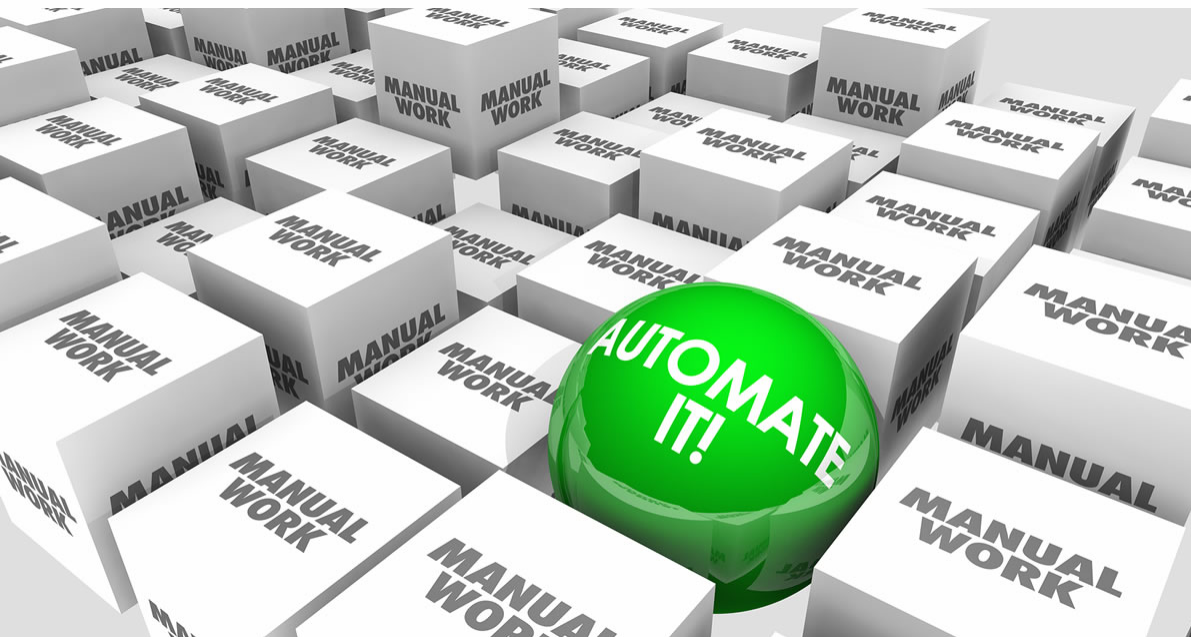


The One Thing Your Online Copywriting Must Do

By Liz Farr



What's the secret to great marketing and sales experiences? The ones that turn a buyer from a casual observer to a raving fan? The ones that make them feel good about the money and time spent?

At this year's *Web Copywriting Intensive*, attendees learned the secret: An integrated experience focuses on the needs, desires, and language of the buyer with empathy and understanding.

Not hype or pressure, but a gentle glide down a smooth ramp to an experience that solves the customer's problems and answers all of their questions. Even the questions they didn't yet know they had.

Over three days in Austin, we learned from seven experts — beginning with Ryan Levesque and concluding with Ryan Deiss, with two Heathers (Robson and Lloyd-Martin), Pam Foster, Tim Washer, and Nick Usborne in between.

Rebecca Matter set the stage Sunday evening by showing an image of all the pieces we would learn as an integrated puzzle.

When all the pieces are cohesive, consistent, and interconnected, the user has a powerful experience.

Miss one or more of the pieces, and you lose potential customers and leave money on the table.

Start with the right language

Integration begins when the words you use are the words used by your customers.

Ryan Levesque introduced us to the ASK method, which uses a survey of open-ended questions to discover what really matters to an audience. By using open-ended questions, the survey keys in on what the audience needs, not what we *think* they need.

A mistake many make with surveys is to focus on the most frequent responses, but as Levesque has found in markets ranging from orchid care to weight loss, the secret is to focus on the hyper-responsive respondents.

The responses from those who answer survey questions in sentences and paragraphs are a gold mine of information and offer surprising insights about your market.

It's the hyper-responsives who will be your potential buyers and their concerns are the ones to focus on.

When you echo back exactly their words and their concerns, you instantly connect with and engage with the people who most need what you're selling.

As copywriters, we can use our understanding of the architecture of persuasion to weave the language of those potential buyers into powerful marketing messages.

This demonstration of empathy and understanding for a prospect's specific situation elevates you to the level of a trusted advisor.

Use those words — plus SEO — to help those in need find you

Heather Lloyd-Martin de-mystified SEO and made all of us — including several who previously feared SEO — comfortable with the concepts of keyphrase research and working with Google's ever-changing algorithm.

In the B2B world, however, search volumes in niche industries may be too small to show up in the keyword databases, so other techniques are needed. Reverse engineering a high-ranking competitor's content can provide some clues.

Does the competing page cite more sources and appear more authoritative? How does the length of content compare? Do competing pages have longer posts that include the keyphrase or synonyms more often?

Meet the user's needs at every step of the way

A consistent user experience — or UX — at all contact points, from website to emails to the processes for purchasing or signing up for service is essential, Heather Robson explained.

A great user experience makes customers feel valued, smart, safe, and welcome. A bad user experience leads to frustration, complaints, and refunds.

UX copywriting requires the copywriter to shift from being a vendor to being an integrated part of a team with a laser focus on the needs and desires of the user.

Clear and consistent messaging, and providing a clear path to the next step, makes for a great user experience.

Mixed messages, confusing instructions, and a focus on the company rather than on user benefits make for a bad experience.

Put your best foot forward with a great website

Websites, as Pam Foster explained, need to be easy to navigate with clear indications of what a visitor should do next and what makes this company different from the competition.

Websites need to work well with mobile since that's the way more searches are conducted.

As part of UX, websites need to focus on the needs and desires of the customer, not on how wonderful a company is. A casual visitor should be able to tell at a glance what the company does, whom they serve, and why they're the best option.

For many websites, big improvements come from simple fixes.

Businesses that serve a local community need to have an address and phone number so prospects in that community see them as an option. A descriptive headline and explanatory copy helps visitors understand what the company does.

Nurture and convert with automated email sequences

As Ryan Deiss explained, the best model for client acquisition is to see ourselves as guides for the journey that our buyers are on.

Well-crafted automated email sequences that put the needs of the customer first are an ideal tool to guide prospects along that journey.

When someone first signs up for a newsletter or service, or purchases something, an indoctrination sequence helps turn strangers into friends. A series of two to five emails introduces the new subscriber to the company, helps to set expectations for

future interactions, and starts a conversation.

A conversion sequence helps guide a prospect to the next logical step and overcomes objections that someone might have about buying.

The key in any email sequence is to understand the needs of your prospect and their stage of the customer journey.

Social media is for engaging with your customers

Today, almost all businesses are on social media, but 90% of them are doing it badly. Those 90% are treating social media as just another channel for a one-way, broadcast message.

But as Nick Usborne reminded us, the power of the internet comes from two-way conversation, and social media is ideal for that.

By engaging with customers on social media, a company demonstrates it cares.

Here are some of the keys to getting social media right:

- Choose the platform where your audience hangs out, and use their language. Each platform has a different personality, demographic, and posting limitation.
- Engage by responding actively to comments. Engagement leads to trust, which leads to increased conversion, which leads to an increase in the amounts and frequency of future sales.
- Compelling headlines are the key indicator of whether something will be shared. Research shows that 59% of the articles that have been shared were never actually clicked on.
- Use every day conversational language. Dry corporate-speak filled with pronouncements of how great a company is don't engage with customers and are ignored.

Video and humor connect powerfully

Making someone laugh pierces the bubble of resistance, according to Tim Washer. Humor demonstrates empathy.

Combining humor and video can communicate complex messages more powerfully than a logical sequence of proofs. As he learned from his time in standup comedy, communication happens when you shift from what you want to say to what the audience will hear.

As Ryan Deiss said at the beginning of his presentation, copywriting is the most important skill. If the copy isn't great, the marketing plan — no matter how well-designed — won't work.

When we use our copywriting superpowers and place the customer and their needs in the center of all we do, we serve the customer best by helping them solve their problems.

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