Worth reading no matter what your role in copywriting for the Web. Great tips for creative copywriting techniques specifically tailored to the online experience.

**Debbie Weil, WordBiz Report**

The online marketing industry of today is finally ready to meet the demanding needs of effective copywriting. By reading and utilizing *Persuasive Online Copywriting*, any online marketer can meet and exceed their goals of effectively communicating and persuading an audience to take action.

**Ben Isaacson, Exec Director, Association for Interactive Marketing**

Every online marketer should have a copy... to read once and use as a daily reference guide.

**Rob Gabel, LowerMyBills.com**

A wonderful, succinct guide that covers both the hows and whys behind creating persuasive copy that appeals to a variety of unique audiences. ... I keep lots of reference materials – this one is going at the front because I know I’ll be referring to it frequently.

**Stevie Ann Rinehart, Marketing Copywriter**

This common-sense guide will walk you through creating persuasive, results-oriented online copy, step-by-step. Clear, logical, easy to follow advice for anyone who needs to find and use the right words online, whatever their level of marketing expertise.

**Rebecca Lieb, Executive Editor, ClickZ**

Any businessman or entrepreneur who wants to succeed online should read and implement the tactics and strategies found in this book.

**Michael R. Drew, Promote-a-Book**

Awesome! Chock full of great material for both marketers and writers. And the Afterword alone is worth the price of admission – a delightful
case of under-promising and over-delivering. Read this book! Put it under your pillow at night! Get these principles firmly lodged in your chemical memory, 'cause this is the stuff that's gonna make a difference in your bottom line online.

**The Grok, GrokDotCom**

It's that no-nonsense, straight-talking attitude that makes this book so appealing. Far from being the academic drones who grind out mind-numbing textbooks on the subject of advertising and marketing, the authors are real world practitioners with brains and moxie. These aren't mere ruminations on theoretical copywriting issues, but practical advice drawn from experience. ... this is a short but important book. By pointing out how pretty words aren't enough, the authors make a valuable contribution to the online experience. We can only hope that everyone will heed their advice.

**Jonathan Jackson, Internet.com**

Here's a book that's actually fun to read and will go a long way in getting your head into the mode of thinking necessary to boost your online sales. Strongly recommended.

**Ralph F. Wilson, Web Commerce Today**

An essential resource for every online copywriter's 'toolbox'. *Persuasive Online Copywriting* takes both a broad view of writing for the Web, and also drills down to specific copy tactics that engage readers and drive results. An excellent, practical guide to writing with conversion rates in mind.

**Nick Usborne, Author of Net Words: Creating High Impact Online Copy**

Take Your Words to the Bank speaks to e-marketers with exuberance and clarity about what is at the heart of their careers - effective and powerful communications. It should be required reading for executives, directors, managers and employees in every organization that has an e-marketing department.

**Faith Kuczaj, Sabre's Virtually There**

I've been writing copy for over twenty years. What I've learned is that you can never learn enough about writing copy. Just take one look at the table of contents and you'll realize that this is a must-have volume.

**Larry Chase, Publisher and Author**
This is the Strunk & White of writing for the web.

**Dan Janal, Founder, PR Leads**

Having read just about every book written so far on the subject online copywriting, I must say, that while "Persuasive Online Copywriting" is not the longest book on the subject, but it may be the most useful.

**Eric Graham, Amazon Review**

Before reading this book I considered myself a decent copyrighter, not excellent by any means, but decent. After reading this book (and their other book: Call to Action) I realized that I have no idea what I'm doing. Now I refer to each book on a weekly basis to be sure that I'm getting it right as I build websites for my clients. Reading these books has opened my eyes; referencing them keeps them open. Using just a few examples in these books I have been able to increase my registrations on several websites in just a few weeks.

**Ash Buckles, Amazon Review**

Anyone responsible for the content of their website should read this book and keep it close by. As the author's state, writing for your website is not a one-time process, but is all about tweaking and testing different formulas. Persuasive makes a great reference manual for the process of getting the most out of your web page content and squeezing out higher conversion rates from your visitors.

**Stoney G. deGeyter, Amazon Review**

This gem of a book offers the most comprehensive (and immediately useable) information on "how to make your website profitable" in the fewest amount of pages that I have yet seen.

**E. Osworth, Amazon Review**

This book is a must have for any web site manager, content coordinator, or copy writer. It contains a proven methodology with solid examples on how the most important part of any web site are its copy and content. ... After years of building sites with form, but no function it is great to finally see someone address this issue. I don’t know anyone else who takes it to this level. Perfect for both the seasoned web professional and beginner alike - A very easy read!

**Ethan Giffin, Allegis Group**
Persuasive Online Copywriting

How to Take Your Words to the Bank

with an afterword on Persuasion Architecture

Bryan Eisenberg, Jeffrey Eisenberg
Lisa T. Davis

A PUBLICATION BY

FUTURE NOW, INC.

For Roy and Penny

who taught us if it's worth doing at all it's worth doing wrong
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This time has been really hard because the press is reporting that this industry is dead. I so believe that access to information is hugely transformative. This industry is not going anywhere.

Maya Draisin  
President, Webby Awards Early 2001

We were at lowest point of the Internet bust when Maya Draisin said it, but I agreed with her then, as I do now, “This industry is not going anywhere.” Yes, Internet Marketing is here to stay and it’s getting better every day.

And the authors of this book are part of the reason why.

1998-2000: Money fell like rain from heaven and the streets were flooded with stories of teenage millionaires. Those halcyon days were fueled by a mentality that “if you build it, they will come.” Investors drunkenly bought into the internet’s promise of a “new economy” and billions of dollars were pumped into spec-tech and dotcoms, never to be seen again. But when the investors saw that the ’net’s realities didn’t quite match up to the glowing promises, investment capital dried up faster than alcohol on a summer sidewalk.

It was during the highest point of Internet frenzy that I published my first and second books, The Wizard of Ads and Secret Formulas of the Wizard of Ads, both of which became best sellers. But as neither of the books mentioned Internet Marketing, I was constantly being asked, “But what about the Internet?” Throughout the years from 1998 to 2001, my answer never wavered:

“The Internet is a baby born premature. She will certainly survive and grow up to exceed all your expectations, but she must first be given some time to mature. There are some fundamental problems with Internet Marketing that cannot be overcome with simple advances in technology. What internet marketing needs is people who truly understand the fundamentals of human persuasion and can apply them to the internet.”

Today it is my extraordinary pleasure to announce that those people have been found. Jeff and Bryan Eisenberg were talking ‘conversion’ back when ‘eyeballs’ were the thing and conversion wasn’t even in the
lexicon. Their work was greatly accelerated when they added Lisa Davis to the team.

Early 2002: Bryan, Jeffrey and Lisa graduated with honors from Wizard Academy and have since gone on to accomplish a number of internet marketing miracles. Consequently, they were chosen to become adjunct faculty at Wizard Academy, where now they teach the academy’s powerful Wizards of Web curriculum. This book contains an extremely important portion of what they teach.

Prepare to be amazed.

**Roy H. Williams**  
**October 2002**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS TO THE 2002 EDITION**

This isn’t exactly the book we intended to write. But it’s the book that wanted to be written. In fact, given that we’ve been living and breathing words and conversion for the past four years, it’s the book that wrote itself.

But no work is ever entirely the product of one, or even three. This book happened because we persisted. More than that, it happened because many people shared the journey with us.

We owe an enormous intellectual and personal debt to Roy Williams that words, for all their potent magic, will never quite encompass. Philosopher, mentor, Wizard and friend, he has been an inextricable part of our thinking from the moment we found his first book and began contemplating the connections between his world of radio and advertising, and our world of Internet sales and marketing.

The force behind any business is the customer, and we have been privileged to work with a number of people, generous of spirit and curious of mind, who were eager to offer their Web sites as crucibles for our ideas. In turn, we have learned much from them.

We’d like to thank our friends, colleagues and advisors: Hal Alpiar, Mark Brownlow, Holly Buchanan, Erin Brenner, Larry Chase, Jason Ciment, Hale Dwoskin, Mitch Fields, Dave Flanagan, Anthony Garcia, Olana Hirsch, Anne Holland, Dan Janal, Laurie Kuntz, Chuck Lickert,
Rebecca Lieb, John Morana, Jim Novo, Pamela Parker, Brad Powers, John Quarto-vonTivadar, Dan Roitman, Dean Rotbart, Mike Sack, Bill Schloth, John Simpson, Jared Spool, Danny Sullivan, Corrine Taylor, Juan Guillermo Tornoe, Nick Usborne, John Walsh, Debbie Weil, Allen Weiss, David Weltman and Pennie Williams.

The readers of GrokDotCom and Bryan’s ClickZ column have a special place in our hearts.

We acknowledge, individually, our personal debts of gratitude.

Bryan: To my parents, without whose support we would never be here, Stacey for her love and for being willing to wait just another few minutes and Hannah for reminding me of my reason why.

Jeffrey: To my brother, my parents and Cindy for providing the wind beneath my wings.

Lisa: To The Grok, for believing in me. And to Zachary, who possesses an incredible soul, a keen mind, a bottomless heart and is the glue of my life.

FOREWORD TO THE 2003 EDITION

In the year since Persuasive Online Copywriting was first published, we have received an extraordinary number of appreciative comments that have had us dancing with joy - and the occasional comment that had us mumbling in our soup. It goes without saying that any presentation of ideas will meet with both acceptance and opposition. We have been remarkably blessed, through this book, to witness the success that results when people rethink the way they approach their Web sites, both in terms of the copy and the persuasive processes they create. If we are able to contribute in any way to a clarity of thinking and a sharpening of skills - not to mention an increase in the return on investment - then we feel we have done our jobs admirably. And so it is with pleasure that we enter into our second printing. We hope it brings to you the same enthusiasm for possibility that it has brought to thousands of others.

BRYAN EISENBERG, JEFFREY EISENBERG, LISA T. DAVIS
OCTOBER 2003
The officially-bound *Persuasive Online Copywriting* is now out of print, for good and proper reasons. We have no intention of changing that. Yet, while the breadth of our perspective has become far more sophisticated, the fundamental truths from which that perspective sprang remain valid. It is in that spirit we bring you this version of *Persuasive Online Copywriting*.

We've made two changes in the text, one small and one large. The small change: We've replaced former personality terminology and explanations with material that reflects their current usage in Persuasion Architecture. The large change: We've scrapped the section of the book called “Understanding Online Conversion” and replaced it with our “Persuasion Architecture White Paper.” That former section was our none-too-subtle strategy for convincing folks that conversion and ROI mattered. People now get that. It’s time to move on and help businesses grasp the enormous value of persuasion.

Otherwise, the text is as it originally appeared.

**Bryan Eisenberg, Jeffrey Eisenberg, Lisa T. Davis**

**November 2006**
BEGINNING WORDS

Your audience is one single reader. I have found that sometimes it helps to pick out one person - a real person you know, or an imagined person - and write to that one.

John Steinbeck

Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind.

Rudyard Kipling

Writing for the Web. Web word wizardry. Web writing that works. If you've been paying attention to all the publications out there that address this issue, you know (or at least have a hunch) something's different about the way folks communicate in this brave new medium.

It's true. People don't "read" a computer screen the way they read print publications. They don't curl up with their computers for a couple of pages just before dropping off to sleep. And you generally won't find computers on the "reading shelves" of their bathrooms.

That much is obvious. But if you are reading this book, you are probably not concerned with writing that passes for literature or journalism or even entertainment, nor how you might create and optimize that writing for a Web environment.

Your primary concern is writing that persuades and motivates your Web visitors to do business with you.

This is the writing that performs the online equivalent of the conventional sales person: it develops a rapport with your visitors, provides appropriate information, helps your visitors qualify their needs, presents the solutions you can provide based on those needs, assures and inspires confidence, security and trust so your visitors feel good about doing business with you, "asks" for action - all the while keeping your visitors fully engaged in the conversion process.

This is writing that must work hard for you. And it's the writing you cannot farm out to just anyone. You, with your finger on the pulse of
marketing and sales, simply must have control. And to effectively manage the quality of your online writing, you need to understand what works, why it works and how to make it work better for you.

Whether or not you happen to be a writer yourself, you must recognize how the writing that appears on your Web site contributes to your ability to achieve your goals of conversion and relevance. Writing that gets in the way of these goals is simply a waste of time, energy and money.

Ron Mayer of InterVideo has written:

*It's interesting how a few words changed or a few sentences moved can make a big difference on what products people look at and choose on a Web site. Unless that messaging is in control of the people with sales responsibility, it's all too easy to have messaging that focuses peoples' attention away from whatever you want them to buy.*

That's where this book comes in - it's our plain-spoken, no-nonsense companion to your needs as a marketer working on the World Wide Web. In these pages, we present topical information in a series of essays to help you understand the nature of the demands placed on your online copy and content. We offer frameworks and tactics for creating words that will earn their keep. And we help you understand the nature of the medium, so you'll know exactly how to present those words to best advantage.

Your words are a critical link between you and your visitors; they not only drive action, they contribute to building long-term relationships.

So make them everything they can be!
THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING RELEVANT

You hear the word all the time. You make decisions based on it everyday.

But do you really know what it means and how to make it work for you when you are trying to get your prospects to take action? Roy H. Williams likes to express it as talking "to the dog, in the language of the dog, about what is in the heart of the dog."1

Are we talking about meat? Not exactly. We're talking relevance.

Each and every search engine out there is fighting to be the most relevant. Why? Relevance is in the heart of their customers; relevant results delight their customers. "Bring me what I want, and bring it now" is the attitude their customers bring to the table. So if search engines grapple with the issue of relevance because they know their customers crave it, why do most Web sites fail to recognize and exploit the importance of relevance?

So what is relevance? The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition gives three definitions:

1. Pertinence to the matter at hand.

2. Applicability to social issues: a governmental policy lacking relevance.

3. Computer Science. The capability of a search engine or function to retrieve data appropriate to a user's needs.

The third definition is most helpful. To paraphrase: relevance is a measure of how closely search results match the search request. Relevance is the single most significant factor in getting your prospects to take action.

Why is relevance such an important concept for Internet Marketing? The answer to this lies in understanding your prospects and how they reach a buying decision (search engines can be a tool for this).
To persuade your visitor to take action, you must be able to see the world from his or her buying point of view. Ideally, while you maintain your sales perspective, you conduct your sales process so that it is in tune with how customers decide to buy.

We engage in the buying process numerous times a day, whether we are buying a can of soda or making a more complex decision, such as buying a new car. Whenever a customer makes a buying decision, that decision represents the culmination of a process. It may take place almost instantaneously or stretch out over a long period of time. But it's a process, not an event.

No matter how long the process takes, the buying decision always begins when the customer becomes aware of a need or problem. Once the need is identified, the customer begins to explore possible avenues for meeting the need. This is the important point: the customer searches for a solution he or she perceives as relevant to the need.

While gathering information, the customer refines the buying criteria that will affect the decision to purchase and narrows the field of choice, finally choosing from the best few and then taking action.

The information architecture of your entire Web site must recognize every step of the consumer buying process. Each step feeds and leads to the others in order to create sales momentum.

Selling (used in the broadest sense of encouraging your prospect to take action) is the flip side of buying. Although the sales process ultimately is linear, there are often feedback loops within this process - as there are in the buying process - as the customer reevaluates information. So, it's not unusual to address several, or even all, of the steps of the sales process on a single page.

It is helpful to consider that these processes operate simultaneously on both a micro level (the individual page) and a macro level (the overall experience). You should always acknowledge and address the needs of the buying and selling processes at both levels.

How do we address these issues on a micro and macro level? We’d like to share a tool from the world of offline sales because it is just as, if not more, powerful online. It's known by the acronym "AIDA," or as we apply it, "AIDAS" (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action, and Satisfaction).
Every successful professional sale incorporates these elements; they are the steps that drive the process of turning browsers into buyers.

- Does the page grab your visitors’ attention - in about eight seconds? Can visitors perceive the relevance of your page to solving their problem and meeting their need?

- Does the page stimulate their interest and reinforce that they're in the right place? Does it suggest that your solution is among the most relevant and useful?

- Does the page inspire the desire to take the action of clicking deeper toward a purchase? Does it explicitly engage the imagination of your visitors and make them feel they will get value from your solution?

- Is it obvious and easy for your visitors to take that action? Do you ask your visitors to take action? Do you give them relevant information at the point of action so they feel more confident in taking that action?

- After they’ve clicked, does the next page satisfy your visitors by providing exactly what they wanted exactly how they wanted it?

You must test for and apply the concept of AIDAS on every page of your Web site, not just your home and landing pages. And when you’ve implemented AIDAS at the micro level of the page, step back and test whether AIDAS is working for you on a macro level.

Are your visitors moving comfortably but irresistibly from your home or landing page, through your entire site, to and through the checkout page?

Relevance is what they want. Are you providing relevance every step towards conversion?

THE MESSAGE MUST BE MEAT

Intuitively, you know the words you put on your Web site must leap off the computer screen and cozy up to your visitors as if it were you sitting right there with them. After all, they have a Herculean task: they must perform the myriad functions that a real person would in the real world.
There are many ingredients important to the recipe of writing well for relevance and conversion on the Web.

But before we can tackle techniques, we need to infuse a dose of perspective. Because you can craft the supremest of supreme pieces of writing, and it's going to be utterly worthless if you fail to speak to the dog, in the language of the dog, about what matters to the heart of the dog.

At his Wizard Academy, Roy Williams talks about Pavlov. You remember him, right? He's the fellow who got the dog to salivate to the sound of a bell. Roy uses Pavlov's experiment to illustrate branding and the value of relevance.

You see, Pavlov didn't put an artfully arranged plate of vegetables in front of the dog. What self-respecting carnivore gets juiced about vegetables? Instead, he put down something the dog seriously cared about, something that would get those salivary glands working overtime: meat.

To the heart of the dog, meat reigns supreme. It matters. It's the bottom-line food-truth in the canine world-view. It doesn't matter how fresh those vegetables are or how fancy you dress them up. They'll never get the dog salivating in the first place.

That's what you have to do - identify the "bottom-line food-truth" stuff about your business that's going to perform the equivalent of getting your visitors to salivate. What's in the heart of your dogs? What matters most to them?

Only when you've figured out what really matters to your dogs can you effectively persuade them, speaking to them in their language. Only then you can decide how you're going to set the table.

You can write screensful of gorgeous copy. You can pay through the nose to have a first-class copywriter perform verbal magic. But understand this: even mediocre writing that captures the essence of what matters to the dog will out-perform stellar writing that completely misses the mark. Naturally, you want to ring the best and most brilliant bell you can through your writing. Just keep in mind - if it isn't the meat, the only thing you're really serving up is a plate of they-could-care-less-about-it vegetables.
THE CASE OF CONTENT V. COPY

Not so long ago, Nick Usborne and Ann Handley discussed the apparent distinctions between content and copy, and underscored the critical need for these two forms of writing to function in cooperation in e-commerce. Their message is well worth understanding, because it will help you shape every piece of writing on your Web site so it reinforces your visitors’ and your goals.

Folks traditionally consider content and copy distinct entities.

Content is the long stuff: articles, descriptions, white papers, reports. The fine print of your privacy policy. The history of the recorder on a Renaissance music site.

Copy is the stuff that is supposed to motivate your prospects to take action. It's generally shorter and more obviously sales-oriented. Product descriptions to capture attention. Headlines. Calls to action. Assurance messages. Words that aid site navigation and usability.

Content informs. Copy persuades. Seems a convenient way to distinguish the two.

However, when you examine this distinction in terms of your Web site as a system of conversion, the differences begin to evaporate. All the words you create must fuel the persuasive process - from the perspective of your visitor, all copy is content, and all content is copy.

Nick and Ann put it this way:

_Let's say someone wishes to apply for a grant through a prominent charitable foundation._

_That person’s purpose on the site is to apply for a grant and get that money to support their cause._

_First, he or she will look to the short text, the copy on the home page, in order to find answers to a couple of key questions in her mind. "Am I in the right place, can they help me?" "And if so, what do I do now?"

_It’s the job of the home page copy to answer these questions, or at least to provide an answer that will compel the visitor to dig a little_
deeper. And the tone of that copy needs to reflect the broader mission and character of the site.

Once our user decides that this probably is a place through which she can apply for that money, she then starts reading a long page that outlines the conditions of eligibility. This is text that has to be read by each applicant.

If the purpose of the site is to help and facilitate applicants, then the content on that page had better be both informative AND engaging. After all, you want the reader to finish reading this page and move on to the next step in the application process.

In this way, core content takes on some of the characteristics of copy. Content cannot simply be there to passively impart information. Like copy, content also has to be written with a view to the user experience and the usability and performance of the site.

There is little point in a copywriter successfully writing engaging and persuasive text, if the content drags the reader down. And it would be wasteful if the content were magical, only to be undermined by poor copy that was inappropriate in tone and vague in meaning and purpose. Or worse: Both.

So there you have it.

There are clearly still organizational and historical divisions between the creation of copy and content on many sites today. But it’s time to break down those barriers.

Those divisions simply reflect the flaws within your own processes, and diminish the quality of the user experience and the ultimate success of your site.

WHEN CONTENT ISN’T KING

When heavyweights like Forrester Research proclaimed content the single biggest motivation in getting people to log onto the Internet (as well as return to a Web site), folks started jumping on The Content Bandwagon. Fortunately, the rush to pad sites with tons of content persuaded some folks to examine both the role and value of content a lot more critically.
Now that we’ve got some experience and some data, here’s what we know: Not all content is created equal. There are times when content is at best pointless, at worst actually destructive to conversion rates, and in any case most definitely not King (or even Prince).

People do come to the Internet to get content. According to a UCLA study, the Internet now beats out radio, television and magazines as an information resource (only newspapers - by a tiny margin - and books ranked higher). But don’t go thinking just because people go online for content, they necessarily want that content from your site or that providing it automatically will help your sales.

Think of it as the online equivalent of the old "milk argument," the one that says 90 percent of the people who go shopping buy milk, so if you want to increase sales in, say, your hardware store, all you have to do is add a milk cooler.

Searching for content is different from going shopping.

When people want content on the Web, they go to sites that specialize in precisely the content they seek. When they want to buy something online, they want sites that offer a simple, trustworthy and streamlined experience. The only content they want is stuff that will directly help them make a more confident buying decision. Anything else only confuses them, or distracts them from buying, or slows the sales process or bloats your site.

In e-commerce, content provides a lot of what you’d get from a real-world salesperson. You’ve got to have it, and because it occupies a central place in supporting the primary sales goals of your site, you cannot give it secondary consideration in the planning and execution of your site. So make sure you have the content you need - but only the content you need.

You need content that’s clear, concise, vivid, compelling, and strictly related to your product or service or to your expertise. It must motivate the shopper directly toward becoming a buyer. These days, folks are even monitoring the effectiveness of their site’s content by tracking which elements prompted the best over-all results.

Content is not King when it exists simply for its own sake, or when it attracts unqualified traffic that isn’t interested in making a purchase from you, or when it undermines your sales process, or when it adds distracting layers that impede your prospect’s momentum toward
becoming a buyer. So if you jumped on The Content Bandwagon, consider putting your content on a serious diet. Only then will you find yourself with content that truly rules!

**WHY COPYWRITING ONLINE IS DIFFERENT**

We're seeing too much stuff online that reads like this: "The blankety-blank is the true essence of a high-performance blankety-blank, delivering sizzling blankety-blank in an absolutely refined way. It's a paradigm shift with profound implications for blankety-blank."

The thing is, your online visitors are 'speaking' very differently. Try this eye-opening exercise: Find a product or service that has user newsgroups, message boards or list-serves and compare how that company talks (pay a call on its Web site) to how its customers talk.

Think creating online copy isn't a whole new ballgame? A while back, we asked Nick Usborne, a gifted professional copywriter and author of *Net Words: Creating High-Impact Online Copy*, to speak to this issue.

Here's what he had to say:

*Is copywriting for the Web very different from copywriting for print and broadcast?*

*Tough question. The incorrect answer is 'No'. The easy answer is 'Yes'. And the best answer is, 'That depends'.*

*But for the purposes of this chapter, I'll be addressing the 'Yes' answer. It's important to understand why copywriting online is profoundly different from writing for other media - before venturing into those gray, 'That depends' areas.*

*To really understand why copywriting online is different, you need to step back a little.*

*In the offline world, copywriters work within an environment that was created and is owned and controlled by large media companies and the ad agencies of Madison Avenue.*
It's a closed loop. Media companies own the means to get the message out to the public. Corporations buy ad space to reach those people - their prospects and customers. The ad money they spend supports the media companies they depend on.

A key factor here is that the audience has no real means to talk back - beyond an occasional letter to the editor. Offline marketing is a one-way process. Companies use traditional media to broadcast a message, in the hope that multiple impressions will have the desired impact. This has a huge effect on how copywriters ply their craft. They write in the knowledge that this is a wholly commercial, one-way channel of communication and that success depends on repeated ‘hits’ or impressions being made on the target audience.

In many ways the offline marketing environment is adversarial. Copywriters are writing ‘at’ their audience with a view to persuading them to take a particular course of action.

The online marketing environment is profoundly different.

As a ‘medium’, the Web was not created by and nor is it owned by large corporations. And even those huge media companies online like AOL Time Warner may own a great deal of infrastructure - but they will never own the audience in the way that the media does offline.

The Internet sprang not from Madison Avenue, but from the minds of academics. Long before commerce came to the Web, millions of people were emailing, posting to discussion lists and sharing their views and passions.

Usenet, CompuServe, Prodigy, The Well ... These were all forums within which passionate individuals began to carve out the character of what would later become the Web.

Online, your ‘audience’ has a huge and vibrant voice. As a ‘medium’ the Web is quite unlike offline media - it is owned more by its audience than it is by its advertisers and marketers.

People will use email, live chat and discussion groups far more frequently than they log onto an ecommerce site. For tens of millions of people, the Web is more about communicating and sharing than it is about buying.
In addition, the network of the Web has enabled ‘consumers’ to become much smarter. Sites like epinions.com and planetfeedback.com - plus thousands of niche discussion lists - allow people to share their aggregate experience of online and offline vendors, products and services. They praise some companies and beat up on others.

In the offline advertising environment, such a scenario would be unthinkable. But online, your ‘audience’ has become an active and vocal participant in the sales and marketing process.

So why is copywriting online different from copywriting offline?

It’s because your audience is no longer silent and passive. Online, the audience is vocal, active and connected.

As a copywriter you have to respect that. You need to recognize that. You are no longer writing to single, isolated individuals, sitting passively in front of their TVs or magazines.

You are writing to networked groups of people. That’s what makes copywriting online so different, so interesting and so challenging.

Your visitors have the unprecedented ability to talk back and shape your marketing and sales strategies. And they speak to, listen to and hear each other in ways you should heed. It’s not a one-way street anymore. That’s why the words you put on your Web site and in your emails have to transcend ‘brochureware.’ They have to be high-impact. They have to connect and explain and persuade AND ignite the imagination.

**IT’S THE CUSTOMER, STUPID**

Ok, Ok, so that’s a little aggressive. But really, isn't that the whole deal? Get that part right, and everything else follows. Get it wrong, and, even if everything else is perfect, you'll still fail.

Have you ever been cornered at a party by someone who only talks about himself? Pretty annoying, isn’t it? Do you respect that person? Are you comfortable around him? Do you feel such people care about you or what’s important to you? Do you even want be there? If you saw that person again, would you be eager to spend even more time
with him? Most of us would be looking for the nearest plant to hide behind!

Now ask yourself what was the source of those negative feelings and that avoidance behavior. It wasn’t how the person was dressed. It wasn’t where the person came from. It wasn’t what the person did for a living or who he was with. It was the words.

So let’s take a look at the words on your Web site. Are you talking about all the wonderful ways your visitors can benefit from your products or services, or are you talking about all the great features of your products, services, or company? In other words, are you speaking the language of "you," or are you caught up in the language of "we"? (Old joke: Woman comes home from a date. Roommate asks how it went. She replies, "He’s an opera singer." "Really?" "Yeah, all night it was 'me-me-me-me-me.'")

The words you use and how you use them tell your visitors where your focus is. Want them to stick around and eventually take the action you want? Then talk about them, their needs, their wants, and how they can get those needs and wants satisfied. Use customer-focused language. Otherwise, they’re going to feel like you’re the self-centered guest at the party. You may not be, but they have only your words by which to judge you.

Because there wasn’t a tool you could use to evaluate the customer focused-ness of your site, we invented one. It’s not perfect (there are lots of variables and contingencies, of course). But it has proven to be so useful that it’s already gotten a bunch of press.

More importantly, it’s already helped a lot of people improve their conversion rates. Link to the tool and play with it before you read on.

As you can see, we parse your page for self-focused words such as "I," "we," "our," and your company name (which functions much like "we"), as well as for customer-focused words such as "you" and "your." Then we calculate several ratios that indicate whether your visitors are likely to perceive you as genuinely focused on them.

The most important is the Customer Focus Ratio (CFR). That’s the ratio of customer-focused words to self-focused words. Then you can compare all the CFRs with a complementary set of self-focus ratios. Run the tool to check your site; run it to check a variety of sites. You’re
likely to have an eye-opening opportunity to see your site through your customer's eyes.

It's fascinating to see how certain sites, and even whole business categories, score. Most sites with splash pages or flash intros score terribly. But what better examples are there of sites pushing what the company wants the visitor to see rather than giving the visitor what he or she came to find? Ad agencies and Web design firms are especially guilty of this!

If you want a rough guideline, there seems to be a clear difference between sites with CFRs of 60 percent and higher, and sites with CFRs below 60 percent. If your site scores 35 percent, know that you have room to improve. But remember: You could score over 60 percent and still have room to improve. Again, it's a guideline.

So test. Test each part of your site. Now look at your text, and make the changes that ensure your visitors feel your only focus is them.

**CASE STUDY: NEWSBIOS BEFORE & AFTER**

With our help, Laurie Kuntz of NewsBios, a journalist profiling service, took the plunge and reevaluated the copy on her home page. Comparing her before and after copy can help you get a handle on how to speak to your prospects about what matters to them. The Grok, offers his commentary:

*The Headline*

NewsBios has big text that pretty effectively grabs your visual attention when you land on the home page. The old version read:

> We know more, about more journalists, than anyone else in the World.

Yeah? So what! The first thing you want to do to engage your customers is brag about yourself? I don't think so. If you even want a chance to speak to the dog, you'd better give it meat. Laurie's revised version reads:
Empowering you to know more, about more journalists, than anyone else in the World.

Way cool! "We" is gone, replaced with "Empowering you to" and the entire sense of the headline has changed. If I'm a PR type, I'm all for being empowered. And I absolutely want to know more about it than anyone else in the world, 'cause I'm all for having the inside edge in my business! This headline speaks to me about what matters to me, and I'm far more likely to keep reading.

Here's the body of the old copy:

Have you or your clients gotten calls from journalists wanting to interview them? Tried pitching stories to a journalist with no luck?

Let NewsBios give you the tools to educate you and your clients about journalists.

NewsBios is a comprehensive database of the world's most influential journalists. Every in-depth profile is updated prior to its delivery to ensure our clients are getting the latest and most up-to-date information.

We know more, about more journalists, than anyone in the World.

Journalists have two main complaints of the PR/IR industry today.

One, they do not know the beat.

If you are pitching the editor/managing editor, you do not know the beat. In a survey conducted by our research staff, 8 times out of 10 you should not pitch the editor. If you are, you do not know the beat and you do not know the correct journalist to pitch. NewsBios can help.

Two, Communication professionals do not know the journalist.

A journalist is more than ink on the paper or the story they write. If a journalist is knocking on your door to interview you or your client, do you think that they have done their homework? You bet they have. Let NewsBios do the homework for you. By learning in-depth information about what the journalist does and who they are.
This priceless tool will save you and your clients' valuable time and money.

Each year NewsBios ranks the Top 100 Business Journalists of the Year, the Business News Luminaries, the Top 30 journalists under the age of 30, as well as additional publications and events. To find out more about one of these events or advertising and sponsorship opportunities go to our events/publication page.

With NewsBios you get the "picture" on the press.

The opening two questions address potential reasons I - the PR dude - might have come to this site, but these are quickly followed with copy that again touts the wonderfulness of NewsBios. Not an effective value proposition, nor an emotional hook by any stretch. It's simply counter-productive to we-we all over yourself.

Then the copy proceeds to tell me I basically don’t know the difference between my head and a hole in the ground. And that’s why journalists won’t talk to me or write about my business. But NewsBios is the priceless tool that is going to save me.

Wanna guess how a negative pitch affects the dog? Think whack on the snout with a rolled up newspaper.

The revised copy reads as follows:

Are you getting frustrated from sending out press releases to no avail? You have a great story to tell. Your product is unique. Why isn't anyone writing about it? You are purchasing a list of journalists that cover your target beat, but you still are not garnering the coverage your client needs.

Do you want to get more publicity? Are you or your clients getting calls from journalists wanting an interview? This service will provide you with in-depth profiles on journalists you want to reach, or journalists who have contacted you. Know the journalists. Know what they write. It is not news until a journalist says it is news. The journalist has already done their homework on you, now do your homework.

Here is a tool that will educate you and your clients about journalists. Relevant information to bridge the communication gap.
This comprehensive database of journalists profiles spans a variety of beats and media outlets. Every in-depth profile is updated prior to its delivery to ensure our clients are getting the latest and most up-to-date information. A professional team of research journalists is on staff to develop profiles of journalists not currently existing in the proprietary database.

Take time to browse the Journalist Spotlight for a first-hand look at this invaluable tool.

Now this delightfully and immediately treats me like a sentient being and acknowledges the frustrations I might be having doing my job. Not only that, it understands that I have a great story to tell and a unique product. Do I want more publicity? Yeah, baby, bring it on! Do I want a "tool that will educate" me? Darn tootin'! Do I want help with my homework? Make it easier for me!!

The copy is also shorter. And if you can achieve the goal more effectively in fewer words, that's a very good thing.

Other improvements

Laurie employed a few other tactics in her copy that will help keep her dogs engaged in her persuasion process. The revision includes links embedded in the text - each a call to action - that can help visitors move further into the site based on the information they want next.

She also has employed text bolding so those cut-to-the-chase personality types can get the entire sense of the home page by skimming. If you just read the bolded bits, you get:

You have a great story to tell. Your product is unique. Get more publicity from journalists? Tool that will educate you and your clients. This comprehensive database is updated ensure our clients are getting the latest information.

Not a perfect read, but it gets the point across quickly and efficiently. Benefit, service. Aimed at the heart of the dog.

The point here is not that Laurie wrote perfect copy; it is that she ditched self-serving copy in favor of speaking to her prospects' needs in a way that communicates the value of doing business with NewsBios. And that is already getting Laurie more business!
Every now and again we need to take a step back from the microscope we keep trained on the detaily specifics of designing for conversion and consider the broader picture. And it’s actually the picture itself, the image, that has captured our fancy today.

In *Secret Formulas of the Wizard of Ads*, Roy H. Williams presents a little essay that opens like this:

> Born into a wealthy family in 1830, Emily has her photograph taken at the age of eighteen, then lives a remarkably uneventful life until she quietly passes at the age of fifty-five. It will be the only photograph ever made of her.

> Incredibly shy, Emily asks her friends to speak to her through an open door from an adjoining room while she stands behind the wall. Her life consists of tending her garden and baking. She never travels, never marries, and rarely leaves her home. Emily lives in a world of imagination where words are all she requires to generate a series of vivid associations.¹³

Think about this for a minute. The only image lots of folks ever had of Emily (Dickinson, that is) was a static daguerreotype - a woman perpetually eighteen. Of course, she didn’t stay eighteen. And the dimensions of her personality no doubt encompassed more than what the photograph suggested. But that photograph and her words defined who Emily was.

What has this got to do with you? Lots, actually. It’s a brilliant metaphor for how you conduct your business on the Web, and the sorts of things you can accomplish if you present the right image - the right personality - through the content and copy on your Web site. We don’t mean to sound cavalier, but when push comes to shove out there in cyberspace, who you are is far less important than who your customers imagine you to be.

So let us take you to talk with Emily.

*The Importance of Consistency*

You’re on the other side of that wall, exchanging confidences. Emily sounds understanding and compassionate. But when you come back the next day, she sounds like a gutter snipe. How are you going to feel?
With consistency comes trust. Visitors to your Web site want to know they are interacting with the same, reassuring person every time they come. When you change personalities in the middle of the stream, they get confused. They can't form a coherent image of you.

The Importance of Personality

Who Emily actually is behind that wall matters far less than what she has to say and how she says it. And as you sit there listening to her, who you "see" is actually based on a very limited experience of her. It is through her words that she ignites your imagination and helps you form your image.

In reality, you can be the toast of the party or even a dreadful bore - it really doesn't matter online. What does matter is the character of the personality you create through your words. They are the elements that help construct the image of you that is going to make a huge difference to your visitors.

The Importance of a Relationship

Behind her wall, Emily engages you in conversation, and you never doubt that you have her complete attention. Now, maybe she's really making notations in her gardening diary or deciding which sauce to whip up for the roast beef that night, but that isn't the point. The important thing is, you feel her words are just for you.

That's how you want your visitors to feel - as though you are there for and speaking to them and them alone! Of course your relationship will grow and develop over time.

It all comes down to the importance of words and their power to create the image you must convey to your visitors.

Take it from us ... and Emily.
It's straight out of Sales 101. When you want to capture your customers' interest and speak to their felt needs (the things that make them want to buy), you sell the benefits, not the features of your product or service.

A classic example? Take the electric drill. Nobody is going to buy one just so they can have an electric drill. They buy one because they want holes. Clean holes, deep holes, accurate holes, holes in a hurry, holes of many sizes, holes in different materials.

Most folks don’t care what the drill is made from or how the circuitry is toggled - they care that it makes holes. They might also care that the drill is light-weight (but spare them a discussion of the space-age aluminum alloy casing), maneuverable, UL approved, has a super-long cord and comes in its own carrying case. But they only care about those things because they add to performance, convenience or safety - benefits, not features, are what appeal at an emotional level.

Or take lipstick. A woman does not care that a tube of lipstick contains tetroboxomanganite hypoperoxidase (we’re making this up as we go) - not unless the ingredient itself is a major selling point (think Lycra™).

What is going to grab her interest is that the lipstick makes her look more attractive. And it stays put longer so she doesn’t have to keep reapplying it. And it doesn’t smear or "kiss off", so she doesn’t have to worry about curling up against someone else’s shirt.

Less fuss, fewer worries, great look - these are the benefits of this lipstick.

How do you convey benefits most effectively? With great copy. (Yes - a great picture can help, but it can’t do the job alone, ever. And it better not be so big it slows the download.)

So look at your copy. Are you selling features or benefits? Are you talking about what the product or service is or how it can make your prospect's life better? If you find you’re focusing on features, rewrite your copy to reflect how great that item is going to make your customer feel. Even price matters only when put in the right context.

Consider the value of the product or service to your customer’s life, then write killer copy that sells that!
At our office, there's an axiom we keep prominently displayed. We refer to it repeatedly in many of our reports. We constantly remind our clients of its power. There's even talk here we're going to have it tattooed on our foreheads! (We're actually kidding about that part). But the axiom is that important.

Here it is:

\[ \text{People rationalize buying decisions based on facts,} \]

\[ \text{but} \]

\[ \text{People make buying decisions based on feelings.} \]

Trouble is, stuff like this sounds pretty airy-fairy to the procedural business mind (a very rational entity). At least, it does up until the procedural mind gets an eyeful of the bottom line. Still think we're crooning New Age mumbo jumbo?

News Flash! The University of Rochester School of Medicine published a study based on brain activity imaging that reveals emotions are inextricably a part of the decision process. In fact, "if you eliminate the emotional guiding factors, it's impossible [for people] to make decisions in daily life." \(^{14}\)

Folks with damaged prefrontal lobes - the area of the brain where emotions are processed - are completely stymied when it comes to making personal decisions such as scheduling a doctor's appointment, wearing a seat belt, and yes, even deciding what to buy for themselves!

When humans make personal decisions, they put themselves in the picture and evaluate the emotional risks or benefits of making that decision. If they can't grab onto the emotional image, they can't make the decision.

That's why you ALWAYS have to appeal to emotions. It's why you have to sell benefits over features and decide when you're going to promote style or substance. It's the imperative for writing persuasive copy that creates powerful, evocative mental imagery in your prospects' minds - the sort of imagery that allows them to put themselves center stage. It's why you have to let your visitors know "what's in it for them" and why they should buy from you. It's why you have to woo the dominant
personality types of your visitors, employ a selling process that honors their felt needs, offer assistance and assurances.

Emotions. Feelings. The whole shooting match when it comes to conversion. Care to tap into that goldmine now?
WRITING TECHNIQUES

SPEAKING PERSUASIVELY TO ONE

No, sir, I’m not saying that charming, witty and warm copy won’t sell. I’m just saying I’ve seen thousands of charming, witty campaigns that didn’t sell.

Rosser Reeves

You are ready to tackle the heart of the matter: putting pen to paper or fingertips to keyboard. The time to start digging into the tactics of shaping your copy and content is at hand.

The beauty and great appeal of the Internet has always been the opportunity it gives people to initiate, develop and maintain interesting and meaningful relationships, very often with individuals they otherwise might never have known.

The best piece of advice we can possibly give you is to exploit this knowledge fully. When you write, write to one person. If you can make each and every one of your readers feel as though you have written your message solely for them, you will have established the basis for effective communication.

Within the context of this ultimate writing goal, however, you still have many things to consider. While you are speaking to this one person, you are engaging in the art of persuasion. In the words of Roy Williams, "Describe what you want the listener to see, and she will see it. Cause her to imagine taking the action you’d like her to take, and you’ve brought her much closer to taking the action."15

The Blind Men and the Elephant

It was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.
The First approached the Elephant,  
And happening to fall  
Against his broad and sturdy side,  
At once began to bawl:  
"God bless me! but the Elephant Is very like a wall!"

The Second, feeling of the tusk,  
Cried, "Ho, what have we here,  
So very round and smooth and sharp?  
To me 'tis mighty clear  
This wonder of an Elephant  
Is very like a spear!"

The Third approached the animal,  
And happening to take  
The squirming trunk within his hands,  
Thus boldly up and spake:  
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant  
Is very like a snake!"

The Fourth reached out an eager hand,  
And felt about the knee.  
"What most this wondrous beast is like  
Is mighty plain," quoth he;  
"'Tis clear enough the Elephant  
Is very like a tree!"

The Fifth, who chanced to touch the ear,  
Said: "E'en the blindest man  
Can tell what this resembles most;  
Deny the fact who can,  
This marvel of an Elephant  
Is very like a fan!"

The Sixth no sooner had begun  
About the beast to grope,  
Than, seizing on the swinging tail  
That fell within his scope,  
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant  
Is very like a rope!"
And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!

JOHN GODFREY Saxe (1816-1887)¹⁶

Most online efforts fall short of effective persuasion and are nothing more than one blind man trying to convince another to "see" the elephant as he does. As you speak, you must connect emotionally with your reader, or you will never persuade effectively. You must draw her into the full experience and activate all her senses. You must build for her a whole picture, without which, your efforts at persuasion will be incomplete.

ESTABLISH A STRUCTURE

The key to constructing effective mental images and creating powerful persuasive copy lies in systematic and coherent intentionality. Your copy should not be presented randomly. Instead, it should flow, interconnect, have a consistent personality, and reveal the gestalt as well as the particulars. It can help to follow a fundamental process similar to the one that is used in other developmental or "construction" practices.

We should note that we present this structuring process in an order-dependent, left-brain fashion, but it is entirely possible to rearrange the sequence by allowing the creative juices to do their thing first and then organizing the exuberant results into a structure.

Many copywriters will tap into the emotional ambiance of the message first and then distill the structure from that. Whichever way you come at the task, your result must have a logical, progressive framework that your reader can quickly apprehend and that will propel her through your conversion process.

The concept of wireframing comes from engineering development practice; it is the preliminary phase of development that leads to storyboarding and prototyping. Wireframing takes its name from the skeletal wire structures that underlie any type of sculpture. Without this
foundation, there is no support for the fleshing-out that creates the finished piece.

In Web-speak, a wireframe is a skeletal rendering of every click-through possibility on your site - a text-only "action," "decision" or "experience" model. Wireframing attends to the 'what' and 'why' issues of your project; it is not at all concerned with 'how'. Its purpose is to maintain the flow of your specific logical and business functions by identifying all the entry and exit points your users will experience on every page of your site.

The goal is to ensure your needs and the needs of your visitors will be met effectively in the resulting Web site.

You wireframe first, before a single line of code is written, a single graphic or color is chosen, or a single word of copy is composed. Wireframing is not concerned with design, navigational layout, content or even the developers' and designers' concepts of how to produce your Web site.

In the same fashion, you want to wireframe your writing project - plan its flow so you have a template for its construction, an idea of where you will be incorporating calls to action, points of action, headings, navigation, content resources, and so on.

In his copywriting book, Joseph Sugarman presents a straightforward, linear flow - essentially a wireframe - of the process of writing advertising copy that follows a reader's natural progression of interest and concern:

- Open strongly by eliciting interest and excitement
- Develop the drama Explain why the product or service is different
- Explain how to use the product or service
- Elaborate on the unique benefits
- Justify the purchase Identify the lasting value
- Address service concerns
- Ask for order
By itself, this topical flow appears pretty uninspiring; the craft of writing will convert it into persuasive magic. But it does exactly what it should do: it answers the ‘what’ and ‘why’ questions that should frame the structure of your project - what forms of writing do you require and why - and allows you to turn productively to the tactical ‘how’ questions.

Once you have decided on the structure of your wireframe (and it needn’t replicate Joseph Sugarman’s example), you begin to storyboard your content. This is where you start to consider the mental images and personality you want to present so you can persuade your reader to take action.

Find all the words that help describe the complete mental images you need to convey - all the nouns that draw the mental picture and all the adjectives that modify these. Then relate these nouns with verbs, which are modified by adverbs. Finally, add prepositions to form complete sentences and paragraphs that will evoke the full mental image and its associations in the mind of the reader.

Alongside your structural elements, jot down phrases that elaborate your images and begin to develop very rough drafts of the central points you will address. Your results at this stage will look a lot like an enhanced flow chart - descriptions of mental imagery joined with the summary of your objectives.

A lot of effort? Perhaps. But if you have no idea where you need to go, how will you ever know you’ve arrived?

**DEFINE A PERSPECTIVE**

You need to make a series of choices about your copy that will serve as writing guidelines. There are truly no right or wrong choices to make here, simply decisions. Each choice provides a framework for unifying your message and defining the boundaries that will allow you to make your point strong and clear. Once you’ve made a choice, honor the integrity of that perspective and stick with it. If you discover it’s the wrong choice for the project, then start afresh. Don’t vacillate between the perspectives.
Perspective No. 1: Intellect versus Emotion

Intellectual copy presents new information in an attempt to lead readers to a new conclusion. Emotional copy tells readers what they already know to be true, subtly inserting a new perspective that influences them to feel differently about the information. Before you put pen to paper, you must consciously choose whether your writing is going to appeal at an intellectual or emotional level.

Perspective No. 2: Then versus Now

The past tense speaks of what has already happened. The future tense speaks of what might happen. The present tense speaks of what is happening right now. There is a presence in the present tense; because it places the reader directly in the action, it most effectively engages the brain. But there are times when you need to evoke the experience of the past or the promise of the future. Consider which perspective will give your copy its greatest impact.

Perspective No. 3: Me, Them or You

First person perspective is that of the speaker: I am standing. Second person perspective is that of the reader: The copy starts with "You are standing in the snow, 5 ½ miles above sea level..." Third person perspective is that of the outsider: They are standing. In general, people tend to find first and third person perspectives less engaging. Second person perspective puts you right there in the action - you, the person you care most about. To your readers, it's them. When your goal is to persuade action, the "understood you" is extremely powerful: it's the imperative call to act ("Click here"); it's the avenue that will lead your readers to the richest, most satisfying mental imagery.

Perspective No. 4: Time versus Money

Business owners like to think their products or services are money-driven: "It has always been and it will always be about price." But it's only that way because we think about it that way, because advertising promotes products and services based on price. Yet these days, particularly in the United States, the customer is more often interested in saving time. There are probably a few exceptions to that. If your product saves both time and money, you have to make a choice of which to use in your copy.
Perspective No. 5: Style versus Substance

Are you going to sell style, or are you going to sell substance? It's an important choice. Here's a Rule of Thumb: If your product is mainly about style, you can promote it with style; if your product or the decision to buy the product is mainly about substance, then you'd better promote it with substance.

Do you remember Nissan's GI JoeTM, KenTM and BarbieTM advertisement? It constituted one of the most famous ad campaigns in the last 10 years. Unfortunately Nissan spent over two hundred million dollars on it, and sales actually went down. Very few people make the decision to invest $35,000 in a substance product like a car based solely on style. Nissan learned the hard way; now their ads focus on substance.

Perspective No. 6: Pain versus Gain

Will your copy appeal to your readers' fear of loss or their hope of gain? Experiments show when people are offered a choice between a guaranteed $3,000 or an 80% chance at $4,000, almost all people choose the sure thing. Hope of gain is motivating when there are no attendant risks. But there is something far more compelling in the fear of loss. However, speaking to pain, igniting the fear of loss, can be dangerous - it can conjure unpleasant mental images. If you choose this path, use it wisely.

Defining perspectives within your Web site requires a bit more constraint than defining perspectives in the various email campaigns you undertake. Particularly in email, where very often your goal is to nurture a long-term relationship with your customer, your messages would become predictable and boring if you always wrote with the same combination of choices.

Your goal is to develop strong, consistent copy that persuades, and you want to maximize the persuasive power of your copy appropriate to the actions you seek to motivate. Invariably, poor copy results when you find yourself halfway down the path before you ever decided which way you really meant to go.
You won’t snag or woo your customers with drabness; you'll woo them with skillful wordsmithing that penetrates their souls, captures their attention and speaks to them. It's nice to have an arsenal of techniques at your disposal that prevents you from writing the same thing the same way every time.

You can fill your shelves with books about writing - we won’t presume to recreate every option available to you. But we would like to pique your enthusiasm and get you thinking about how you can infuse your content and copy with appealing creativity.

All the ideas below challenge you to create writing that is memorable and persuasive, to think outside the boxes and color outside the lines. You are out to win the hearts and minds of people who are actively involved in the dynamic, interactive medium of online communication. And that won’t happen if your writing is lackluster.

Roy Williams suggests, "If you will illuminate the mind, win the heart, inspire the public, and change the world, steal a few moments each day to quietly walk the path of poetry." When we seek to persuade effectively, we should communicate a new perspective in an economy of words, and few do this better than the poet. "Poetry ... is about unusual combinations of unpredictable words that surprise Broca... gain the voluntary attention of the [reader and persuade him to feel the way we want him to feel]. It is about transferring a new perspective."

Frosting

Frosting, after Robert Frost, is one of the simplest techniques you can employ to bring light and life to otherwise dull writing. Take what you have written, "and without changing the message structurally, replace all the common, predictable phrases with unexpected, interesting ones." Make word combinations that bring very bright, vivid and unforgettable images to mind.

**To Frost:** Replace common, predictable phrases with unexpected, colorful ones.
Frost could have written:

There are things that can ruin a wall
Like freezing
Which makes the top rocks of the wall fall down
So even two people together can walk through the holes.

Instead, personifying freezing and choosing more unusual words, he wrote:

Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,
That sends the frozen ground swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.²¹

Franking

Franking, derived from the photographic style of Robert Frank, requires you to select your details sparingly and use them suggestively rather than blatantly. The critical element in Franking is to choose an unexpected perspective from which you reveal your message, an angle that puts your reader directly in the scene.

When photographing an opera, Frank eschewed the conventional "photo op" locations and took his pictures from the orchestra pit. As the viewer, you are drawn into the thick of the experience and presented with a far more compelling interpretation of a predictable event that engages your interest and excites your imagination. So what intriguing vantage points can you come up with?

To Frank: Write accurately, select which details to include and which to omit, view the subject from an unusual angle.

SINGLE BLACK FEMALE...

Seeks male companionship, ethnicity unimportant. I’m a svelte good looking girl who LOVES to play. I love long walks in the woods, riding in your pickup truck, hunting, camping, and fishing trips, cozy winter nights lying by the fire. Candlelight dinners will have me eating out of your hand. Rub me the right way and watch me respond. I’ll be at the front door when you get home from work, wearing only what nature gave me. Kiss me and I’m yours. Call xxx-xxxx and ask for Daisy.
Seussing

Seussing, named for the mischievous and whimsical Dr. Seuss, engages your reader by demanding first the attention of the illogical, nonjudgmental right brain before conquering the rational left hemisphere of the brain. It emphasizes verbs over nouns and adjectives, and uses unofficial, fanciful words - the reader instinctively knows their meaning, even though he has never heard them before. It's not to be overused; "like pepper sauce ... a tiny bit adds zip to even the blandest of dishes." But used judiciously, it can make your copy leap off the page and settle delightfully in your prospect's brain.

Another writing technique everyone associates with Dr. Seuss is the use of meter. When words generate their own "beat," they very often become more appealing and very memorable - the right brain quickly latches on to them and pays attention. Meter makes your words seem that much more musical. While Dr. Seuss employed different meters in his writing, he most frequently used the anapest, a rolling meter with a soft-soft-hard rhythm (the accented syllables appear in bolding):

On the end of a rope he lets down a tin pail
And you have to toss in fifteen cents and a nail
And the shell of a great-great-great grandfather snail

To Seuss: Invent new words that the reader intuitively understands the meaning of; use meter.

Being Monet

In 1869 Monet was painting at La Grenouillere when he realized shadows are not just black or brown, but are influenced by their surrounding colors. He further realized the color of an object is modified by the light in which it is seen, by reflections from other objects and by contrast with juxtaposed colors.

Likewise the meaning of the word is influenced by the surrounding words; that's what Frosting is all about. The color of a word is modified by the light in which it is seen, by reflections from words near it.
and by contrast with words juxtaposed to it. The meaning of a word changes entirely depending upon the words along side it, and depending upon the context in which it is used. Being Monet is to write impressionistically rather than accurately; it’s also to use poetic exaggeration and overstatement. You don’t have to be accurate to tell the truth; the truth is bigger than the facts. To be Monet is to select emotional words according to the intensity of their associations or colors.

To Monet: Write impressionistically; exaggerate and overstate; choose emotional words for their associations; remove the black words.

A note takes flight, makes to soar sonorous and pure,  
the voice of light fashioning ambiance for the soul.  
Another and another lift with grace into being,  
blending, merging  
until voices  
contrapuntal, polyphonic, in cadence antique  
etch traces of modal musical lace across the landscape of reason.

Music from the Middle Ages
Experience a renaissance.
LadyFingers

Frameline Magnetism

Frameline Magnetism is a technique you often see in visual images - it excites the imagination by asking the viewer to fill in what is not pictured. Pictures have framelines, edges that define the boundaries of the scene. When an object is cropped against the frameline - when a portion of the object is missing from the scene - the imagination fills in the missing parts. The same captivating technique can be used verbally.

Spider, Spider on the wall.  
Ain't you got no smarts at all?  
Don't you know that wall's fresh plastered?  
Get off that wall, you dirty ... spider.24

Left unsaid or unwritten, the missing word is yet communicated. And what is missing lodges that much more memorably in your reader's mind.
Focus on Verbs

You pack punch in your writing not with nouns or adjectives or adverbs, but with verbs. Nothing engages or moves your reader like a good verb. Many times, choosing the right word comes down to choosing a verb, or one of its grammatical forms.

"The verb is the heartthrob of a sentence," says Karen Elizabeth Gordon in The Transitive Vampire, while Strunk and White, in Elements of Style instruct, "Write with nouns and verbs, not with adjectives and adverbs. The adjective hasn't been built that can pull a weak or inaccurate noun out of a tight place [the same can be said of adverbs for verbs]. ... It is nouns and verbs that give to good writing its toughness and character."

One of the most important verb issues you will work with is voice. There are two voices: active and passive. Active voice emphasizes the subject, the agent of the action; passive voice shifts the focus to what is happening, the action itself. As a general rule of thumb, when you want to inspire confidence and motivate someone to take action, you want to use the active voice.

- **Passive**: The mail was delivered in a timely fashion. ("by someone" is implicit, but not stated.)
- **Active**: The postman delivered the mail in a timely fashion.

- **Passive**: The stew was being gobbled by the ravenous crone. ("by someone" is the crone)
- **Active**: The ravenous crone gobbled the stew.

Passive voice has its uses - it is exceptionally good at helping you set a particular mood. But for most sales purposes, it is wordy, vague and distances your customer, very often just when you want to draw them in.

Compare these two descriptions:

- **Passive Description**: Once the button has been clicked, the order is generated immediately and an e-mail confirmation will be sent automatically to you.

- **Active Description**: When you click the button, we immediately generate your order and automatically send you an e-mail confirmation.
See the difference? Feel the difference? The first description is wordier, vague and requires the customer to make some assumptions - who's clicking, who's generating, who's sending. It feels shifty, as if it might actually be lying to you. In contrast, the active description is short and sweet. You do this and we'll do that. Ta-dah! There's comfort in the active voice. You can trust the active voice. It gets things done. It makes promises that don't sound wishy-washy. It's the voice of accountability!

Now think about this:

**Passive Description:** The Sonic Drill can be used to make holes up to two inches deep and one inch in diameter using the accessory kit that is packaged in the set. Expanded possibilities are made available through additional attachments that can be purchased separately.

**Active Description:** The Sonic Drill has everything you need to make perfect holes up to two inches deep and one inch in diameter, quickly and easily. We also stock accessories that make it a snap for you to expand your possibilities.

The active description involves your customer and puts her inside the activity. The passive description requires her to work hard to make the product relevant to her. More than that, it simply sounds too pompous to be appealing. One of the greatest attributes of the active voice is that it embraces the individual. And when you can get your customers imagining your words are speaking directly to them, you have their emotional attention and involvement. They are engaged. They are with you in spirit. You are that much closer to persuading them to take action.

Verbs help you out in other ways. Screen space is always at a premium, and good writing doesn't come cheap. Every word costs you something, so you want to make the most of every word you use. Writing with verbs not only gives you a stronger verbal effect, it can often save you space.

**Sample 1:** I went slowly along the sandy shore. The small, cold waves lazily came on in long, thin fingers of white foam. The sky was slate-gray and blew a thin, humid wind reticently toward the dark beach. (36 words)
Sample 2: I crept close to the shore. The waves limped in and collapsed in dying fingers of foam. The sky brooded, darkened, then persuaded the reticent wind toward the beach. (29 words)

Now read the two samples aloud. Listen to how your voice sounds as you read them. Feel a difference? Do you think one delivers more punch?

Sample 1 feels slow, dull and plodding ... too many modifiers. Sample 2 is crisper, more compelling, more exciting. Not only do verbs and their associated forms generate motion, they also convey character: creeping, limping, collapsing, dying ... all create a strong mental image and mood - mandatory for effective writing. Sample 1 created its mood with ten adjectives and three adverbs; Sample 2 used only two adjectives (and one of those a verb form) and no adverbs, yet achieved a more powerful result.

Mood. Verbs can help communicate meaning and quality in a sentence without bogging down the language with unnecessary modifiers.

We go to the store.

We trudge to the store.

In both sentences, we arrive at the same place (and in the same number of words), but the second example gives you a much better idea of how we'll get there and what mood we're in.

Verbs as Adjectives. Folks have grammar nightmares when someone mentions participles, but a participle is nothing more than a verb used as an adjective (a word that modifies a noun).

Vanquished by his foe, the commander knelt on the ground.
(vanquished commander)

Dripping with rain, the mouse scurried under a toadstool.
(dripping mouse)

The surrendered document lay on the table.
(surrendered document)

Verbs as Nouns. Ditto the nightmare stuff when it comes to gerunds, but gerunds are just verbs with -ing endings that work as nouns.
Giving is better than receiving.

His fear is losing control.

She adores listening to bagpipes.

In all their incarnations, verbs breathe essence and vitality into your writing. By their very nature, they are action-oriented and quickly draw your reader into a powerful mental universe of activity, sound and feeling. They also pull your reader through the text. Verbs are like seductresses with come-hither gestures! Use them well, and you will help keep your reader hooked.

**Use Alliteration**

Alliteration is the technique of using the same letter (or sound - "ph" sounds like "f") at the beginning of each word in a series. Used sparingly, particularly in subject lines and headings, it can be a clever strategy to capture your reader's attention. A newsletter from an online company specializing in products for people with curly hair created this subject line for one of their newsletters:

*Freedom from February's Frizzies*  

**Use Repetition**

You can often make a point succinctly and dramatically by using (but not overusing) repetition. It worked very nicely in the television advertisement that went: "This is your brain. This is your brain on drugs."

Repetition of imperative verbs can keep calling the reader back to the main activity, as in this example:

*See the cleaner lift out stains.*  
*See the reds get redder, the blues bluer.*  
*See how, without soap or foam ...*  
*See the spick-and-span result.*  

**Develop a Pace**

Powerful writing matches its pace to the feeling it intends to create. To inspire an excited, fast-moving feeling in your reader, use punctuation sparingly, and impart motion through the use of action verbs and
short, rolling words. If you want to convey a relaxed and sleepy feel, a sense of rest or moodiness, lengthen your sentences, use abundant punctuation, descriptives, and pay very close attention to detail.

*Your pulse races, hands clenching your ticket as she comes flying into the homestretch. Whispering a prayer, you watch her cross the line. A photo finish. Too close to call. Eternal silence. Bated breath. The announcement crackles in your ear. She lost. By a nose.*

How do you feel? Breathing just a bit shallower?

*Your fingers finally uncramp and ease their vise grip on damp paper, a palpable weight in your open palm, the embodiment of hope that has become failed dream. You shred precisely, with contempt, then surrender the useless burden, and the tatters flutter like betrayal to the stained concrete at your feet, no longer distinguishable in their promise from crumpled candy wrappers and empty plastic cups.*

Now how do you feel? Can you see the palm opening in slow motion, ticket fragments falling like decayed petals? Can you sense the despair?

**Develop a Rhythm**

Rhythm is essentially an alternating recurrence of similar elements. Songs have rhythm; jokes have rhythm in their timing and delivery. Good writing has rhythm that is revealed in the variation of sentence length. When you write sentences that are all the same length, your writing develops a plodding predictability. To avoid this, mix up your sentence lengths: a short sentence, a long sentence, a medium sentence, then another short sentence. This sentence will carry some impact, because the reader wasn’t expecting it. Another short sentence might reinforce the impact. Then a long one. Give your reader the experience of rhythm in variety.

Interestingly, there is a "rhythm in three." When you incorporate a series of things into a sentence, three seems to be the magic number. It has a nice rhythm. "We load up the car, roll down the windows and head out into the day."29
Use Poetic Meter

You create both rhythm and a pace that pulls your reader through your copy - and helps improve the memorability of your copy - when you employ poetic meter. Poetic meter is simply the arrangement of words in a repeating pattern of accented and unaccented syllables; the traditional forms of poetic meter are the iamb, the trochee, the anapest and the dactyl.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poetic Meter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mnemonic Device</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The iamb saunters through my book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trochees rush and tumble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While the anapest rolls like a babbling brook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dactyls are stately and classical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meter Name</th>
<th>Meter Form (/ indicates stress)</th>
<th>Example (bolding indicates stress)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iamb</td>
<td>u /</td>
<td>The <strong>iamb saunters through</strong> my book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trochee</td>
<td>/ u</td>
<td>Trochees <strong>rush and tumble</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anapest</td>
<td>u u /</td>
<td>While the <strong>anapest rolls</strong> like a babbling brook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dactyl</td>
<td>/ u u</td>
<td>Dactyls are <strong>stately and classical</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The iamb is considered the meter most natural to speech - many passages in Shakespeare's plays are composed in iambic pentameter (five iambs per line) - and many sonnet forms employ iambic meter.

*Shall I *compare thee to a *summer's day?*
*Thou art more lovely and more temperate.*

Dr. Seuss played magnificently with meter. The earlier example (under Seussing) is written using captivating anapests. The example below uses trochees.
One fish, two fish, red fish, blue fish

Advertising has long taken advantage of the “catchiness” of meter, and the propensity people have for better remembering copy that effectively uses meter.

Winston tastes good like a cigarette should™

Despite the questionable grammar and suitability of cigarettes, the phrase (coupled with a catchy melody), composed of three dactyls and a concluding strong syllable, stuck.

Melts in your mouth, not in your hand™

You needn’t confine yourself to established metric conventions. The M&Ms slogan doesn’t really fit the traditional patterns of poetic meter, but the two phrases are mirrors of accented and unaccented syllables.

Punctuate Intentionally

You want to establish a relationship with your readers; you want them to recognize you as an individual, you want them to be able to sense what you are relating to them.

Therefore, it can be advantageous to develop, and stick to, a standard system of punctuation that has your own personal signature. For example, use commas for brief pauses in speech, ellipses (…) for longer, but still connected pauses, and periods as separating hard stops. Whatever you do, stay consistent and communicate so the reader knows you are the one talking and knows your intentions.

Let’s take the former example we used in our discussion of pace and write it this way:

Your pulse races ... your hand clenches your ticket ... she comes flying into the homestretch. You whisper a prayer ... she crosses the line ... a photo finish ... too close to call ... eternal silence ... bated breath. The announcement crackles in your ear. She lost by a nose.

Feel different? Time is just as collapsed as it was in our earlier example, but it is presented in a fluid way - now you can visualize the event in a softer focus. The montage isn’t as stop-and-go; instead it almost flows with a strange quality of suspended motion that is at odds with
the obvious speed of what is happening. And simply by changing the punctuation (and a few words). Then, the finality of the event is acknowledged and reflected in the last two sentences: two hard stops.

We wouldn’t recommend doing this all over the place - folks lose patience when anything is over-used. But do you see how the identities of these passages differ?

Show, Don’t Tell

Be patient, have faith in your ability to put together a credible reality in your reader’s mind. Instead of saying "This car is the fastest sports car on the market today," make the reader experience the feeling of maneuvering it ... the cold sensation of the door handle, the whoosh of the leather seats when she jumps in, the roaring of the engine when turned on, the tight turns that satisfy, the way she gets "pushed" against the seat every time her foot touches the accelerator, the tremble of the gear stick in her hand as she prepares for the next shift, the way she attends to the sounds of acceleration, listening for that precise moment when the engine will sing, "Now ... take me to the next level."

Engage the Senses

To hold the attention of your readers, use shapes, colors, and names of things to which they can easily relate and to which they can attach strong, clear mental images. Though distinct to each person, these images do require everyone’s active involvement. Mental images are composed of all senses; therefore words like "sweet", "bright", and "smooth" enhance their "visibility". By strengthening your mental images, you’ll haul your readers to the places you want them to go.

Be Specific

Specifics are more believable than generalities, and specifics about your products or services are far superior to generalities (or even specifics) about you. Authors of every genre tend to gain your willing suspension of disbelief by means of details. It takes careful attention to describe accurately things you want people to imagine in a certain way. Make each point very clearly; give your readers the respect they deserve as you captivate them by making powerful, relevant, and specific statements about stuff that matters to them - not you - every opportunity you get.
Make it Irresistible

Remember watching a Seinfeld episode, glued to the TV, following several unrelated stories that finally converge into a hilarious, unpredictable, grand finale? It’s a kind of template some of the most memorable TV shows have tapped into: a single episode weaves together multiple storylines that eventually connect at the climax. You can tap into this magic as well - it's particularly effective when developed through an email campaign. Alternate between several storylines, lay false trails, add a bit of mystery by withholding some information until the very end of your message. Have your readers need to read what you have to say.

Communicate Emotions and Feelings

People make buying decisions based on feelings. Therefore, it is essential that your reader fully realize the feelings you mean to communicate so she can properly translate throughout your message. Once you have chosen the appropriate emotion to evoke, think of words and phrases you associate with it and incorporate these into your writing. This way you won't just paint pictures, you'll give rides.

Be Provocative

Make your message straightforward enough so receivers are inclined to read it and provocative enough that they choose to read it again. The secret is high Impact Quotient, that is, your message's power not only to convince, but also to enlarge and impress. Readers go back and read the words again when they realize you're writing about something much bigger than they originally suspected. The thought that they have missed "something huge" draws them back to the beginning for a second read. Read a thing twice - even in one sitting - and you've read it twice. You have just doubled the message's frequency.

Be Audacious

Audacity leverages the power of the unexpected. Audacious statements have far more impact than those that are "predictable." Are you avoiding audacity for fear you might offend someone? Are your readers reaching for tissues because you bore them to tears? Go ahead; take a chance worth taking.
Customatix, a customized athletic shoe business, welcomed new accounts with a little audacity:

*Well, you've gone and done it now. By opening a Customatix account, you've just changed the way you're going to buy athletic shoes forever. Be careful. The surgeon general reports that designing your own cool athletic shoes can be highly addictive.*

**Think Symbolically**

Symbolic thought bridges left-brain and right, the literal to the figurative, concrete realities to abstract concepts. It communicates ideas in such a way that massive, right-brain concepts can be glimpsed on the left-brain's little black & white screen.

Symbolic thought is rich and exciting, satisfying both hemispheres of the brain. It is extremely useful when you try to communicate difficult concepts, and encourages the reader to consider things from different perspectives.

You communicate symbolically when you write in similes and metaphors. A simile is a figure of speech that creates a comparison between two essentially dissimilar things, often introduced with the words "like" or "as." "Cheeks like roses," "lips like wine" and "fog as thick as pea soup" are all similes. The comparison is the reference for the simile.

While there is also a suggestion of likeness between two things in a metaphor, this figure of speech is a bit more complex. In a metaphor, one thing is conceived as representing another thing: a symbol. More broadly, metaphors are "figurative." The example below is rich in metaphor.

**Wings**

_Some only dream of flying_  
_They say you need wings to fly_  
_I say, I have wings_  
_But they can't hear me_  
_I am already there_  
_And the wind is screaming words with me_  
_But I am not dreaming_  
_They say I wish I had wings_  
_I say, you do have wings_  
_The question is: Where are you hiding them?_
A young girl named Piper Loyd wrote this poem and Nike used it in a television ad for shoes - simple copy read against a montage of images. Not the sort of text you might think of juxtaposing with shoes. As a piece of promotional copy, it was brilliant: phenomenally memorable, persuasive, emotional, provocative, audacious, symbolic!

*Copy Length*

There is a lot of discussion about the length of your copy, and if you believe everything you read, you would only ever generate very short copy. The consensus appears to be that those who read online can’t be bothered to read lengthy content or emails, and that long emails, in particular, negatively affect your conversion rates.

Surprisingly, though, shorter copy is not always the better choice.

One consumer software marketer learned this by testing three different sets of copy in an email campaign: A) a tried-and-true version of about three very brief paragraphs; B) a slightly longer version, at about three-quarters of a printed page, that expanded on the offer details; and C) a one-and-a-half-page version that went into more detail on the offer, products, and company.

All three were mailed at the same time in straight text to three equal-sized segments (50,000 names) of the house list. The winner? C. Although it was substantially longer, it garnered a 7.5 percent click-through rate and a 4 percent conversion rate. B placed second with just under 6 percent and 3 percent, respectively.

If you short-change your copy - bleed it of its persuasive power - you can do serious damage to your conversion rates.

All things being equal, short copy is better. We’ve heard it’s possible to make almost any point in 500 words or fewer. We are not suggesting this is a rule to which you must adhere, but it does highlight the challenge of writing well and working some editorial magic. Because if you can say exactly the same thing in fewer words - accomplishing exactly the same goal - that’s a very good thing indeed.

But saying less than what needs to be said, just because you’ve been told copy must be short, is not a good thing. Beware the difference!

You don’t want to blather ad nauseum; neither do you want to short change the job. In deciding how much you should say in any situation,
be guided by what you need to say to accomplish your goals and meet your customers’ needs. Back when the majority of copywriters were men, there was a saying: your copy should be like a woman’s skirt - long enough to cover the essentials, but short enough to be interesting.

Your subject and choice of approach determines how long your copy should be. Just remember that copy needn’t be short to be effective. It should be as long as it needs to be - not a word more nor less. The key to writing persuasively and with relevance is to use your imagination in an appealing, different way - a way that jogs the reader from complacency and captures attention. You’re not just hawking your wares, you are communicating magic.

WRITING “BASIC” WITH A GLOBAL REACH

English happens to be the language used by about 80% of all Web sites. We’ve read somewhere it could be Chinese by the year 2007.

But for now, the lingua franca is English. So what do you do if your business has a more global reach, and you have to make sense to non-native readers of English? You write basic!

Now, we make no bones about it. We do not generally write basic English, particularly in our newsletter, Grokdotcom. You get us as we are. And that’s a perfectly acceptable model - you’ve got to figure you’re never going to appeal to all the folks all the time no matter what you do. Sometimes you choose to "target" your writing.

But some of you out there must communicate effectively on your Web site and in your emails with those for whom English is a second language (ESL). So here’s what you do:

**Use Short Sentences**

Fifteen to 20 words - and 20 words puts you close to the danger zone. Writing concise, direct sentences is most of the battle.

**Use Simple Sentence Constructions**

Subject - verb - object (if any), followed by any extra information. You start confusing folks when you insert lots of phrases between the core elements of a sentence.
Use the Active Voice

When you use passive verbs, you risk making your meaning ambiguous.

Avoid "Phrasal" and "Modal Auxiliary" Verbs

Phrasal verbs combine two or more words, as in: call up, pull in, pick away at and put down. English has about 3000 of these constructions, and they confuse non-native speakers of the language. So choose a one-word verb that says the same thing.

Modal auxiliary verbs include should, could, can, would, might and may.

A representative should contact you within 48 hours.

Does this mean he will, he might not, he has a moral obligation to or that it could take longer than 48 hours? Native English readers understand these words based on context. They usually perplex ESL readers.

Use pronouns clearly

Notice the last two sentences in the previous section. The "they" in the last sentence refers to a noun in the previous sentence, but which one? Words? Native English "readers"? Or did we make a grammatical mistake and refer in the plural to "context"? See what we mean?

Use Simple, Common Words with Clear Meanings

Use Positive Language

Stay away from negative constructions (which can be hard to translate) and negative images (which are depressing and can be insulting). "Don't you just hate it when ..." is a negative construction (don't) with a negative image (hate). Double negatives (as in "not uncommon") are doubly troublesome.
Avoid Idioms, Clichés and Slang

We wrote "make no bones about it." Can you imagine what that means to this audience? Nothing.

Proof Very Carefully

Writing that is grammatically correct and free of typos is enormously important with this audience! These folks are generally good with English grammar and if you break the rules, you risk confusing them at best and damaging your credibility at worst.

Get Some Help

If you know people who speak English as a second language, ask them to read your copy for clarity and to help you identify potentially offensive language. This is especially important if you are using humor.

If you want to study a good model for International English, pick up a copy of the Herald Tribune, a newspaper that writes in English for a global audience.

WRITING FOR PERSONALITIES

From Hippocrates through Jung to Keirsey and beyond, humans have been trying to fathom the dimensions of personality. In the most general scheme of categorization, we’ve learned that each of the millions of different personalities fall into one of four main groups, which we label as Driver, Amiable, Expressive and Analytical.

It doesn't really matter what you call them. Thing is, you need to become intimately acquainted with these personalities. They are your Web site's visitors. And once you know who they are, you've got the inside track on how you shape your writing to persuade them most effectively.

At the most fundamental level, all people are motivated by a single, critical question: What's In It For Me (WIIFM)? Their dominant personality types strongly influence how they ask that question, perceive value and, consciously - or more typically, subconsciously - approach a decision-making task.
One of your most important objectives is to communicate consistently with each of the four main personality types, so your prospects can "self serve" the information they require to influence their buying decision from the "buffet" of information you provide on your site and in your emails. It is important not only to give people what they want and need, but to give it to them through words that are designed to appeal to them.

On to the introductions! For each personality, we'll give you a general profile, then some specific comments that include the dominant attitude that characterizes this personality, how this personality type typically uses time, the question this personality type is most likely to ask about your product or service and how you should strive to meet the needs of this personality type. Finally, we present sample copy - same copy for each profile, but italics and underlining indicate the language that will appeal most to the personality type.

**Methodical**

Methodical types need to be prepared and organized to act. For them, task completion is its own reward. These individuals appreciate facts, hard data and information presented in a logical manner as documentation of truth. They enjoy organization and completion of detailed tasks. They do not appreciate the “personal touch,” and they abhor disorganization. They fear negative surprises and irresponsibility above all. Those who are Methodical have a strong internal frame of reference. They prefer to think and speak about details and specifics. They compare everything to a standard ideal and look for mismatches (what’s wrong or what’s missing.)

**Attitude:** Businesslike, detail oriented  
**Using Time:** Disciplined, methodically paced  
**Question:** How can your solution solve this problem?  
**Approach:** Provide hard evidence and superior service

**Sample Copy:** Our approach is timed to meet your objectives. The bottom line is that your results are guaranteed. *Explore our methodology* to discover how thousands of clients just like you have been delighted.

**Representatives:** C3PO in Star Wars, Dr. Carrie Weaver on ER, Linus from Peanuts, Eeyore from Winnie the Pooh, Main Street USA in Disney’s Magic Kingdom
Spontaneous

Spontaneous types must live in the moment. Their sensing preference makes them most grounded in the immediate world of the senses. This, coupled with their perceiving preference, helps them to remain poised and present in any situation. They are available, flexible and engaged in a personal quest for action and impact, which defines who they are. For the Spontaneous, integrity means the unity of impulse with action. These individuals appreciate the personalized touch, are in search of new and exciting experiences. They dislike dealing with traditional details, and are usually quick to reach a decision. They fear “missing out” on whatever life has offer.

**Attitude:** Personal, activity oriented  
**Using Time:** Spontaneous, fast paced  
**Question:** Why is your solution best to solve the problem now?  
**Approach:** Address immediate needs with relevant credible options

**Sample Copy:** *Our approach is timed to meet your objectives.* The bottom line is that your results are guaranteed. Explore our methodology to discover how thousands of clients just like you have been delighted.

**Representatives:** Hans Solo in Star Wars, Vivian Ward in Pretty Woman, Snoopy in Peanuts, Tigger in Winnie the Pooh, Adventureland in Disney’s Magic Kingdom

Humanistic

Humanistic types have a tendency to put others’ needs before their own and are often uncomfortable accepting gifts or allowing others to do anything for them. They are very creative and entertaining. They enjoy helping others and highly value the quality of relationships. They are usually slow to reach a decision. They fear separation. Those who are Humanistic are good listeners and are generally willing to lend a sympathetic ear. They focus on acceptance, freedom and helping. They generally prefer the big picture. They greatly value human development, including their own.

**Attitude:** Personal, relationship oriented  
**Using Time:** Open-ended, slow paced  
**Question:** Who has used your solution to solve my problem?  
**Approach:** Offer testimonials and incentives
Sample Copy: Our approach is timed to meet your objectives. The bottom line is that your results are guaranteed. Explore our methodology to *discover how thousands of clients just like you have been delighted*.


**Competitive**

Competitive types seek competence in themselves and others. They want to understand and control life. Driven by curiosity, a Competitive is often preoccupied with learning and has a deep appreciation for challenges. They enjoy being in control, are goal-oriented and are looking for methods for completing tasks. Once their vision is clear, they usually reach decisions quickly. They fear loss of control. Those who are Competitive are highly motivated, success- and goal-oriented, hard working, image conscious, good planners and good at promoting their ideas. They are able to subordinate their present needs to develop future success. They can be intense, very persuasive about getting their own way, and are particularly irritated by inefficiency.

**Attitude:** Businesslike, power oriented  
**Using Time:** Disciplined, strategically paced  
**Question:** What can your solution do for me?  
**Approach:** Provide rational options, probabilities and challenges

Sample Copy: Our approach is timed to meet your objectives. *The bottom line is that your results are guaranteed*. Explore our methodology to discover how thousands of clients just like you have been delighted.

Representatives: Yoda and Princess Lea in Star Wars, Lucy in Peanuts, Rabbit in Winnie the Pooh, Tomorrowland in Disney's Magic Kingdom.

*The Questions They Ask*

Different modes are likely to lead with different types of questions, which reflect their information priorities and the pace of their deliberations.
Those who are Methodical focus on language that answers HOW questions.

- What are the details?
- What’s the fine print?
- How does this work?
- What’s the process you use?
- Can you take me through this step-by-step?
- How can I plan ahead?
- What are the product specs?
- What proof do you have?
- Can you guarantee that?

Those who are Spontaneous focus on language that combines WHY (and sometimes WHEN) questions.

- How can you get me to what I need quickly?
- Do you offer superior service?
- Can I customize your product or service?
- Can you help me narrow down my choices?
- How quickly can I take action and achieve my goals?
- How will this let me enjoy life more?

Those who are Humanistic focus on language that answers WHO questions.

- How will your product or service make me feel?
- Who uses your products/service?
- Who are you? Tell me who is on your staff, and let me see bios
• What will it feel like to work with you?

• What experience have others had with you?

• Can I trust you?

• What are your values?

• How will this help me strengthen relationships?

Those who are Competitive focus on language that answers WHAT questions.

• What are your competitive advantages?

• Why are you a superior choice?

• Are you a credible company?

• How can you help me be more productive?

• How can you help make me look cutting edge?

• What are your credentials?

• What is your research?

• How can you help me achieve my goals?

To a greater or lesser degree, depending on the flow of your conversion process, the content and copy on all of your pages needs to speak in these four ways.

Now, a few closing caveats. Humans are amazingly complex creatures, and any classification attempt is a simplification of this complexity. On top of that, no one person is all one personality type. Each of us is a delightful mixture - one type may predominate, but others come into play, often influenced by environmental factors, social factors, even ephemeral moods. So, even though you may know for a fact that 72 percent of your visitors are Analyticals, that doesn't mean you can write solely to the analytical profile. And it's a big reason why we encourage clients to create multiple but interlinking paths in which their visitors can "self-serve" the customer experience they prefer. After all, the Amiable might follow a path that is primarily why-oriented, then
decide that to feel completely comfortable taking action, he requires some how-oriented information.

Also, consider the nature of the products or services you offer. Pure impulse-buying is going to appeal most to the friendly, impulsive Amiables.

A site selling engineering equipment is going to attract more Analyticals than Expressives ... and even if an Expressive engineer requires the product, his job requires that he be concerned with a logical, orderly, precise and features-attentive approach.

And if you run an online dating service, no matter how Analytical or Assertive your visitor, she is likely to approach this service in a more Expressive state of mind.

Understanding these profiles allows you to create multiple navigation paths that will be much more meaningful and satisfying to the people who come to your site, because they will appear tailored to their needs.

And when you line these paths with intentional copy that appeals to the different qualities people value and the various ways in which they interact with the world, you will be speaking far more persuasively to each and every one of your visitors.

**WRITING IN REVIEW**

We've discussed the context of many of these issues. Let's just run through them now, individually, so you can be certain you've covered the basics.

Within the context of the style you have chosen - potentially a very evocative style - are you grammatically and syntactically consistent? You don't have to write in complete sentences. You don't have to use standard punctuation. But it always helps to know how grammar and syntax should be handled, even as you stray from the straight and narrow. And no matter whether you seek to create a more flamboyant impression or write within the confines of corporate tradition, many of your readers will find you less credible and less convincing when you abuse spelling and tense agreement.

If you or your copywriters have been doing your homework, you'll have a pretty good idea how people are talking about businesses, products
and services similar to yours. Find ways to echo these styles in your message, from "inflection" to vocabulary choices. You will be much more likely to make positive connections with your audience when you speak to them as they tend to speak.

Always make sure the words and style you adopt are appropriate to the context of your relationship with your readers. Our friend, The Grok, can get away with greeting his readers as "dudes and dudettes," but if you are a loan and finance company or a supplier of serious medical equipment, this might not be in your best interest.

There was a time when people may have expected communications from businesses to individuals to be very formal and proper. And while there may be places where the "Dear Sir or Madam; We deeply regret to inform you that despite our best efforts we have been unable to procure the item you desired" approach might still work, it generally isn't online. Stiff, formal writing feels aloof and distances your reader. Even if formal is necessarily the name of your game, find ways to humanize the tone.

You may reach a phenomenal number of people each month through your online efforts. But when you compose your content and copy, you write as if your only purpose was communication from one individual to one individual: speaker to reader. Nobody wants to feel she is simply a nameless face in the crowd or the online version of "current resident." People don't develop relationships with entities. And when they buy, they much prefer to think they are buying from someone who cares about them, someone who is going to look after their needs.

As you write, picture a specific person. Give that person a character and qualities to which you can relate. Then write to that person, just as you would speak to that person if you were face-to-face. It’s interesting to consider that the writing contained in personal letters is often the most engaging writing you can read.

You as an individual and a business have a unique voice, a personality with facets. Use these, embellish upon the conventional. If you sound like everyone else, and always sound like everyone else, you are not exactly going to stand out and get noticed.

Keep your writing fresh, unique. Don't overuse clichés, unless you have a specific reason for using them, and don't fall prey to adopting the language that peppers unsolicited commercial mail - particularly in the subject lines of your emails! To confer the broadest appeal on your
writing, don’t litter it with jargon or insider-speak that may be unfamiliar to some of your readers. If you absolutely must use technology-specific terminology, make it accessible to the lay reader, and pay attention to incorporating the benefits inherent in the features.

Use the passive voice only if you have the perfect application for it. Otherwise, keep your writing voice in the active tense. Your reader should never have to wonder at the implied agent of action. Active voice is much more immediate, more economical in the number of words it uses and inspires confidence.

Skillful use of verbs gives your writing motion, energy and makes it appealing. The verbs you use in your calls to action should be imperatives (Click here, Add to Cart) paired with a clear benefit.

Your goal is to create strong, positive images that impress upon your readers’ minds, activate their imaginations and become memorable. Writing that is suggestive, impressionistic, and that eliminates the obvious encourages more active participation from your readers. Anytime you can get your readers imagining alongside you, you are much more likely to tap into the emotional realm that will persuade both their hearts and their minds.

We did mention earlier that it was important to choose between speaking to the very compelling fear of loss or the less compelling (and more often favored) hope of gain. There are certainly circumstances where fear of loss is the motivating reason for taking action, but if you take this perspective, you must tread the path carefully. Often it is more advantageous to speak to present gain and put the fear of loss in a reflective context. Dredging up distressing mental images is risky; people tend to discard or ignore negativity.

A person should feel fully immersed in the imagery you present. She should be able to place herself inside what is happening and imagine how she would be feeling. Verbs, a second person perspective and language that appeals to the senses are the keys. Remember that to take action, a person must be able to see herself taking that action. Once you have her thinking what it would be like to take a particular action, she is that much closer to doing so.

Stellar writing begs reading. There is an urgency to the writing that keeps the reader going, even when that reader might be pressed for time. If you can create a sense of drama and momentum in your writing, you stand a better chance of capturing more of your reader's share of mind.
THE MAGIC TOUCH OF EDITING

I'm unable to judge my own work and I don't see how any copywriter can.

DAVID OGILVY

You are never done writing. Once you've written, there is the urge to refine. And refine again. Writing can always be improved, but the writer, by virtue of having created the copy, suffers from Inside-the-Bottle Syndrome and sometimes has difficulty reading the label. It's hard to be objective when you've poured yourself into the words.

This is where a good editor makes all the difference. More than simply proofing the copy, an editor can offer the objectivity and skill that turns good writing into brilliant writing. Ego is an unproductive factor in the equation - no matter who is involved in the process, the collective goal is to achieve copy that works hard for you and performs well.

The editor's job is to refine the copy so the fewest words yield the greatest effect, all within the context of the writing style you have chosen. Here are some editorial tips you can use to help improve your copy:

• Look at 'that' words. People tend to overuse the word 'that.' They write "She said that she would come" when they could write "She said she would come." If your sentence makes sense without the 'that' word, exorcise it. One fewer word is a good thing.

• Edit for rhythm. All short, all long, no variation - this gets monotonous. It will bore your reader, who will then proceed to tune out you and your message via the delete or backspace button. Words, phrases, sentences, all have "sound" value; there is an inherent musicality to writing, and a pleasing rhythm will make your writing much stronger and more memorable.

• Consider combining sentences. If you string the same point across multiple sentences, see if you can combine them to make the point more strongly in fewer sentences.

• Remove unnecessary words. In writing, less very often is more. It makes what is there stand out more prominently. If you don't really need a word, take it out.

• Rearrange thoughts so they flow better. There is a logic to the
process you are asking your readers to engage in and your writing should reinforce that process. Step 1 usually comes before Step 2.33

Writing is a craft; it takes lots of time and lots of practice, and even then, there's always more to learn. Do what you can to tighten and shape your copy, then hand it over to a good editor. Not only will you find you have a better product, you will probably also learn how to improve your technique.

CASE STUDY: MAX-EFFECT BEFORE & AFTER

John Morana of MaxEffect34 designs ads for the Yellow Pages, and he is a veteran reader of GrokDotCom. He was already doing a number of things reasonably well on his site - in particular, his text was formatted for scanning and skimming, and it included text hyperlinks that appealed to different personality types. But several things were limiting him to one or two leads a week. One of these was the tone of his home page copy.

Old Copy

Eliminate Yellow Page Advertising Hassles Forever
... And watch your calls & sales SKYROCKET!
A Custom Designed Yellow Page Ad by MaxEffect Will:

• Maximize your readership, phone calls & sales 24 / 7 / 365
• Save you money... Using the most cost-effective sizes & colors
• Save you time... Minimizing YP sales rep calls & DIY struggles
• Eliminate Yellow Pages frustration, doubts & deadline worries
• Nullify your competitors... Letting you dominate your classification

Yellow Pages advertising is expensive, time-consuming and fiercely competitive. A new, custom-designed ad by MaxEffect will let you easily conquer your rivals and save you time, money and the aggravating headaches common with Yellow Pages advertising. Study the following Ad Samples, read a few Testimonials or review our Risk Free Guarantee. But whatever you do Place Your Order Now... before your competitors! MaxEffect clients have asked us, even PAID us, to NOT ACCEPT ORDERS from their competitors. They've learned something you absolutely MUST... A custom-
designed Yellow Page ad by MaxEffect is your most powerful weapon when doing battle in the Yellow Pages directory. Your new advertisement will reign supreme.

If you're determined to drive your Yellow Pages ROI to the absolute MAX, you need to Order MaxEffect Now.

As you read this slightly self-serving copy, notice the way the words speak to "pain" and focus heavily on negative associations: eliminate, hassles, minimize, struggles, frustration, doubts, worries, nullify, aggravating headaches, weapons, battle. And on top of everything else, "Yellow Pages advertising is expensive"!

New Copy

Maximize Your Investment!

Place Your Business under the Yellow Page Advertising Spotlight and Listen to Your Phone and Cash Register Sing! Dare to stand out within your Yellow Pages category! Then your potential customers will...

• Be drawn to your Yellow Page ad more strongly than anything else on the page.
• Be engaged by your ad so they read it entirely!
• Recognize that you are the solution to what they’re searching for.
• Call you, visit you & buy from you!

For just a onetime, low investment you get an express in-depth company evaluation, outstanding graphic design and persuasive creative messaging that will deliver immediate results.

Best of all, your new MaxEffect Yellow Page ad is 100% Guaranteed. Check out some happy clients’ ad samples and read about all the business we’ve generated for businesses like yours.

Contact us now to dramatically increase your sales opportunities!

This shorter revision is more to the point, more believable, completely benefit-oriented and puts everything in a positive light. The value proposition of “saving time and money” has become “making more money.” And while “Maximize Your Investment!” is possibly one of the biggest clichés in the book, it reinforces the business name, while the exclamation point echoes the logo. It works for John’s customers.
The other principal problem with John's copy centered on usability issues associated with the look and feel of the site.

The old home page was laid-out attractively, but the color choices made it almost impossible to quickly scan or skim the reverse-color grey type featured on a black background. You could argue it was an aesthetically pleasing color combination, but it played havoc on the reader's eyes.

John's Yellow Page ad designs really are distinctive, and he had a sample page of his work. But very few people could be bothered to get past this barbed-wire fence to discover John's skill.

To compliment the positive copy, John needed a positive look and feel, something that was usability-friendly for his copy and, again, didn't reinforce negativity.

The new home page is brighter, conveys energy and, most important, highlights the copy that is critical to John's conversion process: once you've focused on the central headline, you are quickly drawn to text that is benefit-rich and includes hyperlinks as internal calls to action.
With these changes in place, John went from 1 or 2 leads a week to 1 or 2 a day. He got more business than he could handle! So he hired someone to help. Recently, he raised his rates, hoping that would discourage some of the visitors to his Web site and help him catch up with his workload. It didn’t. What a problem to have!
THE EYES HAVE IT

You pick up a newspaper; your eyes go for the pictures first. So it should follow the same thing will happen when you sit in front of a computer screen, right?

Well, Stanford-Poynter Project researchers discovered that when folks read news online, their eyes went for text first, particularly captions and summaries, and graphics only later. Sometimes much later. Sometimes not at all. This made a lot of commercial writers happy. It also heralded a new phase of inquiry: how do folks scan Web sites for information?

Should you care about this stuff? If you know how folks gather information visually from their browser windows, you’ve got a powerful design tool you can use right now to support your mission of persuading your visitors to take the action you want.

When a user lands on a Web page, she gives the display a quick scan that starts in the top left of the window, moves quickly across the center to the right, then returns leftward, again crossing center. All this happens in seconds, without the user necessarily fixing her gaze until she reaches the center of the display as she’s coming back. It also usually happens without her being aware of it.

She’s on a preliminary scouting mission, an effort to quickly orient herself within the context of a page, before she makes the conscious effort to engage with the information.

How Can I Use This?

- Your logo should be one of the first elements the user encounters at the top of the page (so make sure it’s one of the first things that loads). This is your identity, and along with the url, lets your user know where she’s landed.
• Global navigation schemes work well here, as do in-site search features (if you use them) - they provide the preliminary assurance of general organization and can serve as back-up.

• Make sure your value proposition is clear and prominent.

Jared Spool’s User Interface Engineering group has discovered that a user’s gaze ultimately fixes in the center of the screen, then moves left, then right, a pattern of visual fixation that was true of both new and experienced users. A user fixed on areas other than the center only when she was looking for additional information. The team also found users pretty much ignored the bottom of the screen and seemed to interact peripherally with the right area (folks use their scroll bar without obviously looking at it!).

How Can I Use This?

• Clearly the center area of the screen is prime real estate, the “active window” where you will either succeed or fail in persuading your visitor. This is the first place your visitor makes a conscious effort to engage with you. When her gaze returns across the screen from its preliminary sortie, you want to make sure you present content and copy that will capture her interest and motivate her through the conversion process. If anything on the page distracts her or requires her to disconnect from the center area, she is that much less likely to stay rapt in your powers of persuasion. And if you’ve learned the Stanford-Poynter lesson, you’ll understand your words are much more important than your images.

• The left side of the screen can function as a “stabilizing window,” a place where people look for particular points of reference that can help them locate the items that suit their needs. Comprehensive navigation works well here.

• Even when they remain engaged in the central area, users peripherally attend to the right area. This becomes a valuable space to convey confidence through your assurances, guarantees and testimonials. Calls to Action do well here, too. Notice how Amazon has their Add to Shopping Cart and 1-Click action block in the top right, and below this is their Add to Wish List button. Because the user is peripherally aware of it, she knows it is there if and when she is ready to take that action.
Using this cool eye-tracking stuff, your general order of business is first to orient your visitor, then use your "active window" to keep her attention and persuade her to become a buyer (or subscriber, or whatever your goal is). The other graphic turf on your Web site is no less important to the overall effort, but your users are simply never going to give it the same visual priority.

If you know how folks scan, you have a template for placing things on your Web pages so your visitors will find a) what they are looking for, b) where they expect to find it, c) in the way that engages them best. Don't think of it as limiting your artistic freedom, think of it as knowledge you can use to meet your customers' needs and thereby increase your conversion rate!

**SET UP SCANNING AND SKIMMING SO THEY SEE**

You spent your time writing right. Not only is your text persuasive, but now you're ready to make sure your reader engages with your text on your Web page.

This, in many ways, is a usability issue.

So how helpful is it when the terms folks use for talking about usability stuff sound different, but seem to mean the same thing? Take scannability and skimmability.

"You mean there's a difference ... and I need to understand it?" you wonder.

You bet! If your visitors can't scan and skim your Web pages quickly and efficiently as soon as they first arrive, they aren't going to stick around to dig deeper. Not good.

Even though these two activities are related, they are distinct experiences in the usability equation and require separate treatment. If you lump scannability and skimmability together, chances are you're going to miss the Usability Boat.

Let's start with the dictionary definitions:39
Scan: To look over quickly and systematically (scan the horizon for signs of land), to leaf through hastily.

Skim: To give a quick and superficial reading, scrutiny, or consideration (skim the newspaper).

Can you see that they're similar but not quite the same? Both scanning and skimming are information-gathering activities, and humans perform them quickly, usually without thinking about them very much. But they don't work exactly the same way, and they don't serve exactly the same purpose.

Think of it this way: You're on the frontier of the wild and wooly west, and your trusty horse crests the hill. Before you is a vast expanse of territory. You don't know if there's danger out there. So you look around. A copse of trees to the left ... a lake in the distance ... a tendril of smoke drifting above a small rise ... a wooden fence close to you on the right with something on it. Your "scan" suggests things look pretty safe.

So you spur your horse to a trot and go to check out that "something" on the fence. It's a piece of paper nailed to a post. You approach. It's a "Wanted Dead or Alive" poster. You dismount and get a bit closer, and "skim" the contents, looking first for the most salient facts that will help you decide if you need to bother with the fine print. Maybe you've seen the guy. Maybe it's you!

See the difference between scanning and skimming? Now let's apply it to your Web site.

Your visitor arrives and her eyes immediately begin scoping out the situation to determine if she's in the right place. First, she will scan the visible screen for prominent elements, determining if they mesh with her mental image of her mission. As she scans, in addition to collecting "top-level" clues like headlines, she will be evaluating larger-scale issues such as legibility, arrangement and accessibility. This is where the more prominent features including the size of your type, the layout of your page and your use of color come into play. You want to help her minimize the time she spends on finding, sorting, and selecting information and get her engaged in the conversion process. If she doesn't find top-level clues that she's in the right place, or if she finds the page too hard to deal with, she's back on her horse, galloping to another site.
Skimming is the second - but no less important - activity. It is a reading-based activity, a refinement in the information-gathering process. When your visitor has a fairly good idea of the lay of the land, she is going to start engaging with your copy. But she's not ready to stop and read anything thoroughly. She's still not sure whether it will be worth her while. So she's going to start with just a superficial read, looking for the highlights and the important key words that will help direct further involvement. This is where bolding key words, bulleting, keeping paragraphs short, making sure the first and last sentences in each paragraph are strong, choosing a legible font, and even the effective use of hyperlinks all make a difference. It's a subtle distinction, but one that can make a big difference in your results. Try it - you'll like it!

**POINT OF ACTION: LOCATION MATTERS**

You don't really need us to tell you that when people visit your site, you need them to realize right away both the value of your product or service and the value of buying from you over one of your competitors. That's pretty basic information.

But think about what's implicit in that information. Right when your visitor lands on the site, he has to get the impression he's in the right place to accomplish the task he has in mind. The information you provide is critical to the impression.

The same is true for every place on your site where you ask your visitors to take action. When you provide your reassuring policies on privacy, returns, guarantees, shipping and so forth (and you do offer these, right?), put them at the Point of Action.

If you want to subscribe to GrokDotCom, you've got to share a little information - not tons of it, just your name and e-mail. But some people are understandably squeamish about doing even that, so we've got a privacy policy. You can scroll all the way down to the bottom of our page and read: "We will never give, lease or sell your personal information. Period!"

Thing is, while that policy is clear, concise and compelling, it's at the bottom of the page. The opt-in subscription box is at the top. You might never get to the bottom to read how sincere we are about privacy. So what did we do? We put a concise statement right under the Subscribe button, right at the point of action: "We Value Your Privacy!"
Want to know something? As soon as we did that seemingly minor thing, subscriptions went way up! By putting the information at the point of action, the impact was immediate and dramatic.

Think about how often information that’s critical to your customer gets buried in tiny type at the bottom of the page or in some other place where it is not immediately visible when the need to know it is foremost in your visitor’s mind.

If you walk into a store, it’s fairly easy to find out product warranty information. You can read the box or chat with a salesperson. Online, give your customers this same option, at the point of action, when they’d figuratively be examining that box. Link right there to product warranties, your company’s specific policies, even optional extended service plans. Right there! Maybe you take them to the info, maybe you give it to them in a pop-up (about the only time we like these things), maybe you give them a short and sweet sentence.

Getting the picture?

At the exact point your visitor has to start filling in a form with personal information, let her know her privacy is sacred to you.

At the point she might be curious about your company’s shipping costs, make them concretely available.

Just when she’s wondering whether or not she can return the item if it doesn’t suit her, make sure she knows you have a no-questions-asked return policy.

And don’t limit yourself to policies. Some shoppers value what other people say about a product or about doing business with you. Offer testimonials, but put them where they need to be seen, when the question is in your prospect’s mind. Think about other aspects of your sales process. What else does your visitor want to know, and when will it have the most impact on his or her decision? It’s not only about making sure it’s on your site, it’s also about making sure it’s in the location that will have the most positive impact on your sales.

Think Point of Action. Give them what they need to know when and where they need to know it. Your customers will be delighted that you’ve managed to anticipate their needs, and that goes a very long way to persuading them you’re the folks with whom they want to do business.
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WRITING FOR SEARCH ENGINES

Search engines are all about relevance. So the writing you do that is targeted for search engine optimization also needs to be about relevance.

Ever notice when you use a search engine, you are extremely task-oriented? You are only interested in finding the most relevant result that pertains to your search. Then you want to move on. You initiate a search, get a list of choices that potentially meet your need and find the one you want - the end result is that you have been satisfied.

It's analogous to shopping on a Web site. Remember the buying process? Your prospects begin with a problem, they then do an information search, evaluate alternatives and finally decide on the best one to meet their need.

This process also ties in very well with the process of Attention, Interest, Desire, Action and Satisfaction (AIDAS).

Search engines practice both these processes on a regular basis.

Your attention starts after you enter your keywords and keyphrases. You get a ranking of results, the titles of each result capture your interest, the descriptions ignite your desire. Hopefully once you take action and click, you will be satisfied with your choice. If you're not, you'll go through the process once more.

So how can we take the success of the search engines and magnify the effect so that we can increase the conversion rates on our site? Take advantage of the same elements that make your page relevant to the search engines - they just so happen to be the same elements that make the page relevant (and persuasive) to your prospects.

You begin by finding the right keywords and keyphrases.

Researching Keywords and Keyphrases

There are now a number of resources to assist you in identifying the most popular of relevant keywords. A useful tool provided by Overture, called the "Search Term Suggestion Tool", tells you how many times users searched on a particular key word or phrase in their search
engine during the last month. This helps you determine the relative popularity of keywords, which will help you choose the words to include for the search engine spiders.

Additional keyword brainstorming tools worth investigating include WordTracker, Google's terrific Adword Select Keyword Suggestion tool, and customer discussion sites like ePinions and PlanetFeedback.

Stick primarily to two to four word phrases rather than individual words. Because of the staggering number of web pages that are indexed by the major search engines, competing for a spot on the first or second page of search results on a one-word keyword will be a tough battle to win. You'll just be one of thousands of web sites vying for that top position.

Another reason to focus on phrases is that Internet users learn over time to refine their searches in order to get more relevant results. Someone searching for "email marketing glossary" instead of "email marketing" will get a fraction of search results, and those results will be much more useful to them.

The good news is that achieving a top ten position for a search phrase such as "email marketing glossary" is a much more attainable goal and will yield a much more qualified prospect. Also, be aware that there may be times when one spelling variation (like email marketing) pulls better than another variation (e-mail marketing). However, do not use two different spelling variations on the same page; it looks like a typo and breaks your reader's flow.

Some additional tips for keyword research:

- Include several permutations of the phrases (different order).
- Create phrases that are in the form of a question.
- Include synonyms and substitutes to selected words.
- Include common misspellings.
- Include brand names of merchandise carried (be sure you stock it).
- Include model numbers of the products you carry.
• Mine the data from a site’s internal search engine to see how people found you and what they are looking for on your site (search log data).

Areas to Place Your Keywords and Keyphrases

• Title tags

• Headings and subheadings (using heading tags <h1>,<h2>,etc.)

• Body text (the most important area, search engines love content, and so do your prospects, make sure the phrase shows up in your first paragraph)

• Link text and navigation

• Meta-tags (keywords and descriptions)

• Alt-attribute in the image source tags

The key is getting your keywords and keyphrases in these areas. It is important to spend plenty of time researching these keywords and making sure they are the terms your visitors use. Remember, "talk to the dog, in the language of the dog about what is in the heart of the dog."

Don't worry if you aren't technically literate; just understand that you want to be in control of the content that goes in those important areas.

Beyond Search Engine Positioning

It's tough to convert traffic if you don't have any, know what we mean? You probably know search engines remain the most popular way people find websites and account for over 80% of the traffic to some sites.

Having a website that's a killer conversion machine is a big part of improving your results. So is insuring a high ranking in search engine positioning. But beyond positioning, you want to make sure what the search retrieves is persuasive and drives action.

What good's a high ranking that's so badly worded, nobody clicks on it? Or an okay-worded ranking that brings in only a fraction of the traffic you'd get if your copy captured browsers' attention and moved them to
action? Not good ... in fact, maybe even doubly bad! You look unde-
pendable if your listing is so terse it seems like you can't be bothered
with the details.

Worse, suppose you sit at the top of the list with a vague, misleading
blurb. Imagine how annoyed folks are going to be when they click
through and don't find what they expected. And guess what happens
when you lure folks to a site that fails to deliver and doesn't engage
them in the conversion process?

Conversion is about getting prospects to take the action you want them
to take. For search engines, the action you want to motivate is a click.
Here's what you need to know so you get the clicks you want.

An SEOP Fable

Phil sells designer clothes for pet sharks. He goes to a Search Engine
Optimization (SEOP) company to generate traffic for his niche market.
The company says it will do several things: identify valuable keywords,
get him high rankings on top search engines, optimize his home page
and create an information page (an added webpage that is keyword
rich). Phil checks the company out and gives their proposal a thumbs
up.

They get busy and locate some keywords and synonyms, then proceed
to optimize Phil's home page, targeting the phrase "Shark Clothes."
Since the SEOP expert’s goal is a high ranking, she puts "Shark
Clothes" in the title tag of the home page (part of the HTML code the
search engine looks for). She succeeds! Phil gets a top ranking on
Google that looks like this:

Shark Clothes
... for sharks who are fashion-conscious and shark owners who are
embarrassed by their naked pets.

Like most SEOP companies, this one is good at getting high rankings,
but it doesn't understand conversion. What we have here is a top rank-
ing that doesn't drive action. No persuasion. No calls to action. No real
appeal to benefits. The conversion rate of this ranking will be a fraction
of what's possible.

Compare that listing with this one:
Buy Top Designer Shark Clothes Now and Get FREE Shipping

Are you a hip shark looking to stand out from the school? A shark owner who wants to strut your pet in finery on his morning walk? Phil has what you need.

What's different? The imperative "Buy" gets attention and creates momentum toward taking action. "Now" reinforces the urgency. FREE shipping provides a clear benefit. Then a "richer" descriptive sentence appeals to emotion and creates strong mental imagery. This listing is likely to get 20-50% more clicks than the first one!

All we did was add a few very important words in a very specific way to create a link that doesn't just sit there, but actively converts traffic.
IN CONCLUSION

THE GROK NOTES

Cliff Notes are cool, aren’t they? When you want to cut to the chase, you buy one and it reveals exactly what you were supposed to get out of, say, Moby Dick. Saves you a lot of life energy if you are the sort who isn’t into plowing through the original, but wants a clear understanding of the salient points.

Know Your Audience

Elena Fawkner discovered this snippet of copy from the Web site of a professional Web copywriter:

* Name changed to protect the ostentatious and largiloquent.

Verisimilitude? Willfully attracts? Ensure with pacesetting presentation? Editorial power? What a mouth- and headful of gobbledygook! Bob Tony is definitely not the fellow you want as your copywriting model!

Where do you look? To your customers! Folks are out there talking. So listen to what they have to say and how they say it, then model your copy to reflect their needs and concerns. If you’re going to invest time doing "adequate research," dig in here!
Keep Your Copy Customer-Centered

Ditch self-serving copy that promotes how wonderful you are. Focus on the powerful perspective of the second person (YOU!) to help your visitors put themselves inside the picture, and always let your visitors know what's in it for them by communicating the benefits of your product or service. Appeal to their emotions by showing rather than telling and by engaging the senses.

Create a Personality

For all its interactivity and dynamism, the Web isn't very personal. And you want to get as nose-to-nose with folks as you can. Do it not only by writing as you (and they) would speak, but also by creating the impression of an appealing personality. Give your writing a distinctive, memorable style that captivates as it persuades. And keep in mind: who you are is far less important than who your visitors imagine you to be.

VERBal Power

Verbs get your visitors excited and should form the backbone of your writing.

Using active verbs will not only help keep your visitors engaged, it will also help improve your credibility. The passive voice occasionally may help you set the right tone or focus on the activity rather than the actor, but for persuasive purposes, it tends to sound shiftily and overly academic. In general, avoid it in your Web copy.

Imperative verbs are commands. Act. Drive. Click. See. Go. Download. Pair them with benefits and you have effective calls to action.

Be Credible

Your copy sends out credibility vibes all the time. Over-promising and spouting lots of marketing hype won't work in your favor. Neither will typos and grammatical errors.
Make Your Copy Usability-Friendly

Understanding human eye-tracking behavior helps you optimize the organization of your copy on your Web pages. It also helps to understand how folks scan and skim copy.

- Use bulleted points to detail critical information (including your value proposition)
- Get important information to your visitor first; elaborate later (think newspaper articles)
- Highlight important text by using bolding, color, a highlight feature, or making the critical text a link (as appropriate)
- Use "white" space to separate your points
- Keep your paragraphs as concise as possible - eyes glaze over when they encounter impenetrable blocks of text
- Use font sizes that don't require magnifying glasses
- Avoid light type against a dark background (reverse type) - stick with contrast combinations that are comfortable on the eye

Is that everything? Sheesh, you know me well enough by now to know that when it comes to your online copy, I could keep going till the cows come home. But then, these wouldn't be The Grok Notes, would they? And you wouldn't know which areas I think are most important to your efforts.

Now you do!

WHAT TO DO NEXT

It can be daunting to consider revamping the entirety of the copy on your Web site. And it isn't necessarily something we would recommend you do all at once.

If you have an existing site, you are in the advantageous position of being able to test and optimize your changes. So as you are making
improvements, you are also learning much more intimately the strategies and tactics that work best in your situation, for your audience. Tiny, incremental changes will yield far more valuable information than a sweeping overhaul.

As you begin to make those changes, we offer these suggestions:

1. Don’t feel overwhelmed with the task before you. It may seem large, but breaking it into bite-sized chunks is a much better - and saner - approach.

2. Look to the "low-hanging fruit" first. There are many opportunities to change obvious, simple elements of your copy that can have a dramatic effect on your conversion rate. Here are some possibilities:

   a. Start paying close attention to your Web logs. For now, look carefully at your reject pages - the ones where visitors exit or fail to take an action. Determine the extent to which the page is critical to the buying process, then evaluate the copy to see if you can make improvements that will keep your visitors motivated and moving.

   b. Examine all the areas on your site where you require or request your visitor to supply personal information. Add point of action statements that assure your visitor’s need to feel secure. We added the very brief "We value your privacy" beneath the newsletter subscribe button for a client and subscription rates immediately doubled!

   c. On key Web pages, examine your headings (these are the words that grab attention) and your benefits (these are the points that build interest). Make sure your headings are written in language that is benefit-oriented. Bullet your benefits so visitors can quickly read them, and make sure they address what "matters to the hearts of your dogs." We made changes to fewer than 40 words in the headings and benefit copy for one client who was experiencing a high rejection rate on one page. After the changes, hundreds more visitors completed that page and moved forward in the conversion process.

   d. Scrutinize your autoresponder messaging and your emails. In the messages you send to your customers - from shipping confirmations to promotional offers - you have a wonderful opportunity to stretch your writing wings and nurture a (hopefully) long-term relationship.
3. With every change you make, always test and optimize. Even if they all seem necessary, changes need to be made individually so you can track the result of the change. If you make one change at a time and then discover it doesn't help, it's easier to back up and try something else. If you are not methodical in your approach to change, much of your effort will be wasted.

4. Learn one skill at a time, and understand it in the context of your particular situation. Your goal is not to follow e-commerce rules (they don't exist, anyway); your goal is to understand the principles of conversion and how they apply to you. What works like a dream for one Web site is not necessarily going to work in the same way for another. We've examined many of the principles that relate to relevant writing for the Web. Your circumstance will dictate how those principles apply. There is no fast-track to certain success - remember the Tortoise! So take your time. Be methodical. In the long run, it will be worth it.

This is exciting stuff, and it's just about to get more exciting! We wish you all the best.
1 Roy H. Williams, best-selling author and the force behind Williams Marketing, is known as The Wizard of Ads:


4 Ann Handley is co-founder and former editor of ClickZ.com.

http://www.marketingprofs.com/Perspect/usborne19.asp. Permission to use a portion of this article has been granted graciously.


7 "UCLA Report Finds Internet Surpasses Television As Key Information Source." Harlan Lebo. 15 August 2000.

8 "Optimize Content to Maximize the Bottom Line." Charlie Tarzian, ClickZ, March 30, 2000

9 Net Words is an exceptional primer on Web writing, and we encourage you to add it to your business bookshelf.

10 This article appeared in the January 15, 2002 issue of Grokdotcom:

11 The Future Now "We-We" Calculator:


15 Monday Morning Memo. Roy H. Williams.  


17 Advertising Secrets of the Written Word: The Ultimate Resource on How to  

18 Secret Formulas of the Wizard of Ads. Roy H. Williams. Austin, Texas:  


20 Accidental Magic. p 18.

21 "Mending Wall." Robert Frost. Appearing in The United States in  
Literature. Robert C. Pooley, General Editor. Chicago: Scott, Foresman and  


25 The Deluxe Transitive Vampire: The Ultimate Handbook of Grammar for  
the Innocent, the Eager, and the Doomed. Karen Elizabeth Gordon. New  


29 Advertising Secrets of the Written Word: The Ultimate Resource on How to  


35 Stanford-Poynter Project:

36 It is important to note that this is the pattern for Western culture. The point is cleverly and interestingly made in “What You See Depends On Where You’re From.” The Micro Computer Trainer.


40 http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/.

41 http://www.wordtracker.com/.

42 https://adwords.google.com/select/main?cmd=KeywordSandbox

Persuasion Architecture™
Persuading Customers When They Ignore Marketing

**WITHIN**

*What Persuasion Architecture Can Mean for You*
An executive summary describing the nature of Persuasion Architecture and its value to your business

*The Persuasion Architecture White Paper*
An overview of the business philosophies behind Persuasion Architecture with an explanation of its processes and applications

**FUTURE NOW, INC.**
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INDUSTRY EXPERTS TALK ABOUT WAITING FOR YOUR CAT TO BARK? AND PERSUASION ARCHITECTURE™

These guys really “get it.” In a world of know-it-all marketing hypesters, these guys realize that it takes work to persuade people who aren’t listening. They’ve connected a lot of the pieces that we all already know—plus a lot that we don’t. It’s a rare approach that recognizes that the customer is in charge and must be encouraged and engaged on his/her own terms, not the sellers’. It takes apart the persuasion process, breaks down the steps and gives practical ways to tailor your approaches to your varying real customers in the real world. This book is at a high level that marketers better hope their competitors will be too lazy to implement.

**George Silverman**, Author of *The Secrets of Word of Mouth Marketing: How to Trigger Exponential Sales Through Runaway Word of Mouth*

We often hear that the current marketing model is broken—meaning the changes in customers, media, distribution and even the “flatness of the world” make current practices no longer relevant. Yet few have offered a solution. This book recognizes the new reality in which we operate and provides a path for moving forward. The authors do an outstanding job of using metaphors to help make Persuasion Architecture clear and real life examples to make it come alive. Finally, someone has offered direction for how to market in this new era where the customer is in control.

**David J. Reibstein**, William Stewart Woodside Professor, Wharton Business School of the University of Pennsylvania and former Executive Director, Marketing Science Institute

Virtually all web sites have a persuasive purpose. To change what people think and do online, you need to first clarify your target outcomes and then make sure everything leads to those outcomes. Thousands of design firms can create beautiful and usable websites; few firms really understand how persuasion works.

**BJ Fogg**, Stanford Persuasive Technology Lab and author of *Persuasive Technology: Using Computers to Change What We Think and Do*
The Web is a democratizing force as the world’s largest global brain. It educates everyone on the pros and cons of every product, service, and even person. An educated person doesn’t react well to the traditional “art of manipulation” that most marketers attempt to employ in their campaigns. As a matter of fact, it makes them angry and defensive – like a cat backed into a corner. No one understands this new world of marketing better than the Eisenbergs.

**Brett Hurt**, Founder and CEO of Bazaarvoice, Founder of Coremetrics and Shop.org Board Director

In 1999, the Wachowski brothers revolutionized moviemaking with stunning new angles and special effects revealed in The Matrix. Now the Eisenbrothers have done the same for business in *Waiting for Your Cat to Bark?* Stunning new angles! Techniques that will be copied for decades. Cat is sure to be remembered as the genesis of an important new direction in marketing.

**Roy H. Williams**, New York Times Bestselling Author of The Wizard of Ads Trilogy
WHAT PERSUASION ARCHITECTURE CAN MEAN FOR YOU: AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

• One of the world’s largest diamond wholesalers revamped their site and increased visitor conversions from .86% to 54.1%, an increase of over 5500%.

• An ebusiness that helps people sell customized merchandise reduced their shopping cart abandonment rate from 35% (already low by industry standards) to just 15%.

• A re-seller of broadband services reported a 60% increase in their order pipeline, a 419% increase in conversion and a 13% increase in gross margin, with sales up over 100%. Their Web site sets new records month after month and has done so for over a year.

• One of the world’s largest manufacturers of construction equipment improved their web analytics reporting and were able to increase their conversion rate by over 700%.

• The Web site for an entrepreneurial firm specializing in custom Yellow Page ad design originally delivered an average of 6 leads a month. It now delivers an average of 37 a month – an increase in conversion of over 600%.

• One of the world’s largest staffing firms wanted to increase their conversion rate of 3-4% for first-time visitor New Accounts on their resume submission site. They achieved a conversion rate of 27.93%.

• A popular theme park increased their website’s conversion rate by 80%.

These are not typographic errors. These businesses and many others with diverse applications and needs, experienced dramatic, sustainable increases in their conversion rates. What have they done that sets them apart from the abysmal industry standard?

Each of these businesses applied the principles of Persuasion Architecture™, developed by Future Now, Inc. and its subsidiary, Persuasion Architecture, Inc., to their online and offline marketing efforts.
Each of these businesses made a choice not to settle for incremental changes that deliver tepid results. Instead, they opted to employ an integrated methodology that delivers dramatic results.

Each of these businesses was willing to examine conversion from a different perspective. If the industry standard for conversion hovers at 2%, you might ask: How can I increase that number? But this diverts attention from the more relevant question: What am I doing that is driving 98% of my audience away? The effort spent answering this question delivers the dramatic improvements that more than satisfy the former question.

Ultimately, each of these businesses has been able to embrace the customer-centric philosophy that is at the heart of Persuasion Architecture.

**Persuasion Architecture helps your prospect “buy better”**

Persuasion Architecture begins with the premise that the buying decision process and the sales process must work in tandem. The solution for dramatically improving conversion rates does not lie in helping businesses “sell better.” It lies in helping businesses marry the sales process to their audience’s buying decision processes—in essence, the business must provide a structure that helps the prospect “buy better.”

For you to achieve your goals, your visitors must first achieve their goals. Only when you help your audience buy better will you be able to sell better.

There is no “average user”

People approach the buying process in different ways—to design for the “average user” is to leave the majority of your audience high and dry.

Persuasion Architecture provides a detailed process for persuading your visitors to take the actions you want them to take. Nothing is left to chance. To provide visitors with the information they want, when they want it, in language that speaks to their individual needs, you design persuasive paths based on personas.

Persuasion Architecture makes it possible for you to:

- Create business-specific personas that reflect the demographic, psychologic and topologic dimensions of your audience
• Develop persuasion scenarios that meet the needs of your audience’s buying decision processes and your sales process

• Identify the necessary language that will help you create persuasive copy and rank well in search engine results

• Integrate your multi-channel marketing efforts, based on the personas you have created, through Persuasion Entities (on- or offline)

• Establish a structure that allows you to test, measure and optimize your results on a continuing basis, so you can manage intelligently

From a development point of view, Persuasion Architecture and its MAPSuite™ software offer these advantages:

• The process presents a simple-to-follow project management and monitoring methodology

• The process is based on a solid foundation of business “rules” and the principles of cognitive psychology

• The process helps non-experts create persuasive systems

• The process allows non-technical business people to lead and manage the development of the project

• The process is designed to maximize the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both technical and business people

When you focus on Persuasion Architecture:

• You don’t just get more sales -- you get more sales from your existing traffic. You don’t need to increase your marketing expenses.

• Your customer acquisition cost goes down.

• Your customer retention rate goes up.

• Your customer lifetime value goes up.
Are you ready to let Persuasion Architecture deliver for you?

If businesses ranging from one-person shops to international corporations can apply the principles of Persuasion Architecture to achieve dramatic results, you can too. Our process is proven. It incorporates software applications developed specifically for creating persuasive systems. And it is accessible, even for those who possess no technological expertise.

You can apply Persuasion Architecture to a single area of your business or across the board. What can Persuasion Architecture mean for you? That depends on how much dramatic success you are looking for!
PERSUASION ARCHITECTURE™

PERSUADING CUSTOMERS WHEN THEY IGNORE MARKETING

WITHIN

The Persuasion Architecture White Paper

An overview of the business philosophies behind Persuasion Architecture with an explanation of its processes and applications
INTRODUCTION

This white paper provides an overview of the business philosophies and methodology behind Persuasion Architecture. Within this document you will:

• Learn why selling with buying go hand-in-hand, and how Persuasion Architecture facilitates merging the two processes

• Learn the architectural metaphors for Persuasion Architecture

• Learn the true nature of conversion as both a micro- and macro-level activity

• Learn the phases that comprise the creation of a persuasive system

• View screen shots of the applications we have developed specifically for Persuasion Architecture

• Read what others have to say about their experiences with Persuasion Architecture

Because many of us understand what a Web site is and because Web sites have become the nexus of multi-channel marketing efforts, we have framed our white paper around the example of Web site design. However, the principles and processes described within apply to the creation of all persuasive systems. The true beauty of Persuasion Architecture lies in its ability to integrate and synthesize all your persuasive entities!
The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.

Ben Franklin

Whether you manufacture paper clips or eye pieces for electron microscopes, whether you sell micro chips or chocolate chips, whether you paint houses or canvases, your business depends on satisfying people.

The needs of the customer have always defined the nature of successful business. We quickly discover that if we want to achieve our business goals, we must do everything in our power to help our potential customers and clients achieve their goals.

The Internet has offered a new venue for this exchange – more than that, it has become the nexus for most marketing activity. It has not, however, changed the fact that conducting business is still about people.

Certainly, managing projects that draw heavily on both business and technical skills is complex. But at a much deeper level, most Web sites fail to construct an intentional persuasive process that meets the individual needs of their visitors. As a result, conversion rates and return on investment (ROI) remain low.

To be successful, your Web site must acknowledge what each of your visitors will ask or require of you, in a manner that is meaningful to them. Without a sense of satisfaction and confidence, your visitors will not feel comfortable taking action. You must provide a process that goes beyond usability’s goal of removing functional impediments and information architecture’s goal of organizing information. You must transcend a simplistic conception of both your visitor’s objectives and the nature of conversion.

Your persuasive process must begin and end with the visitors’ point of view.

Creating or redesigning a Web site is an exercise in managing complexity. We call the intentional creation of a persuasive process Persuasion Architecture. At the center of our discipline is MAPSuite, our proprietary software for managing the complexity of a persuasive system.
Central to Persuasion Architecture is the persona. Drawn from demographic, psychologic and topologic information about your audience, these fully-imagined individuals with specific questions, motivations and needs allow you to design meaningful, productive navigation paths from their point of view.

Persuasion Architecture offers you the only available, fully integrated framework for understanding and applying the principles that comprise persuasive design. It is a structured process that provides the applications you need to create a persuasive, efficient, customer-centric online experience.

In the following pages, we examine the business philosophies behind Persuasion Architecture and review its methodology. While we present this information in the context of a Web site, which was the inspiration for Persuasion Architecture, our philosophy and methodology extend to all persuasive activities. Persuasion Architecture makes it possible for you to integrate and synthesize every aspect of your multi-channel marketing, from banner ads and pay-per-clicks to television, radio and beyond.

We begin by examining the nature of the fundamental exchange in ebusiness – the premise that defines the purpose of our persuasive architectural creation.
THE BASIC EXCHANGE

Think beyond the conventional definitions of “buy” and “sell.” We use these terms as a convenient shorthand, but apply them broadly: “selling” is the process through which you accomplish your business objectives; “buying” is the process through which your visitors accomplish their goals and become customers.

At the most elemental level, commercial Web sites come in four flavors – every commercial site you’ll come across is a subset or combination of one of these four variations: e-commerce, content, lead-generation and self-service.

- **E-commerce sites.** The objective is increase sales and decrease marketing expenses.
- **Content sites.** The objective is increase readership, level of interest, and time spent on the site.
- **Lead-generation sites.** The objective is increase and segment lead generation.
- **Self-service sites.** The objective is increase customer satisfaction and decrease support inquiries.

Different though these business objectives might be, every online business has these elements in common:

- Each business has an ultimate conversion goal
- Each business has a series of steps that ideally help folks achieve that ultimate conversion goal
- Each business has an audience made up of folks who have their own agendas and their own ways of satisfying their agendas

You Sell

It doesn’t matter what you are trying to accomplish on your Web site – whether you want to provide shoe laces to the public or to local shoe repair shops across the country or to shoe manufacturers, whether you want to offer Tonka trucks to Sally’s parents or high-end earth-movers to We Dig It, Inc., or whether you want to promote consultancy servic-
es aimed at helping other business do their business better – you are selling. You are trying to persuade someone, or a group of someones, that you’re the best thing going in the market. You want them to do business with you.

Toward which end, you have a sales process\(^2\) - steps you go through to achieve a “close.” Not every business has the same sales process, but every business has a sales process (admittedly some are more effective than others). Only you care about your sales process. It’s internal. It’s about you and your goals. It is not about your audience and their goals.

**They Buy**

It doesn’t matter who your audience is – a fun-loving fellow looking for the ultimate experience in a gaming joy stick or a street savvy CEO looking to expand telephone services into untapped markets – your Web site has to understand and respond to how your audience buys whatever it is you offer. You must be able to understand their needs, anticipate their questions and provide the information that helps each one make a decision (actually, lots of decisions!).

Everyone in your audience has a buying decision process\(^3\) - steps they go through on their way to satisfying their needs and achieving confidence that they made the right decision. Sometimes this buying process happens in the blink of an eye. Sometimes it takes six months. Sometimes it takes only one person to make the decision. Sometimes the decision requires input from a significant other. Sometimes five different departments and a C-level executive have to sign off on the decision.

**The Classic Sales Process**

In general, most sales processes include these steps:

1. Prospect
2. Rapport
3. Qualify
4. Present
5. Close
6. Post-sales evaluation
The process is rarely linear – rapport is developed throughout the sales experience; qualify and present are frequently iterative.

The Classic Buying Process

The typical buying process generally incorporates these phases:

1. Recognition
2. Search for information
3. Evaluation of action
4. Purchasing decision
5. Purchasing action
6. Post-purchase evaluation

The Twain Must Meet

Your visitors don’t care about your sales process (and everything about your sales process should be designed so they shouldn’t have to care) – remember, your sales process is all about you. But you definitely have to care about how they buy. The key to a persuasive site is to map their buying processes to your selling process, refining your sales process when it becomes intrusive or counterproductive.

Persuasion Architecture creates an experience that leads your visitors to find what they want by acknowledging that these two processes – buying and selling – occur in tandem and take place on every page of a Web site.

In an ideal world, selling and buying take place between people in a space designed to accommodate the needs of both parties. Let’s turn to the architectural metaphor that helps us understand creating a persuasive arena for ebusiness.
Architecture has always been a self-conscious, intentional discipline in which the relationships between environments and those who use them have been examined in great detail. Successful architecture must integrate structural considerations, serve the needs of the client (the purpose of the structure) and acknowledge the behaviors of all the people who use the spaces within.

Certainly, persuasion in architecture isn’t a revolutionary idea. A century ago, Frank Lloyd Wright wrote:

A building should contain as few rooms as will meet the condition which give it rise and under which we live, and which the architect should strive continually to simplify; the ensemble of the rooms should then be carefully considered that comfort and utility may go hand in hand with beauty.4

Wright’s observations become relevant to us if we replace “Web site” for “building.” Spinning out this analogy, we could then consider “rooms” as Web pages and “doors” as calls to action. We can think of “nature, comfort and utility” as functionality. The “materials” we choose – not wood, brick or stone, but those circumscribed by the inherent character of our medium.

For addition architectural parallels to the interface between user experience and environment, we can also look to the development of landscape architecture, particularly through visionaries like Frederick Law Olmsted (best known for his role in shaping New York City’s Central Park).5

Olmsted applied these principles of separation and subordination more consistently than any other landscape architect of his era. Subordination was accomplished in his parks where carefully constructed walks and paths would flow through landscape with gentle grades and easy curves, thus requiring the viewer’s minimal attention to the process of movement. At the same time, many of the structures that Olmsted incorporated into his parks merge with their surroundings. Separation is accomplished in his park systems by designing large parks that were meant for the enjoyment of the scenery. Smaller recreational areas for other activities and where “park ways” handle the movement of pedestrians and vehicular traffic offset these large parks.6
Even more explicitly, the purpose of landscape architecture was to create space that shaped and guided the “user’s” experience. Intention was integral to the design – when you stepped in one direction, you were supposed to see this; when you moved further down that path, you were presented with a secretive opening you simply couldn’t resist investigating.

In “Learning from traditional architects,” Lorraine Johnston discussed the historical changes in the role of the architect and described the task of the “new architect”:

> For an architect called on to design a hospital, it is important that every detail of the working of the hospital is known early. Space cannot be allocated or even the firm of the buildings conceived until the people responsible for wards, kitchens and operating theatres, say, have been able to explain their requirements. ... Only after all the preliminary work is done for the hospital can an architect decide whether a small number of multi-storied buildings would suit better than a series of lower connected buildings. Up to this point there is no physical shape for the building nor any architectural character. ... the visible form and the aesthetic quality for the building will emerge as part of the problem-solving, in contrast to the earlier approach of starting with a preconceived image and fixing the functionality to suit.7

Johnston’s ethic for the modern architect parallels our own needs in developing for persuasive systems:

> The way clients are looking to the future requires that we study our client’s situation more than we have ever done before. If we are to succeed, we must learn a great deal about how clients are organized and what strategies underlie their way of doing business.

Brick-and-mortar retailers have incorporated their own form of “persuasion architecture” in stores for decades. Nothing is left to chance: milk in the back of the store, the aroma of bread baking, the layout of the aisles, and the location of products on shelves are all planned to attract attention, gain interest, stimulate desire, and persuade you to navigate the store the way retailers want you to.8

Because you cannot make people take action, you must persuade them. In fact, every action you motivate depends on the ability of your Web site to persuade.
If I were given one hour to save the planet, I would spend 59 minutes defining the problem and one minute resolving it.

Albert Einstein

The architecture industry enjoys a high project success rate — time, cost of materials and labor, and the fact that people’s lives are at stake when buildings collapse have something to do with it. Architects and construction companies spend tremendous amounts of time planning and thinking long before the first foundation stone is laid.

If you were building a new house, you wouldn't call in the building crew on the very first day of the project to begin construction, then pop around each day to tell the foreman what to change from the day before. You don’t need to select bathroom tiles before you’ve bought the building lot.

You’d begin by evaluating the location, testing the soil for contamination, determining how you were going to supply yourself with water and septic, deciding the orientation of each structure you plan to build. Then you would turn to pen and paper, creating a plan that considered all the functions and features you wanted, and how they could be arranged. Once you had a general plan, you would start filling in the details – lighting and wiring, plumbing, windows, style, specific materials. As construction proceeds, situations you couldn’t anticipate inevitably crop up. But to keep budget, time and sanity under control, you anticipate and document as much as possible in advance.

The best way to manage the complexity of creating a persuasive system is through well thought-out and well-documented iterative phases. Persuasion Architecture incorporates a methodology for implementing the planning, design, development and optimization of your Web site. It insures you start with a solid foundation that persuades your visitors more effectively and allows you to measure activity so you can manage more intelligently.

Persuasion Architecture offers these advantages:

• The process presents a simple-to-follow project management and monitoring methodology
• The process is based on a solid foundation of business “rules” and the principles of cognitive psychology

• The process facilitates the ability of non-experts to create persuasive systems

• The process allows non-technical business people to lead and manage the development of the project

• The process is designed to maximize the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both technical and business people

Further, Persuasion Architecture makes the design process concrete through a series of software applications designed and developed by Persuasion Architecture, Inc. The MAPSuite applications reinforce the philosophy of our process through flexibility, a non-technical focus and the ability to manage iterative development from multiple creative sources.

The Essential Questions

The persuasive system you create allows you to carry on a dialog with your visitors. Preparing for this dialog starts with your answers to the three essential questions that arise from the activity of marrying your selling process with their buying process:

• **Who needs to be persuaded?** When you know who you need to persuade, you can create personas that allow you to design meaningful navigation scenarios.

• **What actions does this person need to take?** Not all actions will be direct functions of your sales process; many will be actions your personas need to take to satisfy their buying decision process.

• **How will you most effectively persuade that person?** Knowing “who” and “what” helps you create persuasive copy and content.

Always keep these three questions at the forefront of your mind—they will frame every other question you ask and underlie every decision you make about the design of your persuasive system.
The Nature of Your Prospects

You want to encourage the people who come to your site to engage—and stay engaged—in your dialog. Toward this end, it helps to understand the commonalities among your online audience—the traits all your prospects share.

Every one of your visitors is a voluntary participant in the process, possesses some degree of propensity to buy and has a personality.

Voluntary Participants

Every individual actively makes a choice to come to your Web site. And they arrive, task in mind, prepared to participate. While they remain on your site, they agree to continue participating in a persuasive dialog with you. This is critical knowledge: behavior on ebusiness sites (fundamentally a self-service environment) is voluntary, participatory and goal-directed. Save for those who land on your site by mistake, your visitors are already interested in you and are there for a reason. And they are completely in control of what they will or will not agree to experience. If your visitor refuses to take the next click on your site, your dialog is over. It is essential to remember you are always one click away from goodbye.

Your visitors:

- Control their experience
- Are goal-oriented
- Are highly fragmented
- Are volunteers
- Are involved in a self-service environment
- Must participate to accomplish their tasks

Propensity to Buy

We can identify four categories of visitors based on their level of motivation and their readiness to make a decision.

- First are the perfect prospects who know exactly what they want. Think of a self-actualizing buyer seeking features, brands, and model numbers.
• Second are prospects who sort of know what they want. Think of shoppers with a strongly felt need but who have not yet narrowed down their search criteria.

• Third are prospects who aren’t sure they want anything but might buy if what they want were to appear. These are window-shoppers. They have no strongly felt need in mind, but one could be suggested to them.

• The fourth group of visitors don’t qualify as prospects, nor are they “qualified” to take advantage of the product or service. They’re there by mistake. Be happy when they exit gracefully.

You don’t know where your visitors are in the process when they land on your site, so your site must be prepared to deal with all possibilities. It also helps to consider that not all your visitors will make a decision when they first visit your site—sometimes a successful conversion is the result of multiple visits.

**Personality**

Every one of your visitors has one, and that personality influences the choices they make, the questions they ask and the information they look for to feel comfortable making a decision. Although it may seem impossibly complex to categorize infinite variation, almost every philosopher has concluded there are four dominant personality types. For Hippocrates it was Sanguine, Choleric, Phlegmatic and Melancholic. Jung chose to call his types Feeler, Thinker, Sensor and Intuitor. Keirsey calls them Idealists, Rationals, Guardians and Artisans.

We use the names Competitive, Spontaneous, Methodical and Humanistic. Every one of your visitors will have a predominate personality type that fits into at least one of these categories.
Combine the possible stages of the buying decision process with the dominant personality types, and you effectively describe your universe of buyers.
Persuasion Architecture has six phases. The process begins with Uncovery, continues with Wireframing, Storyboarding and Prototyping, then enters the actual coding phase in Development. The final phase provides for testing, measuring and optimization, an ongoing process that insures your management decisions are always based on solid information. The following pages describe each phase of Persuasion Architecture in more depth.

1. Uncovery

The goals of Uncovery are to identify the value of the business and articulate it in a way that matters to the customer, as well as evaluate the nature of the buying process and the characteristics of the visitors. Uncovery includes identifying the business objectives for your persuasive system, developing strategy, and researching keywords and key phrases, all of which aid us in creating the best merger between selling and buying for your situation.

Toward the end of the Uncovery process, we start creating personas that give you insight into your customers’ buying process and help you understand each customer’s individual needs, wants and desires. Uncovery concludes by creating narratives, stories of the experiences your personas will have as they interact with your persuasion entity.

Skillful Uncovery requires careful attention; it is the critical first step toward designing and developing effective persuasion architecture.
Uncovery is an exercise in self-disclosure. In part, the exercise rediscovers what you know about your own business and articulate to your prospects. More importantly, it uncovers the critical information you know about your business and need to articulate to your prospects to influence their perception of your value to them.

The Johari Window provides a useful model for Uncovery. Named after its inventors, Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham, it describes knowledge relationships in human interaction. A four-paned "window" divides levels of awareness into four types: open, unknown, blind, and hidden. As mutual familiarity increases, the lines dividing the four panes move to reflect the changes in the relationship.

When we apply the Johari Window to Uncovery, the business is "self" and the customers are "others." Let's describe the relationships:

- **Open.** The open quadrant represents information you and your customers know about each other. Early in the relationship, the size of this quadrant is small—here has been little time to exchange information. As you and your customers become more familiar with each other, the dividing line moves down or to the right, placing more information into the open window.

- **Unknown.** The unknown quadrant represents information that neither party knows about the other. While it is not impossible to discover something neither the business nor its customers know about the relationship, it is very unlikely. Pursuing this area is rarely a productive effort.

- **Blind.** The blind quadrant represents information you do not know about yourself, but the other party does know. A necessary part of uncovery is to identify what is known to the customer that must be revealed to the business.

- **Hidden.** The hidden quadrant represents information you know about yourself but your customers not know. Uncovering this hidden information so we can move it into the open quadrant is very often the key to a great uncovery.
It is virtually impossible for any business to achieve comprehensive self-disclosure on its own—as we say, you can’t read the label from inside the bottle. When it comes to issues in which we have a huge personal investment—our children, our homes, our businesses—we risk losing our objectivity. It’s then we risk pushing our own interests at the expense of our customers’ interests. The most successful uncoveries benefit from the objective perspective of someone outside the bottle.

The Militating Factors in Your Sale

Certain factors pertain to the buying decisions your audience makes—without appropriate and relevant information that addresses these factors, most people will not feel sufficiently confident to make a decision. Understanding these factors is critical to shaping your persuasive process— they are considerations we address during Uncovery:

• **Knowledge.** How difficult is it for people to understand the nature of your product or service, or the procedures for buying? What do they need to know? Your persuasive process must eliminate the friction generated by confusion or lack of knowledge. Knowledge dimensions for the buying decision can differ based on who is doing the buying: is the customer buying for herself (she will be the end user) or is she buying on behalf of another (as in the case of a purchasing agent)? The knowledge assumptions and language—especially jargon—that work for one may be totally inappropriate for the other.
• **Need.** How urgent is the need for your product or service? How fast are people likely to make their decisions to buy? Will the need be satisfied by a one-time purchase (either impulsive or momentous) or is the need on-going? Folks might be willing to compromise their thoroughness for a casual one-time deal. But if that one-time deal is something like a house, or if they are choosing a long-term relationship to satisfy an on-going need, things get significantly more complicated.

• **Risk.** How risky, especially with respect to issues of finance, is the sale? While price may not be an ultimate decision factor in a purchase (for many, safety and trust trump price), increasing financial risk necessitates a more intricate persuasive structure. Risk may also be associated with compromises to health, as when individuals or medical professionals have to make treatment choices. Or even when someone simply evaluates the safety of an herbal remedy.

• **Consensus.** How many people do you have to persuade? An individual? An individual and her significant other? Several end-users and heads-of-department? Your ability to understand who is involved in the decision-making process allows you to provide copy and content that appropriately informs, reassures and persuades.

These factors apply differently depending on the nature of your sale. For example, home computers aren’t terribly high-risk products anymore, but many find them unfathomable beasts, and they’ll take their time acquiring information before deciding to buy one. Unless the one and only computer upon which their sole-proprietor business depends just got zapped by lightening and must be replaced by tomorrow noon. By the same token, you might take a while to consider the purchase of a water-heater if you are building a new house, but if your existing water heater goes up the spout, you need to replace it pronto. Almost no one would say a pencil is a considered purchase—knowledge of pencils isn’t much of a problem and there’s generally no risk associated—but if the purchase of a case of pencils or a single pencil from a new vender requires several departments to sign off, consensus is an issue.

These factors can also be interdependent. The more you know about something, the more you may perceive the risks involved. Conversely, more knowledge may afford you the perception of less risk. The individual facing heart surgery will consider the relationship between knowledge and risk differently than will the heart surgeon. As will the individual investor staking his life earnings on options, compared to the options trader for whom these transactions are daily occurrences.
For each persona, we create a thumbnail graphic that represents the relationships of these factors once the site has satisfied the persona’s needs – a depiction of the persona’s end state of mind. We use a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) to help us plot the dimensions of sales complexity on a visual representation we call a Complexogram™. It is fundamentally a subjective process, but it offers us a reference and direction that we continue to investigate as we dig deeper into our understanding of the business as well as persona and scenario design.

Understanding all the elements that make up your unique persuasive process and understanding the needs of your audience will allow you to create a meaningful, persuasive correspondence between how you sell and how they buy.

**Personas**

There is no average visitor. The path to mediocre and uninspiring conversion results is lined with project managers who imagined every visitor would think and behave in exactly the same way. People have varying strategies for accomplishing tasks, conducting research, managing their time and making decisions. The very concept of an average user makes it impossible to construct a persuasive process that will motivate a broad spectrum of individuals. The only thing average about most users is that they bail out in droves, happily abandoning businesses that to not speak to them, understand their needs or provide value.

To acknowledge and intentionally design for individual variation is not a direct-marketing exercise in audience segmentation; it’s a commonsense strategy for selling as face-to-face as you can get in a faceless medium.

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**Personas Development in Persuasion Architecture’s Uncovery Application**
A critical part of the uncovery phase is identifying personas, archetypal fictional characters who represent your buying audience. We use these fully-imagined individuals to plan the click-through-experience models, or persuasion scenarios, each will have on the Web site—scenarios which we then articulate in the wireframe. This integrated and detailed level of planning allows multiple personas to access critical sales-process pages, as well as identifies how to address each persona’s separate needs on that page.

We create personas—generally between three and seven—based on your knowledge of your audience, on actual visitor/customer information from documented experience (for example: customer service interactions, online behavior) and on research that describes the demographic, psychographic, and topologic information related to how people approach the buying decision process for your type of business.

- **Demographic.** What are the attributes of the audience?
- **Psychographic.** What are the psychological dimensions of the buying decision process?
- **Topologic.** How does the nature of your business shape the buying decision process, as well as the demographic and psychographic characteristics of your audience?

When we design personas for persuasive systems, we are primarily interested in understanding how they initiate relationships, how they gather information, how they approach the decision-making process, what language they use, and how they prefer to obtain agreement and closure. These are the principle factors that influence how we choose and connect prospects to content that helps them buy in a manner comfortable to them.

**Narratives**

Your personas are your protagonists. A Persuasion Architect™’s job is to role-play every persona’s experience. Our comprehensive understanding of this story allows us to begin constructing actual scenarios.

The narrative is filled with descriptions of how the protagonists begin their buying processes: to whom they talk, what they think and feel, what they encounter when they visit you and your competitors. It accounts for all possible interactions across all possible channels.
Accounting for these elements allows you to construct a meaningful narrative.

- **Angle of Approach.** What causes the persona to realize they have a need/problem/opportunity? How do they describe that need/solution? (*I just bought a house and I need to mow my lawn*).

- **Alternative Options.** What options does the persona identify to try to fill that need/problem/opportunity? (*I could hire someone to mow my lawn; I could try to borrow my neighbor’s lawn mower; I could buy a lawn mower; I could just let the weeds grow and call it "natural landscaping").

- **Driving Points.** How does the persona learn about the company/product as an option? This can include prior knowledge of the company/product (*I’ve used Toro lawnmowers before*(driving point brand recognition?) or word of mouth (*I hear Toro mowers are good or My neighbor loves his Toro*). Then again, the persona may have no prior knowledge of the product/company (*This search result/consumer report/radio ad about Toro lawnmowers is interesting – I think I’ll investigate*).

- **Stage of the Buying Process.** Where is the persona in the buying process? This can be early (knows nothing about the product or brand), middle (narrowing down choices and comparing options, may have some brand knowledge) or late (knows about the brand and exactly what he/she wants).

- **Buying Process/Needs.** What questions is the persona asking? What are the personas needs, motivations and objections? What are the competitive comparisons?

- **Selling Process/Presentation.** How you address the needs, motivations, objections and competitive comparisons? What does the company know that the customer does not know, but needs to? What questions should the persona be asking?

- **Conversion Goal.** What does the persona want to accomplish? What does the company want to accomplish?

Narratives confirm whether we’ve hit the mark in Uncovery. Through persona-specific narratives, we dramatize the facts and intelligence we’ve gathered in uncovery so we can predict the actions a persona will take and why they will take them. We identify pathways that align the
buying process with the selling process. We begin to establish a structure of measurable conversion points – the definable places we can reference when analyzing whether our predictive models were correct.

In other words, we create plots that start with personas achieving their goals and end with businesses achieving their goals.

A Sample Narrative

David C., a methodical buyer, is early in his buying process – he is going to propose to the woman he loves and wants to get her a diamond engagement ring. He knows he will need to visit a jeweler eventually, but before he speaks with a salesperson, he wants to understand everything he can about diamonds – from diamond quality to cut to sparkle to cost. David needs to make an educated choice so he can feel he has invested his money wisely. He will be meticulous in his research. But in the end, his deepest motivation is to get this wonderful woman to say, “Yes!”

David will want to learn about the “4 Cs” of diamond quality, the difference in diamond shapes, what to look for in diamond settings, how diamonds are certified, what makes a diamond beautiful. David will look for logical explanations – charts and figures that show how these various qualities are measured by gemologists. He will want assurances that his financial situation will not be minimized, and that the business understands and respects his desire to become an informed customer.

Because David prefers to think about his options and is not likely to make an impulsive decision, he may not achieve the business’s ultimate conversion goal of locating an authorized retailer who can show him these diamonds on his first visit. He is more likely, early in the process, to want information he can print out and examine at his leisure. Both the site and the brochure will need to help persuade him to reengage with the business later.

When David returns to the site, he may want to research further, or he may be ready to locate a store near him. The site will want to make its locator obvious, so David can get to it quickly.

Navigating the Uncovery Process

A comprehensive uncovery will unfold as follows:
• **Step 1.** We evaluate the particulars of your business model, your products, your customers, your competitive landscape and existing analytics for your current efforts.

• **Step 2.** We begin to develop a conversion methodology by setting up baseline goals and objectives, documenting current metrics for baseline ‘apples to apples’ comparisons, and identifying Key Performance Indicators.

• **Step 3.** We begin developing personas to better understand your customers as well as develop the strategy and tactics for achieving your business objectives. These personas will help shape more relevant messaging on your site and in your marketing channels. The success of this step depends greatly on acquiring as much information as possible about your customers, especially data that may reveal their motives for purchasing and not purchasing.

• **Step 4.** The fourth and final step in uncovery is developing the precursor of a scenario: the narrative. In this step, we create stories that align the goal of each stage in the personas’ buying processes with a corresponding sales or business objective. The effect is twofold: we understand what we want the persona to do and can begin establishing trackable metrics to ensure predicted scenario behavior will eventually match actual scenario behaviors (see Optimization below). This allows us to plan for ROI.

2. Wireframing

**WIREFRAMING**

- Identify the responsibility of each persuasion entity
- Identify every entry and exit point within the persuasion entity
- Establish persona scenarios (click-through paths)
- Identify calls-to-action
- Identify points-of-resolution
- Identify relevant keywords and key phrases for each page
- Suggest character of persuasive copy

Persuasion Architecture’s Wireframing defines the “what” of the creative process, providing the structure that will deliver the persuasive experience. This is not the form of wireframing most marketing or design people think of. “If you’ve ever seen a wireframe, it’s not too surprising there is a lot of friction between Information Architects (IA) and designers. Most wireframes are grayscale designed web pages. And then the IA says there is no design.”
The Persuasion Architecture wireframe is absolutely critical to persuading your customers; nothing is more important or relevant to planning for conversion. Wireframing is the stage where we concretely define our predictive model and create the detailed, customer-sensitive process that supports the customer’s buying needs and the business’s conversion objectives. Your wireframe is the culmination of the time spent on Uncovery (where you mapped the selling process with the buying process and developed personas). It is a detailed description of the strategy you will take to persuade each persona to navigate your site’s carefully designed conversion scenarios.

**Persuasive Momentum – The Bigger Picture of Conversion**

While the ultimate conversion goal of your persuasive system might be to generate a lead, get someone to register or subscribe or enter a contest or make a purchase, Persuasion Architecture acknowledges that every little step – each click – on the path to the goal is also a point of conversion. You want your Web site to persuade at the level of “micro-actions” as well as “macro-actions.”

*The essence of the Internet experience is how visitors click from one hyperlink to the next. How they feel about that experience is determined by whether each click fulfills their expectations and needs. Satisfaction with each click (a microaction) increases their confidence they’ll get what they came for (the goal or macroaction).*

The click, then, is the essence of your persuasive process. Every click represents a question your visitor is asking. It represents your visitor’s
willingness to try to stay engaged with you. It represents a unique point of conversion. It represents continued persuasive momentum. If your visitors don’t click, communication ceases and persuasive momentum evaporates.

No matter how complex the sale, every persuasive process unfolds click by click, one microaction conversion at a time. Persuasion Architecture is based on this broader understanding of conversion, so you can identify:

- **What actions?** You must look at every single action people will take on your site – first click, last click and all the clicks in between – as a measurable point of conversion in your persuasive process.

- **How will you persuade?** You aren’t simply motivating the close. You are motivating a click and then another click. You must look to the specific copy and content that will persuade people to make conscious decisions to click on the hyperlinks that will take them deeper into your persuasive process.

Persuasion Architecture’s associated applications allow you to manage the complexity of your scenarios, ensuring that your personas are always within a click or two of a macro-action conversion. Persuasion Architecture also helps you guarantee that no click undermines your persuasive momentum by taking a persona to a dead end. The
Persuasion Architecture Pathing application offers you the unique and valuable opportunity to experience the persuasive momentum of a site well before it is built.

*Calls-to-Action, Points-of-Resolution, Resolving Doors*

Wireframing makes the idea of marrying your sales process to their buying decision processes concrete through the use of specific hyperlinks that create and sustain persuasive momentum. The type most people are familiar with are hyperlinks that deal with the sales process: calls-to-action. The one most sites don’t use often enough — points-of-resolution — are links that help visitors in their own buying process.

**Calls-to-Action.** Each step in our sales process requires a visitor to take a specific action. Calls-to-action are the hyperlinks that move your visitor through your sales process — they give your visitors the opportunity to take the action you want them to take. These are the links that are critical to you, the ones you want your visitor to click on.

Calls-to-action are sales process links. We create them by pairing an imperative verb with an implied benefit:

- Locate a retailer near you
- Subscribe to our newsletter
- Compare service plans

**Points-of-Resolution.** Depending where they are in their buying decision process, your visitors will have specific questions they need answered before they can make a decision. You must resolve these questions before you can proceed with the sales process. The nature of the questions depends on the persona — not all personas will require the same information.

Points-of-resolution are the hyperlinks that answer these questions. These links, which have no hierarchical value, help resolve sticking points in the buying decision process. Your prospects are never required to click on a point-of-resolution to move through the sales process; they simply let visitors collect the information they need to feel confident making a decision.

Points-of-resolution are buying decision process links. We create them using nouns and place them where visitors are most likely to ask their questions:
• “You might be surprised by all the industries that have discovered ways to use grommets.”

• “Grommets have improved greatly due to new grommet technology.”

**Resolving Doors.** A point-of-resolution hyperlink takes your prospect to a resolution page, where the question is answered with relevant information. A resolution page can offer additional point-of-resolution hyperlinks—so a path through resolution pages can seem circular. Resolution pages frequently need to link to one another, hence “resolving” door. Think of those hotel lobby revolving doors.

Now think of the nightmare scenario where you’re stuck in one of those doors and can’t get out. You never lead your visitors into a dead end! You must either offer another answer or return your visitor to the sales process.

If at any time, on any resolution page, the prospect feels confident his buying process questions have been answered and is ready to exit, he’ll find carefully worded hyperlinks that lead him back into your sales process. These exit links, worded as a call-to-action, relate more to the sales process than the buying process—they introduce your specific solutions to the questions he is asking.

**Scenarios and Their Components**

A scenario consists of persuasive components that lead a customer to participate in a conversion action. Some of these components will be linear; others will be non-linear. All must be customer-focused—based on how each customer approaches the decision to buy—rather than business-focused.

*And ...*

A scenario provides a structure for the meaningful measurement of customer activity so you can optimize performance.
When we explicitly plan a scenario to meet the needs of marketers, analysts and customers, we call it a “persuasion scenario.” It helps to understand the components that make up this beast.

- **Driving point.** This is the prospecting point, outside the funnel, where a scenario begins. It might be a search engine result, a pay-per-click ad, a print ad or any number of persuasion entities. It may also be the result of branding or a recommendation—things that don’t give us the benefit of direct evidence so we can understand their intentions. For our purposes in defining a scenario, however, the driving point is the place where the customer shows a level of interest in entering the scenario, even if we can’t always measure it.

The reason you must establish a driving point when describing a scenario is to understand the customer’s angle of approach. Knowing the angle of approach gives you better insight into the customer’s motivation.

Think of it as the for-sale sign (measurable) in front of a house or a phone call from a neighbor (not measurable)—the driving point is not the house itself, but the persuasive alert that the house is available.

- **Funnel points.** These are entries to the conversion funnel—a door (perhaps one of many) to the house that’s for sale. At this point, you, the business, are in a position to control and develop the dynamic of the persuasive process. A funnel point might be a landing page or...
main product category page, which essentially functions as a home page would to build persuasive momentum within the scenario itself. For a scenario to be measurable we must be able to identify the funnel point.

In our house analogy, think of the funnel point as making contact with the person selling the home.

- **Points of resolution.** These are your opportunities to provide the information customers may need to answer questions associated with their individual buying processes. Each point of resolution must always connect to a waypoint or a conversion beacon (see below) to ensure the customer never misses an opportunity to convert.

Think of points of resolution as questions a potential house buyer would ask about neighbors, schools or local shopping opportunities.

- **Waypoints.** These are “persuasive touch points”—points of interactivity—that are integral to the seller’s conversion goals, but critical to the needs of a particular customer. Waypoints support the sales process and the conversion goal.

For example, a Methodical, price-conscious homebuyer would wonder about costs, so a waypoint might be a document that answered questions about taxes and maintenance costs for the house.

Points of resolution and waypoints are persuasive components that support the non-linear qualities of the online experience. The order in which a customer hits these points and the actual number of points she interacts with is dynamic. In other words, both allow her to interact with you in a way that feels comfortable to her.

In all this, however, there is a danger in mistaking movement as forward momentum. When we are developing scenarios, we have to be careful not simply to move customers around the information; we must always be trying to move them forward toward their goal.

- **Conversion beacon.** A conversion beacon signals the first (or next) step in a linear process through which a customer must pass to reach the conversion point. Points of resolution and waypoints lead a customer to the conversion beacon, the place where the customer demonstrates the intention to convert.
To persuade customers to make an offer on the home, points of resolution and waypoints would build value for the home; the preparation of an offer would constitute the first conversion beacon. Each step in completing the offer process constitutes another conversion beacon—and the customer must complete each step in order.

In a store, you may enter the conversion beacon when you go to stand at the checkout line, even though you have yet to complete the purchase. Checkout processes for online retails Web sites usually include several conversion beacons.

- **Conversion point.** This is the point where we know with absolute certainty that a customer has successfully completed a persuasion scenario. The conversion point is the entity that gets delivered so that both the customer and the business know conversion has taken place. This entity is usually some form of confirmation.

When the offer for the home is conveyed to the seller, one scenario is now complete (although there are additional scenarios required before the macro-conversion goal of purchasing the home is complete).
Scenarios Have Linear and Non-Linear Aspects

Each component of a persuasion scenario is designed with a customer focus that acknowledges the differing needs of each customer segment, depending on where each is in the buying decision process, and provides persuasive momentum. Into that structure, the scenario incorporates the sales process of the business in a way that benefits customers without undermining their buying decision process. This explicit planning provides exceptional support for the analytic expert’s goal of measuring so marketers and sales people can, in turn, optimize.

**Linear aspects.** The analytics expert describes the success of the linear aspect of a scenario. Linear aspects typically occur at the beginning or at the end of a conversion process.

At the beginning, they could look like this:

- Search engine result (the driving point) to landing page (the funnel point)
  
  or
  
- Banner ad (driving point) to landing page (funnel point)
  
  or
  
- A flier (driving point) to a store (funnel point)

And at the end:

- Shopping Cart (the conversion beacon) to Complete Checkout (conversion point)
  
  or
  
- Form Completion (the conversion beacon) to Confirmation (conversion point)
  
  or
  
- Taking the product to the checkout counter (conversion beacon) to receiving a purchase receipt (conversion point)
Linear aspects of a scenario come into play when customers need to start a conversion process or complete a registration process or checkout process.

**Non-linear aspects.** Many times customers have questions that need to be resolved before they can buy. Answering these questions requires building non-linear qualities into the scenario—these are more difficult, but by no means impossible, to measure.

Customers define the non-linear aspects of a scenario as they navigate your persuasion entities. These scenarios can be explicitly planned or implicit. They do occur randomly even if they were not planned. In a non-linear scenario, you can measure the point at which the customer starts the scenario (the driving point) to the point at which they complete the intended scenario (conversion point), identifying whether or not the customer hits the key value waypoints.

In online persuasive systems, Web analytics can identify the click-through path within the non-linear points of resolution. This helps marketers determine whether they are providing the appropriate content to maintain persuasive momentum.

![Persuasion Architecture's Scenario Pathing Simulator](image)

*A Sample Scenario: Gathering Information*

David C. is going to begin researching the diamond engagement ring for the woman he hopes to marry.
In this scenario, the goal is to help change the angle of David’s perception early in his buying process. You can measure the success of this micro-conversion scenario (the point of which is not necessarily an actual purchase) by looking at whether David accesses a store-locator tool, examining how he interacts with various points of resolution, determining how much time he spends with waypoints, and whether he downloads information documents.

The path of David’s information-gathering scenario might look like this:

- David types “learning about diamonds” into a search engine. The search results constitute the driving point for David’s scenario.

- David selects a link to a website for the Leo Diamond and arrives on a landing page with the heading “How do I choose a diamond?” This landing page is the funnel point for David’s scenario.

- David learns that researching diamonds begins with understanding the “4 Cs,” so he clicks on a link to the “4 Cs.” This is a point of resolution in David’s scenario.

- From a list of other factors David might want to consider in choosing a diamond, he clicks on a link to “diamond settings.” This is another point of resolution in David’s scenario.

- David learns that the setting helps showcase a diamond’s brilliance, which is the essence of a diamond’s beauty. He follows a link to the “beauty of a diamond.” This is a waypoint in David’s scenario.

- David feels there is a lot of information for him to consider, so he clicks on a link to receive a PDF brochure of this information by email. This is a conversion beacon in David’s scenario.

- On the download page, David provides his email address in a form and clicks the submit link. This is another conversion beacon in David’s scenario.

- After the request is processed, David is taken to a screen confirming the file has been sent to him. This is the conversion point for the scenario.

Given David’s persona attributes, the “diamond settings” page of the website was a point of resolution for him – it helps him resolve his
information-gathering questions, but is not primarily a sales process page in his persuasion scenario.

For another persona with different attributes, the “diamond settings” page is a waypoint – presented explicitly as a persuasive sales process page that is sensitive to the individual needs of this particular persona.

Creating the Wireframe

In wireframing you deliberately “map” your sales process to each persona’s buying process. Thus, every wireframed Web page contains the answers to those three questions essential to persuasion:

• Who needs to be persuaded to take action?
• What actions do they need to take to satisfy the objective?
• How do you most effectively persuade them to take action?

Wireframing identifies every entry point and exit point on each page. It answers questions that include: "What actions can be taken here?" "What is the user's state of experience as she enters this page and when she leaves it?" “What role does this page fulfill in advancing the predefined conversion path for this persona? ”

The wireframe focuses on the experiential flow of the site. We meticulously create the path each persona requires to accomplish his or her goals, considering every single click-through possibility in order to fully map the persona scenarios. These scenarios are defined structurally as decision trees in the wireframe.

In the wireframe, we specify the responsibility (objective) of each page and determine which personas will be most likely to visit which pages. There are no pictures, no graphic design, just bare bones text and hyperlinks. You can click the links and see where you go; you can get a feel for the process of the site and help generate useful feedback at a time when changes are easy.

In addition to serving as your primary reference for developing persuasive copy and content, this detailed structure lays the foundation for establishing a comprehensive Web analytics strategy that allow you to track metrics and optimize your site based on those metrics. Persuasion Architecture’s Wireframe application also makes it possible for you to integrate multi-channel marketing (see Persuasion Architecture Beyond Your Web Site).
3. Storyboarding

This developmental phase of Persuasion Architecture focuses on persuasive content, layout and design, “how” you will go about accomplishing the “what” you have meticulously created in the wireframe. You begin to flesh out your wireframe to ensure your Web site not only “speaks” persuasively, but has a persuasive atmosphere and an appropriate look and feel based on aesthetic and scientific principles of color theory and eyetracking. Rather than take the traditional approach of designing the look/feel and then fitting persuasion processes to this, we begin by defining the processes that are the backbone of your business imperative. With a thorough understanding and solid structure in place, we can then design the look/feel to support and enhance the persuasion process and conversion.

Persuasion Architecture’s Storyboard Summary Page

Persuasion Architecture’s Storyboard Element Copy Page
Storyboarding unfolds in the following order:

• **Step 1.** Persuasive Copy. We identify everything that must be written for the persuasive system, incorporating everything we developed and conceptualized in the wireframe (incorporating the persuasive text, keywords and sales strategy.)

• **Step 2.** Layout/Storyboard. We develop a mockup of the visual aspects of the layout. Several elements will be considered: branding, navigation, page titles, header graphics, and footers, which include copyrights and privacy notices. After key elements are identified, we assign each element a priority so we know which elements need the most emphasis and where these elements belong.

• **Step 3.** Design in Grayscale. This is the first part of the phase in which we start designing for aesthetics. This mockup will be in grayscale so we can assess how the composition of the piece works without the emotional influence of color. If it looks good in black and white, you've probably got a design that can come alive with the judicious use of color.

• **Step 4.** Design with Color Application. This is where we focus on the mood and impact color can create. Better use of color means a better Web page or site. Your template will carry a color scheme from the landing page to the exit page, creating a cohesive look and feel for your site.

• **Step 5.** HTML Development. Once the color mockup is completed, we can now turn this image into an HTML document. Considerations addressed include download time, compatibility with multiple browsers, use of cascading style sheets for simplicity and congruence with Web standards, laying out of tables based on how search engines spider a Web site, and choosing fonts that can be read easily on a computer screen.

4. **Prototyping**

We borrow yet another design pattern from the field of Architecture: when architects prototype, they develop a full model of the final building that is accurate in virtually all aspects except scale. Developing this operational model of the application will allow you to see exactly how the system looks and functions. The goal is to evolve towards a prototype which is indistinguishable, from the user’s standpoint, from the final Web site.
Now is the time to make changes - it's still easy and cheap because nothing has been spent on programming. Look at things from different angles; solicit opinions from staff and end users. Iterate as often as it takes for the application to be right.

5. Development

The goal of Development is to deliver the finished, fully-functional product. Because planning, design iterations, and all the specifications have been finalized, your technology team or third-party developer can undertake programming without having to make decisions that could undermine your business objectives. Evolving technology will always shape the possibilities for your online persuasive entities, but it should never override or become a replacement for your business acumen.

Your careful planning ensures that developers can happily go about doing what they do best: making technology work for you. Additional benefits of detailed planning through Persuasion Architecture include cost control, a faster turn-around for the deliverable and a deliverable that is exactly what you expected.

6. Optimizing

You now have a finished product that offers a meaningful starting point for testing and measuring. Your ongoing optimization efforts will require monitoring your Web analytics to evaluate the effectiveness of the pre-determined scenarios that were defined during Wireframing. Testing and measuring in order to optimize is the only way you come full circle in Persuasion Architecture – the only way you can determine how closely you are meeting your objectives and how you can improve your results on every page that doesn’t meet its responsibilities.

Applying Persuasion Architecture to web marketing makes everything measurable (although not all data yield useful information!). The result is a Six Sigma process that enables continuous improvement.
You create the system your visitor must navigate. People don't cause defects, systems do.

W. Edwards Deming, Total Quality Management Guru

Anything that results in a lower level of customer satisfaction or a lost customer is a defect, a flaw in the sales process. When a visitor doesn't convert, your Web site has a service defect, and your processes don't deliver on your promise to customers or prospects. At least, that's how you'd look at things if you applied a Six Sigma discipline to your Web site.

Six Sigma is a measure of quality that strives for near-perfection. It's a disciplined, data-driven approach and methodology to eliminate defects in any process (driving toward six standard deviations between the mean and the nearest specification limit). It can be applied from manufacturing to transactional businesses, from products to services.

Six Sigma provides a framework to determine and prioritize what's mission-critical. Underlying the approach is a structure that uses measurements before, during, and after site development. Six Sigma works for any area where problems can impact customer perception of quality. Most failures in getting a customer to convert (to a sale, lead, subscription, registration, etc.) stem from perception of lack of value, trust, confidence, security, or relevance.

Six Sigma is an ideal, particularly in a service environment such as a Web site. The term literally means 3.4 or fewer errors per million opportunities (99.9997 percent accuracy). You're probably thinking, "That's not possible, or even applicable to conversion rates. I can't convert everyone."

In Persuasion Architecture, the goal is to predict a non-linear, but non-random, constellation of clicks. Six Sigma allows us to measure the deviation from our predictions.

Wireframing is the stage where we concretely define our predictive model and create the detailed, customer-sensitive process that supports the customer's buying needs and the business's conversion objectives. If we subsequently discover through analytic evaluation that our predictions were incorrect, we can first turn to our creative to determine if that truly supports the strategies we've defined. If that doesn't yield
productive results, we then challenge the assumptions we built into the creative.

Don’t get caught up in the number; it’s not representative of the complete methodology. It’s like a glass being half full or half empty. If we focus on an average 2 percent conversion rate, the best we’ll get is incremental improvement.

To achieve outstanding results, look at things from the other side. What happened to the other 98 percent who left not yet ready to buy, intend to return, are still researching; or were disappointed or dissatisfied?

There are plenty of sites out there with conversion rates in the 10 to 40 percent range. Many more can convert 80 percent or more of their search engine traffic for specific key terms and optimized landing pages. Six Sigma is meant to drive sustained improvement in productivity, customer satisfaction and loyalty to reduce cost and increase revenue and profit.
Managing the complexity of Web site development provided the inspiration for Persuasion Architecture, and it isn’t a difficult stretch to understand the mechanics of this unique methodology when you think of a persuasive process in terms of hyperlink to hyperlink—click to click. But online initiatives rarely exist in a marketing vacuum.

The strength and beauty of Persuasion Architecture lies in its ability to manage a broader marketing picture in terms of cognitive process to cognitive process—the ability to persuade across venues in a multi-channel world. Any marketing activity that seeks to persuade, whether it is online or offline, will benefit from integration through Persuasion Architecture.

**Persuasion entities**

Points of interactivity—touch points—occur throughout a persuasive system, and take many forms: A Web page, an e-mail, a snail-mail letter, a banner ad, an out-bound telemarketing call, a billboard, a television commercial, the packaging of a product, a sales conversation . . . whatever medium you choose to engage your audience.

How do you know which medium is the most effective for a particular message to a particular customer? By mapping the cognitive process of the buyer first, we can determine what persuasion entity will best satisfy the goal. The interactive map helps us to begin sorting these details.
Persuasion Architecture’s Wireframing application provides for the management of Persuasion Entities and allows you to develop them in harmony with each other. These Entities include: Web pages, emails, banner ads, broadcast and cable television, radio, pay-per-click, telephone contact, CRM campaign, live chat, IVR, salesperson, search engine result, direct mail, Overture, AdWords, demonstration and others.

Each entity—whether a TV ad, banner ad, or Google AdWord—sets up a different expectation, will be seen in a different context and will likely trigger different responses. Each touch point with your audience provides an opportunity to persuade. A Persuasion Architect’s job is to map the cognitive processes that are going to help customers reach the goal that is both theirs and ours. Persuasion Architecture can synthesize your marketing strategies based on the personas you have developed and help you maximize the potential for conversion every time one touch point hands over to the next.
PERSUASION ARCHITECTURE DELIVERS

The world can be seen as only connections, nothing else... A piece of information is really only defined by what it’s related to, and how it’s related. There really is little else to meaning. The structure is everything.

Tim Berners-Lee, Weaving the Web

Individuals who come to you are not looking for persuasion; most people don’t mind being “sold,” but ultimately, they are all looking for relevance. Your ability to persuade them and satisfy their needs depends entirely on your ability to provide relevance at every turn. When you satisfy your visitors’ needs, you satisfy your business objectives: your conversion rates improve dramatically.

By making your prospects the driving force behind your persuasive system, Persuasion Architecture delivers the improved conversion rates that are the ultimate measure of your success. When you focus on Persuasion Architecture:

• You don’t just get more sales -- you get more sales from your existing traffic. There’s no need to increase your marketing expenses.

• Your customer acquisition cost goes down.

• Your customer retention rate goes up.

• Your customer lifetime value goes up.

The results of Persuasion Architecture are durable – they outlast the vicissitudes of temporary campaign strategies. Persuasion Architecture insures you will create a persuasive system with clearly defined objectives, a structure that improves conversion and ROI, and a fully accountability entity that allows you to test, measure and optimize so you can manage intelligently.

If businesses ranging from one-person shops to international corporations can apply the principles of Persuasion Architecture to achieve dramatic results, you can too. Our process is proven. It incorporates software applications developed specifically for creating persuasive systems. And it is accessible, even for those who possess no technological expertise.
Are you ready to let Persuasion Architecture deliver for you?

If you would like to learn more about optimizing for conversion and planning for Persuasion Architecture, we encourage you to read Call to Action: Secret Formulas to Improve Online Results and Waiting for Your Cat to Bark?: Persuading Customers When They Ignore Marketing. Both books are authored by Bryan Eisenberg and Jeffrey Eisenberg, with Lisa T. Davis.

A Quotation from a Client of Persuasion Architecture

We met Bryan and Jeffrey Eisenberg [years] ago. They were referred to us by a very creative and insightful marketing consultant who knew we were struggling with creating a meaningful brand presence for Leo Schachter Diamonds online. Eighty percent of all prospective diamond purchasers go online for information about products, their features and benefits, pricing, etc. Before we meet the Eisenbergs, Leo Schachter was not on the consumer’s online "radar screen", demonstrated by marginal site traffic and meaningless visitor conversion rates.

In after just three months of their advice and guidance, we were able to architect and design a new brand site that now is regarded as the "poster child" for all online diamond brand sites in the industry. Their consumer-centric "persuasion architecture" process was the key in making the seemingly complex overhaul very simple. The project also cost less than we ever imagined. The experience was relatively simple and intuitive. In hindsight this makes sense since persuasion architecture has been founded on sound marketing and business "best practices". We started with the basics, setting objectives for the project that led to the development of multi-dimensional consumer personas we needed to influence. This led to building a mosaic of messages that we knew would be compelling to each persona in the purchase process. It is difficult to imagine that such a painless and logical approach would spawn the extraordinary results we continue to experience in qualified traffic and conversion.

This association has also resulted in overall enhancement of ROI for our overall marketing spend. The key metric? We directly attribute the "persuasion architecture" process, combined with Jeffrey and Bryan’s project "navigation" expertise, for conversion rates that have risen from under 1% to over 50%! Future Now made it easy for us to de-mystify the "smoke and mirrors" promoted by the typical, generic creative,
direct marketing and marketing communications resources that populate this space. Many people who know Future Now would refer to the company as being provocative. We do not. Rather, we see them as the voice in the cyber-wilderness that can finally make business sense of the role this difficult issue plays in any enterprise. If we were asked how we regard Future Now ... as a resource, we see them as a strategically relevant, creatively unexpected "secret weapon" in helping Leo Schachter maintain its #1 brand ranking in the evolving branded diamond category.”

John Marchese, Executive Director, Marchese Associates, Former Chairman & CEO, 141 Worldwide (currently a division of WPP)
ENDNOTES

1 MAP™ is a patent pending business process of Persuasion Architecture, Inc., a subsidiary of Future Now, Inc.


5 Also Andrew Jackson Downing, Calvert Vaux, Ebenezer Howard.

6 http://www.fredericklawolmsted.com/Lifeframe.htm.

7 “Learning from traditional architects.” Lorraine Johnston. Swinburne University of Technology, School of Information Technology. Hawthorn, Australia.


9 Christina Wodtke, Senior Design Manager, Yahoo! and author of Information Architecture: Blueprints for the Web.

ABOUT FUTURE NOW, INC.

Judge a man by his questions, rather than by his answers.”

VOLTAIRE

Driven by the question “Why do people do what they do?” the team at Future Now, Inc. focuses on helping our clients better understand their customers and converting that insight into profits.

Founded in 1998 by Bryan and Jeffrey Eisenberg, Future Now, Inc. is a New York City based consulting firm. Future Now, Inc. is largely recognized a leading voice for increasing online conversion rates, accountable multi-channel marketing and web analytics.

Our Passion

Our company thrives on three core values.

• Curiosity - We never stop seeking better answers, seeking interesting perspectives, and generating practical new ideas.

• Integrity - We have a passion for uncovering what is true, real, and knowable even when it’s not the conclusion we hoped for.

• Loyalty - There are things more important than gain at the expense of compromised values and divisiveness.

Behind Future Now, Inc.

Led by two time New York Times, Business Week and Wall Street Journal bestselling authors, Bryan and Jeffrey Eisenberg, our team is a tight-knit, colorful group of experts from a wide palette of disciplines: interactive media, human behavior, online strategy, business development, communications and technology, our team has decades of combined experience. What we all share is a passion for our company’s core values, and a camaraderie scarce in the business world.

With our patent-pending Persuasion Architecture methodology and proven conversion rate optimization services, our team helps clients define and surpass their goals—online and off.
Our Reputation & Track Record


Future Now, Inc.'s services include company-wide strategic consulting, campaign specific consulting, and ongoing optimization for long-term engagements. We also offer free and low-cost resources for the do-it-yourselfer, mid four-figure conversion assessments, low-to-mid five figure persuasion scenario assessments, low-to-mid six-figure Persuasion Architecture planning and architectures.

Holistic Approach, Better Results

Future Now, Inc. views persuasion and conversion from a global perspective. While other firms claim the ability to increase conversion, it is usually because they have highly-specialized expertise that at best improve your overall sales efforts incrementally. Our philosophy is quite different. Rather than focusing solely on the technical aspects of how your customers buy, we are able to dramatically improve overall conversion rates by adjusting your entire sales process through the eyes of your customers. We believe technology should follow people, not the other way around.

Like you, your customers are three-dimensional, living human beings. Links manifest their choices; clicks evidence their decisions. We help you sell by creating persuasive systems that help your visitors choose to buy.

There are plenty of talented interactive marketing professionals in our industry; in fact, we'll gladly recommend them to you if we’re not a good match. Still, when choosing the right firm to meet your online goals, it’s important to know where a narrow focus can blur the big picture:

• Design firms won't tell you that anything beyond "professional" design won't increase profits.
Usability firms won't tell you that usability is like dial-tone; you only miss it when it's not there.

Analytics and Testing firms won't tell you that traditional A/B and multivariate tests don't help with complex scenarios that were unplanned to begin with.

Search Engine Marketing firms and Online Agencies won't tell you how to convert the traffic they drive.

User Experience firms won't tell you that experience does not equal persuasion, nor that effective persuasion implicitly leads to effective usability.

**Our History**

Future Now, Inc. began in 1998 as a kitchen table operation in Brooklyn, New York. At the time the Internet world was obsessed with “eyeballs” and the Eisenbergs were disgusted at the sheer volume of capital being thrown at Internet sites without regard to return. Shortly thereafter the Dot Com boom became the Dot Bomb.

During those tight years the small and committed Future Now, Inc. team was notching up success after success, teaching those who would listen, refining our process, and together with John Quarto-vonTivadar doing the hard work of developing Persuasion Architecture. By 2001 the company had celebrated a move into a dedicated office in a basement below a residence on 24th Street.

Today Future Now, Inc. publications enjoy a readership of over 100,000. Our team and organization have grown, our client list has expanded, and we have since moved into a spacious office in Brooklyn’s historic Red Hook district.

**Persuading Your Visitors to Take Action**

Persuasion Architecture combines the best of these disciplines into one comprehensive process that includes:

- Relentless devotion to ROI
- Psychology & neuroscience
- Marketing & sales strategy
- Linguistics & search engine principles
• Graphic design & aesthetics
• Usability & heuristic analysis
• Data mining & analysis
• Persuasive copywriting & editing
• Testing & optimization methodologies
• Training backed by our experts’ proven track-record

Future Now, Inc. first described the Persuasion Architecture methodology of converting online traffic in 1998; publishing over 200 columns, 200 articles and 3 books on the subject. Marketers worldwide have used our methods to boost their site conversion rates, and we have trained dozens of clients and licensees to optimize their websites on their own.

What Future Now, Inc. Can Do for You

We invite you to learn more about our services as they relate to:

• Completing purchases - lowering your abandonment rates and increasing sales
• Lead generation - turning more site visitors into business leads
• Driving customers across channels - enhancing your brand affinity and increasing value

If you would like help evaluating which options might be best for you, please contact us or call (877) 643-7244. We do not have salespeople, so there will never be a "sales pitch."

Our Professional Memberships

Professional organization memberships include:

• Founders and Chairman of the Web Analytics Association
• Associate members of Shop.org
• Charter member of the WebTrends Insight Network
• Members of the Word of Mouth Marketing Association
• Members of the Advertising Research Federation
• Members of the Asilomar Institute for Information Architecture
• Members of the Usability Professionals Association
• Members of the American Society for Quality