

Orange Guide N° 1:

**8 Steps to Writing a Website
that Pays for Itself**

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Uncommon copywriting that makes your cash register sing.

Step 1: Know your goals.

This sounds so simple, yet you'd be surprised how many people don't know what they want their website to do. They've just been told it's something they need.

The fact is, like anything else you do (or don't do) in your business, you've got to be clear on your intentions and expectations. Simply putting up a website won't do much for your bottom line. It's not a magic bullet that will solve all your sales woes. (In fact, it lets smart people know exactly where those woes are!)

On the contrary, a website is more of a foot soldier. It follows your orders. And that's it. No magic. No secret weapon. No hidden gold.

The great promise of websites, however, is that they're foot soldiers that don't need rations or rest. If you give some thought about what you want your website to do ahead of time, then you can start plugging in strategies that will help you get there.

Some people say they want their website to "be a brochure in the sky." They just want a "presence on the web." That's it. And those are perfectly reasonable goals. But they don't really leverage the medium. Just as most brochures don't really leverage *that* medium.

(I don't know about you, but the only reason I ever take a brochure is to have an in-hand reminder to follow up with that person. And when was the last time you read a brochure?)

The point is, if you're looking to build your business, why would you spend all kinds of money building or revising your website without expecting a return on your investment?

Some uncommonly smart goals for websites include:

- Expand your business nationally.
- Build a mailing list.
- Develop a webinar or teleseminar program.
- Sell or distribute my ebook, book, how-to videos, etc.
- Add value for my clients, fans, and network

- [] Enable people to buy something from me directly online
- [] Sell more of my product or service.
- [] Position myself as the expert in my field.

Step 2: Know who you're talking to.

Want to know a secret? Ever since I visited Chicago ad agency Leo Burnett on a college fieldtrip, I've been intimidated by the phrase "target market."

My marketing professor had impressed upon us that a lot of research goes into figuring out who's in a target market. And a lot of money. Tens of millions of dollars. Hundreds, even.

Once I went into business for myself, I realized that my "target market" is actually my clients and the people I want to be my clients. Instantly, the term became a lot less imposing.

Same goes for you. You don't need millions of dollars for market research. And your focus group can simply be a collection of your ideal clients and trusted advisors. Who uses your products or services? What thorny problem do you help them solve? What's their pain? What are they dreaming of?

A website that pays for itself is focused. It doesn't try to be all things for all people. Like your business, your website should have priorities. If your focus for the next 6 months is to drum up invitations as a keynote speaker, then make sure your website talks to people who are in the position to engage you. Or at least, a page of your website.

I recently spoke with an author who has written several books. She also teaches writing workshops and reviews manuscripts. She wanted to know why her website foot soldier wasn't bringing her manuscript business or adult writing students.

After looking at her website, we saw that it primarily promotes her book. The book's cover appears—big and visual and juicy—on her homepage.

With only a little text link to her workshops, and a tab for people who want her to read their manuscripts (click through, and the page itself has less than a

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paragraph about the service), she's really talking to readers, not students of writing or writers in need of a professional critique.

Even though she had 3 "target markets"—readers, writing students, and other young adult authors—she had subconsciously favored readers... which wasn't even bringing her any business, because under her publishing contract, she's not allowed to sell her book!

If you're aware of who you most want to talk to, your website will do a whole lot more for your business.

Step 3: Show 'em you've got WIIFM covered.

You know those "WWJD" bracelets? If you ask me, business owners and service professionals should all wear a WIIFM bracelet to remind us all of the #1 most overlooked secret to copywriting that pays for itself.

WIIFM stands for "What's In It For Me?" And it's a question that will put you light years ahead of the Neighbors in your line of work.

"What's In It For Me?" is the question your clients, prospects, network, and fans need answered. And it's a question your website needs to answer right out of the gate if you want to dazzle them and turn them into believers.

"We have more than 35 years of experience" isn't really all that helpful or noteworthy until it's combined with a WIIFM statement: "Our 35 years' experience has taught us that when you call us with a flat tire, you want a live human being to pick up the phone, and a tow truck within the half hour. So we do that, and we make sure you get one of Jo Ann's chocolate chip cookies when you arrive at the shop."

The goal here is to switch your brain from your perspective, to the perspective of your client and potential customers. How do they want to be treated? What do you want their experience with you to be?

What's more, this principle filters up to how you arrange your website. Sure, you can go with the standard "Services", "About Us", "Products" set up. There's absolutely nothing wrong with that.

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But if you want to kick it up a notch, think about who your target market is, and how to arrange your site so they get the info they need easily and without a lot of hassle.

As a simple example of this strategy, some websites divide up pages based on the different groups that access their service. "For Parents", "For Teachers", and "Just for Kids" comes to mind.

Banks do this on their websites as well: they split up business and commercial customers from personal banking. Think about who uses your services or products, and what groups they may identify with. Then create your website with WIIFM in mind for each group, and you'll see a big difference in your responses.

Step 4: Take advantage of all your opportunities.

A website that pays for itself looks simple, tidy, and user-friendly... and also doesn't shy away from doing the heavy lifting of converting visitors to fans, clients, customers, subscribers and members of your tribe.

Here are just some of the opportunities you have to distinguish yourself from your competitors and gather visitors into your fold:

- Your headline
- Your tagline
- Your site hierarchy
- Your site layout
- The homepage copy that says who you are & what you do
- Testimonials
- Your guarantee
- Your returns policy
- Your photos or images
- The voice and readability of your site
- Whether or not your site is "easy on the eyes"
- Whether or not your offer is mouth-watering or ho-hum

Step 5: Think “Above the Fold”.

This is a principle I teach all my clients: the most valuable real estate on your homepage is whatever’s onscreen before you scroll down or click away.

What’s more, eye-tracking studies have shown that people look at websites like they read (in the Western world, anyway): starting at the upper left corner. Which means that’s where important stuff goes, like your headline, tagline, or your juiciest, most delicious offer.

Thinking “above the fold” means that it matters where you put things on your website—and these decisions will affect things like how long visitors stay on your site, and what they do when they’re there.

I’ve seen some beautiful websites that have a stunning photo or inspirational quote parked on half—or more!—of that first screen. I’m all for beauty and inspiration, believe me, but unless there’s been some thought about how those elements move a visitor to click, engage, or take action, it’s essentially wasted space.

Instead, think about what you’d like visitors to your website to do, in an ideal world. Request a quote? Call you for an appointment? Sign up for your newsletter? Claim a special report? It’s up to you to engage your visitors to start a conversation with you... and if you want a website that pays for itself, you must have several opportunities to do so “above the fold.”

Step 6: Prioritize Your “Bread & Butter”.

“A confused mind says no,” as the saying goes. Then it’s your job to make your website as simple and as straightforward as possible—but no simpler, to co-opt Albert Einstein.

Many small business owners and service professionals have multiple practice areas. For instance, I write websites. But I also write scripts for online videos. And I also write grants for an art center in Montana. Now, I don’t put all that on my website, because it would confuse people.

Instead, I made the decision that copywriting for websites is my bread & butter. And so, that’s what I write about on my website. Sure, I have other packages

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that I offer, but when I go to a networking event, I want people to think of me as the wordsmith for websites. So that's what I talk about in person with people, too.

Some of my clients who are coaches or creative-types have a hard time with this principle. They see it as pigeon-holing, or only representing part of who they are. When I first started out, this was hard for me, too.

But since then, I've seen with my own eyes how focusing on one thing doesn't ruin the other areas of my business. It actually helps!

It may seem counterintuitive, but your website should ideally promote one "bread & butter" service or product at a time. This gives you clarity, and actually helps you demonstrate your expertise, process and results more powerfully than the shotgun "I'll name all the things I could do to make sure I appeal to everyone" approach.

And ideally, your "bread & butter" is the product or service that you're most fired-up about providing, and the direction your business is headed. (If you don't like it, or don't get paid enough to do it, don't make it your bread & butter!)

Step 7: Ask for action.

There are so, so many websites whose only "call to action" is a Contact Us button.

Yawn.

If you want a website that pays for itself, you've got to come up with a slew of ways that you can entice your visitors to take action.

From buttons that invite visitors to click for more information, to interactive elements like a quiz or questionnaire, to discounts for buying now, to invitations to register for a prize, to offers to claim a special report or some other valuable content, there are plenty of ways to show visitors continue the conversation.

And to show visitors what you're made of. Before they even buy from you.

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Because the more options you have for visitors to engage with you—and in a genuine, non-cheesy, non-sleazy sales kind of way—the more engagement you are going to get.

Depending on your line of work, it may be a how-to video, a request for a follow-up call or email, claiming a “pink spoon” offer like a MP3 of Frequently Asked Questions or a white paper solving your ideal client’s stickiest problem, or a quote request.

Step 8: Enter the laboratory.

Look, you can do everything right and still bomb. Here’s the thing: your website, like your business, is a living, breathing, changing thing. It’s simply not the case that you get your website dialed once, and then it takes care of itself for the next 10 years.

There’s two points that need to be made here.

One: like a pet chinchilla, there’s something to be said for proper care and feeding of your website. Periodic tune-ups and think-throughs of your website every few years can actually be a powerful litmus test for your business. And a useful exercise in clarifying where you are, and where you want to be.

Because, frankly, you can’t build a website that pays for itself if you’re murky on your business plan and marketing goals.

So there’s that.

And two: building website that earns its keep is part art, part science. Good art inspires an emotion—or heck, just a reaction—from other people. And good science requires us to investigate the truth.

Which means that you’ve got to test your website. See what feelings and responses it gets from your friends, advisers, clients and colleagues. Measure which headline gets a larger response, and whether the “buy now” button gets more action than the “get the edge here” button.

Check your assumptions at the door, and get curious about how people interact with your website. And let me know how it works out – I always love to hear reports from the field!

What's next?

Now that you've got some food for thought about building a website that earns its keep, you may want to do something with the momentum.

If you'd like to continue the conversation, I offer a complimentary Friendly Website Critique, where we sit down and look at your goals and how well your website is meeting them.

There's no charge, and it gives people a chance to brainstorm creative solutions (two heads are better than one!) and get some good ideas to move forward, whether we end up working together or not. Feel free to take me up on this, as I really enjoy meeting people and helping unravel some of the mysteries of smart websites.

You can make an appointment at my website: www.stellaorange.com.

Until then, I wish you many happy returns.

Stella wants you to win.

www.stellaorange.com