Technical Copywriting Course Exercises

# Getting started

1. Make a list of the company websites, brochures or letters you like. The ones where you think the copywriting is good.
2. Write down why you like them.

# What is copywriting?

No exercise

# Overview of modern marketing

## Open Steno Website Project

As a project for you to work on, you'll be asked to imagine you are the copywriter for an open source project called "Open Steno". This is a real open source project, so you can look at the actual copy on the project website.

Stenography is a form of shorthand writing/typing, traditionally done on a special machine. It was invented in the early 1900s. Professional stenographers enter text at around 225 words per minute. However, the use of stenography has been limited to court rooms and TV subtitling, due to the high cost of the hardware, software and training.

Open Steno comprises the Plover open source application, training courses and low-cost hardware. Plover is a 100% free, open source steno program that lets you use a computer keyboard (you can also use it with hobbyist steno machines or professional steno machines).

Background information for you:

* <https://www.slideshare.net/ellispratt/open-steno-a-new-world>
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRXiNMS9JuY>
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtQzTUEuPWo>
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RBBiri3CD6w>
* <https://github.com/openstenoproject/plover/wiki/Beginner's-Guide:-Get-Started-with-Plover>
* <http://www.openstenoproject.org/plover/>
* <http://plover.stenoknight.com/2017/08/responses-to-2017-osp-community-survey.html>
* <http://www.openstenoproject.org>
* <http://plover.stenoknight.com/>
* <https://medium.freecodecamp.org/stack-overflow-2018-developer-survey-faac8d3eb357>

The answers you provide to the exercises won't be going onto the actual website, so you have freedom to stray a little from the truth. You have the option of inventing new problems, facts and reasons for using the solution, if you wanted.

## Exercises

Look at the Open Steno Project <http://www.openstenoproject.org/>

1. Can you identify what will a prospective customer be capable of doing when they have used this product?
2. Can you identify the customer journey? From the landing on the Home page, what do they want the reader to do next?
3. What is the core problem Open Steno and Plover are solving?

# How people buy

No exercise

# Copywriting in an Attention Economy

Look at the Open Steno Project http://www.openstenoproject.org/

1. You have been asked to write "Pillar content" for Open Steno (all content about the topic). Write a list of 5 topic titles for "Pillar content "articles.
2. You have been asked to write "Auction content" for Open Steno (a unique view). Write a list of 5 topic titles for "Auction content "articles.
3. At what stage is this market (Pioneer, Early stage, Growth stage, Mature stage)?

# What makes you different?

1. What makes the Open Steno Project unique? How does it differentiate itself?
   1. Write a list.

# Market research

Look at the Open Steno Project http://www.openstenoproject.org/

1. Who is its target audience? (There is more than one)
2. What tasks does it help them carry out?
3. How will their lives look different  after using the Plover software and steno hardware?
4. What might the readers be skeptical about?
5. After landing on the Home page, what’s the next step you'd want prospects to take?
6. One of the target markets for the Open Steno Project are programmers. The QWERTY keyboard layout can result in developers suffering from RSI and other pains in their bodies. You have been asked to write copy that will explain how the Open Steno Project can help programmers.
   1. Write a list of keywords to include on the Open Steno Project. You can use the Google Keyword planner tool (<https://adwords.google.com/intl/en_uk/home/tools/keyword-planner/>).

# A framework for copywriting

One of the target markets for the Open Steno Project are programmers. The QWERTY keyboard layout can result in developers suffering from RSI and other physical pains. You have been asked to write a web page that will explain how the Open Steno Project can help programmers. You can write this page as a Word document, if you wish.

Your web page will contain these sections

* The customer, their problem and pain
* The contrast with not changing
* The founder's story
* The solution or system
* The proof
* The offer
* The Call to Action

## The customer, their problem and pain

1. What problems do programmers have, which you could solve with your product or service?
2. What could a potential remedy for them be?
3. What might programmers have tried before to solve this problem in the past and failed?
   1. Why might it will be different this time?
4. How much terminology do they understand already?
5. What do they fear?
6. What motivates them?
7. Write some copy for a web page that describes the customer, their problem and pain. You can describe:
   1. The problem which you are solving for them
   2. The pain the problem causes
   3. (optional) An emotion your user feels or want to feel.
   4. What the possible remedy could be

## The contrast with not changing

1. Write some copy for a web page for this section. On your page:
   1. Show this is important.
   2. Describe the consequences of doing nothing.
   3. Give them hope it can be solved within a short or immediate timeframe.

## The founder's story (optional)

1. On your page, describe:
   1. How the founder faced the problem.
   2. How they overcame it.
   3. How they developed a system that works for them and the audience.
2. What was the scary dragon (if any)?
3. What was the happy ending?

## The solution or system

1. On your page, describe:
   1. What is the transformation - how will their lives change afterwards?
   2. What are the results that happen when they use Open Steno?

## The proof

1. On your page, describe:
   1. The facts or other types of proof you can use to back up your claims. Anything that can visually represent the product, the claims, or the benefits of the product.
   2. Walk your reader through a simple process to their goal (Step 1, Step 2)
2. How can you:
   1. Show it in action
   2. Show before and after pictures
3. What can you compare this product to?
4. Are there any relevant awards or certificates you can mention?

## The offer

1. On your page, describe the Plover software.
   1. What are your benefits? Write down at least two.
   2. Compare to the pain and consequences.
   3. Compare to competition.

## The Call to Action

1. On your page, describe:
   1. What you want them to do next. (What do they need to do next in order to rid themselves of their problem).
   2. The reasons (if any) to do it now.

## Look at the Open Steno website

* Does it tell you who this is for?
* See if you can find if it tells you what pain people have
* See if you can find if it tells you why they should change now.
* See if you can find if it tells you what it is selling.
* See if you can find if it tells you the benefits/transformation.
* See if you can find if it tells you the proof/customer testimonies.
* See if you can find any Calls to Action.

Are there any places where they could add these to their existing copy?

# Planning and writing multiple page copy

1. What nurturing sequence could you add to the Open Steno Project web page?
   1. Could it lead up to an event or challenge?
   2. How could this be broken down into a sideways selling sequence?
2. What questions could you ask programmers about them and their pain that could be used to guide them to a specific benefit or solution?
3. What content could go onto a squeeze page?

# Writing techniques

1. Look at the copy you have written:
   1. Circle or highlight every instance of "we" and "you".
      1. Can you change any of the "we" to"you"?
   2. Circle or highlight every instance of power words.
      1. Are there any places where you could add power words to your existing copy?
   3. Circle or highlight every instance of poor words.
      1. Are there any places where you could remove these from your existing copy?
   4. Are there any sentences you could use alliteration, diacope or epistrophe?
2. Write some possible headlines for your web page

# The content brief

Optional exercise:

1. Write a content brief for a copywriting contractor who will write a web page on the Open Steno Project website for you. This page will be targeted at Personal Assistants (secretaries) who need to write and transcribe lots of content.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
| Project Owner |  |
| Subject Matter Expert |  |
| Reviewer |  |
| Format |  |
| Who will be publishing the content |  |
| Source content and images | (Not required for this exercise) |
| Maintenance |  |
| Deadlines:  First draft  Second draft  Final version |  |
| Review process | (Not required for this exercise) |
| Style guidelines (Voice and Tone) | (Not required for this exercise) |
| Requirement |  |
| Target audience |  |
| Competitors |  |
| Date |  |
| Briefed by |  |
| Purpose and objectives  (Why is this wanted? What do you want to achieve in the short-term, in the long-term?) |  |
| Positioning of product - Overarching content position  (How the product represents itself within the marketplace. What does it stand for? Why is it content different?) |  |
| Benefits  (What is the single most important benefit that will appeal to your target audience? Why is this important to your customer? What are the secondary benefits?) |  |
| What is the Call to Action |  |
| Proposition  (What is the key statement that summarises the main benefit of your product or service?) |  |
| Proof  Why should the audience believe what you claim? | (Not required for this exercise) |
| How it will be published | (Not required for this exercise) |
| Other related marketing activities | (Not required for this exercise) |
| Background of the project | (Not required for this exercise) |
| Context  How do your target audience feel about your product or service in relation to alternatives available to them? |  |
| Key words and phrases | (Not required for this exercise) |
| Attachments | (Not required for this exercise) |
| Estimate/budget | (Not required for this exercise) |
| Project Plan | (Not required for this exercise) |
| Visual style | (Not required for this exercise) |
| Content structure | (Not required for this exercise) |
| Name of job |  |
| Location in website | (Not required for this exercise) |
| Length |  |
| Where it will be used |  |
| Hyperlinks | (Not required for this exercise) |
| Content tags | (Not required for this exercise) |

# Measuring your performance

1. Print out the content you wrote.
2. Ask someone read it and to:
   1. underline things that made them feel more confident about the product in green
   2. underline the things that made them feel less confident in red

# Planning

No exercise

# Troubleshooting

1. Copy and paste the content you wrote into Hemingway or Grammarly.
   1. See if it identifies any potential issues with your copy.
   2. Correct any sections you feel you need to correct.
2. Check your copy against the website copy checklists provided.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Content | Yes/No |
| Your facts are true |  |
| The copy is right for the target audience |  |
| The headline is a hook |  |
| The first paragraph is engaging |  |
| The benefits are stated clearly |  |
| It is clear what is being offered |  |
| You have proof (testimonials) |  |
| There’s a Call to Action |  |
| Passed the “we” and “us” versus “you” test |  |
| Passed the active voice test |  |
| Reader can pinpoint your unique competitive advantage |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Framework | Yes/No |
| Identify the customer, their problem and pain |  |
| Contrast with not changing |  |
| How you discovered the solution (optional) |  |
| Describe the solution or system |  |
| Provide Proof |  |
| Make the Offer |  |
| Make a Call to Action |  |