

10 Commandments of About Us Pages

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Commandment 1: Know thy audience. Who's most likely to look you up? Friends, advocates, opponents, information-seekers? Figure it out and talk to them. Design separate pages for specialized users. DO let your org's personality show. DON'T blather on. Think elevator speech. Wrap facts in an enticing overview.

Commandment 2: Thou shalt not generalize. Your mission statement may contain noble abstractions. But to hold the attention of fickle web-surfers, About Us pages need specifics. How many products or services do you offer? How long have you been doing it? What awards have you won? What do clients say?

Commandment 3: Reveal thy personality. Photos are good. Quick, solid info about your people is better. Who was your founder, and what DNA did he or she impart? (From Walt Disney on down, we've yet to encounter a company that didn't reflect its founder's interests and quirks.) Where is your current CEO steering the company? Who's on your management team? What are your employees' aggregate strengths?

Commandment 4: Don't take your own name in vain. Readers may find all kinds of things about you on a Web search. That's why, on your About Us page, you should refer visitors to outside sources who can testify to the value of your products, your management, your expertise, and your good works. When objective third parties confirm what you're saying, your credibility is increased.

Commandment 5: Honor thy readers and their attention spans. Hurried visitors will be more likely to finish your page if you ruthlessly cut non-crucial copy. Can't bear to part with pretty prose? Move it to another page and add a link. At the same time, give good material its due. Some topics need explication, and some audiences (especially literary folks) enjoy longer copy.

Commandment 6: Honor thy visuals. A solid block of 9-point Verdana tempts visitors to click and move on. Break the text into paragraphs or themes or timelines. Use subheads. Add photos, both current and archival, and generously lace them with captions. *People read captions.*

Commandment 7: Keep navigation easy. Once you've got great content, attractively presented, make it easily accessible. Your navigation bars should look like navigation bars, and they should provide site-wide access. About Us page text should include links to relevant subpages or to other pages on your site.

Commandment 8: Remember to make yourself and your organization easily accessible. Give visitors a variety of ways to contact you. Make the contact information easy to find from any page. Reminding visitors of why they want to contact you is a great way to end an About Us page.

Commandment 9: Worship clarity. Check your grammar, spelling, punctuation, and other fine points. Errors here are "broken windows." They suggest you're careless with details—that you may be as indifferent to a misplaced decimal point as you are to a misplaced apostrophe.

Commandment 10. Remember to keep holy the updates. Once your "About Us" pages are polished, keep them fresh. A copyright date from even one year ago suggests that no one's minding the store.