

## WEBSAAVY



# Make Every Word Count

## Boost traffic on your shop's site with the 'write' words

BY WILLIAM CARLSON

**W**e may be stating the obvious here, but words are important. They are the first (and perhaps last) means of communication between you and your customer.

On the Internet, a typical Web surfer is only going to give your site a brief glance in determining whether to stay or to move on. Therefore, you need to make every word count. Here are some pointers:

Words make your Web site easier to find using a search engine. Search engines like Google or Yahoo and you sift through literally billions of Web sites each time you perform a search. For customers to find you on the Internet, you want your Web site to come up as the first choice (or at least on the first page!) of a search for the products and services that you provide. Making that happen is called "site optimization." How can you make that happen? Making deliberate word choices in labeling the tags on your Web site give you a distinct advantage in optimizing your Web site. Thoughtfully choosing the right search terms that describe your business can give your Web site traffic a tremendous boost. For example, get attention by using specialty words, such as names of seasons, holidays, occasions, colors, or types of flowers in your content and tags. (Tags are codes embedded in your site for the benefit of search engines.) Remember, people use different words to find flowers. Be deliberate and generous with the tags, titles, descriptions and storylines on your Web site.

Other tips for site optimization include labeling your pictures with captions; using key search terms in Web site headers and titles; and, using many geographic terms (city, county, surrounding towns, subdivisions and zip codes) that describe your location and service area. An "optimized" Web site will help the right people find you.

Words can bring in more people and keep people (happily) at your site. Once someone enters their keyword the only thing that sets your site apart from everyone else's are the WORDS! Make sure every phrase or sentence on your site relates to the reader, has an intriguing benefit-driven focus, and offers to solve their red-hot-minute problems.

Words can entice people to explore the multiple pages within your site. Once people are at your site the work of your homepage is to greet them, introduce yourself, and make them feel welcome enough to explore a while.

When someone walks through the front door of your brick and mortar store you don't say "Hey, wanna buy the orange lilies or the red roses?" Why would you do that at the front door (or on the homepage) of your Web site?

One of the easiest ways to encourage visitors to explore your site is to ask questions and offer "live links" that visitors can click on to take them to that solution.

Words persuade visitors to take action – to buy, to comment, and to register. When customers walk into your physical store, their senses are engaged immediately by the sights, smells, and sounds of the room. Assimilating all of this information helps the first-time visitor decide whether to do business with you or not.

Online, you lose all the power of those ethereal vibrations, but you still have to convey all those same feelings. On your Web site, the persuasion process has to be more systematic.

- Give something for FREE to help generate goodwill
- Offer a guarantee to ease purchasing anxiety
- Provide testimonials to prove that you're "OK"
- Solve their problems with storylines to build relationships
- Write casually to relax and befriend customers
- Ask for just one action per page to improve your chances for success

Want your reader to BUY something? Give customers clear, simple instructions for the sales process. Let them buy online or offline. Offer choice by providing them a variety of ways to complete the transaction, such as by phone, fax or e-mail.

Want your reader to COMMENT or fill out a survey? Be sure to make it short, simple, and offer an instantly retrievable reward, such as a coupon or newsletter, for their efforts.

Want your reader to REGISTER for your mailing list?

- Ask only for their name and e-mail address
- Offer rewards for giving you that sacred information
- Promise to treat them with respect
- Give them everything you promised (and nothing more!)

Throughout the entire persuasion process, be sure that your language is benefit driven. Words build a long-term relationship between you and your visitors. A catchy domain name will make it easier for your customers to remember you. Want to use [www.YourBusinessName.com](http://www.YourBusinessName.com) but it's not available? Add "My, Call, or Get," in front of your name or end the domain with "Now, or Wow" dot com. (For example [www.CallYourBusinessName.com](http://www.CallYourBusinessName.com) or [www.YourBusinessNameNow.com](http://www.YourBusinessNameNow.com)). Let your personality shine through! Your "signature words" and phrases provide warmth and friendliness to the cold medium of cyberspace.

By doing a little creative editing and by making deliberate choices in the words you use your Web site customers will hold you in their hearts and keep you on their minds. This will ensure that after someone visits your site once, they'll automatically type in [www.YourStore'sSite.com](http://www.YourStore'sSite.com) the next time they need flowers.

If you'd like step-by-step tips on winning at word games, visit [www.FlowerPR.com](http://www.FlowerPR.com) and click on the MFA icon.

Here's to your blooming success! ✿

*William Carlson is the president of Flower PR, a floriculture association with more than 14 years of industry experience as a Web site development and services company.*