from the 'I badly need to go to the toilet' perspective. Your customer needs to act and act quickly. That's the Web.

You're proud of your website but pride comes before the click of the Back button. Anything on your Web site that puffs your ego, that makes you smile, that you think is really cool-remove immediately. The content that you're in love with-and so proud of-is nearly always the content that drives your customers away.

There is far too much content written for the English teacher or the English exam you crammed for. You want to impress. You want to show off all the clever things you know. You want a beginning, middle and end. You want to tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them, then tell them what you've told them.

A normal person sees a link called "Where's my refund?" and thinks that if they click on this link they'll be able to answer that question quickly. But a classically trained English

student who wrote the link thinks that when the person clicks on the link they should be given this sentence. “You filed your tax return and you’re expecting a refund. You have just one question and you want the answer now: Where’s my refund?”

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