8 Incredibly Simple Ways to Get More People to Read Your Content

Your precious words. You know they've got to be right to attract the audience you want.

You've slaved over them, carefully crafting each phrase. You finally hit "publish," and what happens?

Nobody reads them.

No comments, no tweets, no sharing on Facebook.

It's enough to send a writer into deep depression, and wipe out motivation to keep producing great content.

Think you need to spend another 10,000 hours perfecting your writing skills? Probably not.

Actually, the solution may be a lot easier than you expect. Writing *less* and styling your text so it's easy to read could be all you need to do to attract and hold attention.

Impatient searchers

Jakob Nielson's seminal web usability study from 1997 showed that 79% of web users scan rather than read.

Think about how you use the web. You're in search of information. And if you don't find it on the page you're visiting, you click away and look elsewhere.

The web is a "lean forward and participate" medium. Television, by contrast, is a "lean back and let it wash over me" medium.

What can you do to engage your readers so they lean into your content, stay on your pages and interact with your information?

Make it snappy

To write successfully for the web, you need to forget some of what you learned in English composition class.

Accept that people scan web pages rather than reading them in detail, and work with this reality rather than fighting it.

If you want to cover a complex topic, consider breaking it into a series of posts. It's a great way to keep people coming back for more, and your reader will find it easier to digest your content if they get it in portion-controlled sizes.

Structure your paragraphs in the inverted pyramid style. This means stating your conclusion first, then supporting it with the sentences that follow. This helps scanners to move from point to point, and decide where they'd like to dive in deeper.

Once you've done that, use the following easy design techniques to make your content much more

reader-friendly. It takes just a few minutes to turn a post from an overwhelming mass of gray text to something that engages the reader and pulls her in.

1. Embrace the line break

There are few easier ways to make your content more readable. Even complex content can be made much more reader-friendly with the simple introduction of lots of white space. Feature one idea per paragraph, and keep them short — three or four sentences at most.

And try writing some paragraphs with one sentence only.

2. Break up your content with compelling subheads

One technique taught here at Copyblogger is to write your headline and subheads first.

A strong headline (and therefore a strong premise) is vital to getting readers to come check you out in the first place. And solid subheads keep the reader engaged, acting as "mini headlines" to keep them moving through the rest of your content.

Make your subheads intriguing, but informative, too. Web readers have well-honed BS meters, so don't exaggerate or you'll lose credibility. "Compelling" is not the same as "hypey."

Once you've written your subheads, review them to see what your reader/scanner will understand if he or she reads only that part of your article. Is there a compelling story? Will they get the gist of your information?

3. Use bulleted lists

- They create fascinations your readers can't resist
- They're an easily-scannable way to present multiple points
- They look different from the rest of your text, so they provide a visual break for your reader

4. Use deep captions.

Studies have shown that image captions are consistently some of the most-read copy on a page. Try pairing a strong image with a "deep caption."

Deep captions are two to three sentences long. That's long enough to intrigue your reader to dig in to your whole article.

5. Add highly relevant links

Internal links back to your own cornerstone content will keep people on your site and reading your best material.

External links demonstrate that you've researched the topic and want to highlight other experts.

Good content uses both to expand your reader's understanding and add value.

Another advantage of internal links is they make it less frustrating when some dirtbag scrapes your content (cuts and pastes it to their own site without attribution).

6. Use strategic formatting

Add emphasis to your web copy by **bolding important concepts**. You reader will be able to scan through and pick out the most important information at a glance.

Don't highlight everything (which would have the same effect as highlighting nothing). Instead, emphasize the key points so the scanner can quickly pick them out.

7. Harness the power of numbers

Think those numbered list posts are tired? Think again. Numbers are an incredibly effective way to both capture attention and to keep the reader oriented.

If you don't believe me, take a quick look at the "Popular Articles" on the right hand of this site. You'll get a mini-tutorial in some of the ways you can use numbers (and other techniques) to make a post more inviting.

You can often make a post more compelling just by numbering your main points. Give it a try.

8. Check your dual readership path

Once you've used subheads, numbers, bulleted lists and other formatting to highlight the key elements of your post, read through it again — looking *only* at the text you've called special attention to.

Does the reader get the gist? Have you pulled out the most interesting and relevant words, the words that will pull your scanner in and turn her into a reader?

How about you? What are your favorite techniques for getting readers to lean in to your web content? Let's talk about it in the comments.

About the Author: *Pamela Wilson helps small businesses grow with great design and marketing tips. Learn the basics with her free Design 101 e-course at Big Brand System.*

How the Genesis Design Framework Makes Your WordPress Site Way Better

If you're building a website these days, you're in luck.

WordPress has revolutionized the ease and power of what a website (or blog) can do and be. Now, with the emergence of theme frameworks, you can take WordPress even further.

As you'll see in a moment, the Genesis Theme Framework for WordPress is much more than a mere WordPress theme. It's an underlying framework of immaculate code that's been built to achieve three important objectives.

Let's take a look at each of these objectives, and why they matter to what you're doing online…

Click to continue…

Sites That Link to this Post