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InSynch Business Services Ltd

Copy Writing for the Web


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Copywriting for the Web

Esther Prytherch

InSynch Business Services Ltd
www.insynchbusiness.co.uk

Copy Writing for the Web

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Purpose of the Day

- Importance of Web site content
- Writing Tips
- Language, Style and Structure
- Brand Guidelines
- Effective captions for images
- Obtaining images for the web
- On-line PR


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Content is King

- Your website is your on-line shop window
- First impressions count
- Loyalty and trust
- Search engines

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Writing for the Web

"Web users generally prefer writing that is concise, easy to scan and objective (rather than promotional) in style"
 Jakob Nielsen

<http://www.useit.com>

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Creating Content

Think about your audience:

- Who will be using the site?
- What will they be looking for?
- What language will be most accessible and understandable?
- Can they find the information they want?
- Does the site feel friendly?
- Are they likely to leave the site feeling happy – or frustrated?

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Exercise 1

Take a look at the examples of tourism business home pages and discuss....

- What are your first impressions?
- Is the main purpose of the site clear?
- Which home page do you find most attractive and why?
- What don't you like about the sites?
- What would you click on?

Exercise 2

- Search for a particular website
- First impressions
- Try to make a booking or buy something on the site
- Talk through what you're doing
- Feedback

Print vs On-line

- People read slower on-line
- Web users scan more than read
- Web users don't tend to like long pages
- Web users often have a specific purpose

Writing Style

- Simple, concise sentences
- Avoid sub-clauses
- Short paragraphs
- One idea per paragraph
- Use active verbs
- Use the present tense
- "Chunk" your information

Chunking Information

Long sentences and paragraphs, with lots of sub-clauses and clumsy syntax, can be very difficult to read, especially from a computer screen which is more tiring on the reader's eye than print so it is important to break long passages of text into shorter, manageable bites; highlighting keywords, using headings and sub-headings as well as bulleted or numbered lists where appropriate.

Chunking Information

- Use headings and sub-headings
- Highlight keywords
- Use bullet points
- List information

Writing Style

- Aim for a conversational or informal style of writing
- Use plain, simple language
- Avoid jargon and flowery language
- Articulate before writing
- Read your copy out loud
- Keep it personal

KEEP IT SHORT....

“Broadly speaking, the short words are the best, and the old words best of all”.

Winston Churchill

EXERCISE 3

Using Simple Language

Structure

- Plan your pages by making a list of the main points you want to make
- Use the “inverted pyramid” model
- Put the most important information in the opening sentences
- Add more detail in subsequent paragraphs
- End by pointing to further information

The 5 “Ws”

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?

Structure

- ‘Inverted Pyramid’
- Most important information at the top
- Include all main points
- Keep language simple
- Is there a wow factor?
- Make it interesting!

DOs and DON'Ts

- Do update your pages
- Don't cut and paste printed text - rewrite for on-line use
- Navigation – do help users find their way around your site
- Do point to other useful content
- DON'T WRITE IN CAPITAL LETTERS

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MID WALES BRAND GUIDELINES

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Brand Guidelines

- Copy content should
 - focus on specific facts and experiences
 - avoid platitudes and generalisations
 - adopt a friendly, approachable and welcoming tone of voice
 - images should feature people rather than empty landscapes

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Brand Guidelines

- Base copy on interesting and unusual facts that make Mid Wales different
- Embrace the specific, personal and anecdotal
- Avoid clichés and generalisations
- Use short, sharp sentences
- Avoid jargon
- Take a conversational approach

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Brand Guidelines

- Mid Wales logo
 - follow sizing and other guidelines on use of logo
 - can be used over imagery
 - can be used on print material
 - use alongside Welsh dragon marquee

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Brand Guidelines

- Typeface:
 - FS Ingrid is primary typeface for titles, masthead, headlines and body copy
 - Range headlines and copy to the left
 - Verdana is secondary typeface
 - Use Verdana for web and email
 - Use minimum 12pt for body copy
 - Line length less than 70 characters

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Bilingualism + Web Sites

- Welsh-language is one of Wales's USPs
- Mid Wales Brand Guidelines encourage use of some Welsh-language words alongside English, e.g. Croeso Cynnes!
- Grants may be available from Welsh Language Board + free translation service: <http://www.byig-wlb.org.uk>

Exercise 4

- Write an introductory sentence about your business which is in keeping with the Mid Wales brand guidelines

Images

- Pictures can speak louder than words
- Important for design
- Keep image files small
- Use captions
- Always write an 'Alt Tag'

Captions

- Most images need a caption
- A caption should sum up the image in a short and concise way
- With a group of people, indicate if the list of names is left to right or give other instructions to ensure correct identification



Alt Tags

- On-line images require an Alt Tag
- An Alt Tag is a text description of the image, not a caption
- Alt Tags help visually-impaired computer users
- Alt Tags replace pictures if the user switches images off
- Try to include keywords in your Alt Tags

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Brand Guidelines

- Photography
 - Avoid cutesy, packaged, touristy images
 - Use simple, uncomplicated images that give a sense of place
 - Where possible, show the 'magic' of a specific location
 - Off-brand imagery (see handout p33)

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Brand Guidelines

- Photography
 - Choose interesting and unusual images
 - Use unusual crops to add intrigue
 - Look for unexpected angles
 - Pay attention to foregrounds as well as main object
 - Feature people where possible but not in a contrived way and remember that the focus is Mid Wales

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EXERCISE 4

Writing Captions

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Digital Photography

Digital Camera

- 3 to 4 megapixels is standard for budget cameras (£100)
- Opt for rechargeable batteries or rechargeable built in battery
- Zoom – 3x is standard for budget cameras
- Optical zoom is the important specification
- Docking station makes transferring images simple
- Otherwise USB cable or card reader

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Obtaining images for Web sites

- www.walesonview.com – free
- www.photolibrarywales.com - fee
- www.google.co.uk/imghp - copyright
- www.sxc.hu/ - Free!
- www.creatingonline.com - some free and others from \$1
- www.fotolia.co.uk – from £1
- www.istockphoto.com – from \$1

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Editing images

Image editing software

- Google Picassa (Free)
- Software with scanners/cameras
- Adobe Photoshop Elements (£60)
- Adobe Photoshop (£300+)
- Corel PaintShop Pro (£30 - £90)
- CorelDraw with PhotoPaint (£35 - £280)

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Final Checklist

- Proof read your pages (read out loud)
- Edit or rewrite if necessary
- Ask someone else to read over your work
- Use a spell-checker
- Check your punctuation (it's / its, order's / orders, they're/their)
- Avoid capital letters
- Test for broken links
- Use Captions and Alt Tags for Images

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Review of the Day

- Importance of Web site content
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- Brand Guidelines
- Effective captions for images
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- On-line PR

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Online PR

- Press releases are an effective means of communicating
- Press releases can provide free publicity
- Targeted audience
- Provides updated content for your website

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Think like a journalist

- Is it newsworthy...
 - is it new?
 - is it unusual?
 - is it interesting?
- What's the peg?
- Are there pictures?
- Are there interviewees?
- Where's the human interest?

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General Format

- Headline
- Embargo
- Introduction
- More details
- Quotations
- Background information
- Contact Details

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Writing Style

- Use clear, simple language
- Keep sentences short
- Keep paragraphs short
- Use quotations
- Avoid jargon
- Write objectively – 3rd person
- Use a spell-checker
- Check your facts

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Remember the 5 “Ws”

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?

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On-line PR

- Social networking site
 - Facebook www.facebook.com
 - Twitter www.twitter.com
- Blogs
- Electronic newsletter

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Useful Web sites

- Plain English Campaign
 - <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk>
- Jakob Nielsen
 - <http://www.useit.com>
- InSynch Business Services Ltd.
 - <http://www.insynch.co.uk>

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Questions?

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Contact Details

InSynch Business Services Ltd.

Tel: 01970 630077
eMail: enquiries@insynchbusiness.co.uk
Web site: www.insynchbusiness.co.uk

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