Writing for the Web
Training Outline
9/10/2015

I. Format of training
   a. How is web writing different?
      i. User needs
      ii. User habits
      iii. Accessibility
      iv. Devices
   b. Best practices
   c. Exercises and tools

II. Audience
   a. Always, always start with your audience
   b. Performance Clackamas (Managing for Results) should have provided clear direction for your department regarding your target audience(s)
   c. Personas
   d. Task based – phone vs file cabinet
   e. Is your content focused more on what you want to say or what the user needs to know?
   f. What do our analytics show? What are users looking for? What search keywords are they using?
   g. Hint at voice and tone – come back to

III. How users interact with web
   a. F-shaped reading pattern
   b. Users quickly scan headings
   c. Half are on mobile devices. How does that impact how we approach content design?
   d. [Users only read about 20-28% of a web page.](#)

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Exercise

Hemingway app: How do samples of your existing content rate for readability? Improve at least two paragraphs.

Hemingway Editor http://www.hemingwayapp.com/

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IV. Focus on Conversations & Key Messages

a. Remember your audience!
b. Web = phone NOT file cabinet
c. So we know users read in F-shaped patterns – use inverted pyramid structure to start with key message – front load – use your analytics
d. Be brief and concise – "brevity = respect"
e. Layer with 'progressive disclosure' – the more investment and interest users' have, the more time and attention they will provide
f. Think "bite, snack, meal"
g. [Try to avoid FAQs](#)
h. Break content into bulleted lists and chunks
i. Include calls to action – what should the user do to act on the information provided?
j. Use plain language ([guidelines](#))
    i. Be clear and direct.
    ii. Avoid acronyms.
    iii. Studies show both highly educated and lesser educated audiences prefer plain language.
    iv. Avoid lengthy welcome messages and mission statements – your users aren't coming to our website for welcome messages.
    v. "The term 'readability' doesn't ask simply 'can you read it?' or 'how fast can you read it.' It also asks 'do you want to read it.'"
k. Maintain your content!

Exercise

Gov.uk Content Evaluation

V. Voice & tone
a. Remember your audience!
b. Web content is for people
    i. County government is comprised of people
    ii. We are writing web content for people
c. Use informal voice – "we, us, you, etc."
d. Use active voice – "We will contact you within 10 days" instead of "The applicant will be contacted by the county within 10 days."
e. Concisely explain rules and regulations – how does restaurant plan review in Public Health keep our communities safe and healthy? Work it into the content.
f. Do not use all capitals – they make it appear as if you're shouting (caps are also more difficult to read.

User emotions – What are users feeling when they come to these web pages? Write down user emotions. How should our users' feelings affect our voice and tone.

Lost dog: http://web3.clackamas.us/dogs/found.jsp

Energy Assistance: http://www.clackamas.us/socialservices/energy.html

Flood insurance: http://www.clackamas.us/planning/floodinsurance.html

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VI. Accessibility
   a. We want everyone to benefit from the information we provide
   b. Appropriately, we are also required by law to meet web standards (508 standards)
   c. Accessibility standards benefit everyone: improve searchability, content specificity; content structure
   d. Alt text for images: how would you describe this image over the phone to someone? You description doesn't have to be too literal – think about what the purpose of the image is.
   e. No to "click here" and "read more" links – use descriptive links
   f. A note on formats: Reduce all PDFs – eliminate scanned PDFs (not accessible)
   g. Use descriptive links – don't list out URL addresses (screen readers read each character) – both web links and email addresses

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Exercise

Screen reader demonstration – how does navigating the site with a screen reader change the way you approach your content?

Writing for the Web
Workshop Evaluation

The training met my expectations.   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Definitely

The format of the training was…   Unfocused 1 2 3 4 5 Easy to follow

The presenter communicated the main ideas. Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

The training was fun.   Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

The content will be useful for my work.   Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Agree

Examples presented were fresh, memorable, and instructive.   Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Agree

The quality of the notes and visuals was…   Poor   1   2   3   4   5   Excellent

The pace of the training was…   Too slow   Just right   Too fast

The length of the training was…   Too short   Just right   Too long

Comments