

The Little Book of Website Tips

**10 tips to make your website
SELL your products and services**



Neville Merritt

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Your website has to sell

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Your website has to sell

The web is full of website experts. Website designers, SEO* specialists, digital marketers and more. Many of them are really, really good at their jobs but in my experience, many of them see their role just as improving your website.

They don't see it as ***making your website an integral part of your business*** which is to help you make more sales.

Big difference.

The most elegant design, the fastest load times, the highest SEO scores count for nothing if your visitor isn't finding what they are looking for from your website at that moment in time.

Every buyer is on a journey, from the time before they need something, through their investigations, identifying what they need, selecting a supplier to placing an order and becoming part of your customer community.

The modern buyer does much of that independently from and much earlier than contacting the supplier. Their main resource will be the internet, which includes your website.

To help you attract, engage and convert those visitors to customers, your website has to support them every step of the way.

These tips are not aesthetic or technical tips: they are tips for your website to help your customers buy from you (and you to sell to them!)

I hope you find them useful.

Neville Merritt



*Search Engine Optimisation

Design for people

Your website is your shop window.

People are looking in your shop window before they “come in” (i.e. contact you)

- Does it interest them?
- Does it engage them?
- Does it actively help them buy from you?

People buy from people. People build trust with people before they buy. Connection and relationship are vital parts of buying and selling.

So why do so many websites have so little supporting the human connection?

1. Have images of people otherwise the website appears impersonal
2. Have photographs and mini-bios of you and key team members in your “About Us” section. This is common in some business sectors, absent in others.
3. Write your copy in the first person - “We’d love to meet you on our courses”
4. Emotion plays a big part in influencing people to buy. Use emotion in your copy - “Take the next exciting step to grow your business!”
5. Sell outcomes not products - “Eliminate unwanted stock” (with our inventory forecasting system)

Does your website help people buy from people by including all these?



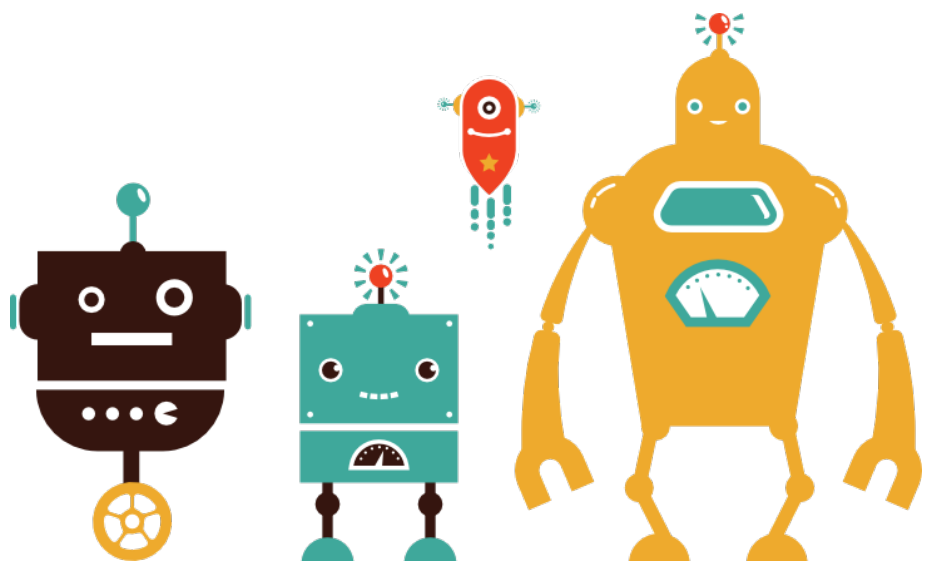
SEO (search engine) robots, specifically.

Don't be nervous of this. Search engines are more complex than ever, because they are like humans. But they are easier to write for - because they are like humans.

You'll need a SEO expert to help get to the top of a search list but there's still a lot you can do yourself.

- If you manage your own website content, use one of the search engine plugins to help you (like Yoast for Wordpress)
- Have all the search terms and combinations of words on your site that people may use to narrow their search, e.g. "ISO9001 quality consultants in Hampshire specialising in Aerospace"
- Use phrases that match what people in your market are looking for. Google helps: read the box "People also ask" when you search for your own services.
- Don't duplicate content on your website or others except on social media.
- Have longform content (3,000 words plus) sometimes called Pillar Pages if they link out to other pages
- Use plenty of internal links
- Encourage authoritative sites to link to your site by having informative content that adds value

You can dedicate your life to SEO but luckily some people already have done that. If SEO is vital for your business, use them. If web enquiries are just a useful additional source of leads, why not design your content for SEO robots as well as humans?



You probably think it is. But you already know what it's meant to show. Your visitors don't. Just like a shop window or a display advert, if people glancing at it can't immediately see what the page is about (and your entire website if we are talking about the Home Page) then you will be losing visitors.

You only have seconds to get your message across. If people can't see what it is, they will move on.

That's why we have the 5 Second Rule.

Open the page. You have 5 seconds to decide whether the page is engaging enough to want to scroll down or read more.

How many words can you read (and process) in five seconds? Not many. That's why it's so important to use visual images to convey a message.

We can process images 60,000 times faster than text. 80% of people remember what they see, compared to 20% of what they read.

To make your message obvious, use short, obvious headline statements (never in capitals - slower to read) and strong, meaningful images.

Even if your message is more complex, you still only have five seconds. You have to "sell" the desire to read more with your images and headline statements.

Try the 5 second test on every page. Don't kid yourself. Get someone else to do the 5 second test. An independent viewpoint is invaluable.



The previous tip was Make it Obvious. Once you have the visitor's attention, make it easy to find out more. Make it easy to get around your website. Make it easy to engage with you. Make it easy to trust you - then you are on the way to having people buy from you.

If you bury good and relevant content in text blocks or on sub-sub-pages, your visitors won't find it easily.

If you don't show or describe what you do and how clients can benefit in clear, simple terms, you are expecting your visitors to have to work it out for themselves. That's not making it easy.

Here's a quick checklist of things that make it easy for your visitors to find out more and get the message you want them to receive.

- Navigation: menus, page links, Header and Footer content, Search
- Relevance to your market: images, content, terminology
- Why it's worth engaging with you: blogs, news, content, value
- How to engage: Follow, Register, Contact
- Your authority: content, content, content
- Trust and reputation: testimonials, case studies, logos

We often want to put more on our websites. That isn't a bad thing, but don't bury good messages. Always have a summary heading line or paragraph with the full message, then expand on it if you wish.



Think how good it feels to get a freebie yourself, or find something genuinely useful when you do an on-line search. That's the feeling we want our visitors to have.

Your website is more than a shop window or on-line brochure. It's probably the only contact your future customers have with you for the first part of their Buyer's Journey.

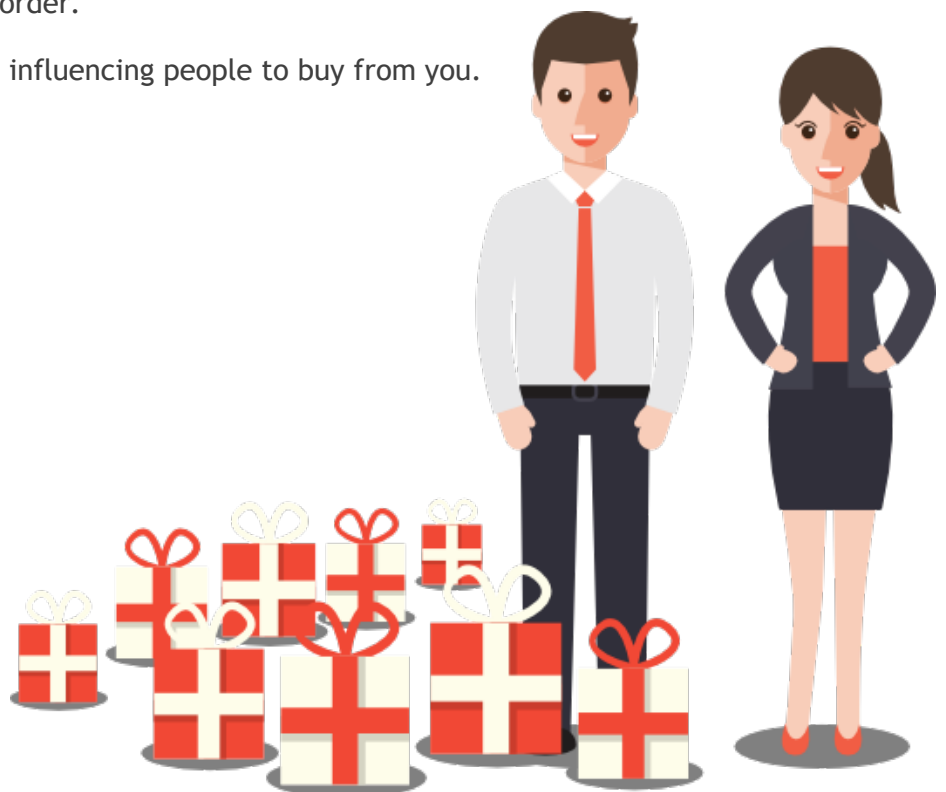
They are doing their research, and don't want to be jumped on by a sales-person. There was a time where we were advised to put useful content behind a registration page, but that just creates a barrier.

Finding something of value on your website (information, articles, tips, news, comment, downloads, checklists, templates, guides) is more than just a feelgood factor. It creates a psychological debt.

Prof. Robert Cialdini explains it in his Principles of Influence. If someone buys you a drink, you instinctively want to buy them one back. If someone gives you a birthday gift, you make a mental note to do the same for them.

Without going into the reasons for this (it's in my online course [“How to read your customer's mind”](#)), the fact remains that if you give something away your customers are more likely to give something back - their attention, time, meeting and eventually an order.

Giving lots away is influencing people to buy from you.



Don't We all over your website

Before writing this I randomly Googled “consulting”.

The first website I opened starts “We are the leading...” Then “Our Values...”
“Our Mission...”

Perfect example of “we-ing” all over the website. It’s all about them, not about the customer. I feel like an outsider, look in through a thick glass pane.

Not very engaging.

Make your website all about the visitor, not about you.

About the market, the problems you solve, the benefits to the customer.

Proof points from other customers.

Make it relevant, interesting, engaging. When they want to know more, they can click on “About Us” and find out. By all means “we” in your “About Us” page, and put your industry awards, company history, market share and the story about your amazing founder in there.

People don't buy from suppliers just because the supplier is the biggest, best, or won the most awards. Their decision to buy will be influenced by the relationship you build up, and that starts from their first encounters with you.

Until the visitor is ready to find out more about you, don't ram it down their throats. And definitely not on the Home Page.

Are you “we-ing” in the right places? It's worth a check.



People buy from people. Did I mention that before? Only about 10,000 times...

When you have a conversation with someone, do you say “you” and “I”? Or do you talk to them in the third person? Thought not. So why go all coy and impersonal on a website? You are trying to engage your visitor, have a conversation, help them get to know you and all the wonderful things you can do to help them.

I’ve seen bios on websites that read as if they have been written by someone else. Who are they kidding anyway? This is a wonderful opportunity to introduce yourself directly to your future customer, so why do it through an interpreter!

The tone of your website has to match the expectations of your market. In some cases that will be more formal, in others it will be very informal. Either way, it is still a personal conversation so let the personality of you, your brand and your organisation shine through.

This applies to the use of words too. I’ve seen some website copy that looks as though someone has swallowed a textbook. Are they trying to impress or engage?

If jargon and particular terminology is universally understood in your market, it helps with the engagement. If not, keep language simple to be more universally understood.

Finally, have pictures of people. This instantly elevates your website from impersonal to personal. Chose wisely though, because stock image models are easy to spot and will detract from your authenticity.

The best websites that work at a personal level have friendly and engaging copy and images of people, preferably your own people professionally photographed, and images with bios of key members of your team.



Design for repeat visits

How do your customers buy? Just like you buy.

You could have a unique service or a commodity. It could be an expensive capital project or a low-cost widget. It could be a one-off transaction or a long-term business relationship. Whatever it is, your customer will go through a decision process before buying.

- Do I have a problem or need?
- Does anyone else have this problem or need?
- What are possible ways of addressing this problem or need?
- Who can help me?
- How can they help?
- What do they know about it?
- Are they reliable?
- Who else has bought from them?
- What were their experiences?
- Can I be sure that I will get what I need from this purchase?

The modern buyer will try and get answers to as many of these questions as possible before communicating with the seller. This entire process - The Buyer's Journey - could take some time.

Your website is your gateway to their Journey. If you can provide answers to all the questions they will have as they get closer to contacting you, you will build engagement and increase the likelihood that they will buy from you.

Better still, if you can provide a reason to engage with your website even before they are aware of their own need, you will be the first on their list.

Provide the people in your target market with a reason to visit your website even before they start on their Journey. Blogs, articles, reviews, tips, guides, downloads, quizzes, competitions, news, comment - anything relevant to your market that gives meaning and value to repeat visits will increase engagement and put you in pole position when the serious buying starts.



Your website is your pride and joy, your showcase for your business. It might even be the first one you have ever created. But websites have been made before, about 2 billion of them actually, and the first website was launched in 1991.

That means there is a huge resource of data and experience from what worked well and what didn't. Why reinvent the wheel when there are some solid best-practice guidelines for website design and content available simply by searching on the Web?

Here are a few that I use:

1. Keep important messages above the fold (in web terms - before you have to scroll)
2. Summarise then tell. Get messages over succinctly then expand on it later
3. Minimise text - don't fill the page
4. Show don't tell - use images and graphics which communicate faster
5. Use short sentences. Easier to read.
6. Use sentence case. Never ALL CAPITALS. Easier to read.
7. Short paragraphs, subheadings, bullets. Easier to read.
8. CTA button colours: best are blue, green, orange in that order. True!
9. Limit the number of options. Conversions will be higher, not lower.
10. Design for mobile and desktop (responsive design - here's a [free checker](#)).

There are lots more - learn from others and give yourself a head start with Best Practice design tips.



Nurture your website

One to leave you with. Just like a garden, your website needs tending frequently. When did you last change it? When did you last review it? When did you last even look at it?

In large organisations with big marketing departments, there will be a full team working full time on it. For most smaller businesses, maintaining a website has to be done alongside delivering services and making money.

Time passes and before you know it, your website hasn't been updated in weeks. Or months. Worse, you had good intentions to publish a blog but the last article is dated a year ago. The equivalent of a dusty shop window with dead flies in it.

Your visitors want to see relevance. Current activity, comment and news shows your business is alive and active. A busy shop attracts more people. Human nature; we are attracted to group activity.

Your News page and About Us needs to be updated regularly to showcase your activities and successes - particularly new customers. Your blogs, videos and articles are usually date-stamped, so keep publishing! You have lots to share.

You want people to keep visiting as the engagement grows. Give them reasons by adding new content.

Every so often, do a full page by page review. Does it still represent you? Could you have better messaging? Does it include new services, customers, testimonials, speaking engagement, your response to current events?

Nurture your website, and like a garden, that care will reward you.



Get an independent review

Your website is an essential part of your entire sales and marketing presence. It's your "shop window" - and more.

But do you really know if it's as effective as it could be?

Just like a shop, if your show window isn't attracting customers and encouraging them to do business with you, it's letting you down.

You might have an attractive website. Your friends and colleagues might tell you it's great. But is it really?

Is it helping you sell?

An independent review from an expert in marketing **and selling** takes account of your market, your customers and your business objectives. It will give you an unbiased assessment of what works, and what could be improved.

It could save you thousands of pounds in lost sales.

Check out our [website review service](#) or

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