

Web Sites For Advocacy and Community Organizing: Basics, Essentials, and Best Practices

Writing For the Web

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Learning Goals

- ▶ Understand how users “really” read content
- ▶ Appreciate importance of writing for specific “take-aways”
- ▶ Learn to make your points early and make text “scannable”
- ▶ Remember low-literacy readers as you write
- ▶ Consider your web site as story telling
 - Use images as part of the story telling

Writing For the Web

- ▶ **How Users Read Websites: The Bad News**
 - **Users Don't Read, they scan**
 - In testing, it was found 79% scanned page 16% read word by word
 - **Users read in an F shaped reading pattern**
 - Horizontal across the top
 - Down the page and horizontal across again
 - Scan the left side bar
 - **Users do not scroll**

Writing For the Web

- ▶ Users are Looking for
 - Concise
 - Scannable
 - Objective (rather than promotional)
 - Credible
 - Links
 - Credentials

Writing For the Web

- ▶ Ask yourself key questions before you start
 - What is the one thing I want a user to remember after reading this page?
 - Where do I want the user to go after reading this page?
 - How am I going to get them there?

Writing For the Web

- ▶ State your point early
 - Express your main point in the first two paragraphs
 - Unlike other writing, rhetoric is less important than information
 - Keep critical information in first paragraph
 - Don't make any important points “below the fold”

Writing For the Web

- ▶ Make content “scannable”
 - Use short informative titles that lead into details
 - Bold key words and concepts
 - Use headlines, sub-headings and bullets
 - Use bulleted list to address main points
 - Start with information and topic rich words that will jump out in this highlighted text when scanned (users may not read 3rd or 4th word)
 - Use white space to make more vertically scannable

Writing For the Web

- ▶ Make it easy to comprehend
 - Write content using as few words as possible and avoid over flowery language
 - Consider reading levels as you write
 - Home page: Target 6th grade reading level
 - Other pages: Target 8th grade reading level
 - The less the user has to think and process the more they will retain

Writing For the Web

- ▶ Considerations for low-literacy readers
 - 48% of US population has low literacy (USDE)
 - Lower literacy readers don't scan
 - They read every word
 - Information needs to be less dense
 - Site search needs to be tolerant of misspellings
 - Complex navigation can be confusing
 - Avoid text that moves or changes
 - Including “fly-out” changes

Writing For the Web

- ▶ Use images and artwork to tell the story
 - Images draw readers to links on lead-in pages and keep them interested on content pages
 - Use images that vividly convey the content
 - Summarize the story not the image in the caption
 - Also use "ALT" text effectively
 - Importance of icons
 - Use iconography to summarize intent of content

Writing For the Web

- ▶ If the page has “an ask” make it easy to see
 - Use an icon to pull out
- ▶ Make content searchable
 - Have keywords in your title without endangering the integrity of your title
- ▶ Link Often
 - Links highlight key concepts and add credibility and excitement

Web Site as Story

- ▶ Stories have
 - Conflict
 - Sympathetic Characters
 - Adversaries
 - Tone
 - Assumptions

Web Site as Story

- ▶ Stories have “Points of Intervention”
 - Point of production
 - Point of destruction
 - Point of consumption
 - Point of decision
 - Point of potential
 - Point of assumption

Web Site as Story

- ▶ Based on audience and tactics
 - Story about organization
 - Character is victim
 - Bad guy
 - Vs
 - Story about the campaign
 - Character is person taking action
 - Bad guy is target

Web Site as Story

- ▶ Who is the sympathetic character in your narrative?
- ▶ How will people understand or relate your topic? Frames include...
 - First person narrative
 - Geography
 - Identity
 - Student, activist, press, academic
 - “Values”

Web Site as Story

- ▶ “Challenge the narrative of powerlessness”
 - Societal narrative posits individuals as powerless actors
 - Change the terms of the story so that individuals are protagonists and change agents
 - The goal is to shift a first-time visitor from thinking as a recipient of the narrative to being an empowered actor in the narrative
- ▶ Thank you, SmartMeme.com

End Of Section

- ▶ Questions?
- ▶ Comments?

Thank You!

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