



## The Long & Short Of 'Short & Sweet'

By Erin Huffstutter

Listen up, small business owners! Lately, I've had a lot of new clients contact me for help editing website text, brochure copy, etc.

After slashing away on a few of these projects, I've noticed a disturbing trend: we, as small business owners, blather on for *way too long* about our businesses. More damaging still, we tend to do it in a "voice" that appeals to other industry types, *not* our customers. Big mistake.

So, when developing your marketing, keep the following in mind:

- 1) Get your edit on.** Once you have a workable first draft, use your "word counter" to tally the number of words in your copy. Now, go back and edit, Edit, EDIT until your counter tallies *half* the original number of words.
- 2) Remember: *you are speaking to your customer, not another engineer / retailer / chiropractor / SEO specialist.*** As interesting as the minutia of your business may be - your customer could care less. (Sorry, it's true!) They don't want to know *how* it works, they just want to know how it will *make their life easier*.
- 3) Refer to tip #2 when *designing* your website or brochure, too.** Clutter is a major turn-off. And, don't show diagrams, graphics or photos that are only of interest to peers!

For example, I recently received a postcard advertising a local dental practice. The front of the card was tasteful and elegant. But when I turned it over - YIKES! I was hit with "before and after" close-ups of lips stretched back revealing pinky, veiny gums and glistening teeth. Ew!

Better to showcase an attracting family, full-face shots framing beautiful, white smiles. The only people who dig the gummy pics are other dentists.

**4) Think in terms of *benefits*, not *features*.** Always highlight the benefits, don't linger too long on features. Just to hammer it home, here's a list of a product/feature and its corresponding benefit(s):

**FEATURE:**

Tourmaline face cream  
with SPF 30

Experienced tax preparation  
services

Full-service, small business  
web design

**BENEFIT:**

*Timeless beauty* in a bottle, the  
*confidence* of glowing skin

*Peace of mind* that your taxes  
are correct, *freedom* from paperwork,  
*more time* to focus on other things

*Peace of mind* that your site will  
perform as it should, *more time* to  
focus on other things, the *confidence*  
of having a beautifully-designed site

**5) Lastly, if you can't – or don't have the time to – adhere to 1-4 above, HIRE A PROFESSIONAL!** For example, as a writer, I know my design skills are seriously lacking. So I invested an initial \$4,000 hiring a designer to develop my logo, my website, my letterhead, my business card, etc. Since launching, I've made that money back many times over. (My website alone passively attracts at least four new clients a month.) Money well spent.

**Bottom line:** If you don't have the time or energy to do-it-well-yourself, paying a professional to develop your marketing materials is really is one of the best investments a business owner can make - just ask those of us who have!

**About The Author:** *Erin Huffstutter is the owner of Erin Writes, a California-based freelance copywriting service specializing in big business, small business and everyone in between. To learn more and/or get a quote on your next copywriting project, visit: [www.erinwrites.com](http://www.erinwrites.com)*