

10 Best Practices for Creating Web Content

1. **Know Your Audience:** Who is your customer? Why are they visiting your website? Create all of your content with them in mind, anticipating what questions they have and making it easy to find the answers.
2. **Say More With Less:** People skim webpages. Use short words, short sentences and short paragraphs. After 5 or 6 lines of text, use a paragraph break. Use headers to break up longer blocks of text, or create a bulleted list to make your content easy to scan.
3. **Keep It Fresh:** Timeliness is key. Keep news, calendars and events up to date. When an event or season has passed, replace it with what's coming up. When you publish something, make note of when to take it down or update it.
4. **Use Images Wisely:** A picture says 1,000 words, especially on the web. Showcase your best photos prominently on your website. Include a gallery or virtual tour so visitors can picture themselves there. If using images you don't own, make sure you have permission to use them, and credit them accordingly.
5. **Make Links Meaningful:** Use links to direct people to more information, both on your own site and elsewhere on the web. Rather than linking the words "click here," make the links meaningful, such as "lodging," "area attractions" or "buy tickets."
6. **Frontload Keywords:** Google and other search engines place high importance on the first words they find when reading your site. Identify your most important keywords and use them in headlines and your first sentences of text when relevant, e.g. Minnesota, your city name, nearby landmark or attraction (Lake Superior, Iron Range) or who you're trying to attract (family, couples, kids).
7. **Check Your Analytics:** Use free tools like Google Analytics to gain insight into your daily visits, traffic sources and click-through rates. You can see which pages are keeping your audience engaged, and which pages are prompting visitors to leave. Use this data to improve existing and future content.
8. **Answer FAQs:** An FAQ page is often a good idea. Whatever questions you answer a lot via phone or email should be addressed here. If visitors can't find the answers they're looking for on your website, they may not bother picking up the phone.
9. **Make Contacting You Easy:** A Contact Us page is also critical. Make this page as easy to find as possible and include all methods of contacting you – phone numbers, email address, fax number, mailing address, and possibly a web contact form.
10. **Get Social:** Include links to your social media pages in the footer or other prominent place on your website. If your website includes a blog, event listings or other timely and interesting information, consider adding share buttons to every content page.