

## Session 2:

# Write Your Website Copy

In this session we'll discuss how to flesh out your starter value statement from the previous session into some website copy.

## It's Time to Move On

If you're still working through your positioning exercise or trying to decide how you're going to position yourself, you need to get moving. It's time to make some decisions and move on, even if you haven't made any final decisions on how you'll position yourself.

You won't be 100 percent sure about your positioning anytime soon. So waiting until you are is a waste of time. Sure, occasionally I have a coaching client who just *knows*. But those are a very small minority. The rest struggle with this decision.

Second, your positioning will evolve. So just pick something. And when in doubt, stay broad. You can always narrow later.

Great examples of broad positioning:

- I write for companies in the healthcare industry.
- I write for professional service firms and providers.
- I write for financial services companies.
- I write for consultants and solopreneurs (a non-industry example).

The answers will appear once you move forward. You'll get clarity as you get going and as you start landing clients and writing for them. Waiting for a flash of insight is a waste of time, because the best insights come only once you're out there making things happen.

## Your Best Effort in Five Days

The good news is that doing your best doesn't mean spending weeks and weeks writing, designing and slogging through all kinds of technical issues.

When I say “Do your best,” I mean you should take a few days to think about what you’ll say and how you’ll organize that information. It’s not about achieving perfection. And “a few days”—I’m talking about maybe 2 days to think about it and 3 or 4 additional days to write it. That’s it!

Yes, I’m giving you a deadline, because I know this is a task that can easily expand if left unchecked.

## Your Web Copy WILL Evolve!

I can’t stress this enough. Your web copy will evolve over time. In fact, you’re going to continue to tweak (and sometimes revamp it) over the next few months and at least the next two or three years. You’ll find ways to make it better as you move through this process and as you start landing clients and getting some field experience.

This means that an extra four weeks of effort trying to get it right won’t get you any closer to landing a client or achieving success. Because even if you take the next year to write your website copy, you’ll still want to tweak that copy the very next day.

Remember: *done is better than perfect!*

## Your Objective

You want to end up with a website that:

- Is clean and professional
- You can launch quickly and cost-effectively
- Will enable you to attract your first few clients
- Will be easy to edit and refine once you’re a bit more established

Notice there’s no mention here of SEO and or other details that don’t matter at this phase of your journey.

Don’t get caught up in all the minutia. Stay focused on the fundamentals—the things that will make a difference right now. Everything else is window dressing.

## How We'll Do This

Here's the process we're going to follow:

- 1)** I'm going to show you how to take your starter value statements from the previous session and use that to kick-start the process of writing your web copy.
- 2)** I'm then going to show you several website examples from writers and copywriters who've been where you are today. Some were in your shoes very recently. And I want you to see how these writers translated their positioning into some simple copy. I think you'll find these examples encouraging and helpful.
- 3)** From there, I'll show you how to update your LinkedIn profile (in a separate training) using the copy you've created for your website.
- 4)** We're not going to get into building or launching your website yet. That's what next week is about.

## What You Need From Your Website

At this stage of the game you need a website that:

- 1)** "Legitimizes" you and your business. A website that makes you "official". Frankly, that's more for you than for others. A well-written website that also looks good can be an acceptable crutch for boosting your own self-confidence.
- 2)** Clearly explains what you do, for whom, what makes you different and why those differences matter.
- 3)** Helps prospects self-qualify.
- 4)** Gets the right prospects to contact you.

To do all four of these things well, your site must be:

- Clean
- Simple
- Organized

It must also communicate your positioning clearly and immediately and show you're credible enough to warrant an inquiry. Essentially, you want the highest-quality, easily scalable site possible with least amount of cost and hassle.

So here's what you're NOT going to do with your new website:

- Start a blog
- Collect names
- Create and offer an info packet
- Offer a report (OK if you already have one there)
- Give them a ton of content
- Worry about SEO
- Worry about having the best-looking site you could possibly create

## Website Pages Needed

Here are the pages you'll need on the first iteration of your website:

- Home
- Why Me/About Me
- Services
- Samples
- Bio (optional)
- Testimonials (optional)
- Contact

## How to Approach and Write Each Page

Let's go through each of these pages in more detail. And as I go through them, I'll explain how to approach them and what important elements you'll want to include on each page.

### Home Page

Your Home page copy needs to be clear and concise. Again, you need to keep it to no more than 150 – 200 words. The idea is to communicate your value quickly and then give the visitor a few options (hyperlinks) where he or she can learn more.

Here's why... When it comes to freelance writer websites, most visitors get lost very quickly. They either:

- Don't understand what it is you do or how your services will help them
- Are overwhelmed with too much copy and information

So they bail!

What you want is to craft a Home page that quickly explains what you do and whom you serve. That way the right prospects will know they're in the right place and the wrong prospects will leave.

From there, you want to go to the next step in persuasive sequence and tell them why you're different and why that difference matters.

But again, you need to do that quickly. There's no need to tell the whole story—that's a very common mistake! Tell them just enough so the right prospects are now persuaded to dig a little deeper in your site. Your other pages will give them those details, if they are, indeed, interested in learning more.

**Research:** Nielsen Norman Group has found that website visitors are ruthless; they try to make a “stay or bail” decision as quickly as possible. (Source: <http://www.nngroup.com/articles/how-long-do-users-stay-on-web-pages>)

Also consider that your home page will almost always be the page your visitors see first. So it has to be clean, clear, to the point and communicate relevance and value right away. Otherwise, you'll lose good prospects.

Here's how to approach the writing of this page, step by step:

### **Step #1:**

Take the list of value statement drafts you put together in Session 1 (or that you're still working on) and use it as fodder for your Home page. In fact, I want you to literally copy and paste your favorite one or two value statements onto a new document and work with that.

If you've already narrowed down your value statement to one winner, go with that. Use that text as the basis for your copy. But if what you ended up with from last week's exercise is still rough and written more as an internal aid than as actual copy, then your first job is to clean it up and make it flow. Keep it short, sweet and punchy.

## Step #2:

Write a few sentences that describe some of the biggest challenges your prospects face as it relates to:

- a) Writing good copy or marketing content, or...
- b) Finding a good writer to work with.

Try to write it in the second person. We touched on this in the last session when I asked you to describe the challenges your prospects are probably facing when it comes to finding a writer. Here are some examples:

*Finding a copywriter who grasps your technology solutions can be a challenge. Even harder is finding a writer with street-level technology sales experience. Someone with the skills to communicate your message so it resonates with your over-marketed prospects and drives action.*

Here's another example:

*You don't have to be a genius to know that business has changed. Mobile, social media, search, technology, global competition — what worked yesterday doesn't work today.*

*While your small industrial manufacturing company has bred-in-the-bone values due to your hard work and vision (or your granddad or dad who may have started the business), those values can carry you only so far.*

*Today, you need a whole other skill-set to reach buyers — be they in your town or half-way around the world.*

(The example above was from my friend and colleague Dianna Huff.)

Feel free to write two or three (or more) iterations of these challenges. You're going to end up picking your best one or two, so it pays to keep working on this until you have some great ones.

## Step #3:

Come up with an attention-grabbing headline. Your headline should either:

- a) Summarize your value statement, or...

b) highlights the problem your audience is facing (as it relates to the services or value you offer).

Keep in mind that the purpose of a headline is simply to grab the reader's attention. So make sure it has pulling power. However, be careful not to sound "hypey" or to use empty words or clichés.

I like to save the headline brainstorming until I have the body copy down. So if you're stuck, just work on your problem copy and your value statement copy first. Then, once you feel good about that, move on to the headline.

#### **Step #4:**

Finally, give the reader one or two options for next steps. You want to keep them engaged and reading more of your site so they can further understand how you can help them and why you're the best choice.

If they've read your home page and they decide to stay, your goal is to now guide them to one or two (at the most) of your strongest pages. Don't make them guess where to go next. Tell them!

What pages could you suggest they check out at this point? Here are some ideas:

- Why Me
- Services
- Samples

And that's it for the Home page! Simple, clean, to the point. And again, try to keep this under 150 or 200 words. There's no reason to go beyond that. Let your other pages provide that kind of detail.

## **"Why Me?" Page**

You've made a statement about this difference on your home page. But this page gives you a chance to really expand on those ideas. It's where you get to talk about your core differences and why they matter to your target market.

A good Why Me page has just three or four paragraphs expanding on the differentiators you mention in your value statement. It can be more information on your background, your experience, your key differentiators and your "why it matters" copy. Basically, this is your chance to:

- Expand on those differentiators.
- Offer more detail.
- Explain why they matter to the prospect (that information is also in your value statement, but this is where you can explain that further).
- Provide some proof that what you're saying is true and real (if and where appropriate).

The best way to do this is to:

- 1)** Write down your top two to four differentiators.
- 2)** Prioritize them based on how impressive they might be to a prospect in your target audience.
- 3)** Write a sub-headline summarizing each differentiator.
- 4)** Write some copy expanding on each differentiator (more details, why it matters and proof, where appropriate).

You'll see some great examples of this in the website overview videos included here on the page for this training session.

## Services Page

Start off the page by introducing your services briefly and reminding the prospect what makes you different. (That's something you'll want to continue to do throughout the site, not just on the Home page and Why Me page.)

List the basic services you provide and, if needed, a brief description of each. By "brief" I'm talking about one or two sentences. That's it.

Ultimately, you're trying to speak to a prospect who already understands the value of these services. So don't go into long explanations of what these marketing pieces are and why they're so valuable.

If you have little to no experience in some areas of interest, list them anyway. The idea is to list projects you have the ability to deliver at a high level of quality, not necessarily only areas in which you have a deep level of experience.



Keep things simple. No need to over-dress your copy or offerings. The readers who go to this page are trying to get a quick idea of whether or not you can help them with a project they may already have in mind. So don't bury the facts in a bunch of copy.

## Samples Page

If you already have a lot of samples from your previous day job or from a copywriting class, it may be tempting to upload them all to your website. However, try not to do that. This is another area where less is more. Give prospects just enough so they can get a good feel for your work and style.

If you don't have enough samples, use whatever you have and don't worry that it's not enough. Work with what you've got.

And if you have no samples whatsoever, that's fine too. You don't have to create a Samples page right now. You can add it later once you have two or three samples to show.

You're not trying to land the proverbial IBM right now (i.e. an A-level client). You're simply trying to get started. *You're looking for someone who's ready to hire you today based on what they see right now.*

If that's not enough for them, *they're simply not a good prospect for you today.* They might be a good prospect in the future, just not today. So your job is to find the ones whose timing and circumstances align well with where you are right now.

## Bio Page

Again, this page is optional. If your background or experience in this target market is extensive and impressive, consider having a Why Me page to really expand on your core differentiators, and then a separate Bio page to get into your detailed experience and credential in your field.

A good Bio page talks about your professional background and your experience. It's your chance to reintroduce the key points from your value statement, but in a way that makes them come to life through your own story.

In fact, this page offers a great opportunity for creativity. This is where you can engage the reader with interesting information about you as a person and a professional.

## Testimonials Page

If you have at least three recommendations on LinkedIn from colleagues or previous supervisors, those are excellent “starter” testimonials, even if they have nothing to do with your writing.

The idea is to demonstrate your character, professionalism, work ethic, smarts, and professional experience. So start with those recommendations and kudos, then add client testimonials as you get them.

Another approach is to simply sprinkle your testimonials throughout your site. There's no right or wrong here. So think about what you'd prefer and what you have to work with. And consider the design capabilities and flexibility of your WordPress theme or the template from your website builder. That can also help make the decision for you.

## Contact Information

Finally, make sure you have a page that provides your full contact information, including email and phone. Don't rely on a web form only. Give out your contact information. Make yourself easy to reach. After all, occasionally there will be a prospect who wants to email or call you right away, and if all you have is a web form, they'll be disappointed that this is the only way to get a hold of you.

If you have a LinkedIn profile and/or other business social media accounts, include buttons to those as well.

## Sample Websites

Jennifer Brozic

**[www.jmb-communications.com](http://www.jmb-communications.com)**

Tracy Wilson

**[www.trcwilson.com](http://www.trcwilson.com)**

D'Angelo Woods

**[www.writerdwoods.com](http://www.writerdwoods.com)**

Saida Boujemaaoui

**[www.copymehappy.com](http://www.copymehappy.com)**

Don DiCicco

**[www.dondicicco.com](http://www.dondicicco.com)**

Carolyn Marsh

**[www.carolynmarshcfa.com](http://www.carolynmarshcfa.com)**

Irene Hatchett

**[www.catchcustomers.com](http://www.catchcustomers.com)**

## Your Next Steps

Here's how I would approach this key step of writing your web copy:

- 1) Review the formulaic outlines I've included with this training session. You'll see them here on this page. Yes, they *are* formulaic. But they work. They'll get you started and moving in the right direction. And once you're moving, it will be easier to refine and change this copy later. But for now, just stick to the approach I'm teaching you here.
- 2) Go through the website overview videos on this page. You'll see how a variety of different writers and copywriters are positioning themselves, and how they've structured and organized their message. Don't worry if you feel you have little to offer compared to these writers. Believe me, most of them felt the same way when they started. And in some cases, what you see here hasn't changed much since they launched.
- 3) Start writing! Tell yourself this is not final. Pretend that you're just playing with some ideas. Go back to the steps I outlined earlier for writing your Home page copy. That's a great place to start. But if that's feeling like way too much right now, start with an easier page. Maybe your Services page ... or even your Contact page! Just get started somewhere. Starting is way more important than getting it perfect.
- 4) Give yourself a deadline. If you're serious about moving along with us (and I really hope you are), give yourself one week. Say, two days for your Home page and then one day each for your other pages. Since you may not have seven pages total, that gives you some wiggle room. This is enough time to get it done. *Remember, we're going for done, not perfect!*
- 5) Update your LinkedIn profile only once your website is live. Once you have your copy ready, we're going to move right into building and launching your website. So don't worry about updating your LinkedIn profile yet. Once your website is up and running, you can go back to the LinkedIn lesson on this page and update your profile.

You've got a lot to do over the next week, but this is totally doable. So start right now, don't wait!

Schedule this time like you would a doctor's appointment. Make it a top priority. And double your time estimate for this project. That way you have a big enough buffer should you encounter any snags along the way.