Content is king!

It is paramount to ensure your web site contains a wealth of the right information

By Kimberley Ward

"Never forget who your audience is and what they are hoping to gain from visiting your website..."

Part three of a six article series that focuses on the importance of your web presence as an integral component of your practice marketing.

When it comes to creating the content for your website, your aim should be twofold: create copy that improves your search engine rankings, therefore attracting more users, and create copy that keeps users on your site once they get there.

In the minds of digital marketing experts there is no doubt - your copy is the key to your site's success or failure. As far as SEO (Search Engine Optimization) experts are concerned, 'Content is King', and including quality content on your site remains the top ranking factor in deciding your site's success in Search Engine Results Pages (SERP's). SEO has really become a buzz term, with companies and organizations across all sectors aiming to incorporate SEO best practice into the design and build of their site. Research has shown that 90% of internet search users click on the organic search results on the first SERP... and will not look any further than this.[1] It is essential that you ensure you are on the first page of search engine results, wherever it is that your patients and potential patients are looking.

The second aim of your copywriting is then to keep your users on your site once you have attracted them. Anyone looking to build a website must be aware that writing web content is fairly unique and requires a completely different approach to preparing copy for print documents and publications.

So how do you write effective copy to meet these two very different goals without compromising one or the other? The key is to follow these 10 basic principles that will address both aims concurrently:

1. Ensure your content is related to the topic and keyword rich

Many hours and dollars can be wasted implementing SEO strategies that aim to get your site on the first SERP, when the best approach is simply to produce a well designed site that is easily crawled by search engine 'bots' (also known as spiders) and contains quality content that clearly relates to the chosen keywords. Search engine 'bots' scan and index the

content of your site to determine what your site actually contains. The way they do this is in much the same way as a user would read through your site. They note keywords and metadata first, followed by headings, sub-headings and then your content, noting any repeated terms and weighting their relevance to the scope of your site as a whole.

2. Make sure your content is easy to read

Some people find reading and comprehending information on screen more difficult than reading it in print. Studies have suggested this is due to glare, poor typeface choice, the intangibility of a screen vs paper, etc. Whatever the cause, it's best to write copy that is as easy as possible for your site visitor to comprehend.

The best way to ensure content is easy to read is to break information into bite size chunks. As a guide, your word count should be kept to around 250 words per page. Keep your sentences short, direct and to the point. Use headings, sub-headings and bullet points where appropriate so that users can more easily 'scan' the information and use bold and italics in your formatting to highlight key points (though remember that underlining should be reserved for hyperlinks only).

3. Write for your audience

You should never forget who your audience is and what they are hoping to gain from visiting your website. A site that has been built to appeal to referring dentists should contain very different copy to a site built for patients. If your target audience is patients, it is best to avoid technical terms and industry jargon in your copy that they may not understand, as it is likely to alienate. Instead write in a conversational tone, from 'me' to 'you', using terms that your audience will easily grasp.

4. Write for how people search

Quite often internet users are looking for a solution to a problem and in many cases, this solution is not already known to them. A patient who has chipped a tooth may not know the treatment options available to them and therefore may not search for 'Veneers', or 'Bonding' for example. Whilst you should by all means still include these terms in your keywords and the content of your site, you should also consider using 'chipped' and 'tooth' as keywords and incorporate 'chipped tooth' into the copy of the sections on your site relating to veneers or bonding.

5. Create effective headings

By creating effective headings, you are highlighting to search engine bots the important terms within your site. This also emphasizes to users the important sections of your site, as headings are the first things users scan to determine what a page is about. Main page headings should also be placed on the home page as a link to content (see point 7 for why this is important!).

6. Write keyword rich title tags

Your website title tag is basically a concentrated blurb that tells search engines what a page is all about. Your web developer will incorporate this into the build of your site, but it is up to you to tell them the pertinent information that should be contained here. Google in particular places a lot of weight on the words contained within a title tag when evaluating the topics within that page, which will in turn effect your ranking results for different search terms.

7. Provide links and connections within the copy

Another important factor in determining search rankings is the number and quality of both inter-site and intra-site links. Having quality links to and from your site to other sites that cover the same topics gives your site credibility, not only in the eyes of your site visitors, but also to search engine bots. Including links from one page in your site to another also aids in highlighting the relevance of each section of your site to the others and helps to move users through your site. Also take this opportunity to use keywords in the anchor text of any links within your site. For example, if you are linking to a journal article, instead of embedding the link within your site as the actual web address of the site that hosts the article, use the name of the article or 'Journal Article on xxx' and introduce the topic and article in the preceding copy.

8. Write effective summaries, sentences and paragraphs

Make sure your copy includes references to all relevant information you have to offer on a topic. In the same way that a journalist creates a story, you must also tell a complete story within your site. A visitor to your site should be able to gather the following information from you:
- Who you are;
- What you do - type of dentistry and procedures you complete;
- What qualifications you have;
- When you are available;
- Where you are located;
- Why they should visit you over a competitor; and
- How they can contact you to make further enquiries or book an appointment.

9. Sell benefits, not features

When writing for the web, this is somewhere that a lot of people come unstuck and it relates closely to point 3. Your website should be used as a tool to reach new patients and encourage them to visit you in future over a competitor. What will convince them to do so will be what you can do for them. So, if your practice prides itself on finding solutions for patients that other practices do not, be sure to make this clear to your patients throughout the copy on your site that this is your MO and that your point of difference is finding the best treatment solution for each individual patient, rather than just listing the different procedures you perform at your practice.

10. Edit!

Last but definitely not least is the importance of a final edit of your copy before your site goes live. Reduce the copy where possible to ensure only pertinent information makes it on to your site. And don't forget that final spell check!

The beauty of a web page as a marketing tool is that it can be constantly updated and tweaked, however if you've noticed a spelling mistake on your site after it has been live for a month, you can guarantee that visitors to your site have to! Before pushing anything live, enlist the help of another person in your practice to cast a fresh pair of eyes over your copy.

Reference

1 Statistics provided by SEOmoz - www.seomoz.org

About the Author

Kimberley Ward is Business Development and Marketing Manager for Levitch Design Associates, one of Australia's leading healthcare interior design consultancies who offer an integrated approach to practice presentation. Custom corporate identity solutions, brand development, graphic/web design, promotional strategies and marketing campaigns are some of the services provided. For more information, contact (02) 9880-9300 or see www.levitch.com.au