

Make Your Page Titles More Readable

By Shonda Miles

Page titles (the text in the title bar of the browser window) and page headlines help explain the difference between two pages when seen in a list of links or even in the history menu of the browser. For example, the titles "Acme Corp. Home Page" and "Product List - Acme Corp." are much better choices for two different pages than "Acme Corp." for both pages. Even worse would be to use the all too common default title like "Designed with Adobe GoLive 4.0."

Page titles and headlines should be about four to six words long, and the first word or two should be the most important, unique, or action-oriented or convey the most information. In the previous example, "Product List - Acme Corp" wins out over "Acme Corp - Product List" for just that reason.

Choose a style and naming convention for your page titles and headlines—and stick to it. Consistency in this area will be noticed, and that's a good thing. Variations in your style will make your site look inconsistent and your business unreliable or lacking in attention to detail.

You can separate the site name from the page name in the page title with any character you want—hyphens, colons, a vertical bar, or something else—but use the same one every time. For headlines, you may choose either headline style, where only the first word is capitalized (as well as proper nouns and acronyms), or title style, where all words are capitalized. But, by all means, avoid ALL CAPS because every readability study since shortly after Gutenberg has shown ALL CAPS text to be hard to read.

Use action words and write in active voice whenever possible. For example, "We received your comment" makes a better headline on an acknowledgement page than "Your comment has been received." Also, use caution when being clever or cute: plain language works best. Even if you really think you know your customers or audience, your inside joke may be lost on many of them and especially the first-time visitors to your site.

From a search-engine-ranking and click-through perspective, the page title is one of the most important tags on your website, if not the most important. Visitors who find out about and visit your site from search engine results are a more focused breed of web surfer. They're also more skeptical and less patient than other visitors to your site. Your site will be judged by its page titles in the same way that a book will be judged by its cover.

Your page titles have to be strong enough to stand on their own because they will appear out of context in a page of search results. Like your entry in the yellow pages, page titles help to classify your site when it's listed among other similar sites in search results.

When worded correctly for the type of visitor you are seeking, page titles can boost your click-through from Google and other search engines even if you're not at the top of the rankings. In addition to or in place of a short descriptive phrase about your business, you might consider naming your key benefit, identifying a free offer, or even posing an intriguing question in your page titles.

About The Author:

Shonda Miles is a small business coach and consultant for Gotta Take Action. She invites you to join the Hot Marketing Tips Newsletter at www.gottatakeaction.com if you are interested in taking your business to the next level.

(c) Copyright – Shonda Miles. All Rights Reserved Worldwide.