

Catalog Copy and the Web

Once upon a time, there was the lone print catalog that arrived in the recipient's mailbox. If the recipient felt inclined, he or she might open it and read it, since the catalog's arrival essentially said, "I'm here; wouldn't you like to take a look?"

If the catalog succeeded in enticing the reader, the contents contained, one after another, pictures of items with bland descriptions. This approach was widely used and sufficient to compete with other catalogs.

Fast forward to 2008.

Whoa, the good old days are looking pretty darn good. That leisurely approach of the print catalog is long gone, thanks to the World Wide Web. Now, shoppers aren't just sitting back and waiting for their catalogs to arrive. No, they're proactive and know what they're looking for and can find it fast, thanks to Google.

So your online catalog copy better respond to their laser focus and trigger-happy finger on the mouse, otherwise, you'll lose sales. Your product descriptions should say right up front what the benefits are. Copy should grab their attention immediately because today's online shopper doesn't have the attention span or the patience to wait long for a reason to stick around.

And don't be afraid to go longer on the copy, especially when you're deeper into the product pages. If you've got a customer who's that interested, why disenchant him or her? Provide all the information necessary, even stuff that he or she might not have thought of. The online shopper falls into two categories: the shopper in research mode, gathering information; and the shopper who's ready to buy. Aim for a blend of copy that satisfies both parties.

Yes, we all love to reminisce about the good old days. But to survive in today's multichannel market you need copy that responds and adapts to shoppers' buying behaviors.

Otherwise, plan on being left behind in the dust.