

10.4 How to write content

<http://www.websuburb.com.au/HelpDesk/Content/Personas/tabid/751/Default.aspx>

10.4.1 User Habits

The internet, email and text messaging are among the most profound influencers of reading and writing behaviour in the past hundred years.

It's important to recognise that website users have specific characteristics and ensure that your writing and content reflects this.

- Volume of information
There are more pages of information on the internet than anyone can read in a lifetime. Therefore people have become highly selective about what they read and use search engines to hone in on the stuff they want.
- Criticality
Experience has taught people that there is a significant amount of “garbage” on the internet, so they have little patience with poor grammar, spelling or verbose writing.
- Information Snacking
Users are often searching for something specific and tend to scan and skim pages quickly.

At WebSuburb we have developed a five-stage process for putting content together.

- Personas – how to develop a short description of your target user
- Wireframes – content bullet points for each page
- Design brief – design objectives and preferences
- Grey scale storyboard – review to ensure meets objectives
- Colour pages – review for final proofing

10.4.2 Personas - figuring out who you're writing for

Personas are representations of the typical user of your website, ie. your target market. The persona seeks to define the target user so that you can more accurately figure out their goals, needs and wants. You should feel that you know the person from the persona description. Consider including a photograph to represent the person.

Try to be as objective as possible, avoid stereotyping and be prepared to think outside the square. For example, if you sell designer jeans for women, consider that a valuable market segment may be men looking for a gift for their partner. These customers may require significantly more assistance to complete a successful purchase.

We have developed a checklist approach covering demographic and psychographic indicators to make this process easier to accomplish. A simple Excel template with these questions can be downloaded from our website.

Indicators	Example for one of our WebSuburb personas
Name	Ashley Retail
% of Customers	
Personal Demographics	
Age	30 – 60
Gender	M/F
Family	Mostly
Children	Mostly
Education	N/a
Skills & proficiencies	Business owner - versatility, not afraid to try new things, likes to be hands on or close to action
Computer skills & proficiencies	General MS Office skills, general internet and search skills
Profession	Focused in their business
Income	Average – Above average
Hobbies	N/a
Technical	
Computer Monitor	Mostly < 5 years old. I.e. at least 15"
Browser	Mostly Internet Explorer
Internet connection	Mostly broadband
Work/business demographics	
Job	Business owners
Employer	Self employed
Psychographic	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time poor. • Budget constraints, want value for money. • Don't know where to start. • Not sure what can be done • Expertise in website technical and content development
Wants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find new retail customers. • Increase repeat sales to existing customers • Learn skills to build on-line facets to their business. • Hands on approach
Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick and easy solution. • Shopping carts. • Electronic communication with existing clients
Goals	Improve internet exposure for their business

7 Touches	
Contact Point 1	Comprehensive manual
Contact Point 2	Ongoing management and support
Contact Point 3	Options and Price list
Contact Point 4	Upgrade path, cost effective e manual
Contact Point 5	Benefit of modules e.g. shopping carts, SMS
Contact Point 6	Explain the sponsorship model I.e. getting community support for your business
Contact Point 7	Explain the community classifieds model I.e. getting community support for your business
Keywords	
Keywords that attract this user	
Trigger words that spur the user to action. "Skimming" words	take control, value for money, increase sales, profitability, cost effective, efficient, demand for product, less time, fast, quick, easy
Examples of "typical" current customers	
Example 1	
Example 2	
Example 3	
Example 4	
Example 5	

- Demographics – fairly straightforward, the main aim is to help you build a picture in your mind.
- Technical – to make sure we create pages that scan well.
- Psychographic – identify the issues here as accurately and clearly as possible. This is where the most of your content ideas will come from.
- 7 touches – most customers need to build confidence before they will buy into something. Your website needs to plan the 7 touches for a user to build confidence.
- Keywords – the keywords that our target persona will use when using a search engine. Start with an informal survey of friends, close customers and business associates. We will glean these from Google analytics in due course.
- Trigger words – keywords plus those emotive words that convince users to follow your calls to action.

Examples – select a few of your current customers to form a clearer picture of this persona in your mind.

The next step is Writing Style

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