

Less and more: 11 writing trends

 By [Tiffany Markman](#) 13 Jan 2011

I have high hopes for 2011. It's barely begun and already it's bursting with potential. Budding with promise. Blooming with opportunity. Or perhaps I'm still riding the holiday wave and soon, all of this optimistic beach-still-in-memory claptrap will vanish - to be replaced with rancid smells, flies and possibly mold. Who knows? That's one of the things that excites me about 2011: it could go anywhere.



But here are a few things my writing and editing clients are talking about and thinking about for our written output in 2011:

1. More professional input

I predict that more clients will start outsourcing strategic copy tasks to pros, and handling less of it in-house. Even the littlies - the micro-micro-micro-enterprises who wouldn't dream of using a copywriter or copy editor in the past - have started to recognise the enormous value of careful, clever copy.

Many clients have also realised how much they despise producing this writing themselves, because of how long it takes and how stressful it can be.

2. Shorter, tighter copy

The consensus appears - finally! - to be shifting in favour of shorter, tighter, more concise copy. For 2011 I predict a real awareness of how much more powerful clean writing is, and a strong movement towards getting to the point, avoiding waffle and offering readers the chance to make contact for more info.

After all, if they want more, they'll ask for it. And then, we've got 'em.

3. PDFs over print

More clients are going to start producing e-mailable PDF or HTML brochures, corporate profiles and fact sheets - *instead of, not in addition to* - expensive hard copies. They're easier to update, change, improve and customise. They're cheaper to generate and distribute. And they're more eco-friendly.

4. Less spin

I predict that we're going to see more telling it like it is. Clients are growing increasingly conscious of the need to be honest with audiences, and to give them the real facts, so that they can decide for themselves how to proceed. The age of spin, haze and murk is coming to a close, at last, and what a

boon this is for brave copywriters.

(The sceptics in the room at present have asserted that I'm deluding myself on this, and that clients are going to request that the copy *look* less like spin, but actually be finer spun... Let's see.)

5. Greater simplicity

Item 4 will translate, I believe, into copy that is simpler in terms of structure, messaging, tone and language. I'm hoping that this also means a lot more 'writing as you speak', and a lot less of that horrid businessy style that leans more towards pomposity and distance than towards engagement and proximity.

6. More risk (style and tone)

Item 4 may also yield more clients being comfortable to take chances on copy: using more irreverent wording than they once did, or being flexible about sentence fragments and starting with 'And', or using a helluva lot more second person ('you').

I'm getting a lot more briefs that say, "Let's make friends with the reader"; a lot fewer that say, "Let's impress the pants off them".

7. More SEO web copy

Anyone who isn't by now able to translate the acronym 'SEO' into 'search engine optimisation' or at the very least, 'Google-friendly', is going to have a hard 2011. Because web copy that isn't optimised for both search engines and the fickle reader may as well not be there.

In 2011, we *will* see more emphasis on high-quality SEO'd web copy... but what will happen to the old world diehards who refuse to get into the lifeboats as the ship sinks?

8. More blog/Facebook assistance

Blogs and Facebook used to be about peddling your personal stories to whichever poor soddie was online with nothing better to do than attend. But in 2011, blogs and Facebook pages are going to continue to be populated with the insider detail, hot-off-the-presses updates and thought leadership coming out of the corporate world.

Companies are going to grow increasingly comfortable with these as channels that have their own perks, but they're also going to have to work harder to identify high-value news for them.

9. More Twitter input

If I can't vent about a brand on [Twitter](#), I'm going to [Hello Peter](#) instead, and that stays on the web a longer.

So best you get your company a Twitter profile; build it a following; find someone really committed, clued up and authoritative to manage it; and start talking with your audience.

I predict that 2011 is the year for this, with writers being called on to provide Twitter input for companies large and small - or even run profiles in their entirety.

10. Stronger, longer strategies

I believe that 2011 will bring more coherent short- to medium-term strategies for communicating with audiences, in place of the reactive methods we've used since 2008. More clients are starting to build plans, even simple ones, for conveying messages to readers (with room within them for unforeseen

11. More auto-solutions

In this, the year of the Rabbit, more communicators are going to find speedy, tidy, easy ways to handle repetitive writing tasks - such as cover letters, billing messages, follow-ups and responses to enquiries

There are loads of great online solutions that can be used to automate these, with sufficient flexibility to tailor and monitor, and I predict that more of us are going to rely on them.

Disclaimer: This article was written by me, not by a bot. Promise. Swear.

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I spend 10 hours a day writing - and teaching others to write. I was South Africa's Freelance Copywriter of the Year in 2020 and one of the world's 'Top 50 Female Content Marketers' 2021.
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