

# Edition

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Program Report

## Web Marketing for Freelancers

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**P**aul Lima presented Web Marketing for Freelancers at the EAC Toronto branch meeting on January 23, 2006, and although I'm a freelancer and do not have a Web site, I am now convinced that I need one, and so do you.

#### **Your Web Site is Your Business Card**

Paul, an experienced freelance copywriter, writing instructor, and media trainer, prefaced his presentation with the disclaimer that "if you're making what you want without a Web site, fine—don't get one." But based on his considerable experience with the freelance writing and editing markets, he believes that a Web site will help boost your hours, client lists, and income. "Web sites are," Paul says, "the business cards of the [present] century."

Paul firmly believes that the return from a well-written, designed, and search-engine-optimized Web site will justify the time and money it takes to create it. Case in point is that in the past year, 75 percent of Paul's new

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business has arrived via his Web site. A self-confessed “lazy guy,” Paul thinks this is a great way to get new business because, in his words, it happens “without my doing any marketing, and without my having to talk to anyone.” If you follow Paul’s guidelines on how to create your Web site, you can have your Web site up and running for under \$1000, and possibly even for \$750. After this first outlay, ongoing costs are the \$100 to \$150 per year that you will pay for Web hosting. You might ask yourself if you can afford to do this.

But Paul thinks the question you should ask yourself is “Can I afford *not* to do this?”

### Creating a Web Site: Not a Mammoth Task

For many of us, creating our own Web sites seems, at first glance, like a mammoth task. However, Paul breaks what might seem like a mammoth task into really easy chunks:

1. Develop your navigational structure.
2. Determine keywords for Web site optimization.
3. Write copy for each page.
4. Source a Web site designer and a Web site host.
5. Supply navigation structure, copy and keywords to designer.
6. Edit/approve pages.
7. Upload site/Review and revise site/Go live.
8. Submit site to search engines.

### Develop Your Navigational Structure

The navigational structure is the Web site menu—that is, the buttons or links people click on your Web site. An organized navigational structure lets site visitors move from any page on your Web site to any section of your site. Your navigational structure need not be



*“This is a great way to get new business ... it happens without my doing any marketing, and without my having to talk to anyone.”*

-Paul Lima

complex. A solid, effective Web site can be as short as two to four pages, and will probably consist of the following four links:

- First link is a HOME PAGE.
- Second link is ABOUT.
- Third link is CONTACT.
- Fourth link is SERVICES.

### Choose Your Keywords for Web Site Optimization

Keywords are probably *the* critical component of an effective Web site. These are the words people will use to find you and your services. To choose effective keywords, you need to think about what you do, and whom you do it for. If you specialize, make sure to select keywords that identify your areas of specialization: for example, use legal/medical/food editing, not the generic “editing.” You should aim for 15 to 30 keywords. Once you know your keywords, you should

weave them into your Web site copy as often as you can.

### Write Copy for Each of Your Pages/Links

Because we now have our navigational structure and our keywords—and because we’re all clever wordsmiths of one variety or another—this is going to be easy.

Referring to your navigational structure, and, using your keywords, write copy for each of the pages/links of your Web site.

**CONTACT:** Your e-mail, phone, fax numbers.

**ABOUT:** A brief bio about yourself or your company.

**SERVICES:** Depending

upon the services you offer, you may want to break this down into more than one link/page. For example, you might have WRITING SERVICES as one page, with copy to describe the writing services you offer (such as media releases, white papers, and abstracts). On another page you might list and describe EDITING SERVICES that you provide (copy-editing, substantive editing, and so on).

**HOME PAGE:** This is copy with particular emphasis on selling you and your services, where your keywords can work extra hard (although you are weaving them into all of your copy). Keywords are your marketing tools, because these are the words that define what you do and the target market you want to reach.

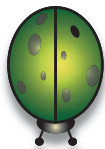
According to Paul, one mistake many freelance writers and editors

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make is presenting themselves as generalists, based on the breadth of their work experience. He adds that “most editors and writers are not generalists—most of you have your niches. If you say you’re a generalist, and I ask you if you do dental or medical editing, you’ll probably say no. If you specialize, make sure you build up those specialized skills on your Web page.”

### Source a Web Site Designer and a Web Site Host

The Web site host is the company that houses or “hosts” your Web site. In effect, you are leasing space for your Web site on their server. Paul recommends that you let your Web site designer recommend a host company, since many designers have host companies they like to work with.



Source your Web site designer the way you would source any service: Talk to friends and colleagues to get a few recommendations; call some of those recommended Web site designers and talk to them about the work you want done and the fee they charge; ask them for references; check out those references; and then select your Web site designer.

At this point, supply your designer with your (a) navigational structure; (b) keywords; and (c) copy for each page/link. Supplying your designer with these elements is critical to keeping your costs within Paul’s price cap of \$750 to

\$1000. If you don’t provide them at the start, the designer’s role then changes from Web site designer to Web site consultant, with a commensurate rise in fees, as he or she must then work with you to create a navigational structure.

The largest portion of your Web site startup costs goes to your Web site designer. Given that books and software programs on how to build your own Web site abound, why should you hire a professional Web site designer? Barring that you are a freelancer whose expertise/services include Web site design, Paul thinks that not hiring a professional designer is a mistake—one that he made for ten years before coming to his senses. Responding to an audience member’s question, “What is the biggest difference between your Web site that you designed versus the one you had done by a professional designer?” Paul explained: “Well, on one hand, here is the Venus de Milo. On the other hand, here is a piece of rock I chiseled away on for ten years and called art ... My Web site was really hard to navigate ... and the colours!—I’m not a colour coordinated kind of guy ... Basically my Web site, *paullima.com*, was ugly, and as I started branching out and offering more services, *paullima.com* could no longer afford to have an ugly Web site. So don’t make my mistake. Start off with a good-looking Web site. It doesn’t have to be slick. It just has to be professional and good-looking.”

Paul also emphasized the importance of working with your Web site designer. For example, always make sure your contract states that your Web site will not go live until you have approved everything. Doing this involves Step 6 (Edit/Approve pages) and Step 7 (Upload site/Review and revise site/Go live).

### Submit Your Web Site to Search Engines

Now that you’ve gone live with your Web site, you want people to find it quickly and easily. Search engines like Google and Yahoo are the starting point for most Web surfers searching for information and services on the Internet. If your Web site is going to show up in search engine results, it must be submitted to the search engine, or found and indexed by search engine robots, commonly called bots. For instructions on how to submit your Web site, visit the major search engines and follow the posted instructions.

Submitting your Web site to search engines is easy and is something everyone should do, despite the fact that once submitted, it may sit in the search engine’s “sandbox” (a Google term) for weeks and months, waiting to be reviewed and indexed by the search engine staff. Fortunately, there are other strategies you can use to (a) speed up this process and (b) rank high in search engine results.



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### Search Engine Optimization

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the process of making a Web site accessible to search engines and improving its rank in search engine listings. Having your Web site rank high in search engine



results is essential if your Web site is going to bring you work. Citing statistics from the Atlas Institute, Paul tells us that “Web site traffic drops significantly by rank. The first site listed in search engine results receives three times the hits of the fifth site; the first 10 sites (generally the first page of search results) are visited 78 percent more often than sites listed 11<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>.”

### Search Engine Optimization with Keywords

For your Web site to rank high in search engine results, it must be optimized for relevant search terms. And where do we get those relevant search terms? They are hard-working, multi-tasking keywords.

Borrowing heavily from Paul’s presentation handout, here is a summary overview of how, with a wave of your magical keywords, you can use the search engine to optimize your Web site.

- Use a consistent, text-based site navigation menu that incorporates your keywords. Search engine bots read site content and use site content when determining site relevancy to search terms.

- Avoid excessive use of non-textual elements on your Web site. Bots like text. Bots do not FLASH, which is frequently used to create zippy splash pages. Bots do not like IFrames and are not overly fond of JavaScript. In non-technical language, these elements cannot be read by bots and will confuse and distract bots from their indexing task.
- Include keyword tags (Alt tags) with all graphics. I know I just said to avoid non-textual elements, but you will want to use some. Paul thinks, for example, that including your picture on the site is a good marketing technique. Though images mean nothing to the bots, if you add an Alt tag, you are adding readable content that the bots can use.
- Write your Meta tags using keywords. Meta tags are embedded in HTML code on Web sites. Three basic Meta tags that you should pay particular attention to are Title, Description, and Content. Note that only the Title tag is seen by visitors. A good example of how to weave your keywords into your title Meta tag can be observed in Paul Lima’s Web site title (*Paul Lima: Freelance Writer: Copywriter: Writing Instructor: Media Trainer*).
- Use your keywords in your entire site content. Every descriptive paragraph on your site should include keywords or phrases. Make sure hotlinks include

keywords, too. Instead of using “For information about my services, click here,” use one that includes your keywords, such as “For information about my medical editing services, click on ‘medical editing services.’” Doing it this way, you will have used your keywords twice in one sentence.

### Use Google Ads

Paul recommends Google Ads—little ads that appear on the right side of Google search results pages. The ads that Google displays contain keywords that are similar to the words used in the search. Raising the profile of your ad requires that you pay more when someone clicks your ad. You set the maximum amount you will pay, so you can try a Google Ad without spending much.

For his Google Ad, Paul has set the maximum pay-per-click at 15¢; he has set the daily maximum at \$3; and he has set his monthly maximum at \$30. Paul therefore knows that he will never pay more than \$30/month for his Google Ad. In Paul’s case, his ad will pay for itself if it brings him as little as one client every 6 months.



### Making Your Google Ad Work: The Landing Page

If you have a Google Ad, you need to create a page on your Web site called a *Landing Page*. This is the page you want people to land on when they click on your Google Ad. It is different from your

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homepage. Your Landing Page may use copy from your home page, and it may use copy from your Services Page, but it's different because the person who comes to your Landing Page is looking for *you*. You therefore want to *immediately* start selling them your services. Paul thinks that the biggest mistake people make with Google Ads is making the Landing Page the same as the homepage. He believes the homepage is too broad and general for people who already know that they're looking for you and your services.

Here are the four main things you need to achieve with the copy on your Landing Page:

### **1: Attention**

If you do not grab the attention of your target market, you cannot interest them in your services. According to Paul, you grab their attention by solving their problems. Let them know what business problems they have that you can solve. Tell them why they should spend money on your services. Why should they pay to have an editor polish their words, smooth their syntax? For example, you can offer to solve their business problem by helping them spend more time doing what they do best (and what makes them the most money). If you're a writer, like Paul Lima, writing would be one type of work that you do best. Continuing to use Paul Lima (writer) as an example—and relying upon the good humour and wit with which he delighted his audience—you could suggest to him that having his work professionally edited would give him more time to take on new writing projects, rather than labouring over his already-written copy, checking for typos such as “How do you attract their attention? Buy solving promises.”

### **2: Interest**

Once you have their attention, you have to hold their interest. Paul says you do this by building trust using a clear, concise, focused copy that demonstrates your value. Use testimonials and samples of your work. Having others or your work speak for you is more convincing than saying it yourself.

### **3: Attitudes**

Paul thinks that visitors to your Landing Page will come with one of two attitudes. There will be people who have clicked on your ad while thinking “I don't need that product.” Paul says that subconsciously they are curious, or they would not have picked up the ad. On your Landing Page, you have to convince those visitors that they need your service. You have to change skeptical thoughts or attitudes to positive ones by demonstrating how they will benefit from your services. Think bottom line, whether it's about money, time, image, or reputation. For example, as one audience member suggested, you might tell a university academic hoping to move up the tenure stream that having a work professionally edited will increase his or her chances of publication.

The second attitude belongs to people who have clicked on your Google Ad thinking, “I need that service.” But don't get lazy. Even with this group of people, you must work to sell your services. Your work is to reinforce their attitude by, as above, demonstrating the benefits of the services you provide and by showing them you are the right person for the job. Paul says there are a variety of ways to prove your value and build trust, such as offering a free edit of up to a set number of words, a free assessment of one page of copy, or to solve one grammar problem at no cost.

### **4: Action**

As Paul emphasizes, the goal of working to grab attention, hold interest, and change attitudes is to get your client to take action, that is, to contact you to discuss the work they'd want you to do for them. To motivate them to take action, offer a simple incentive, such as reminding them about the free consultation you offer, or the free estimate you will deliver within two business days. And, more importantly, make it easy for your Web site visitors to find your contact information so they can easily call or e-mail you. **E**