

The Human Face of Copywriting

*How to be natural and
authentic*

“Anyone who says
writing is easy isn’t
doing it right.”

– Amy Joy

copywriting

MYTHS

Copywriting itself hasn't changed much over the years. The teachings of the greats like Ogilvy and Drayton Bird are still as true today as they've ever been.

But if that's the case, why is there so much bad copy out there?

In a word – the internet.

It has revolutionised the way you do business – even the smallest company can now attract a global audience and compete with multinationals. Of course, that depends on your website's visibility, which means grabbing one of the top spots in the search results.

The problem is that many marketers and business owners have become blinded by that goal.

By focusing on their rankings, they started creating content for the search engines and not their customers. Many myths began to appear – tempting people with a few easy steps that would get them ranking highly.

The problem is that many of those techniques will actually harm your business, damage your reputation, infuriate Google and chase away potential customers.

I hope that by dispelling a few of those urban myths, I'll help you develop a writing style that will get you noticed – for the right reasons.

So, let's start with the biggest myth of them all.

Google is God, all hail Google!



This myth has led to the general mindset: *I'm writing content for the web; therefore, I must write for Google.*

Wrong.

When writing your content, the only person who should be in your mind is your customer. Every word must be aimed at them. That means saying no to **we** marketing (when all you do is tell your reader about your company) and adopting a **you** style that focuses entirely on the needs and wants of your customers.

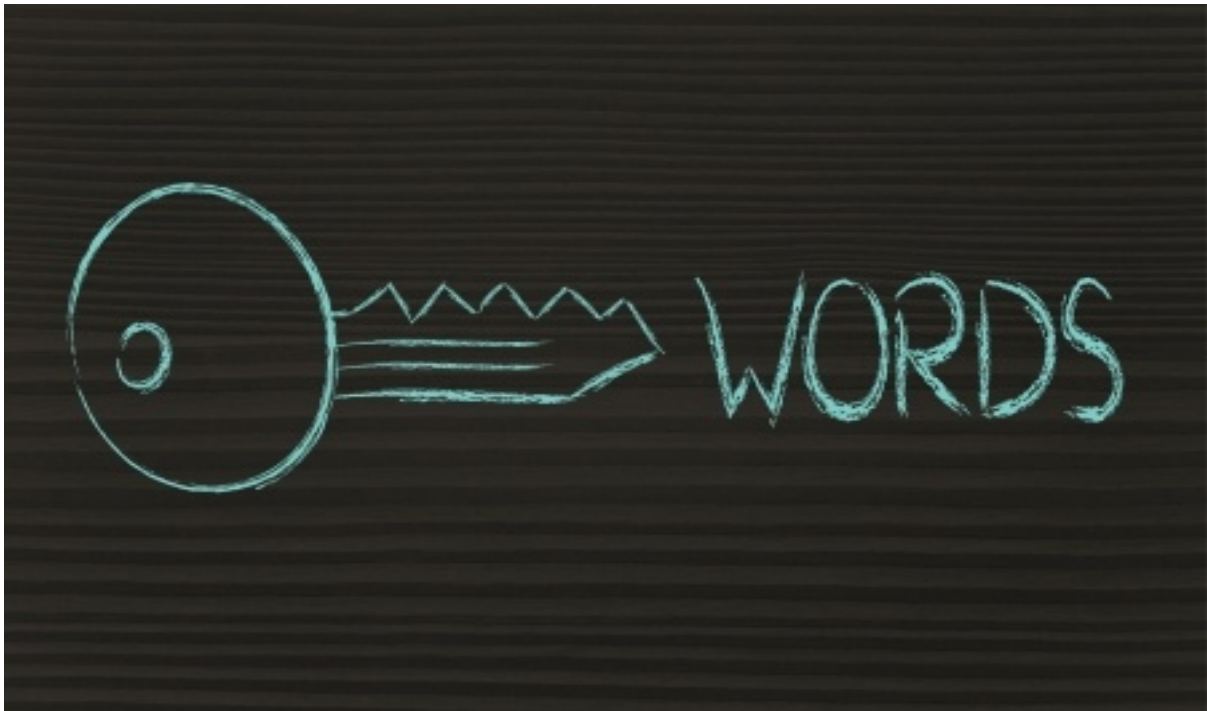
That means:

1. Always write in the second person
2. Write in a conversational style

If you had a physical shop, your website would be the building, fixtures and fittings. Your content would be your sales staff, greeting customers as they arrive, talking them through the benefits of what you offer, answering their questions and making the sale.

Writing in the second person, conversationally, replicates this face-to-face experience. It helps you build rapport and a relationship with them that will show them they can trust you and that you're the type of person with whom they want to do business.

That's why you should be writing for the reader and not Google because writing for Google led to the next copywriting myth I want to look at.



Keywords are still a relevant part of your marketing strategy, but you must tread with caution.

The term “Keyword density” that was coined back in the early days of internet marketing has a lot to answer for because it's the leading cause of bad writing.

If you're unsure of what it means, it refers to the days when online marketers believed that the only way to get high rankings was to stuff their content with as many instances of their keyword as they could.

At one time, websites using this technique probably did rank well – but what they didn't do was convert visitors into customers.

Why?

Because the content was incomprehensible, as this example shows.

This is a screenshot I took from an SEO copywriter's site a few years ago – yes, an official website.

It may well have been that this type of copy meant the website ranked highly for Search Engine Optimisation in the olden days – but I'm willing to guess that it didn't convert many visitors. After all, would you want a company like that to create your web copy?

Search engine optimization

Find search engine optimization services. We are a search engine optimization business. Why not talk to an experienced search engine optimization company? We can write organic copy for search engine optimization. Talk to us if you need us to write **search engine optimization organic copy**. Do you need to find a freelance search engine optimization writer? Speak to a search engine optimization copywriter. We offer copywriting search engine optimization. Professional search engine optimization services offered through this site.

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High rankings are useless if your content doesn't convert your visitors

The sad thing is that there are still people who believe that content will only rank if it has a specific keyword density – wrong.

Yes, keywords are essential, but now it's more about their placement rather than their frequency. They should be used within the structure of your website to show Google what your pages are about meaningful sentences in your URL, title tags and H1 headings. They can also be used in your subheadings.

Posting “car repair garage” once in the title tag of your site and once in the header matters far more than stuffing it five times into the body copy.

Because the subject of your page is your keyword, it will naturally crop up as you write, without you having to shoehorn it into every sentence artificially.

But naturally using it a few times isn't enough. Now, you must also bring in related terms and synonyms to give your writing some context. So, for the 'car repair garage' example, Google would also expect to see words like MOT, car servicing, body shop, exhaust repair, etc.

Today Google's got pretty smart. Its ever-evolving algorithms are becoming more sophisticated, and so must your approach to writing web copy.

In layman's terms, when Google scans your site for information, it no longer pulls out the keyword phrases it thinks are relevant and pairs them to user queries. Instead, Google interprets the data on your website and forms its conclusions about what your business delivers. If that seems a little spooky to you, you aren't alone — Google is becoming exceptionally sophisticated.

That's why it's vital you always write for your reader – the minute you start thinking search engines, your writing will become stilted. Keep it conversational.

So, what's next on our list of Urban myths?

I run a business; therefore, I must sound like a corporate



Your tone of voice

More often than not, the thinking is *"I'm a business; therefore, my writing must be formal, impressive and full of jargon."*

No.

It's essential to convey the personality of your business in your writing if you want to stand out from your competitors.

Every business is different, so everyone's approach will be different, so the way you write must reflect you, and your business values – and that means finding your voice.

By all means, look round at other sites for inspiration, but the writing style you use must reflect you as a person – especially if you work alone.

The reader needs to get a sense of who you are when they read your website. Then, when they pick up the phone or meet you, it's as if they know you already.

I mentioned earlier that the most effective way of writing is in the second person using a conversational style because it mirrors face-to-face communications (without the two-way chat), building engagement and drawing the reader into your writing.

The problem is, many find it difficult to replicate that in the written form, automatically falling into the formal academic style you were used to at school or university.

It takes a bit of practice, so before you start writing, imagine yourself sat opposite a friend having a conversation over a coffee about your product or service. Think about

the language and vocabulary you would use and write down the conversation as it unfolds in your head.

The words you use should be simple – many people believe that using complex multi-syllabled words make you sound intelligent; they don't; they have the opposite effect.

Websites that are full of hyperbole, buzzwords, jargon and industry-speak make customers sceptical. It makes them think, "*why are they using terms like that, I don't understand what they're saying*". It's a bit like a client of mine that wanted to talk about Experiential Marketing – a term that is meaningless to most people other than marketers. Eventually, they realised the market they were aiming for a) wouldn't understand what it means and b) wouldn't use it as a search term.

You see, it doesn't matter whom your audience is, how educated they are, or how high up the corporate ladder they've climbed, they just want simple answers. They are only people.

The other side of finding the right voice for your business is to ensure you also inject your personality into your writing to make it 'human'. If you were reading a novel that used formal, stilted language you wouldn't get beyond the first page; but one that's conversational, chatty and informal will draw you in.

Keep your language simple.



Magic words

Staying with language for a moment, despite popular belief, there are no magic words in copywriting.

You often see articles giving lists of words that will apparently make your readers buy from you.

Sadly, there are no such words. But the way you use language will have a significant effect on your conversion rate.

The best way to do that is by using emotive language.

Words like suddenly, quick, easy, sensational, miracle, compare, challenge, hurry, bargain and revolutionary certainly carry some weight, but it's essential to come up with words that reinforce your underlying message.

Your words should mirror your personality and message.

My website is about me, right?



So far we've looked at various ways of keeping your writing natural: by not keyword stuffing, using simple language and words that mirror your personality and goals – so now let's think about how your writing is going to be presented.

Imagine for a moment you're sitting in your shop waiting for a customer to come in. The door opens and in walks someone wanting to learn about what you do. If you launch into a speech about how you've been in business for 20 years, have offices in 10 cities and provide innovative and cutting-edge products or services, they will probably turn tail and find someone else to help them.

The same goes for your web copy because your website isn't all about you.

Writing in the way I've just described isn't going to impress anyone. It will show you as a company that's more wrapped up in its achievements than how it can help potential customers.

People want to find a company that empathises with their problem and shows them how they can make it go away and improve their life.

As business owners, it's difficult to put your achievements to one side. After all, you've worked hard to build your business and are rightly proud of what you've

achieved. But all of that has to be laid aside when it comes to writing to attract customers.

Your customers want to know one thing – how you’re going to make their life easier.

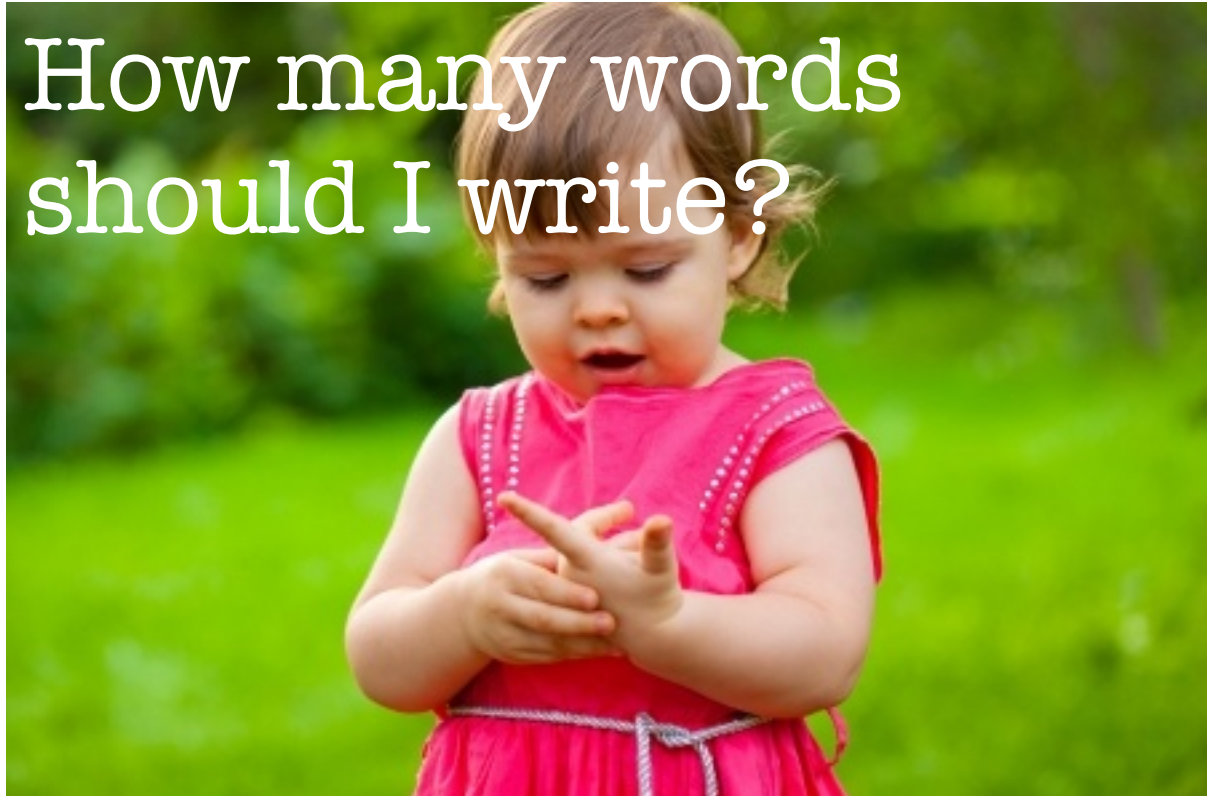
That’s it.

So, your home page has to tell them that.

If you can create a headline that encapsulates your primary benefit, you'll be on to a winner because it will be the first thing they see, drawing them into the rest of the copy that will convince and compel them to get in touch.

Every page you write (including your About page), must focus on benefits.

How many words should I write?



The final myth I want to look at is something that seems to be the subject of numerous blogs and articles right now - how many words you should have on each web page.

The most common questions I'm asked are how much content should I have on my website? and how long should my blogs be?

In the words of a friend and fellow scribe: Copy should be like a mini skirt – long enough to cover everything but short enough to be interesting.

The internet is rife with blogs that claim every web page should have more than 500 words if it is to rank well. The truth is (as far as I'm concerned) you need as much copy as it takes to get your ideas across.

Setting high limits will only lead to padding, which will reduce the impact of your content, bore your reader, and most likely end up with you losing business.

There are certain circumstances where it's been proven that long copy outperforms short – usually in the direct marketing world – but online you'll find websites with only a couple of hundred words (sometimes less) ranking alongside those pushing 1000 words.

It's far more important to make sure your message is strong and that you've focused on the needs of your reader.

In my mind, focusing on quantity is leading you down the same path as the myth about keyword density.

If you've said all you need to say in 300 words, what do you do?

Ruin your powerful message with an extra 200 words of padding?

No.

The content on your website is just one factor that will impact your rankings, and you'd do well to remember that.

Great content on its own isn't going to get you on the first page if your site isn't also optimised.

So, my advice is don't get hung up about quantity and instead concentrate on quality.

Make your writing natural, authentic and powerful by...

- Playing with your words
- Injecting your personality
- Using metaphors to bring life to your writing
- Releasing your creativity

Here are a few takeaways that will help you to write naturally with an injection of personality

Playing with your words

- As you write, the first words that come into your head will probably be those that are commonly used and quite mundane
- When you refine your initial draft, try something more unusual or precise – experiment with emotional or sensory words to create a picture for your readers

Injecting your personality

- Don't be too generic in your writing
- About us page – don't do the usual "Sally loves travelling, cycling and spending time with her family." Try something different such as "On a Saturday morning Sally is usually pedalling along the leafy lanes of Suffolk

before heading home to create her signature dish – Beef Rendang, an Indonesian curry, slightly spicy, lightly sweetened and amazingly fragrant."

Use metaphors

- A metaphor is simply a connection between two unrelated topics that helps add a visual element to your writing
- It will help you add sparkle to your writing

Release creativity

- When writing or drawing when you were a child you wouldn't worry about what others thought – you'd just let your creativity flow
- You need to get back to that creative state
- Silence your inner critic and let your first draft flow – be bold, be daring and just be yourself



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