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VALERIA MALTONI

Make Your Web Site Sticky

10 new ideas for B2B marketers

About Your Web Site

Web users are becoming more harried. The annual report into web habits by usability guru Jakob Nielsen shows people are becoming much less patient when they go online. [Source: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/7417496.stm>] They are like modern shoppers - they want to go in the store and get out holding what they were looking for in the minimum time required.

The good news is that today **75%** of the people achieve that goal compared to **60%** in 1999. There are many reasons for this increase:

- better design and usability;
- more Web savvy people:
 - see what they are looking for faster;
 - know what to look for (which also makes people less tolerant of searching for what they cannot find).

Summarizing:

- be **engaging** using the benefit to the visitor vs. your feature;
- be **succinct** by getting to the point up front;
- **make it easy** to want to find out more through built-in interaction.

Bottom line = less fluff, more substance.



Who are you talking with?

To drive traffic to your Web site, you first need to know who you'd want to attract. The first thing you need to decide is with whom would you like to talk? Who is your ideal readership?

Then right after that you will need to decide what you want them to do. That is what your home page should help you with - showing your readers and potential buyers where the *banana* is (this is a Seth Godin expression). This means what is it you want them to do.

It starts with who, then what.

1. Who do you want to engage?
2. What do you want them to do?
3. Then ask: why?

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Tell them something they didn't know

In many business models, especially for companies that have been around a while, but also in younger firms, there is this belief that your ideas are your currency.

You charge good money for your IP, why share it?

Because ideas are free and \$0.00 is the future of business [Source: http://www.wired.com/techbiz/it/magazine/16-03/ff_free?currentPage=all].

The psychology of free is very powerful. Give something away for free, and it has the potential to go viral. The execution still matters, as long as it's not entirely about you. It's about how all that brain power you have, deployed, can help your customers solve a problem.

Why should they be reading? **Tell them something they did not know**, let your customers look smart in front of their bosses and they will in turn tell everyone what they learned using your tools.

"Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a great battle."
—Philo of Alexandria



Give them something to talk about

With free as the center of today's attention economy, the focus shifts to what is useful to your customers, what they value, truly. They in turn will let you see with whom they share what they learned from you with. Track it using Google Alerts with keywords to find out what people are saying about your company.

Blogs, message boards, even emails can spread ideas faster than we ever hope to via traditional marketing means. The trick is to **be where the conversation is**. And to do that, you've got to create something they will talk about.

Give your customers tools that will help do their jobs better and you gain two scarce currencies - attention and reputation, plus you get to see what works and sticks and what doesn't, then adjust, repeat.

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Content = nourishment = marketing that works

Content matters. Let's make that count. We said give it away for free, focus it on helping your audience, and use the appropriate human voice and tone. Content marketing is the only marketing left that really works - online and off line. When you decide who you are talking with, who you are trying to attract, you write your content so that it addresses *their* specific questions, concerns, issues, what *they* are seeking to learn.

Then you **earn the right** to invite action at every step of the way.

An example from our site:

You're certain business continuity is a strategic asset making operations and revenue possible.

Are you just as certain that your disaster recovery capabilities are keeping pace with the demands for higher levels of information availability?

Business continuity is a strategic imperative and a competitive advantage in an environment where you must plan for the unexpected, maintain operations, and meet regulatory demands. Just think of the daily volume of emails, transactions, and archived data that have to be secured and readily available. And all of this against shrinking recovery time and recovery point objectives (RTO and RPO).



Affirm their product choice

People want to feel they've made the right decision about what they consume. The most powerful way to affirm this is by showing that others have made the same choice. Put customer feedback, names, and activity where they can be easily noticed.

An example from our site:

The Power Went Out but Not the Business

"It started early in the morning when we were not able to gain access to the building because of a power outage. When we called SunGard, they were prepared. This is the business that they are in. They had the resources and facilities available. They were prepared to execute on the plan that we had in place. There were clients who called us that day at the site. Our relationship management people were able to receive those calls knowing that our electricity was down. They were pretty impressed by the fact that we were even running the shop that day. It was great to know SunGard was there for us. That was a great experience."

Nicholas Voutsakis
Chief Technology Officer
Glenmeade, Philadelphia

There is another aspect of the conversation that you can borrow from social media - and that is to **use feedback to show you are listening**. Make it personal, it is.



How are you different?

Tell your story. Today writing with a human voice and letting the personality of a company come across are considered the price of entry in consideration. Who wants to dig through a site filled with impersonal expressions like: "we are the leading company that does X," "our cutting-edge technology is unique," and so on?

Tell me exactly why and how you are different. What is your brand ownership strategy? Finding out what your personality is means figuring out how you are different. As you go through that exercise, remember that your customer does not hold all of the things you hold in your head about your company - and chances are, he/she does not care.

You will need to do the heavy lifting with your words, your tone and how they wrap around her/his problem. Then go head and write with a voice unique to your brand.

An example from our site:

The Value of Information Availability

Having information always available isn't just an IT issue anymore—it's a business issue. It's about remaining productive, viable, and competitive. It's about customers, business partners, and employees at every level. It's about anticipating threats and maintaining uptime. It's about the readiness to exploit opportunities and grow. That's the value of Information Availability.



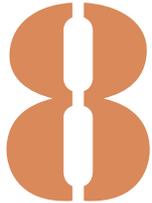
Does your site make you heavy?

According to Web site optimization [Source: <http://www.websiteoptimization.com/speed/tweak/average-web-page/>], the **size of the average web site page has more than tripled** since 2003. During the same five-year period, the **number of objects in the average web page** (texts, images, ads, audio, video, applets, etc) **nearly doubled** from 25.7 to 49.9 objects per page on average, with top sites including generally more objects. As broadband becomes more widespread, web designers have created more elaborate designs, and Web2.0 technologies such as AJAX certainly contribute to the increase in the number of objects per page. Longer term statistics show that since 1995 the size of the average web page has increased by 22 times, and the number of objects per page has grown by 21.7 times.

Other data:

- The average download time of a chosen set of pages has decreased from 2.8 to 2.33 seconds from Feb. 2006 to Feb. 2008: in other words, the increase in the average speed of broadband has more than kept pace with the increase in the size and complexity of the average web page.
- A 2006 survey of over 21,500 non-framed web pages found that the average web page contained 474 words, 281 HTML tags, and 41 links, 10 of which pointed outside the domain.
- The use of streaming media on the Web has increased by more than 100% each year. From 2000 to 2005 the total volume of streaming media files stored on the Web grew by more than 600%. More than 87% of all streaming media is abandoned by users in the first 10 seconds, however.
- About 10% of the most popular videos on YouTube account for nearly 80% of the views.

Bottom line: stay light.



Is that video adding value?

This is not to say that animation and dynamic elements like flash are not welcome, or useful. Yet, before adding all those bells and whistles, you should ask yourself if they will be a distraction (and in some cases an annoyance) or if they truly add value.

Can you provide value beyond the sales pitch?

Some ideas on **adding value**:

- **editing a testimonial down to the story and the sound bites** visitors can share (distill it down for them);
- **providing a write up, a schematic, an eBook that can be customized and used** (help them sell);
- **providing a PowerPoint presentation with ROI models for your type of service** that can be used by your customers and prospects to build his/her case on buying the service;
- **updating your content frequently**. A good rule of thumb is 10-15% a month.



Use the news area as a hub to invite inquiry

What we have done in the past eight months has been to consolidate all of our company's media activities in the news and events area of our Web site. When we have major stories, podcasts, and bylines published in the trade press, we have taken the time to summarize the payout and included that on our site with the link to the original story.

To highlight our expertise in and passion for technology, instead of writing "we are experts" all over the site, we've created biographies for our speakers that detail very specifically what they know.

By virtue of **using the industry terminology**, that which maps to current conversations in the marketplace, we have **increased the number of visitors from search** - by more than 100% over the same period last year. That, in a competitive space like technology services, is nothing to sneeze about.

Organic search engine optimization (SEO) is allowing us to use the news areas as a hub to invite further inquiry. You can also use the news area to provide a reason for your customers to come back for the next compelling story.

10 Help them to come back with RSS and newsletter sign ups

This is something you can do once you have a reservoir of content you feel confident you will be able to stream. Individuals who sign up through an RSS reader, will expect to see new content from you regularly. Whether you decide to make refreshes weekly, monthly, or every two days, it's a good idea to **set expectations up front and keep pace with them.**

Creating a **custom newsletter** works very well in helping your readers stay up to date. The benefit for you is that you collect email addresses, but with one caveat - make it explicit how you are going to use that address. Do not deviate from your promises about that.

Newsletters can be tailored to different audiences. For example, you could gear one version to the needs of small businesses, just like MarketingProfs does, while customizing one for enterprises to address their needs.

In addition to helping people sign up for news items, help them email, bookmark, and forward your content by integrating social media elements with your site.

No matter what you decide to do, remember that communication takes a while to open a two-way channel, stay with it.

10 Appearances matter

No site can be "sticky" if it's too cluttered to scan. At the same time, a site will not stick if it is merely a page of bulleted lists. Be smart about your design elements. Use lots of whitespace, muted (but modern) color combinations, and readable fonts. Fine tune your content, links, and labels constantly. Use the Web site metrics as a way to monitor which pages and areas receive higher traffic, retire or rewrite those that don't.

A The future

The Web site of the future may be organized completely in thirds - part editorial, part community, and part marketing weaved throughout the site; without needing to separate them in a blog, a forum, a customer idea space, and the corporate brochure-ware. This is how we do business - through relationships and connections.

- **1/3 editorial impact** - make the content efficient while still effective; say enough and not too much; talk about the customer and what they think (or worry) about and paths forward to action
- **1/3 community building** - what we in social media have come to refer to as conversation, engagement, creating the connection; before it does that, it needs to be a space where someone knows your name (outside of Cheers)
- **1/3 marketing principles** - the value-based bread and butter of why we buy and how we sell; I could call this positioning, except that there is a lot more to it than that



About the Author

Valeria Maltoni has been called a communicator, a marketer, and a Renaissance person. Using her experience in communications, customer dialogue, and brand management, Valeria has come to define modern business as a long and open conversation. ConversationAgent.com is recognized among the world's top online marketing blogs. Valeria is a *Fast Company* Expert blogger and a contributor to *The Blog Herald*, *Marketing Profs Daily Fix* and *Marketing 2.0*.

She is a co-author of *The Age of Conversation*, a groundbreaking ebook collaboration by 103 of today's top marketing writers. Valeria is a frequent public speaker on brand marketing, customer service, and integrating social media tools in marketing programs to serve business strategy. She publishes in both English and Italian.

Educated at the University of Bologna and Villanova University, Valeria combines New World sensibilities with Italian style. She's an active member of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), the American Marketing Association (AMA), the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia (WACA), and the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA).

To learn more about Valeria, please visit:

blog: www.ConversationAgent.com