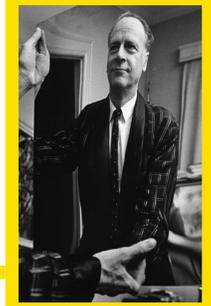


## Writing for the Web: What You Need to Know

The new Rotman website launches in May. From what we've seen so far, the new platform is cool, flexible, innovative and engaging; it makes great use of social media; it's an ideal environment to post videos and infographics that help us tell our story visually.

That said, there are some things that can only be captured in words. How do we make sure the text maintains the impact of the rest of the website? How do we write in a style that captures the imagination of the sort of bright, talented minds we want at our school?

The Mission, if you choose to accept it



### Strictly the Facts

As U of T's own Marshall McLuhan said, "the medium is the message." (Actually he said, "the medium is the message." Don't ask.) This is as true of the Internet as it was of the printing press. Studies show:

- Reading on line is 25% slower than on paper
- 79% of users scan the page instead of reading every word
- Readers can enter the text from any place and at any point
- For a whole host of reasons, users are impatient and action-driven.

-25%



### Web Writing: the Basics

It could be argued that the form and function of the Internet literally change the way we think. What that means for writing web copy:

- Web content should be 50% of the word count of its paper equivalent.
- Web copy is best broken up into discrete chunks, with headers acting as sign posts for the reader. Since readers can enter at any point, each chunk of text should work as a standalone
- The best writing is in a news-you-can-use style that gives readers the information they need, quickly.

 -50% = WWW

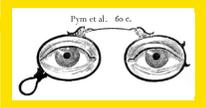
### Turning Blah Text into Killer Text

The first rule of good web copy is the same as good copy of any kind. Know your audience. There are tools to test whether the content on your website is really what your reader wants. These include Google Analytics, focus groups, card sorting and user testing. Ask the marketing team for help. Other tips for turning blah text into killer text:

- **DELETE, DELETE, DELETE.** Get rid of any text that is old, redundant, vestigial, uninteresting or unwanted by your audience. On average, twenty per cent of your text doesn't need to be there. Any information that's more than a year old should not be on the website. Either get rid of it or archive it.
- **REWRITE.** Once you've done your spring cleaning, look at the remaining text with a critical eye. Is it meaningful to the viewer? Does it educate and engage? Is it clear and concise? If not, it's time for a rewrite.



- **AVOID JARGON.** Trendy terms like “cutting edge” and “mission critical” are meant to add more emphasis of a particular subject but are the text equivalent of empty calories. Like fast food, they are best avoided. Another reason for a rewrite.
- **BE HUMAN.** Most of us who work at Rotman have plenty of personality. Be professional, but let your personality show. Use a conversational tone and address your reader directly when possible. Let your text be as intelligent and energetic as you are.
- **GET HELP.** A fresh pair of eyes is always helpful, so get a colleague to look over your work and do a quick edit. Even better, get someone who is your target audience to test drive your web pages. As always, the Rotman marketing team is ready and eager to help.



## Want more? The Ultimate Checklist for Remarkable Content

Here’s an edited version of a list found on [www.hubspot.com](http://www.hubspot.com). It talks about creating compelling, remarkable content of all kinds.

1. **Would your target audience share it?** Before you publish your content, ask if it’s something your prospects will want to read and share. Does it help them to challenge their own way of doing things? Does it offer helpful ways for improvement? If so, it’s probably remarkable.
2. **Does it contain original data?** Using data that supports your argument is a great way to make it compelling. Data helps to support the credibility of your content and make the case that it’s a trustworthy resource. Bonus points if the data is derived from research done right here at Rotman.
3. **Are you presenting information in a new way?** If your competitors are all presenting their ideas in the same boring way, stand out by presenting yours in a different format. Consider exciting formats like infographics, cartoons, videos, slideshows, or other multimedia elements.
4. **Is it thought-provoking?** If someone read your article or looked at your content, would it make them think? If a reader can easily walk away from your content without it impacting them, it’s not very remarkable. Aim to be essential reading.
5. **Is it easy to understand?** If you can’t convey your content in a way that is comprehensible, it’s not going to do much for you. Be clear and concise.
6. **Is it timely?** Steer clear from topics that are outdated. Focus on creating content around topics that are specifically top-of-mind for your target audience. Even better, keep track of industry news for content opportunities. Be the first to break the news.

