

How to write your website in 60 minutes

Don't be daunted at the prospect of writing your website copy. Here's a simple outline that shows you how to compile the framework for a successful business website – and it shouldn't take more than 60 minutes.

If you're like most small business owners, the prospect of writing your website fills you with dread. You don't know where to start and you're not sure what to write. Or perhaps you already have a website and you're wondering whether it's really working to build your business.

Well, here's some good news. Follow the simple steps below and you'll have laid the groundwork for an effective business website that will not only turn visitors into customers but will also rank well with the search engines. And you can achieve this in just 60 minutes ... maybe less.

The reason for a 60-minute time limit is that it forces you to focus on the key aspects of your business.

Of course, in 60 minutes you won't be able to write everything you'll ever want to include on your website. But you will have the basic information that your customers need to do business with you. And you'll have a website that's already way ahead of most small business sites in terms of effectiveness.

Step 1

So let's start. The first step - and one that most people overlook - is to think about the words and phrases a potential customer would enter into a search engine to find your site. Website designers and copywriters usually call these "keywords".

For example, if you're a dentist in Christchurch, you might come up with "dentist, Christchurch, NZ" plus other phrases such as "dental services", "cosmetic dentistry" and any other field of dentistry that you specialise in.

Take a few minutes to think about these key phrases, as they apply to your business. Imagine you are searching for your business in a search engine. What words would you enter? Remember, people tend to enter phrases of two or three words into search engines, rather than single words. Once you have selected three or four key phrases, these will become the foundation of your website content. This should only take 5 to 10 minutes. It is a vital step that most businesses neglect when writing their websites.

You will need to keep this list of phrases in front of you as you write your pages, and make sure your keywords are on every page.

Step 2

Now it's time to start writing your home page. The first step is the headline, which must catch the attention of your readers immediately, otherwise they may click away without reading further.

Your headline should contain your most important key phrase. It may be as simple as "Bill Gummer, Dentist, Christchurch, New Zealand". But don't just put your company name in the headline. It must tell the reader exactly what your business is about. Another five minutes for the headline.

Step 3

The next step is to write two or three sub-headings. These must tell the reader what your product or services can do for them. For example, continuing the dentist theme, you might say: "Are you looking for a dentist who will ensure you feel no pain during your treatment?". Or: "Top quality dentistry at an affordable price". Or: "Cosmetic dentistry is our speciality"

Okay, now you've spent about 20 minutes and you have a main headline and two or three sub-headings. These are what most visitors to your site will read first. Only later will they get to the copy between the headings. This is why you focus first on the headlines.

Step 4

Now it's time to write the main copy for your home page. Imagine you are chatting one-to-one with your potential client. Tell them why they should choose your business over someone else's.

Refer to your list of keywords as you write, and try to use at least one of them in each paragraph, with the most important phrase in the opening paragraph. Your home page doesn't have to be long. About 250 words is enough at this stage, to get across the essential facts.

Make sure you include vital information such as your contact details, street address and opening hours on your home page.

You should be able to complete this in 10 minutes. Total time elapsed, 30 minutes.

Step 5

Next, you'll need to write a page about your products or services. Start by making a list. This should only take two or three minutes. Then, take each item on then list and say a bit about it. Again, remember you a talking one-to-one with your reader, so don't be too formal, but try to weave your keywords into your copy.

This is the page where you should also include prices, if appropriate.

If you get stuck for words here, don't worry. You can come back later. But at least you now have the basic framework of your page. Later, you can expand this page with more details. Don't spend more than 10 minutes on this page.

Step 6

Next, write a page called "About Us", or something similar. If you're a one-person business, this can be similar to your curriculum vitae. If you're a larger business, it will include the history of the company and its main achievements.

Again, don't take too long over this. Just jot down the key facts, which should only take a few minutes. You should include photos of yourself and your staff on this page, too.

Step 7

Next, write a page called "projects" or "clients" or "portfolio" or something similar, which outlines projects you have done. Make a list at this stage, without worrying too much about filling in the details. Again, try to work in your keywords.

If you're a well-established business, this list may be quite long and you can break it up later into several pages.

Step 8

Next, write a page called "Frequently Asked Questions" or "Questions and Answers". Think of the top three or four questions related to your business. Make sure one of these includes your prices. This should take another 10 minutes.

Step 9

Finally, write a page with all your contact details. This should take two or three minutes at most.

Step 10

Make sure you spell-check your copy. Read it through a final time and check for grammar. Double check that your main keywords appear on every page.

Now, you have the framework for a basic six-page website, which not only tells your potential customers the vital information they need to know about your business but also is well placed to rank on the search engines.

You really can do this in 60 minutes. If you feel you need professional help to take your website copy a step further, you at least have the basic framework that a website copywriter can polish up into really sharp sales copy.

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