

Bermuda Yellow Pages: Guide to Web Copy

What is a Copydeck?

A copydeck is a document containing all of the necessary content for a copywriting project (ex: web build).

The components of the copydeck are as follows:

- Title
- SEO keywords and keyword phrases
- Page titles (ex: Home, About Us, Contact Us, etc)
- Page numbers
- Meta tags (Title Tag, H1, Meta Description Tag)
- Page content

The copydeck provides the written content and SEO details for each page of an internal or a client's website. It is inserted into the staging site by the designer following approval, which is to be discussed in more detail later on.

Web Copy

Best Practices

According to an online study by Jakob Nielsen, web users read approximately 28% of the words on a page. This is one of the reasons why it is so important for web copy to be clear and concise. The best web copy *converts*, which means encourages the reader to follow through on a Call To Action, whether it's to contact the company to enlist their services, request an estimate or sign-up for an email newsletter.

1. Be Clear and Concise

Great copywriting is persuasive. Strive for clarity, bypassing the technical jargon in favour of simple, accessible terms. Use verbs to stay on point and convey energy and excitement without getting long winded.

2. Keep it Short

Ensure that web copy is easy to read by utilizing headings, bullet points and short paragraphs. Headings provide an effective outline of the page while bullet points and short paragraphs break up the text and promote readability by making it easier to scan and digest.

3. Know Your Audience

Who is your dream customer and what do they do (for work and fun)? Ensure that your copy is relevant and targeted to *them*. Keep in mind their age bracket, what's important to them and the products and services they use.

4. Impact Emotions

Great copywriting compels readers via a distinctly emotional experience. Capitalize on emotions already present in a given scenario instead of attempting to create a certain feeling. For example, if you're writing Web copy for a product that solves a problem for a niche group such as web professionals, speak to the frustrated developer who's just run into the same issue *again*. Making a reader truly feel something communicates productively and on a human level.

5. Write Effective Headlines

A killer headline draws readers in. According to Copyblogger, an average of 8 out of 10 people will read a headline while only 2 of them will read the remaining copy. A great first impression improves your odds of gaining wider exposure. Follow the 4 U's Formula; turn a good headline into a great one by making it urgent, unique, useful and ultra-specific. For example, compare the headlines "How to Make Good Copywriting Better" and "5 Tips to Make Good Copywriting Great." Which are you more likely to click on?

6. Read It Out Loud

Evaluate your web copy by reading it out loud. Opt for a conversational tone and, when in doubt, have a colleague or friend do the same; they might hear something you don't.

Where Does the Content Come From?

When writing a copydeck for a client, the information for the copy comes from the Web Design Brief (WDB) as well as, in some cases, research conducted by the copywriter. The WDB provides a wide range of important details including tag lines, facts, products, services, etc. In situations where the WDB does not provide enough information to effectively write the copy, the copywriter will do additional research online into the industry and may also request specific information from the client.

From Scratch vs. Rebuild

While most copydecks are written from scratch (meaning the copywriter starts with a blank copydeck and writes the content themselves), some projects taken on by BYP are "rebuilt" of current websites. In this case, the copywriter will conduct keyword research and write meta tags, followed by *importing* the content provided by the client (often from their current, out-of-date website) and editing it, as well as adding SEO keywords. This process is often quicker than writing from scratch as the majority of the content has already been written.

What is Search Engine Optimization (SEO)?

SEO, or Search Engine Optimization, is defined as the process of editing a website or web page to affect its visibility in the search results pages (SERPs) of a search engine like Google or Bing. The higher, or earlier, it appears in the search results the better.

"White Hat" SEO tactics include producing fresh, engaging and relevant content (such as blog posts), well-designed websites and solid strategies. "Black Hat" SEO tactics, which are generally frowned upon, include adding extra keywords to web pages and creating content aimed at search engines instead of potential customers.

“On-Page SEO” refers to optimizing the content of a website, including text, images, tags, internal links, headers and more. “Off-Page SEO” refers to offline strategies for achieving a higher search engine ranking, including high quality link building, a social media presence, blogging and video.

What is a Keyword?

In the context of SEO, a keyword is a word or phrase that describes the contents of a webpage. They help search engines like Google and Bing match webpages to appropriate search queries. A topic of significance, searchers use keywords as a way to identify the topic on which they're looking for more information.

Head Term

A head term is a keyword phrase that is short and generic, such as “blogging.” Searched more frequently than long-tail keywords, they are often harder to rank for in search engines and more competitive.

Long-Tail

Long-tail keywords are keyword phrases typically containing three or more words such as “how to write a fantastic blog post.” They typically have lower search volume than head terms but generate more beneficial traffic.

Keyword Research

The term 'keyword research' refers to figuring out which keywords to target with web copy, which is often also the job of the copywriter. The goal of keyword research is to source keywords and keyword phrases (related to a company's products, services, etc) that will help a business's website rank in Google. The keywords are then inserted into the meta tags (discussed below) and the web copy itself.

Conduct keyword research quickly and efficiently by following these steps:

The Right Steps

1. List Relevant Topics

Keyword research begins with listing out topics that are relevant to the company at hand. For example, an optometrist's office might have topics like “optometry,” “eye examinations,” “prescription eyeglasses,” “glasses,” “sunglasses” and more.

2. Brainstorm Keywords

Keywords are then brainstormed to fit under each topic. For example, for an optometrist's office in Bermuda, the keywords under the topic “optometry” might include “optometry Bermuda,” “Bermuda optometry,” “Bermuda optometrist,” “Bermuda optometrists,” “optometrists in Bermuda,” “Bermuda optometry office” and more.

3. Research Related Terms

Researching related terms is a great way to fill out those lists of keywords. For inspiration, check out related websites or search the term you're looking to expand on Google – scroll to the bottom to find suggestions for searches related to your original search term.

4. Review

Stop what you're doing and review your keywords to ensure that there is a mix of both head terms and long-tail keywords. This contributes to a balanced keyword strategy,

5. Utilize Google Analytics

Google Analytic's *Keyword Planner* is a useful tool for researching search volumes and competition. Able to be narrowed down by place, such as Bermuda, search volume refers to how many searches of the keyword in question are conducted in the geographical area per month. It also lists competition. While high competition means that many other websites are also trying to rank for that keyword, low competition means fewer websites are trying to rank for that keyword.

As a general rule, it is best to use specific keywords with low competition that have a middle-ground search volume – not too high, not too low. This is a great way to narrow down your list of terms and choose keywords that will truly help the customer get found online.

6. Insert Into Copydeck

The keywords are then taken and inserted into the web copy itself as well as into the meta tags for each webpage. At this step it is important to keep keyword density in mind, which is the percentage of times that a head term or long-tail keyword appears on a webpage compared to the total number of words on the page. It's important to remember that when it comes to SEO, less is more. Writing for the reader, and focusing on web copy best practices, is in your best interest.

About Meta Tags

Meta tags are optional page descriptors that provide search engines with valuable information about a website. In a BYP copydeck, webpages are formatted to display the *Title Tag*, *H1* and *Meta Description Tag* at the top of the main copy, or content.

Title Tags

The Title Tag is found in the head block of the page. Not an actual meta tag, the Title Tag is a required page element. General best practices state that the Title Tag should include the name of the business in question, the location, as well as any relevant keywords that fit within a limit of 55 characters.

An example Title Tag from a web copydeck is below:

Title Tag: Local Search, Bermuda Search, BYP | Bermuda Yellow Pages

An example Title Tag in HTML is below:

<title>local search, bermuda search, BYP | bermuda yellow pages</title>

The Title Tag appears as the title of your webpage when your website is listed in the Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs) – it is the hyperlink the user clicks to go to your website from the Google listings. When a user is visiting the webpage, the Title Tag appears in the title bar at the top of the web browser. It also provides a default bookmark title.

H1

The H1 tag is the header, or headline, of the page. It appears within the webpage as opposed to within the search results and is used to create a page title. The H1 tag should also be limited to 55 characters.

For both the Title Tag and H1, it is important to include the primary keyword for the webpage and to place the keyword early on in the tag and use it only once.

An example H1, or Header Tag, from a web copydeck is below:

H1: Local Focus with a Global Reach

An example H1, or Header Tag, in HTML is below:

<h1>local focus with a global reach</h1>

Meta Description

The Meta Description Tag has an optimal length of 150 - 160 characters and is key to gaining user click-through via SERPs. A short paragraph, this tag advertises the content of the webpage to searchers and must utilize relevant keywords in an effective manner. Each meta description tag must be unique and directly relevant to the page in question.

An example Meta Description Tag from a web copydeck is below:

Meta Description Tag: A complete digital solutions provider, Yabsta develops strategies based specifically on your needs, leveraging the global power of the Yabsta Network.

An example Meta Description Tag in HTML is below:

<meta name="description" content="A complete digital solutions provider, Yabsta develops strategies based specifically on your needs, leveraging the global power of the Yabsta Network.">

An example of the meta tags altogether as seen within Yabsta web copydecks is below:

Title Tag: Web Design, Absolute Local Search | Yabsta Digital

H1: Local Focus with a Global Reach

Meta Description Tag: A complete digital solutions provider, Yabsta develops strategies based specifically on your needs, leveraging the global power of the Yabsta Network.

Yabsta's Process

Kick-Off Meeting

For all web copy projects, it is best to lead with a kick-off meeting involving sales, copywriting, design and, in some cases, the client. Everyone involved is able to review the collateral provided by sales and the client (the Web Design Brief, images, etc), discuss the project and get on the same page prior to beginning. If the client is involved, design and copywriting can ask for clarification, additional info, etc as needed.

What is Chelsea's Role?

As Yabsta's main copywriter, I handle all stages of the copywriting process: the kick-off meeting, discussions with clients, keyword research, meta tags, web copy (written from scratch, editing and in between) and revisions.

Web Copywriting Steps (Descriptions Above)

1. Review and take notes on Web Design Brief and additional collateral (ex: existing website, etc)
2. Kick-off meeting
3. Keyword research
4. Meta tags
5. Copywriting
6. Revisions

What is Donna's Role?

For web copy projects, Donna's role is that of editor. Once the initial copydeck has been edited or written, she reviews it for grammar, spelling and content and advises her thoughts.

Revisions

Utilizing Basecamp, *Version 1* of the copydeck is posted to the discussion, which is named after the client. The copy is then edited by Donna, who posts the revision recommendations or the revised copydeck to Basecamp. I will then incorporate Donna's edits and post *Version 2* to Basecamp, which the salesperson forwards to the client for review. The client is encouraged to review the copydeck and make changes directly to the Word document or provide their changes in some other format. I then incorporate these additional changes and post *Version 3*, which, ideally, is the final version of the copydeck, to Basecamp.

What is an eSite?

An eSite, or ePage, forms part of a listing within a Yabsta jurisdiction. It offers customers the option to add a wealth of additional information about a company and is a great selling point for listings as well. The best practices of web copy covered above apply to eSites as they must be concise, to the point, descriptive and written in a conversational tone, with the reader in mind.

Parts of an eSite

An eSite is, essentially, a miniature website within a Yabsta listing. It is designed to provide all of the

information a potential customer or visitor may need. The parts are as follows:

Description

The description forms the most vital part of the eSite. An overview of what the business or restaurant offers, it's a place to let the company shine. A great eSite summarizes the points of the listing (including location, type of cuisine, products and/or services, price range, unique facts etc) in an easy-to-read, personable manner.

An eSite description example for the Cayman Islands restaurant *Cracked Conch* is below:

Cracked Conch is a top Grand Cayman restaurant known for their delicious Cayman cuisine. Voted runner-up for top Caribbean restaurant in 2010, it's run by Gilbert Cavallaro, Cayman's chef of the year.

Cracked Conch offers lunch and dinner, which can be taken indoors or on the sunny patio. Private dining, online booking and event hosting are available and they also have a cocktail bar.

Business Hours

The eSite lists the company's business hours. This feature is not restricted to days of the week.

Payment Method

The eSite lists the company's payment options, including Visa, American Express, Discover and Mastercard.

Relevance

When formulating an eSite, it is important to keep the best practices of web copy in mind. The goal is to write clearly and concisely – keep it short while providing the reader with the best and most relevant information possible. As a “mini website,” the information provided within the eSite and the listing itself should remove the need for the user to visit the company or restaurant's website to find out more.