

Step-by-Step Directions for Writing Your Next Piece of Content [Infographic]

Author : Veronica Jarski

Date : June 11, 2015



Everybody writes, but not everybody who writes gets to his or her intended destination. To help content marketers find their way, best-selling author Ann Handley offers this writing GPS.

Before you write, know why you are writing. "Anything you write—even an individual blog post—should be aligned with a larger (business or marketing) goal," says [Ann Handley](#), chief content officer at MarketingProfs and author of [Everybody Writes](#), in the following [Visual.ly](#) infographic.

Next, you'll want to reframe the idea to relate it to your readers. "Ask, 'So what?'" suggests Handley. "And then answer 'because...' until you've exhausted your ability to reach an answer."

Back up your statements with credible sources and data. (You can use yourself as a source if you have relevant experience.)

For the rest of the steps to creating a writing GPS, check out the [Visual.ly](#) infographic:



**Ann Handley's Writing GPS:
STEP-BY-STEP DIRECTIONS FOR
WRITING YOUR NEXT PIECE OF
CONTENT**

Use these 12 steps from Ann Handley's *Everybody Writes* to take your writing from a discombobulated mess to a coherent, useful piece of content that engages audiences.



1} GOAL

What's your business goal? What are you trying to achieve?
Anything you write—even an individual blog post—should be aligned with a larger (business or marketing) goal.

"I want to drive awareness of and interest in the launch of our incredibly cool new collaborative editing software BECAUSE we want to sell more of it."

The key is to **care** about the purpose of what you're writing.

2} REFRAME

Put your reader into it. Reframe the idea to relate it to your readers. Ask "So what?" and then answer. "Because..." until you've exhausted your ability to reach an answer. For example...



I want to drive interest in the launch of our new collaborative editing software.

So what?

Because our editor makes it stupid-easy to collaborate remotely without overwriting each other's stuff.

So what?

Because that's a pain to deal with for virtual teams.

So what?

Because pain... it hurts and it... umm... bad.

You get the idea. Express your reframed idea as a clear statement. Then put that at the top of the page to remind you where you're headed with your writing.



3} SEEK OUT DATA AND EXAMPLES

What credible sources and data support your main idea?
Can you cite examples? If you have relevant experience, use yourself as a source.



4} ORGANIZE

What format or structure would best communicate your point: opinionated blog post, explanatory how-to article, infographic, case study...?



5} WRITE TO ONE PERSON

Imagine the one person you're helping with this piece of writing. And then write directly to that person (using you, as opposed to using people or they).



6} PRODUCE THE UGLY FIRST DRAFT

Producing the Ugly First Draft (UFD) is basically where you show up and throw up.

Write badly.
Write as if no one will ever read it.



7} WALK AWAY

Put some distance between your first-draft ugliness and your second draft.



8} REWRITE

Shape that mess into something that your reader wants to read. In your head, swap places with your reader as you do so.



9} GIVE IT A GREAT HEADLINE OR TITLE

Spend as much time on the headline as you do on writing the piece itself. Respect the headline.



10} HAVE SOMEONE EDIT

Ideally, the person who edits your piece will have a tight grip on grammar, usage, style, and punctuation. Like a beta-fide editor.



11} ONE FINAL LOOK FOR READABILITY

Does your piece look inviting, alluring, easy to scan? With short paragraphs and bold subheads?

Are your lists numbered or bulleted?



12} PUBLISH

But not before answering one more reader question: "What now?"

Don't leave your readers just standing awkwardly in the middle of the dance floor after the music stops. Tell them what you want them to do next.

Get your copy of **EVERYBODY WRITES** at EverybodyWrites.com

produced by **visually**
Partnership in the digital creative ecosystem

Source: Ann Handley, *Everybody Writes*

