

How to Choose a Copy or Content Writer



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**raspberry
flamingo™**
copywriting and
content marketing

Introduction

Working with the right copywriter or content writer for your business will make all the difference.

You may want to outsource for time reasons... you may want a professional writer as you don't feel you have that skill... you may know you need to publish content regularly for Google but not have the first idea on what it should be.

Whatever your situation, having the right copy and content for your business will generate results in leads, enquiries, and sales. And that means an increase in business and profits, propelling you towards your goals.

So, how do you choose the right person, or company, to bring onboard?

Further into this document I'll provide you with a few example questions to ask, but first I need to explain what you need to know so you can judge the answers you receive.



The Essential Knowledge

Copy and content are different.

The strange thing is that a new wave of individuals calling themselves copywriters are emerging and they don't actually seem to know the difference. Many of them are not copywriters, they're content writers.

Direct Response Copywriting sells. It elicits an immediate response. An example of this is a Sales Page. In the UK a Sales Page is the equivalent of what the US calls a Sales Letter. It's an online page (may be on your website, may be a standalone page) on which you want the reader to hit the 'Buy It Now' button. They're often very long – up to 5000 words – and follow a very specific structure to take the reader through a range of emotions to make them want to solve their problem immediately by buying now!

Content, on the other hand, educates. It may well have gentle sales messages within it, but it is certainly not positioned to sell immediately. Content includes blogs, articles, social media posts, ebooks, lead magnets, and any other form of text which provides someone with valuable information whilst gently promoting your product or service.

Now there always has to be one anomaly doesn't there. In this case, it's website copy.

I call website copy 'soft copy'. It's not the hard sell of Direct Response Copy, but it's certainly not content. Your website copy has to elicit a response too, but often that will be to make an enquiry, book an appointment, ask for a quotation, etc... rather than '*hand over your cash now*'!

So...

If you are talking to prospective writers and they call themselves copywriters, but they write blogs... well I'd see that as a red flag.

Raspberry Flamingo provides a blog writing service for its clients, but I don't write them because I'm a Direct Response Copywriter by training and I find writing long form content to educate takes me twice as long as it should! And I'm not about to charge our clients double because it's not my personal thing! I proofread and edit the blogs that my team write, making sure the SEO is spot on...

In fact, whilst we're on that subject...



On-Page SEO

There are three types of SEO.

1. Technical SEO - is for your website developer to deal with (unless you have a techy brain and like these things of course.)
2. Off-Page SEO - is out there for everyone and is something you can most certainly influence, but I won't get into it here because, whilst I personally fully understand it, it's not generally necessary for a copywriter or content writer to.
3. On-Page SEO – now this is the baby your writer needs to be an expert in.

Let me explain.

You may well have heard of 'keywords'... but just in case...

A 'keyword' is a word or phrase that your prospective customer would enter into a search bar online. It could be 'How do I make a Will' or 'How much will it cost to rewire my house?'

You can have both primary and secondary keywords on one page/blog.

Now most writers will know about keywords – *one caveat to that is that a Direct Response Copywriter who only writes Sales Pages won't need to use keywords and so may not* – HOWEVER, many seem to think that just plonking keywords in the text is all you have to do.

It's NOT.

Google require keywords to be strategically placed on a page (whether website page or blog) and used in a certain density of the overall wordcount. Get this right and... well, our clients often see their blogs being returned in the top five search results within days of being published.

The second, but equally important part of On-Page SEO is the number of fresh words you publish per month. Google would like you to publish approx. 2000 words of fresh content per month, and that doesn't include any changes to existing web pages.

The third part of On-Page SEO is the length of website page copy. Google has a minimum number of words it requires on a web page, but it also has a preferred length which is quite a bit higher than the minimum.

Google likes 'long form text' for both web pages and blogs because, if the keywords are used correctly, it gives their bots chance to establish that you are genuinely an expert on the subject being written about.

The final thing to consider is your 'bounce rate'. If someone finds your site (page or blog) and only spends time on that one page before leaving the site, it's called a bounce off. So, you want to have links to other pages within your text – but at the bottom so they read the whole thing before visiting another part of your site.

Writing Style

Your writer should not have 'a style'. This is not about them – it's about YOU and your TARGET AUDIENCE.

It's also worth noting that the style you would consider to be right for your business, may not be the style which will attract your audience.

A skilled writer, whether copy or content, will write in a style that attracts your audience, not you. Where your audience are based may have implications on the style of writing too.

One client I wrote a website for was a Fire Risk Consultant. He had been very senior in the Fire Service prior to retirement and his old website was extremely professional in it's tone.

When I sent him a draft of the first couple of pages for his new site his comments were something like *'I feel a little uncomfortable with the style of writing as it's so far from how I would write. I'm not saying it's wrong, but could you explain your rationale for it?'*

I explained to him that as I understood it his target market were companies that were not big enough to have their own Estates Department responsible for Fire Risk. He confirmed that was correct. So, I then asked him to confirm that whilst it was likely to be the MD or business owner who actually approved his services, it would more than likely be their secretary or assistant who did the initial investigations to find his services online. The penny dropped with him at that moment! The website needed to be in a language and style which was attractive to the secretary, not the MD.

He allowed me to continue and, a month after the website was launched, I got a message to say he'd had more new enquiries through the website in that month than ever before. (I'm not taking all the credit here – his web developer did an awesome job on the technical SEO and design of the site too... but it is what someone reads on the page that makes them decide to enquire and not leave the site and look for another one!)

To give you an example of how geographical location of your target audience may affect the style, I'll use one of our client's who is an online baby clothes retailer. We write her regular blogs and they're friendly and down to earth and feel like she's personally putting her thoughts and feelings down on paper, so to speak. But when she was offered an opportunity to feature in a very prestigious magazine aimed at Mums in Chelsea, London, we needed to change the style slightly! It was a fantastic success and she sold out of the items we featured.



Questions to ask a prospective copy or content writer

Are you a copywriter or a content writer?

They should specify one or the other, not both. If they say copywriter but then go on to tell you they write blogs then they've either misunderstood what a copywriter does and are really a content writer or they're trying to cover both angles, which in my experience won't get you the best results.

What's your style of writing?

They should say they don't have one – they write in a style which is appropriate for your target audience. If they tell you their style – make very sure it's right for your audience before you engage them.

Where did you train?

Many people have taken to writing as it's something you can do part time or if they've suddenly found themselves out of work. A good writer doesn't have to have taken a formal course, but if they are a copywriter, I would have expected either advertising agency experience or training. Whether copy or content, you want your writer to have good English language qualifications, experience in writing for sales and/or marketing, and to be able to show you examples of their work.

For example, I trained in an advertising agency originally. I also have a Masters Degree in Communication Studies. When I came to set Raspberry Flamingo up, I undertook a Direct Response Copywriting course as a refresher. However, I know a recent marketing graduate who was told that both copy and content were the same thing and you should call yourself a copywriter – when I asked if they had covered direct response copy on her course, the answer was no!

Can you show me relevant examples of your work?

This is an interesting question. Once a writer's work is published on their client's website, Google knows. So, we can't also publish it as a portfolio as it becomes duplicate text which is a huge red flag for Google. Also though, in my experience, it's really hard to send a prospective client 'relevant' examples. As we write in a style which is appropriate for each individual client, a prospective client may not think the examples we send are right for them. If a prospective client insists on seeing work, I send a wide range of different business types

to them and explain that versatility is everything and so nothing I send to them will be perfect for their target audience.

What is your understanding of SEO in your writing?

If they don't use the term 'on-page SEO' this could be an indication they don't understand the different elements of SEO.

If they talk about keywords, ask how they use them in the writing – if they indicate they just include them or they say they pack them in as often as possible, they don't understand positioning or density and so your copy/content won't be as powerful from an SEO point of view in Google's eyes.

They should mention primary and secondary keywords, positioning, density and wordcount.

How long should my webpage/blog be?

Webpages should be an absolute minimum of 300 words long but nearer to the 500 words mark where possible. Your writer should inform you of this requirement. (Please note this doesn't apply to ecommerce websites – there's a whole different set of requirements there.)

For blogs there isn't really a minimum word count per blog post. It's more about trying to achieve the 2000 words per month in total. However, Google loves long-form-text, and that's 1000 words plus. An SEO blog writer would know this.

The caveat here is to consider your audience. If your audience is more academic and used to reading long documents, then make your blogs as long as you want them to be. But if not, aim for approx. 1000 words - you don't want them much longer than that or the reader could lose interest.

Should I have links in my webpage/blog and where should they be?

Firstly, any links should be to other pages on your website, not to external sites that take your visitors away!

Secondly, your writer should also explain to you that you don't want them early on in the text – obvious really as if someone clicks through to another page, they're unlikely to return to the original one they were reading. Your writer should know to place links towards the bottom of the page/post.

So, there you have it. You now know the questions to ask and the answers you're looking for.

How much importance you put on the different areas really depends on your priorities for your copy and content.

If you want to be found in organic searches, then the SEO is just as important as the tone and style.

If I can be of any more help please let me know.

Claire



How to work with me

'Done with you'

Jump on a one hour zoom call where we will review your existing copy and/or content and make changes to ensure it performs how you wish it to.

To book: <https://calendly.com/claire-at-raspberryflamingo/one-hour-content-and-on-page-seo-review>

'Done for you'

If you'd like the Raspberry Flamingo team to write your SEO website copy, SEO blogs, lead magnets/ebooks, email campaigns, sales pages, business award entries... or any other sales or marketing words, then please book a 1-2-1 connection meeting where we can discuss how we can help.

To book: <https://calendly.com/claire-at-raspberryflamingo/60min>

Training and Consultancy

If you're an employer of a Communications Manager/Content Manager who would like to ensure they're up to speed and creating the best copy and content for your business, then please get in touch. I often spend half or a whole day in my clients' businesses for this reason.

To book a call: <https://calendly.com/claire-at-raspberryflamingo/60min>