How Is Writing for the Web Different from Writing for Print?

Effective writing must consider the audience to whom it is directed. Knowing your audience and tailoring the work to appeal to specific interests and qualities is one of the first steps in creating a well-crafted composition. When writing for the Internet, it is critical to understand the answer to this question: how is writing for the web different from writing for print?

How Is Writing for the Web Different? What Digital Content Creators Need to Know

Digital media have increasingly become a primary source of news and information. While some people feared that digital media would mean the end of print, that scenario has not come to pass. Although web writing styles differ from those used in print, we have learned that the two can coexist. It seems that, instead of being in direct competition, digital and print media have come to serve unique purposes for consumers.

For anyone who plans to engage in digital marketing, it is essential to understand people's motivations to read web writing vs. print writing. To do that, writers need to start by asking "how is writing for the web different?"

How Readers Consume Web Writing vs. Print Writing

There are many differences in the way we read online vs. the way we read in print. Some you have probably noticed, but others are a bit subtler.

Research has found that people tend to scan the page when they read online. Studies have tracked Internet readers' eye movements and found that many online consumers scan content in an F-pattern, reading the first line or two, then scanning down the left margin, reading a line or two, and so on. The implications of this research for web writing styles are significant.

While print media readers usually work linearly through a document, scanning the page from left to right, web readers take cues from the page to determine what is worth more attention.

The content that readers are more likely to consume also differentiates web writing vs. print writing. People seem to prefer to read more in-depth articles in print, when they have time to focus on a single task.

Meanwhile, in a comparison of digital vs. traditional writing, it is worth noting that online readers are more likely to have a specific goal. These individuals are seeking content that is easy to consume. They are more likely to be multi-tasking and potentially distracted than a person reading in print.

Web writing styles should consider that online content consumers are more likely to read multi-directionally, are more likely to click links, and will appreciate devices—like bold print and headlines—that allow them to identify focal material.

How Is Writing for the Web Different, and Why Does It Matter?

The differences between web writing vs. print writing can make the transition from one to the other difficult for writers, who might become frustrated when painstakingly crafted content doesn't perform well online. The problem is not necessarily that the quality is poor (though good quality should always be a priority) but that the writer has failed to recognize how online writing is different.

Web writing styles must accommodate a specific audience: web readers. Brief sentences and shorter paragraphs create white space that is easier on the eye. A simple structure populated with interactive elements also helps hold the attention of a mind anticipating distraction.

In addition to writing in a way that considers the readers' medium, [search engine optimization (SEO)](#) is an indispensable part of writing for a digital audience. Search engines decide if your content is useful in answering specific questions posed by Internet users. SEO tells search engines that your writing answers the question at hand.

Digital vs. Traditional Writing Styles: Make the Transition

When you create online content that doesn't get read, you have spent valuable time spinning your wheels and no one benefits from it. Alternatively, investing in quality digital content that knows its audience and implements SEO techniques can help your law firm or business, your clients, potential clients, and even the general public.

Write for the Scanning Eye

Like it or not, online readers are going to scan your copy. Too many words and sparse white space can send a reader fleeing from your site, which in turn tells search engines that your content was not useful. Make your web copy friendlier to the scanning eye by writing shorter sentences and keeping paragraphs succinct.

Create Headings to Guide the Reader's Attention

Because online readers begin at the top and gravitate to the left, place your most important points as close to the beginning as possible. Be sure the title of your piece is accurate and attention-getting, and follow with an introduction that hooks the reader. Headings within the text create a roadmap of sorts for the content, draw the reader's eye, and assist in creating white space on the page.

Provide Hyperlinks That Are Genuinely Helpful

Creating an interactive experience will help prevent readers from finding alternative distractions. Hyperlinks make a page more interactive and can satisfy a wandering mind. Links should always be directed to respected sources that provide deeper context or understanding for the content of your material.

You can also include hyperlinks to pages within your website that offer supportive information. These internal links can introduce the reader to other services you provide, help to establish thought leadership, and build connections within your website.

Learn about SEO and Put It to Work for Your Website

SEO is a set of techniques that can help your website achieve better organic search results and search engine ranking. Google and other search engines crawl your website for clues to nature of your content. By including keywords in your title, headings, and text and implementing other SEO techniques, you can convey to search engines how your website is helpful to Internet users.

How Is Writing for the Web Different, and Where Do We Go from Here?

If there is a battle of digital vs. traditional media, the online sector is certainly making a strong showing. However, it is more likely that the two will continue to work in tandem, serving the purposes of consumers of information in different ways.

While some would argue the dominance of the Internet, studies in neuroscience have found advantages that are unique to print. One study by a Canadian neuromarketing firm discovered that readers of direct mail campaigns had better brand recall than those receiving email or other digital marketing outreach.

Additional research has found that people have more meaningful responses as well as better recall for print advertisements.

This doesn't suggest, however, that the power of digital marketing can be dismissed. In fact, the most effective approach is likely to combine the efforts of digital vs. traditional writing to maximize the effectiveness of the messages you put out into the world.

Get Help Answering "How is Writing for the Web Different?"

People are undoubtedly looking for businesses and services online. The opportunities available in Internet marketing are abundant. Legal professionals need only educate themselves in how to make the most of digital marketing efforts.

Answering the question "how is writing for the web different from writing for print?" is an important first step in your digital marketing journey. To learn more, reach out to TwoDogBlog using this online contact form or call (317) 565-7191.

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Alt-Text: An image of a typewriter on a writing desk, representing the importance of honing your digital marketing to make the most of your marketing dollar by asking the question "how is writing for the web different?"

Meta Description: How is writing for the web different from writing for print? Call the TwoDogBlog for the answer and help making your digital content draw more traffic.