# THE 8-PART GUIDE TO WRITING STELLAR WEBSITE COPY

So, you've just been handed an assignment to write web copy—either for your own company's website or another's. Regardless of whether or not you've written website content before, you might be wondering where and how to get started.

Before you start Googling "how to write amazing web copy," know this: Writing copy for websites isn't as simple as plugging keywords into a template and pressing "go."

**There's no single formula you can use to guarantee great results.**

So, instead of giving you step-by-step instructions for creating compelling web copy, we think you'll benefit more from learning about these website copy writing best practices. You can use them no matter what industry you're writing for to see some amazing results.

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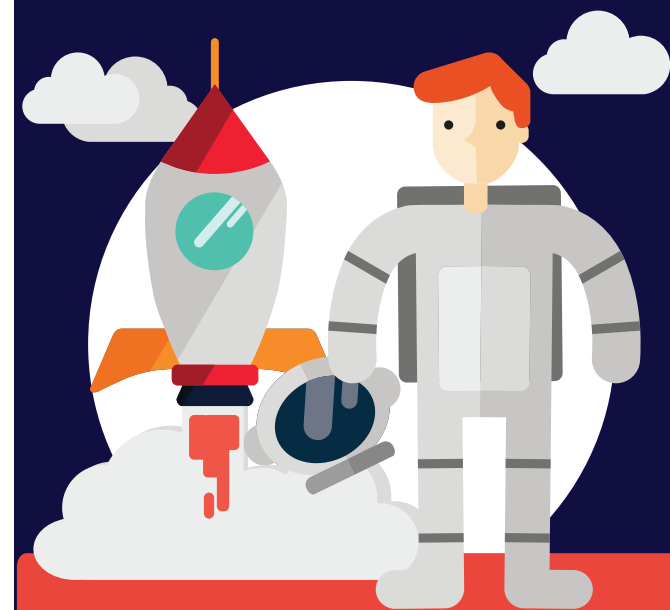
# Before you start writing, read this.

One thing separates good copy writers from mediocre ones: **Excellent web copy writers know how to speak directly to individuals.** The web is unique when it comes to communication, because while you're creating content for mass consumption, it's nearly always consumed by an individual in a private setting.

It's not typical for someone to look at a website with a group of friends—and it's not typical for someone to have a bunch of people with them weighing in or giving feedback. Web copy consumption usually involves an individual reading on their phone, tablet, or computer. This concept informs most philosophies about writing for the web—**this is a personalized medium.**

*Two notes before we get started:*

1. *In this guide, we'll be focusing specifically on business-to-business (B2B) copy writing. While much of what we discuss may be applicable to the business-to-consumer (B2C) world, Nectafy works mostly with B2B businesses—since that's what we know best, that's what we've chosen to focus on.*
2. *The homepage is one of the most critical components of a successful website. Look for the homepage symbol throughout this guide to find tips specifically about homepage copy writing.*

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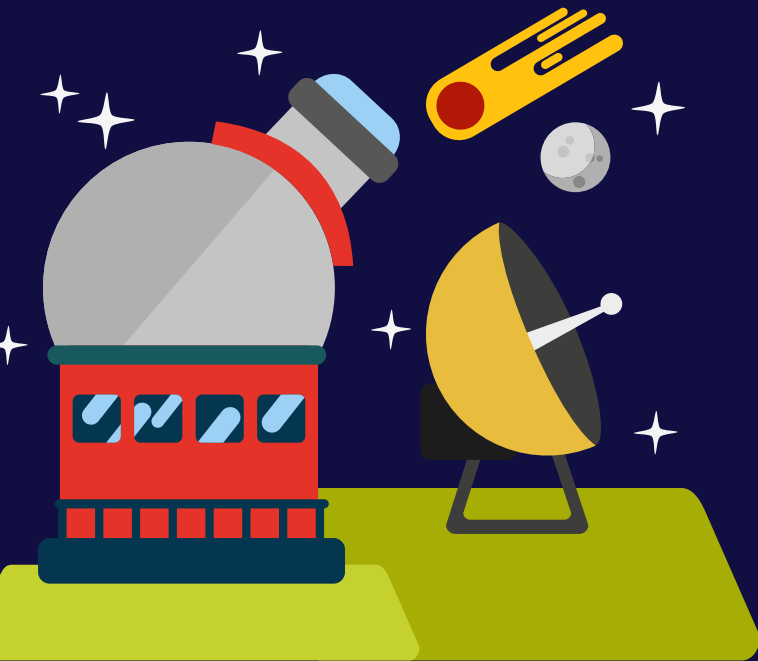
# UNDERSTANDING
# BUYER
# PERSONAS

Before you start writing anything, you need to understand who you're talking to. You can figure this out by creating "buyer personas," which are semi-fictional representations of your ideal customers based on research and real data about your existing customers. (If you need help with this, we've listed a couple articles that can get you started in the resource section below.) You should have 1-3 buyer personas in mind when writing your web copy. As you begin, consider the following:

### Talk to your persona, not about them.

It's easy to fall into the habit of writing about your buyer personas instead of writing to them in your website copy. Don't do that. You wouldn't talk about a person if they were standing right in front of you, would you? Think of the persona on the other end who's actually reading your copy, and write to them.

### Identify the things on your buyer personas' minds.

What are the pain points, interests, or questions that prompted them to come to your website? As much as we love our own websites, it's unlikely many people are visiting them because it's "fun." There is nearly always a pain point behind why they've landed on the site. So, when you're reviewing your buyer personas and preparing to write your copy, make sure you identify the most likely pain points each persona is dealing with and, if you'll be writing to multiple personas on one page, find a common denominator between all of those pain points to ensure the copy will resonate with all of your readers.

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< HOW THIS WORKS ON A HOMEPAGE >

PART 1 | UNDERSTANDING BUYER PERSONAS

The homepage should be an entry point into specific solutions for your buyer personas. You can do this by having your personas identify themselves (which is what we do on the Nectafy homepage).

Not every persona will self-identify (i.e., "I am a [position title] and I want [solution]"). They may gloss over this section of the page, simply wondering what your company does and how you could solve their problems. Make sure you address that, too.
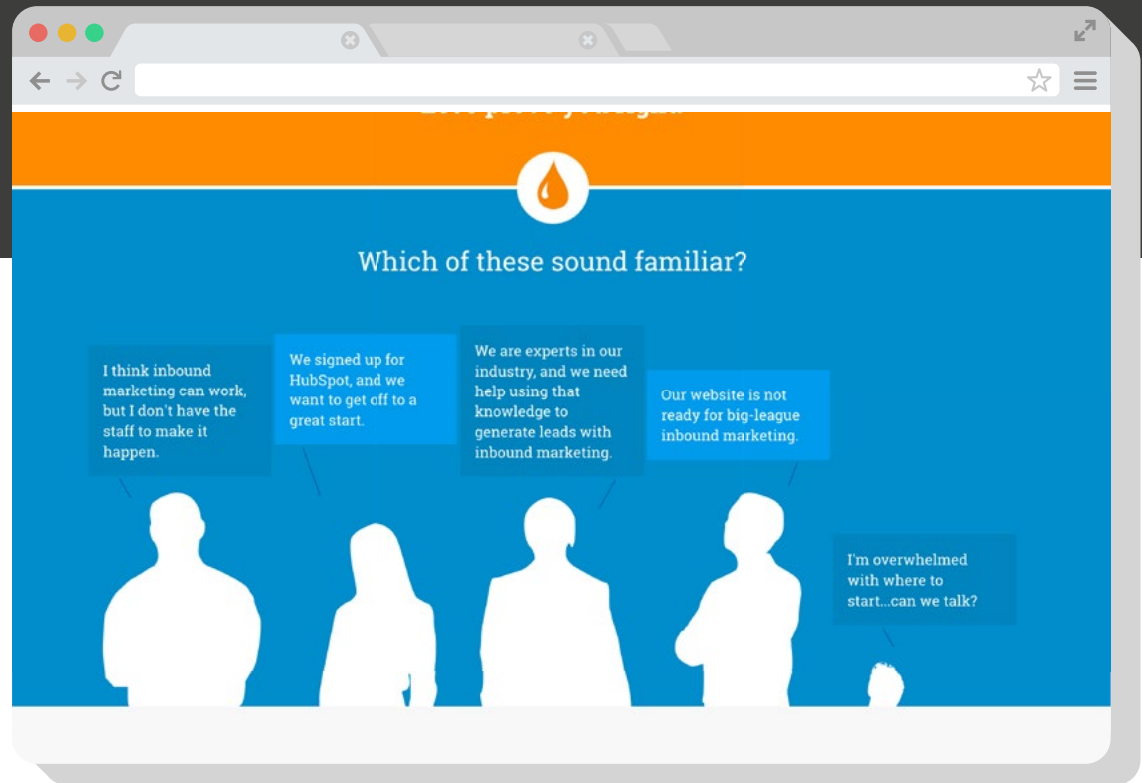
For example, on our homepage, we've created four scenarios tied to our personas and added a fifth for "everyone else"—those who may be interested but don't self-identify with any of the other scenarios.
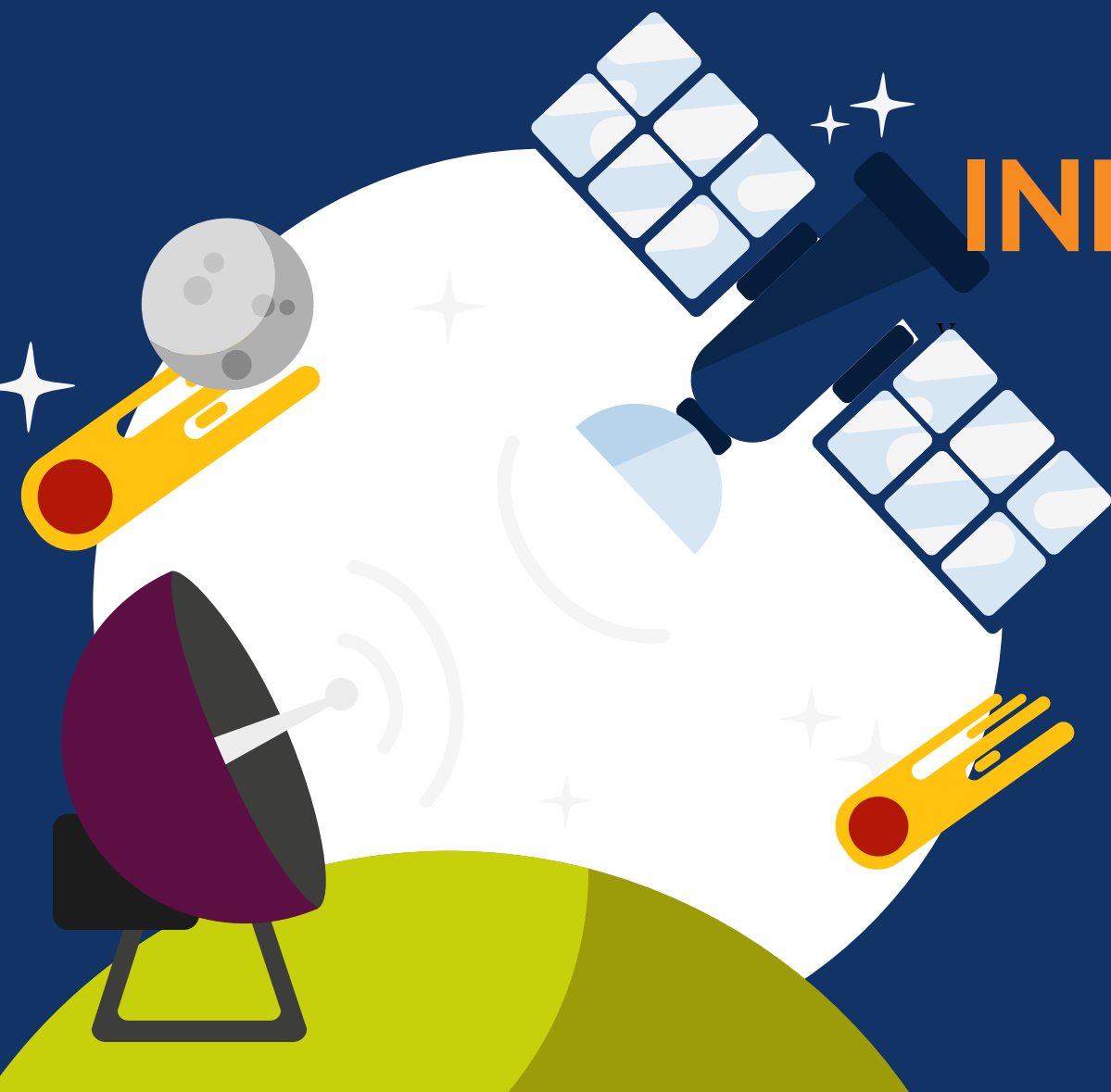
**RESOURCES**

Creating Buyer Personas, From A 19,000-Word, Step-By-Step Inbound Marketing Plan (Nectafy)

How To Create Detailed Buyer Personas For Your Business (HubSpot)

# META
# INFORMATION

There are three pieces of metadata you'll need to write for each of your web pages: a URL, a meta title, and a meta description. This information will show up only on a reader's browser and in search results—not on the pages themselves—so it can be easy to forget! But these three elements are essential to engaging your readership (and for SEO), so make sure you put thought into crafting them. Here's what you should remember about each of these elements from a copy writing perspective:

**URL:** This seems like a pretty insignificant thing, but the URL you choose needs to be clear about what your audience can expect when they click the link.

- Keep the URL as short as possible.
- Always go with readability first and SEO second. Example: You might

want to organize a URL by a hierarchy of services, like "nectafy. com/services/website-design," but from a readability perspective, it's a lot easier to digest "nectafy. com/website-design." To strike that balance between writing for humans and writing for search engines, we have chosen "[nectafy. com/custom-website-design](nectafy.com/custom-website-design)" for our page about web design—this URL is easy for our website visitors to consume and includes a phrase our persona is searching for on Google.

**Meta Title:** The meta title shows up as the page title both on the top of a reader's browser and in search results. The concept behind the meta title is to reassure your readers they have found

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the right place to get answers to their questions.

- Meta titles should be a description of the page, just like a title of an article. Example: "Custom WordPress & HubSpot Website Design | Nectafy"
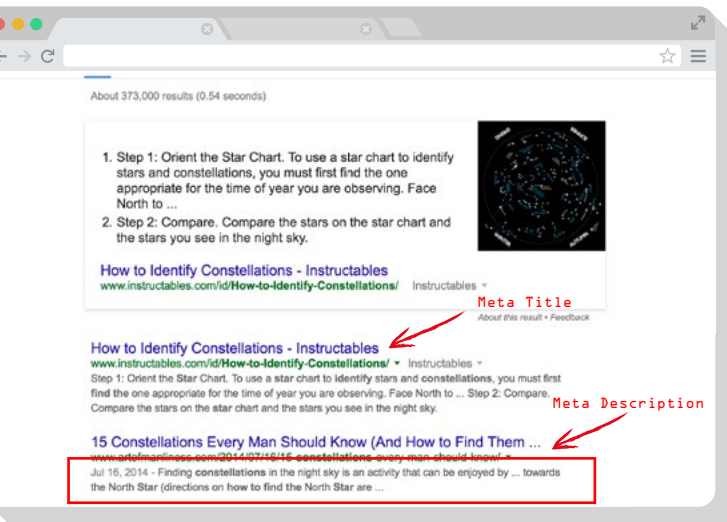


**Meta Description:** As a general rule, the meta description will show up only in search results. Its purpose is to tell the reader there is something worth seeing on the other end of the link. It should be treated as teaser copy—you want to set yourself apart from all of the other descriptions on that page of search results.

- Always write it with readability/humans in mind first.
- You can go for something a bit quirky and still include a keyword phrase for SEO. Example: "Tired of clicking around other custom website design agencies' sites? I think you're going to like what you see here."

**RESOURCES**

How To Outperform Your Google Search Position By 132% (Nectafy)

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## Our Nectafy Web Page Writing Template

We use a Google Doc template for every page of website copy we write (both for our own company and for our clients). This template helps us remember to write the metadata for each page of a website project. It's also useful for those who actually input copy into the final web pages, as it includes everything they need to wire things up. We'd definitely recommend creating a template like this for yourself to ensure you've covered all your bases for each web page you're writing.

| Page | |
|---|---|
| Keywords | |
| URL | / |
| Meta title | |
| Meta description | |
| Page outline | |

Content

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# HEADLINES

**The goal of a headline should be to get your personas to say to themselves, "These people get me!" You want them to nod and think, "Yeah, that's what I've been telling my boss forever," or "This is exactly what I've been looking for!"**

By doing this, you become their advocate. You're no longer trying to sell them something—you've already identified their issue.

**If you can write your copy in this way, you won't have to to convince someone to buy your product—when you acknowledge what they already know, they'll be open to learning more.**

Here are some general tips for writing your headlines.

- **Make sure your headline is clear about the page's topic.** Be clever, but don't be so clever that your persona is confused or can't nod their head in agreement because they don't understand it.

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- **Try to get the most important keyword or keyword phrase in headline.** This will be helpful for SEO.
- **Don't fall so in love with metaphor that you need to take another step to explain what's going on. If your metaphors make things complicated, you need to refine your headline.** Your headline should be easy for a visitor to understand. If your persona isn't new to the industry, it's fine to use industry language. Every time you try to use obscure metaphors, you're putting one more barrier between your website visitor and a sale.
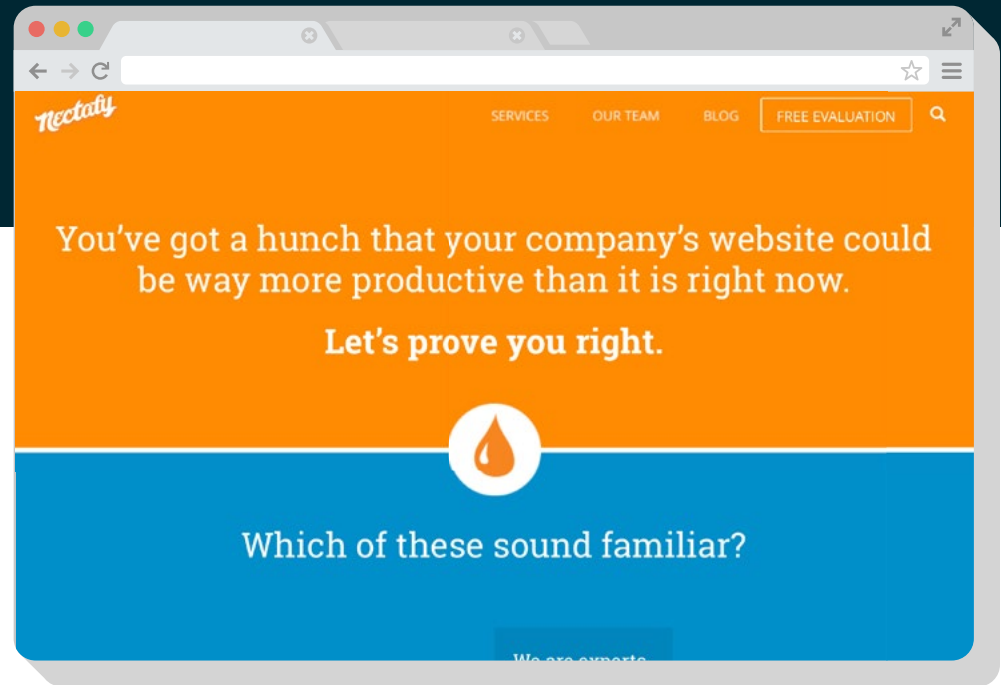- **Don't use sliders or banners.** We *hate* sliders because they dilute your message. With sliding banners, your web visitor has to sift through multiple messages (that may not even pertain to them) rather than read one primary message that's written with them in mind.

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< CRAFTING YOUR HOMEPAGE HEADLINE >

*When you visit our homepage, here's what you'll see:*



> You've got a hunch that your company's website could be way more productive than it is right now.
>
> **Let's prove you right.**
>
> Which of these sound familiar?

*The headline speaks to a problem each of our personas wrestle with—and we wrote the headline as if we were going to get to talk with those personas.*

Your homepage headline needs to be a **broad statement that covers the majority of your services while also getting your persona to nod their head in agreement.**

- **Write to specific people.** The challenge of a homepage headline is that you may be offering multiple services to multiple personas. Don't let your headline become watered down and unrecognizable, or it won't cause anyone to nod their head.

- **Find a common denominator.** As long as you're intentional about only having 2-3 personas, you should be able to find a "common denominator" headline that includes information each persona can identify and agree with. (If you have 15 personas, the battle needs to be fought elsewhere. If that's the case, you don't need to write a headline—you need to figure out your company's focus and structure.)
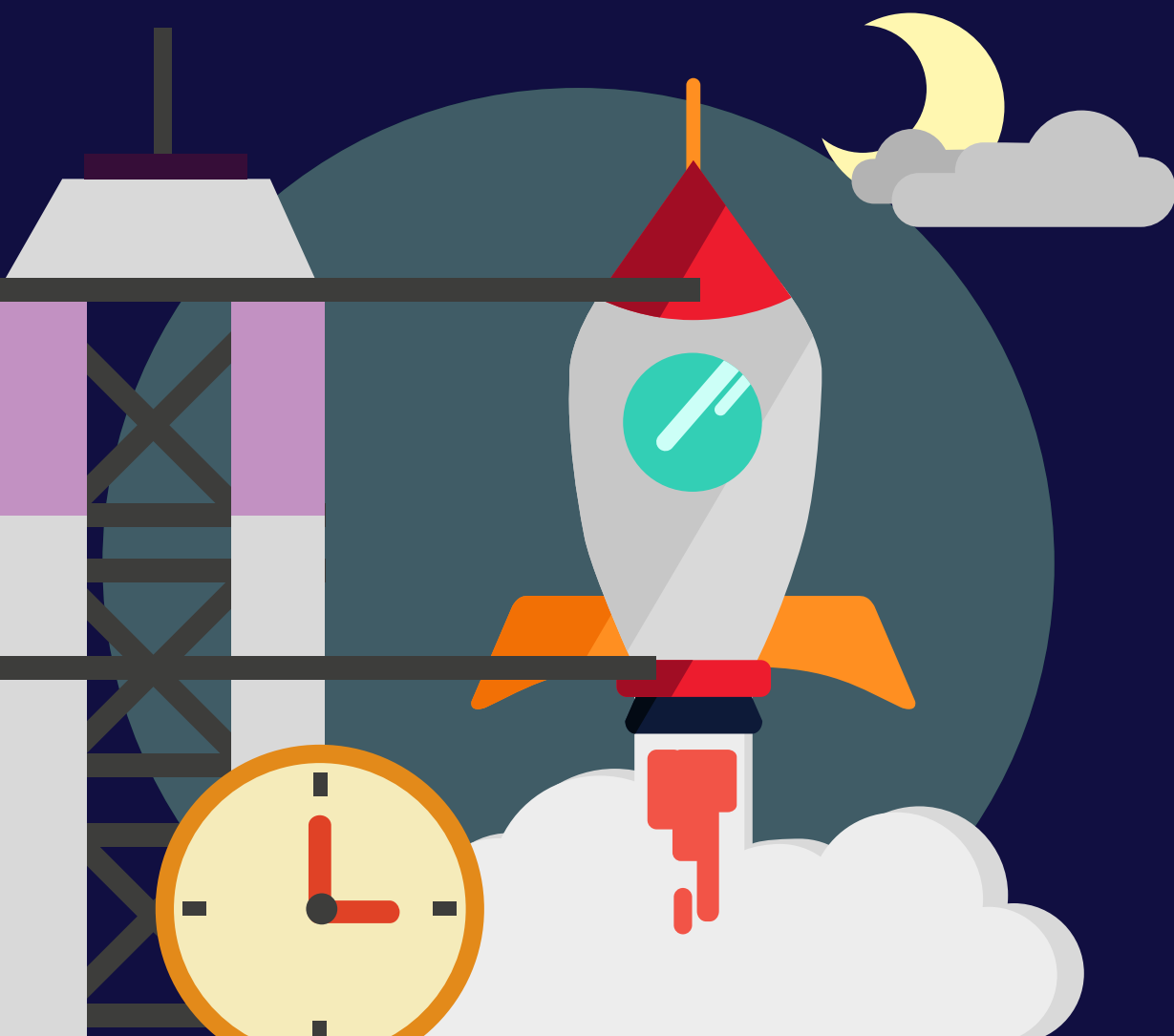
## RESOURCES & TIPS

"The purpose of the headline is to pick out people you can interest. You wish to talk to someone in a crowd, so the first thing you say is, 'Hey there, Bill Jones' to get the right person's attention." (Scientific Advertising)

Write headlines rhythmically. (KissMetrics)

Make your headlines urgent, unique, useful, and ultra-specific. (Writtent)

# BENEFIT
## COPY

A benefit describes how the customer or client should feel—or how their life will be different—after using your product or service.

Benefit copy is more about an actual change or feeling the persona will experience, whereas feature copy discusses the functionality of your product or service.

**Example:** *"Take back 20 hours a month"* is a benefit; it's something you derive from a product or service. *"Project management analysis"* is a feature; it's a function of the product or service.

**A benefit should cheer the persona on.**

If you're a human resources software company, one of your customer's biggest pain points might be dealing with the frustration that is HR. You need to identify this pain point, and then cheer your personas on.

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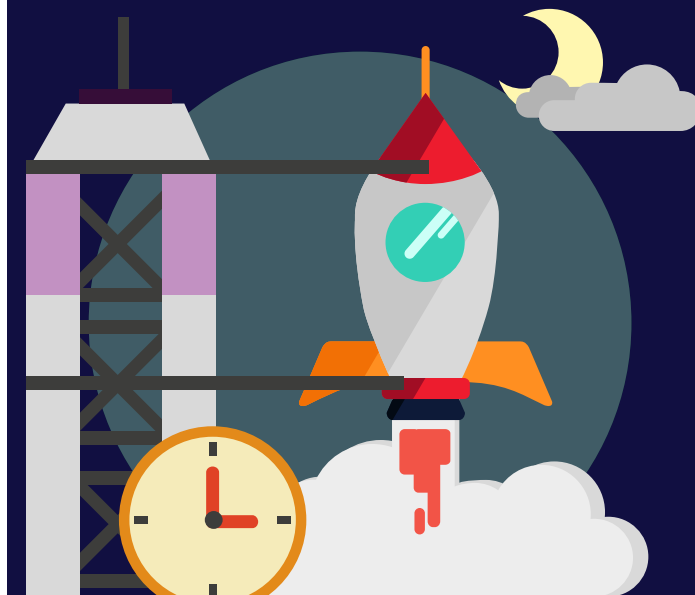
## GOOD EXAMPLE

*"Take 10 hours of your life back each week."*

That is a wonderful feeling for your persona! Who doesn't want to save precious hours of their work week?

## BAD EXAMPLE

*"We're going to handle payroll for you and make sure you don't get sued."*

*Womp womp.* Your persona expects this from your software, but isn't going to be excited by it.

**Speak directly to the persona.**

Those personas you worked so hard to figure out? Keep them in mind! Don't get halfway through your copy and forget your focus. You should approach benefit copy with a "here's what's in it for you" attitude.
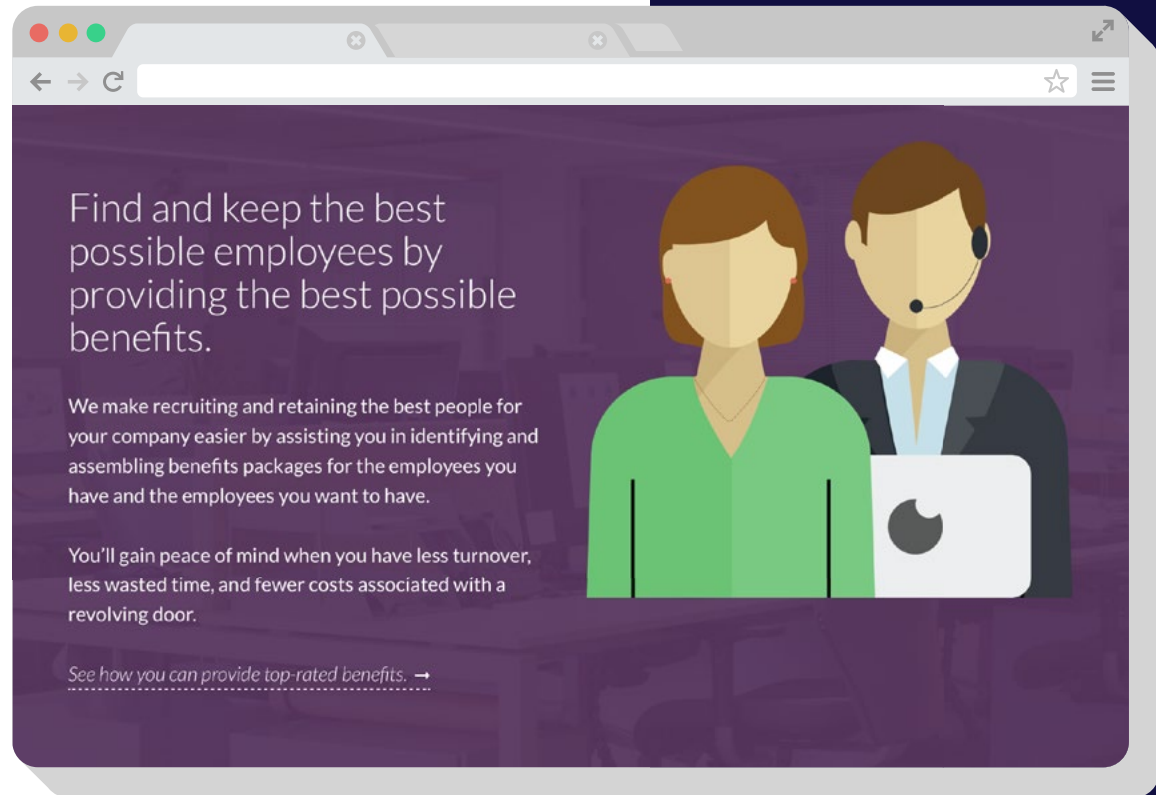
- **Don't speak in generalities.** Instead of saying, "Our customers feel wonderful," you'll want to say (in so many words), "You'll feel wonderful! You deserve this!"
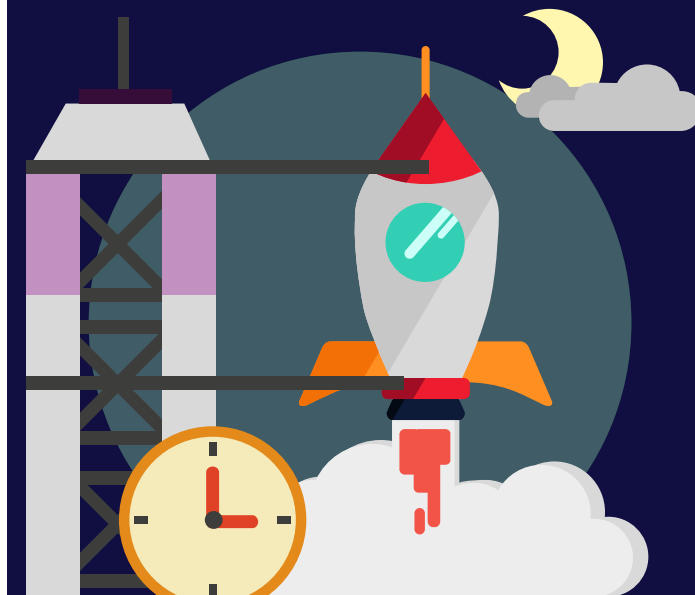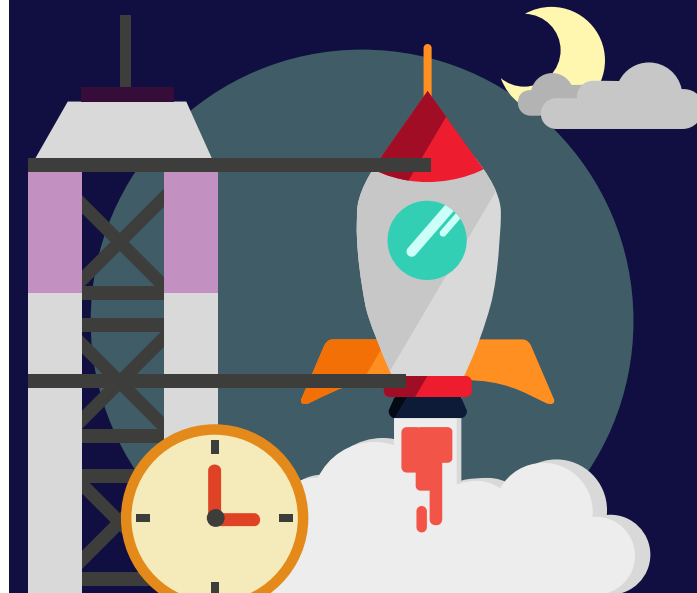
- **Demonstrate how the product or service will directly impact the peronas.** There are very few of us who have greater motives outside of how a product or service impacts us personally. We want something that will appeal to our company and suit their needs, but will first and foremost suit our individual needs.
  - **Example**: If you're writing about technology an engineer will use for her company, speak directly to her. Express how this technology will make her look really good when she presents a new prototype to her committee.

Here's an example from one of our clients' homepages that does both of these things well.

Find and keep the best possible employees by providing the best possible benefits.

We make recruiting and retaining the best people for your company easier by assisting you in identifying and assembling benefits packages for the employees you have and the employees you want to have.

You'll gain peace of mind when you have less turnover, less wasted time, and fewer costs associated with a revolving door.

*See how you can provide top-rated benefits.* →

**RESOURCES**

Does Your Copy Pass The "Forehead Slap" Test? (Copyblogger)

FEATURE
COPY

A feature is something the client will have through the use of your product or service. If a customer asks the question, "How will this be done using your product?" a feature (or multiple features) will be the answer.

**Example:** *"Export your data"* is a feature. A data export is something you can do with a piece of software, not a benefit of using that software. *"Share your reports in any format you choose"* is a benefit. It's an advantage given to the user of this product.

**Follow your benefit statements with features.**

Set up your copy by first writing a benefit statement. Then follow it by a sentence (or some bullet points) that explain the features that go hand-in-hand with that benefit. Take a look at the following example:

Determine whether you're spending your resources in the right places.

Project management is only helpful if you're managing the *right* projects. ClearPoint can help you see how—and if—your projects link to the key elements of your strategy.

- Track key elements of your projects over time, like start and end dates, budget, and percentage complete.
- View your projects in a Gantt chart.
- Separate projects from action items, so you can ensure timely and organized follow-up meetings.

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The headline is a *benefit*—it's advantageous to know if you're spending money in the right places! The subheadline echoes the benefit, and then proceeds into some bullet points that describe the features of the product that lead to that particular benefit.

**Know your audience.**

This makes a *huge* impact on how many specific features you should tout.

If your company is very spec- or numbers-oriented—say, you manufacture radio hardware—your persona is going to need to know every product feature and detail.

**Key Features**

- FCC/IC certified and ETSI/CE compliant
- Supports multiple LPWAN protocols, including Symphony Link and LoRaWAN 1.0
- Indoor or weatherized outdoor enclosure available
- Multiple antenna configurations
- Data connection available through Wi-Fi, cellular, or ethernet
- Optimized for use in the 868 MHz or 915 MHz frequency bands
- Active interference mitigation algorithm
- Adaptive data rates
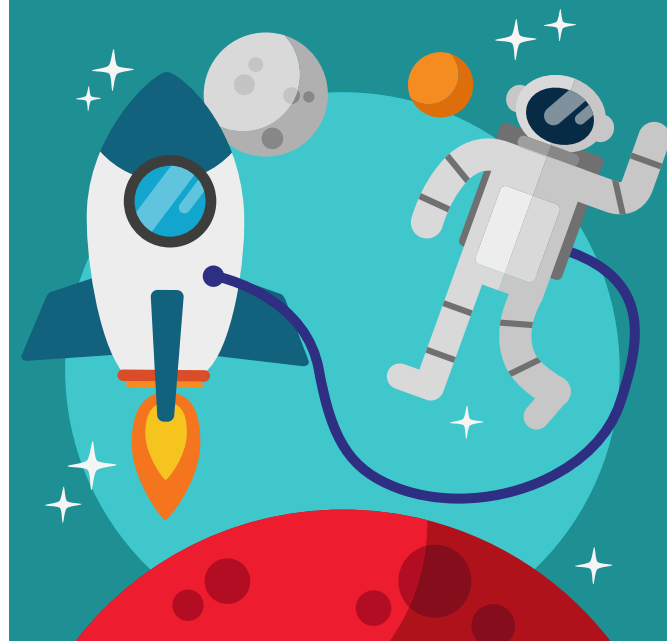- OEM White labeling available

If your company is service-based, you may not need to include so many detailed feature specifications. Again, this all comes down to knowing your buyer personas.
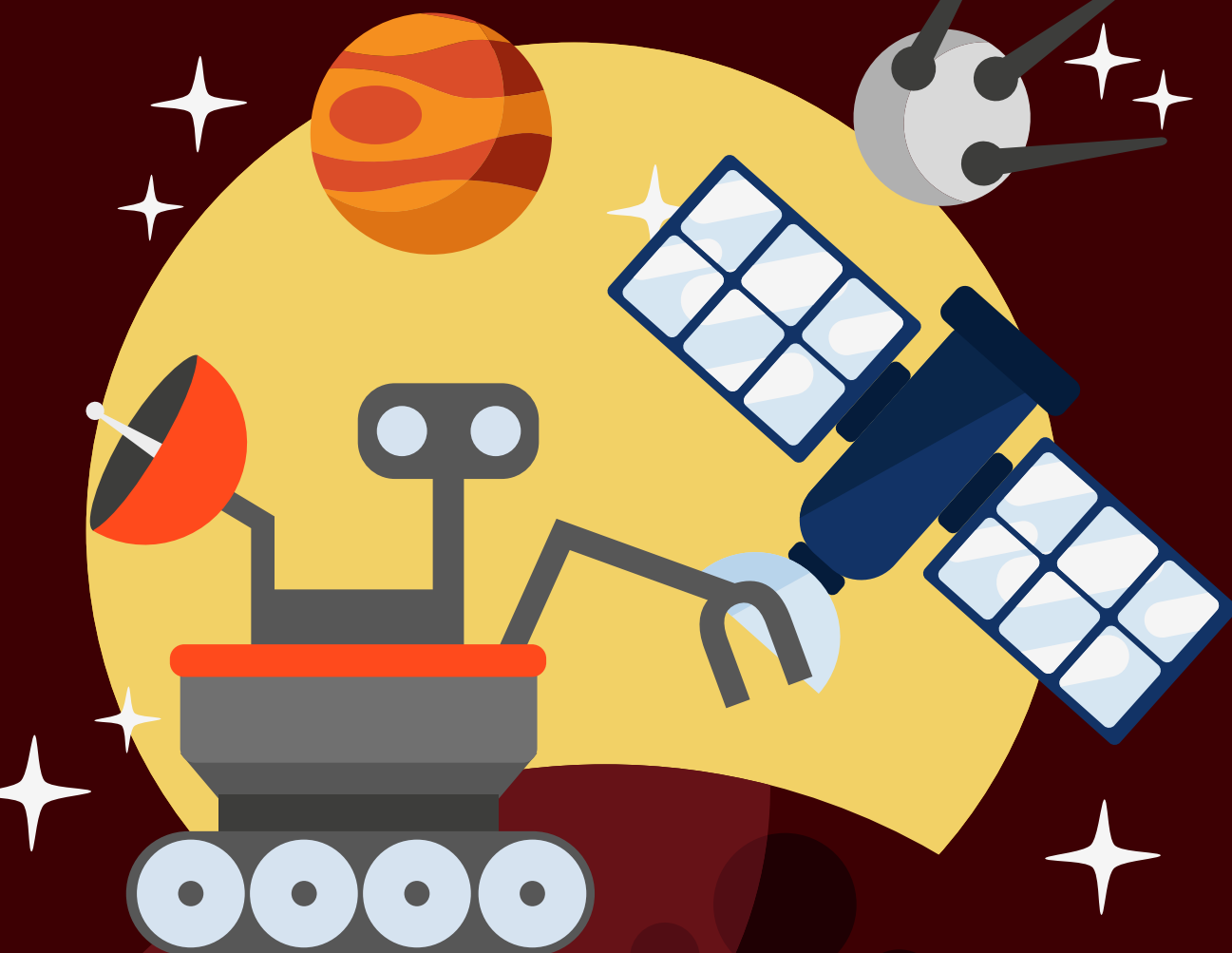
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# SALES-BASED
## COPY

# The argument can easily be made that all website copy is "sales-based," in that it is meant to lead a persona down the sales funnel.

But in this section, we're talking specifically about writing product or service pages with a direct call-to-action to purchase something—not just take another step toward becoming a sales- or marketing-qualified lead. This kind of web page is meant for immediate conversion.

With that in mind, we suggest the following practices:

- **Condense the formatting.**
  Sales-based copy takes into account all other best practices for website copy writing, but presents it in a more concise way.

- **Don't forget the specifics.**
  You'll need to demonstrate the benefits, but will have to list all of the major features of the product or service as well. Your persona still wants to know what's in it for them, but before they'll convert, they need to ensure that this "thing" will really work well in its intended role. The features should be short and informative.
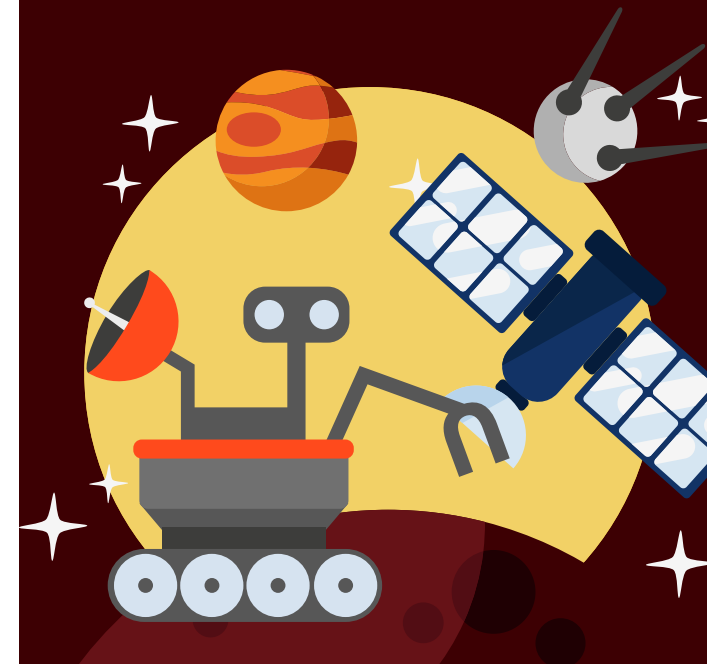
- **Look at page organization.**
  Organize the page in this order:
  - The **challenges** the persona is facing.
  - The **solution** you're offering.
  - The **benefits** of using the solution.
  - The **features** of the solution.
- **Default to "you" instead of "we" or "us."**
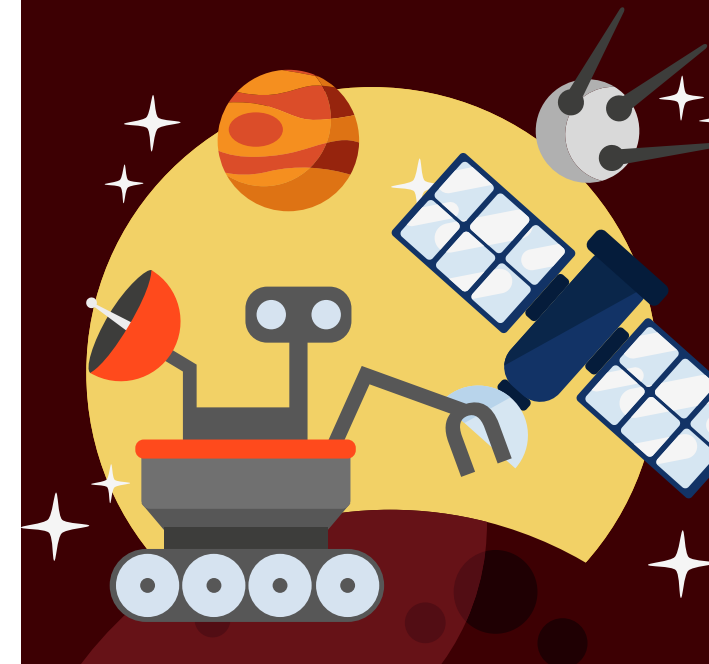  Don't say, "We built this"—say, "You're facing this challenge, and this is the solution."v

**RESOURCES**

[How To Write Product Page Copy That Doesn't Suck](#) (ConversionXL)

[7 Simple Steps To Writing Product Descriptions That Sell](#) (Kissmetrics)

[How Much Of Your Copy Is Totally Irrelevant? A Case For Web Personalization](#) (Copyhackers)
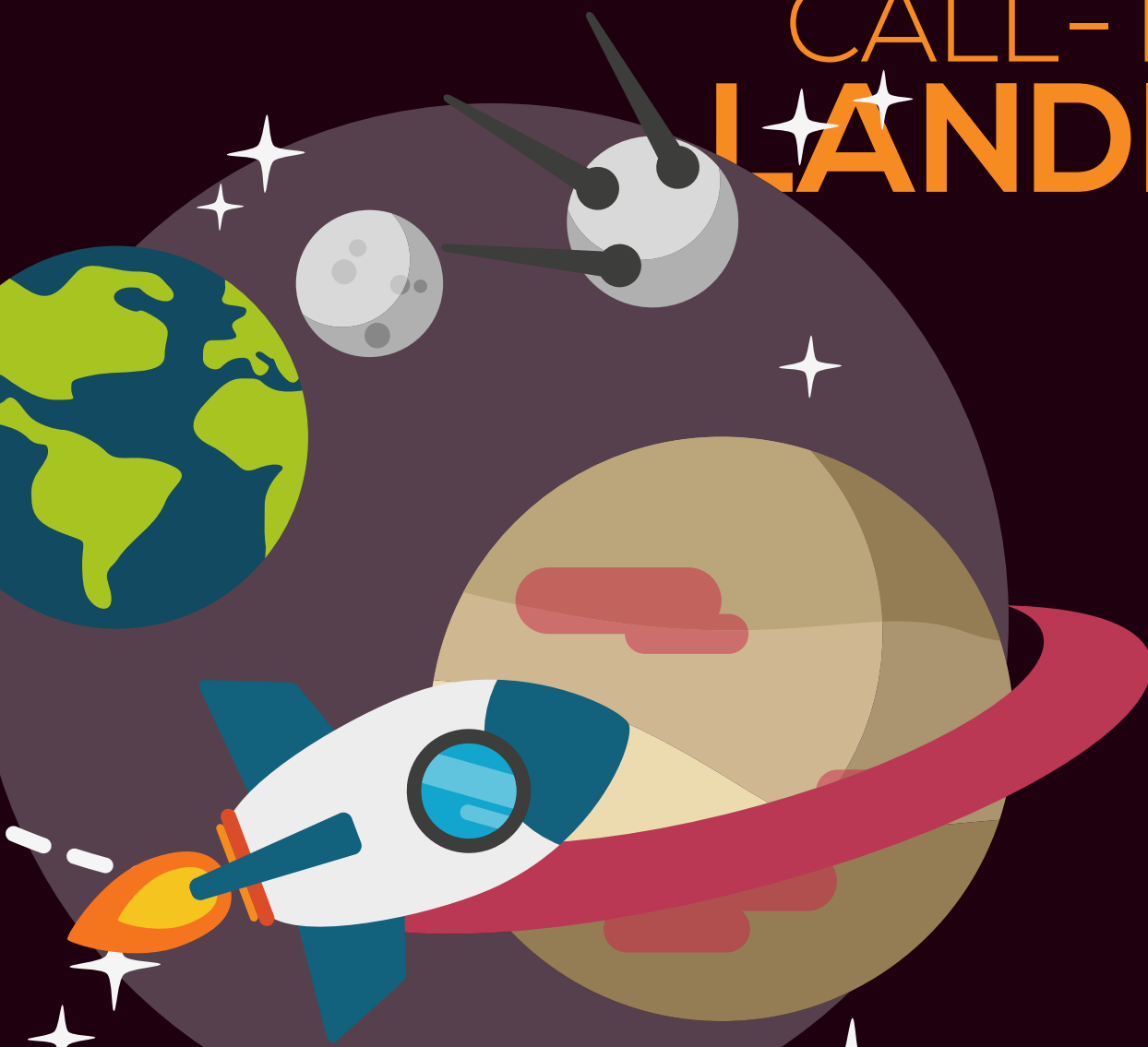
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CALL-TO-ACTION **&**
# LANDING PAGE
COPY

Landing pages and calls-to-action (CTAs) are two completely different things—but more often than not, a CTA redirects to a landing page, so we're grouping them together here.

## Call-To-Action (CTA) Copy

A "CTA" is a call-out that directs the reader to take a particular action. A CTA can be effectively broken down into three parts: the heading, the subheading, and the download button.

### Heading

This is your chance to grab your persona's attention, so don't waste it.

- **Make your heading brief and direct.**
  Your persona may not care for witty or eye-catching statements, but prefer a more direct approach. If so, cater to them!
  - Examples:
    - *"The Cover-All-Your-Bases Handbook"*
    - *"Free White Paper: White Paper Title"*

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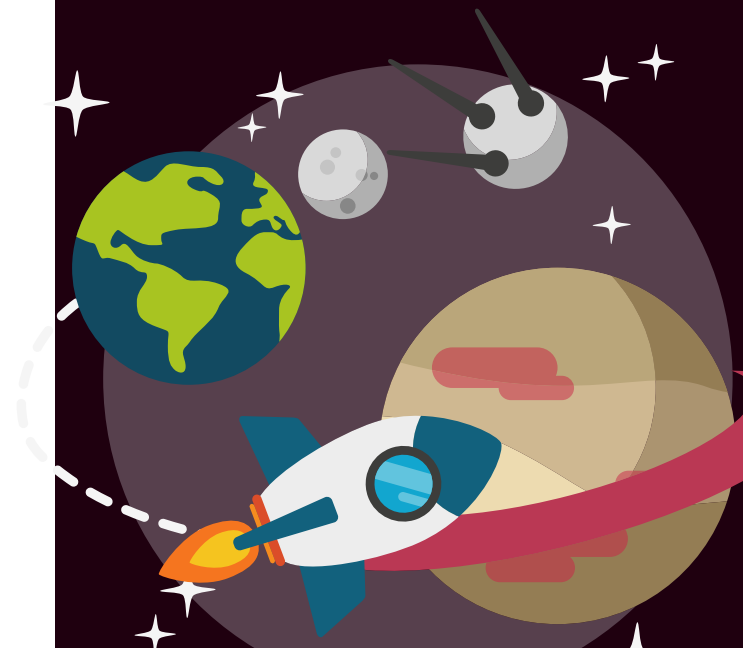
- **Relate to the persona's pain points.**
  Inbound marketing is effective when it solves a problem the persona has. If you can immediately identify this problem, you're headed in the right direction.
  - Examples:
    - *"Frustrated by your reporting process?"*
    - *"How much could ignoring export regulations cost you?"*
    - *"Wish you could figure out if HubSpot would work for you?"*

- **Provide a benefit right from the get-go.**
  As previously mentioned, your ideal persona wants to know right away what's in it for them—so use your heading to speak to that!

- Examples:
  - One of our client's CTAs has a 90% click-to-submission rate—which is phenomenal. The heading—*"Build a winning export strategy!"*—is simple and effective, with a clear benefit to the persona.
  - *"Spend less time analyzing results and more time managing them."*

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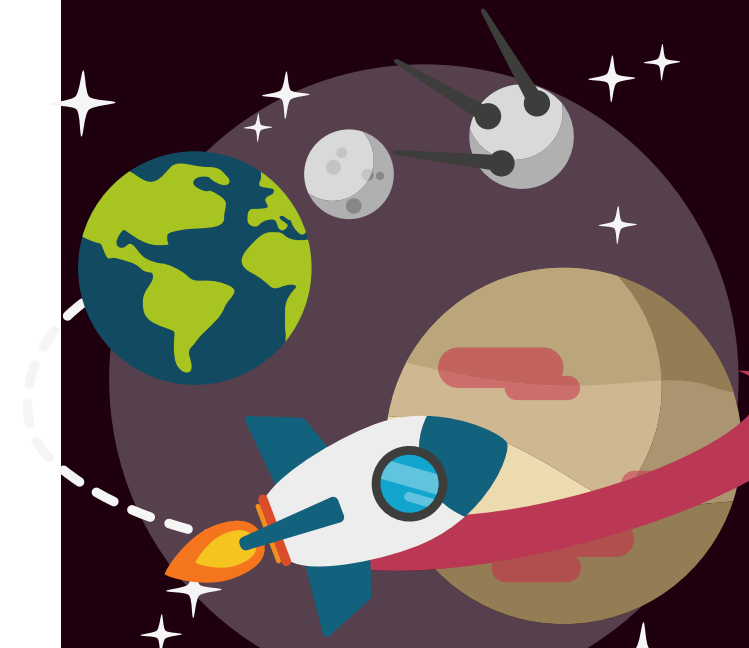
## Subheading

You've now caught your persona's attention with your heading. The subheading is the only sentence (or two) you have to close the deal, so make each word count.

- **Use the headline of the deliverable.**
  - Example: *"How to determine if you need an export license."*
- **Tell them about the deliverable.**
  - Example: *"This 16-page guide explores use cases, fundamental concepts, and leading technologies of low power, wide-area networks."*
- **If you ask a question in your heading, answer it.**
  - Example: *"Download this extensive list of customer measures to find out."*
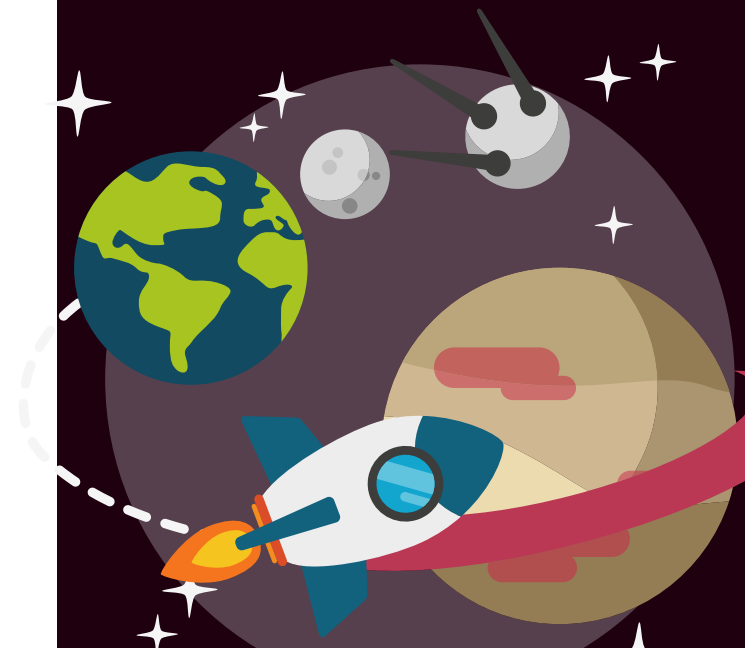
## Download Button

We use "Download Now" as our go-to download button text. It's simple, immediate, action-oriented, and has worked very well for us.

If your CTA isn't for a downloadable offer, keep your language concise:

- *"Begin Free Trial"*
- *"View Calculator"*
- *"See How"*
- *"Learn More"*

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< HOW CTAS WORK ON YOUR HOMEPAGE >

PART 7 | CALL-TO-ACTION & LANDING PAGE COPY

Calls-to-actions are extremely important on your website's home page—so you'll want to offer multiple CTA options. For example, they may not have enough "pain" to go right to the bottom-of-funnel solution, but they could be looking for guidance in how to solve the problem they're experiencing on their own.

Offering quality additional content is great for the "DIY"-type persona who still wants to learn more before taking the plunge with your product or service. Over time, she'll realize she needs your help, and when the lightbulb goes off, she'll reach out.
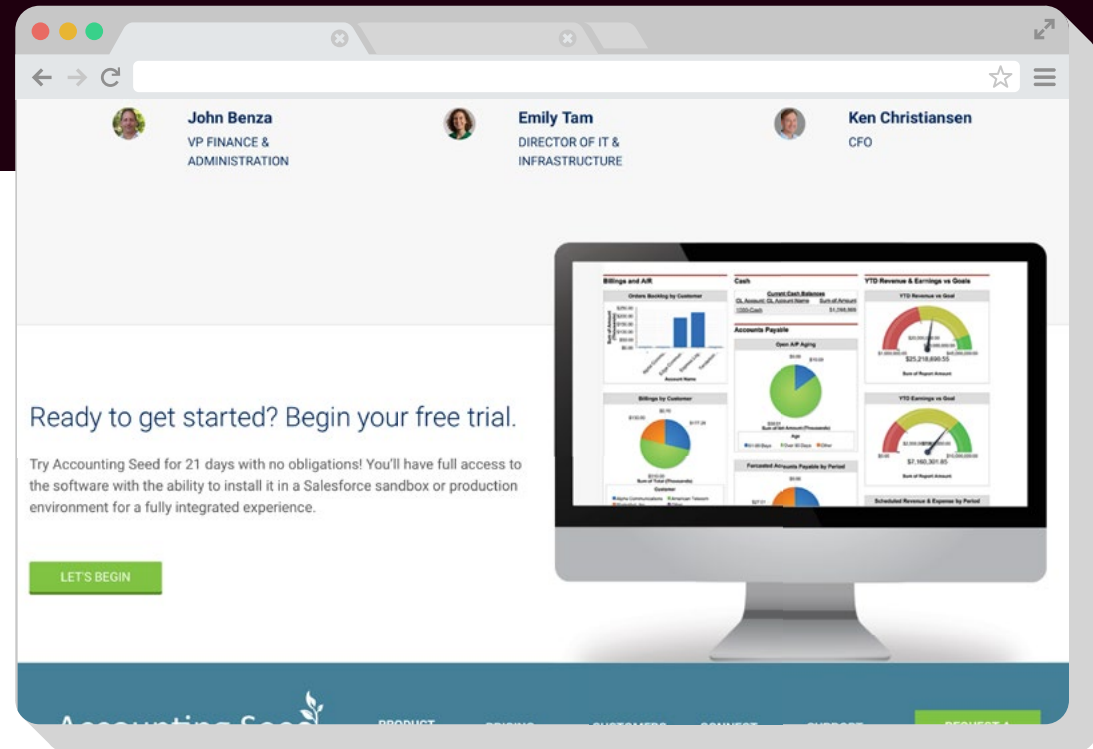
## Landing Pages

A landing page is the web page your visitor "lands" on that has a single focus: getting the persona to perform the action you want them to take. According to Search Engine Land, "The top 10% of landing pages are converting at a rate 3 to 5 times higher than the average." Wouldn't it be great if your landing page was seeing results like that? These tips may help you get there:

- **"The head nod" test.** Everything written on a landing page (and every web page for that matter) should lead the persona to nod their head in agreement and think, *"The obvious next step for me is to fill out this form and get this thing."*

- **Create a sense of time sensitivity and scarcity.** Classic sales methodology says that time sensitivity and scarcity convert. (And it's right.) For example, *"For the next 24 hours, you have access to this—then it's gone!"* and *"There are only 15 left!"* But this is difficult to do with a free, always-available downloadable item like an inbound marketing offer (i.e., a piece of content you offer your prospects and leads for free in exchange for information about themselves.) To accomplish this, we use implied urgency. Remind your persona that the more time that passes without a solution to their problem, the worse off they

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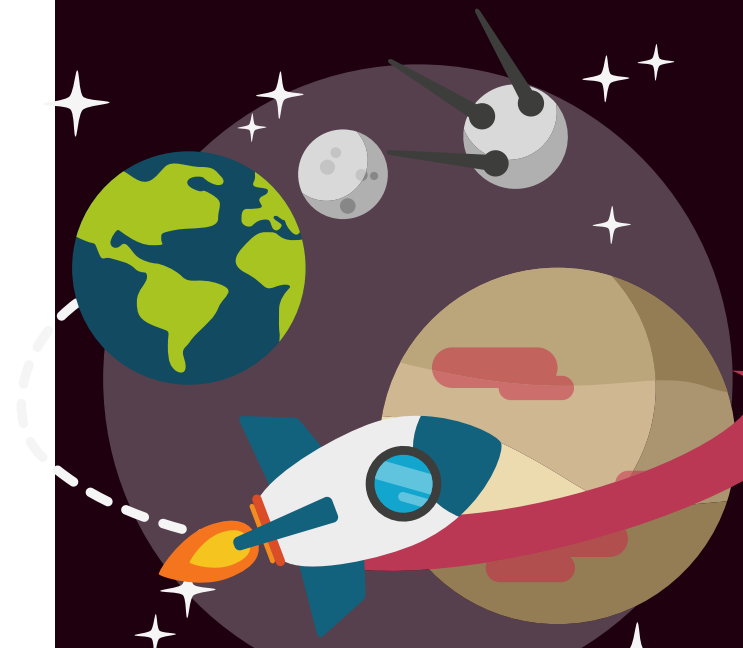
are. Explain that this ebook or guide can help them see results immediately (if that's true, of course).

- **Do what you can to overcome friction.**

  Every action has a certain amount of "friction" associated with it. According to Copyhackers, "Friction words are words that describe things people have to do – not things people want to do. They cause cognitive friction. Web copy that converts is focused on what people want to do." If your reader feels that performing the action on your landing page is going to be a waste of time (or just plain unpleasant!), that means your language is causing friction.

  - Example: If I've created an employee handbook that you can use for your own company, that's an incredibly valuable asset. But

my persona needs to think that the information I'm asking for in exchange for that handbook is perfectly reasonable in order for them to move forward.

**RESOURCES**

How Much Copy Should You Use On Your Landing Page? (Copyhackers)

Avoiding Friction Words In Your Web Copy (Copyhackers)

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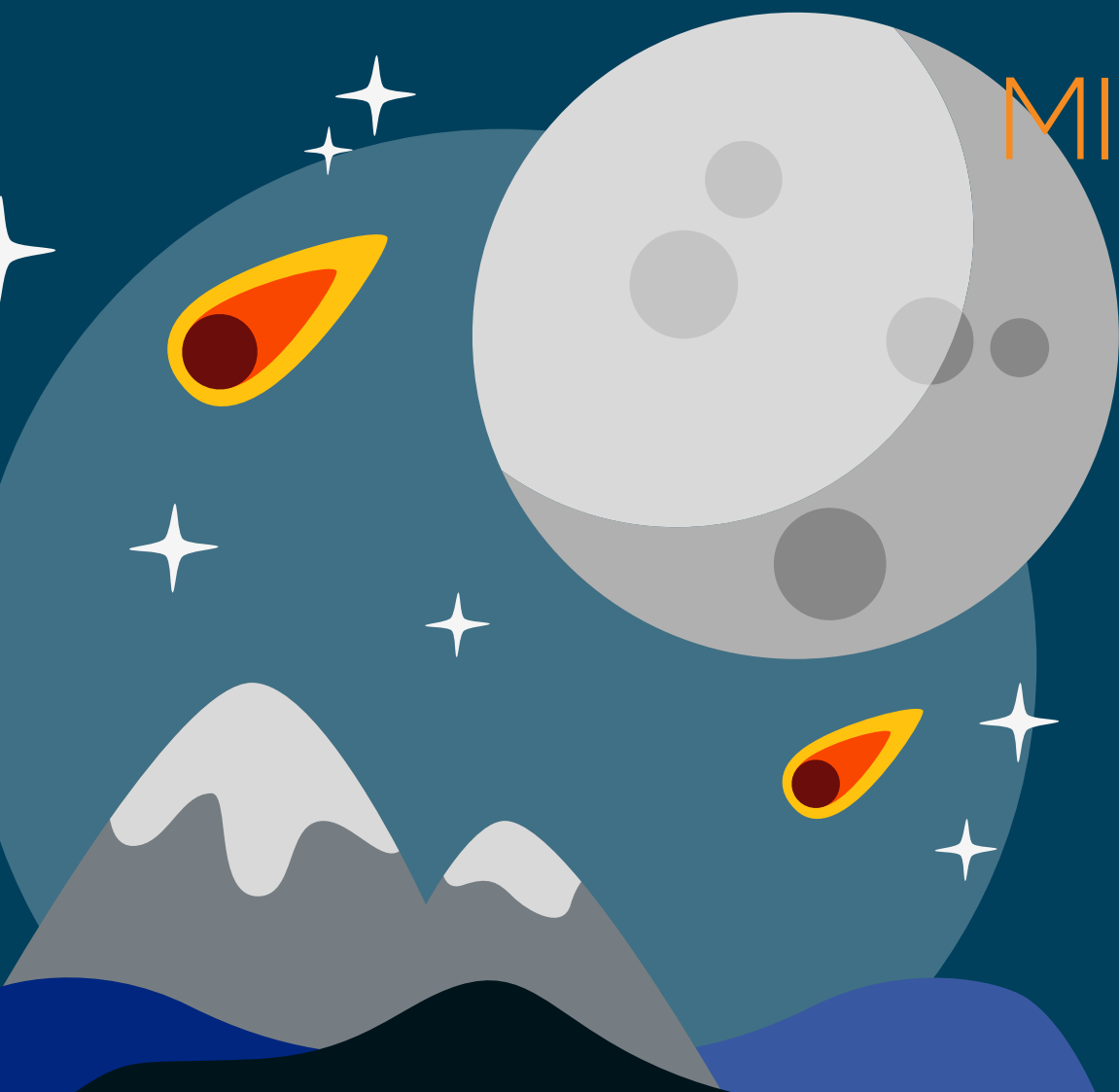**8-PART**
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MISCELLANEOUS
**BEST**
PRACTICES

## Establishing Credibility

Inbound marketing is nothing without the trusting relationship between the company and the reader. For inbound marketing to function correctly, your persona should believe that what you're telling them is accurate, truthful, and helpful. If they feel like you're being less than forthright about your product or service, your reputation—and your bottom line—could suffer. And if your website copy is filled with grammatical errors or disorganized ramblings, you'll likely dissuade your persona from purchasing your product or service.

There are many ways you can showcase your trustworthiness on your website. Here are a few ideas and some examples of each.

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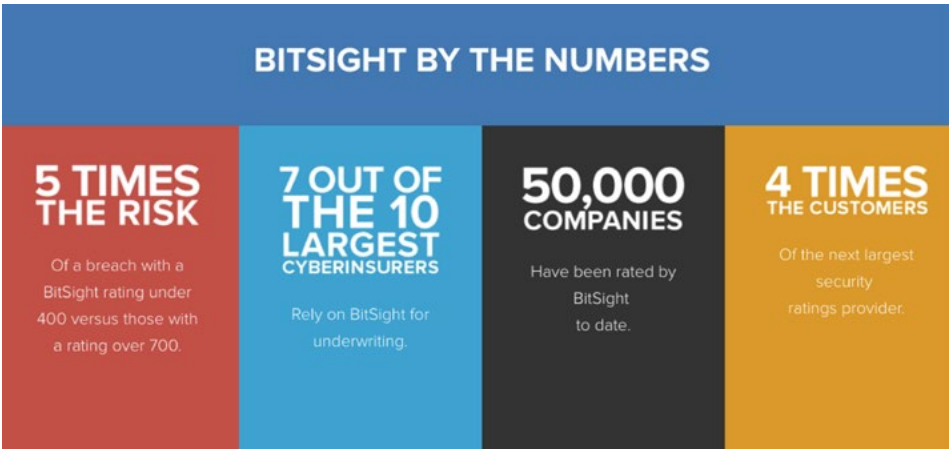**WEBSITE COPY**

## Testimonials



> What Our Customers Are Saying
>
> "Genesis is in the business of providing benefits, so they are in a sense forced—and they do it well—to have the latest technology to support me so that my high-tech employees get what they expect. We've run the numbers, and we couldn't afford to do this without Genesis HR."
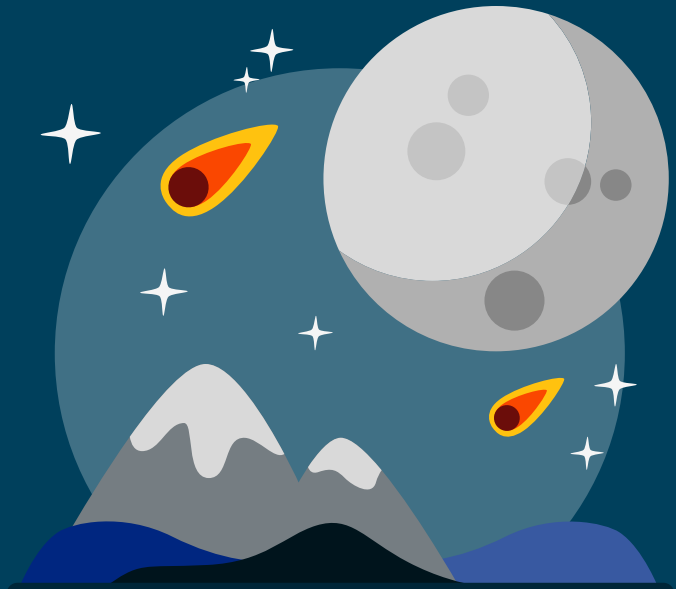>
> Senior Director Operations/Controller
>
> Watch the video. →

## Statistics



**BITSIGHT BY THE NUMBERS**

**5 TIMES THE RISK**
Of a breach with a BitSight rating under 400 versus those with a rating over 700.

**7 OUT OF THE 10 LARGEST CYBERINSURERS**
Rely on BitSight for underwriting.

**50,000 COMPANIES**
Have been rated by BitSight to date.

**4 TIMES THE CUSTOMERS**
Of the next largest security ratings provider.

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## Case Studies



## Customer & Client Logos

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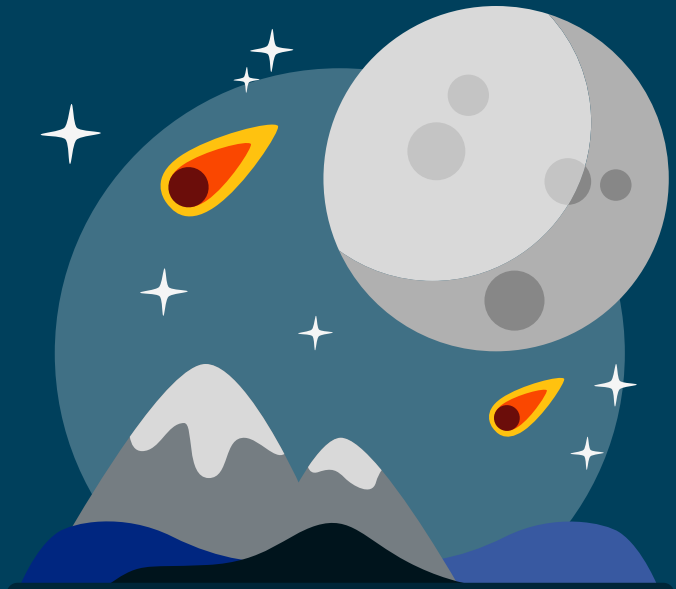
## User Reviews

Our customers are thrilled—
but don't just take our word for it.

Take a look at a few of our rave Accounting Seed reviews.

"Accounting Seed Financial Suite and the team are outstanding! It's very refreshing when a product and support are equally exceptional."

Giorgios Karayannis
FOUNDER, KOLOSSOS OLIVE OIL

## Accreditation

We take your trust seriously.

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Accredited
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### RESOURCES

7 Things That Make Your Website Appear Untrustworthy (Nectafy)

# Organized Lists Vs. Paragraph Text

Anyone who's written website copy before knows that it's best to include both paragraph text and organized lists (numbered, lettered, or bulleted) on your web pages. Why? **Doing this gives "scanners" enough information to quickly glean the information they're looking for and provides "liners"—anyone who wants to read the web page from top to bottom—with enough information to keep them happy.**

But before following that simplified rule of thumb, **you'll want to consider your personas**. If your ideal customer is a busy CEO (or anyone who works in a fast-paced environment), he needs to take in information quickly. Therefore, bullet points with action-packed verbs may be the ticket. If your personas are thoughtful and studious—or your product offering is more detail-oriented—your readers will want all the detail you can provide them with. Paragraph copy is going to be the best solution for them.

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## Copy Length

You should always try to **err on the side of less copy.**

Think about the last time you went to a website and were frustrated by the sheer amount of content—you just wanted to know how this company's product could solve your problem, and instead, you had to scan through paragraph after paragraph of text you didn't care about! Keep that in mind when you're writing your copy and delete any redundant language or overused sales pitches and answer your users' questions in as few words as possible.

One way to manage this is to **write your copy and then delete half of it.** (We're actually not kidding!) When we write web copy, our final draft is usually about half (or a third) of the word count of the original outline. You absolutely should focus on taking a handful of sentences and culling them down to create one extremely powerful sentence. It isn't reaching to say writing web copy is like trying to pack the essence of an 800-word article into 1-3 powerful statements.

### RESOURCES

Seth Goes Short. Buffer Goes Long. Here's What You Should Do With Your Content. (Copyhackers)

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## Point Of View

Keep in mind that no matter which point of view (POV) you write in, you should stay consistent with it throughout your entire website. Your readers will get confused (and rightfully so!) if you are constantly switching between "you are," "our company is," and "we were."

**First person:** This POV should be used for the pages that talk about you and your company—like an "About Us" page.

- Example: *"We're a pretty fun team. Get to know us."*

**Second person:** By and large, your copy will be written in second person. This is an extremely conversational approach, which is likely what you're going for. This POV is likely to get your persona to identify with the pain points you've

discussed, because it's focused on them.

- Example: *"You've got a hunch that your company's website could be way more productive than it is right now. Let's prove you right."*

**Third person:** The only time you should write in third person is if you're talking about someone who isn't reading the copy. If you're writing about caterpillars and the readers aren't caterpillars, talk in third person. But if a reader is a caterpillar and she's the persona, don't write in third person.

- Example: *"The caterpillars will turn into beautiful butterflies."*

**RESOURCES**

[3 Tips To Writing Damn Good Website Copy](#) (Strikingly)

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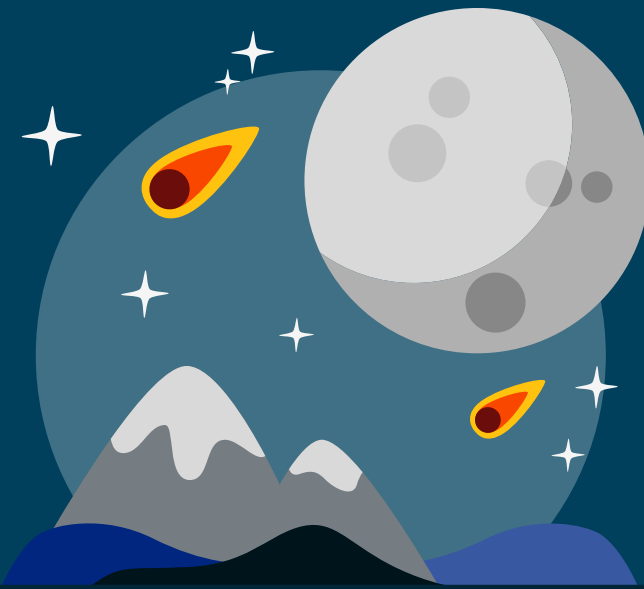
## Interviewing

Subject matter expert (SME) interviews are a critical part of writing stellar website copy. These interviews offer key insights you may not have ever considered yourself and make your job as a writer a whole lot easier.

From an inbound marketing perspective, these interviews are vital in helping us craft really great copy (without BSing it). If you aren't an expert on the topic you'll be writing about, here are a few important tips to keep in mind when you interview an SME:

- **Only interview one person per web page at a time, if possible.**
  Trust us—interviewing two or more SMEs at a time can spell disaster. It's likely that they'll disagree or talk over one another, which isn't helpful for anyone.

- **If you have to speak to two (or more) people at a time, email them an outline of the questions you'll ask them beforehand.**
  This will give your SMEs time to think through the topics and talk about them rather than discussing them at length with (or in front of) you and wasting time during your meeting.

- **Set up a recurring interview time.**
  The duration and number of interviews you'll need will vary based on your website copy writing timeline. When we're rewriting a client's entire website, we often

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write 4-8 web pages each week and have found that we can cover the topics we need to discuss for those pages in an hour-long interview per week (assuming we've done our due diligence beforehand). Setting meetings up to recur each week keeps things consistent for you and your SMEs.

- **Don't ask direct questions about specific elements of web page copy.** If you're interviewing for the homepage, don't ask your SMEs, "What headline ideas do you have?" We've found this approach to be ineffective. Instead, ask them a number of questions (like the following), and then craft your text using their answers:
  - "What specific pain points are your personas dealing with?"
  - "What are three things that could make your visitors nod their head in agreement?"
  - "Describe what your product or service can do for the visitor in as few words as possible."

**RESOURCES**

The Do's & Don'ts Of Subject Matter Expert Interviews (Nectafy)

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# You made it!

Is your head spinning after hearing about all these website copy writing best practices?

Don't worry—simply keep this guide handy throughout the process and refer back as often as you need to. We're certain using these tips will lead you to some pretty spectacular results.

*Had no idea strategic copy writing could be this complicated? Don't want to worry about doing this yourself?* Let us write your web copy for you.

*Take a look at how partnering with Nectafy could provide your website visitors with the valuable content they're looking for.*

*Nectafy*