

I don't want to know about you

When I arrive on your website I don't want to know what you do. I'm not interested in who you are and I certainly don't want to be told how long you've been in business or what you're selling.

If I've landed on your website as the result of a search I'm looking for something - I want information about something, or I want to know if you can solve my problem. The first thing I want to know is 'have I come to the right place?'

This means that you need to know what people are likely to be looking for when they are searching for the service or products you deliver. Then you need to make sure that the headline and the copy on your home page tells them what they want to know so NOT:

We're the fastest delivery company in Utopia

But

If you want a fast delivery call us

It's a subtle difference and one which very few companies understand. The secret is the difference between the word 'we' and the word 'you'. If you keep talking about yourself (we, us, our) you won't engage with me. I want to know what I get so talk about me!

There may be little difference in meaning between 'We can give you ... ' and 'You'll get ...', but it makes me feel different. Don't tell your website visitor what you want them to know, tell them what they want to read.

At first it seems difficult, but with a little practice you'll soon get the hang of it!

Then there's the headline...

When your reader lands on your webpage, you want to be sure that you connect with them fast. The longer it takes for them to confirm that they have arrived somewhere that will resolve their problem, tell them what they were trying to find out, or give them advice on the subject they were researching the higher the chance they'll click that back button.

Realistically, you've got a few seconds - probably no more than 7, before they lose interest and disappear. This means that the first thing - and the most prominent - they see needs to be the headline. It needs to be big, bold and compelling!

It's no good if it's 14pt bold - it will be too small to read without an effort - and webservers are known for being lazy and impatient; just watch someone (or notice yourself) when it takes a few seconds for a website to load. The fingernails tap, lots of sighing goes on and occasional some bad words are muttered!

It's no good if it says 'Welcome to our website'. That doesn't tell me anything - how do I know whether you're going to give me the help or information I want from that?

It's no good if it's all about you 'We can do this'; I'm not interested in what you do - I want to know what I get.

Your page title is **not** a headline. In fact, if you can get your web genius simply to make the menu choice for that page a different colour, that's all that you need. Don't interfere with getting your message across fast.

Also remember that you cannot guarantee which page people will land on. It depends on the words they've searched for - that means that **every** page needs a headline, for the content of that page. That includes the About us and Contact us pages.

If your headline doesn't tell your reader they're in the right place and there's something in it for them, they've gone!

... and finally

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Lesley Morrissey is an expert in readability and specialises in helping people to develop a website that works for their business.

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