

WELCOMING WEBSITES

How deleting Web content invites people in and increases sales



Your website is your digital front door, and if done right, it can be the most effective marketing tool for your camp and ministry. In this fast-paced digital world, people decide within three to five seconds whether they will continue to peruse your website or click off to a different site. So, you only have a couple of seconds to get it right, grab your viewer's attention and make a first impression. ►

One of the biggest reasons that people will quickly leave a website is because the layout and content are too overwhelming. Many sites have too many options and offerings, too much text and the copywriting is trying to speak to too many different people all at the same time. ►



Photo courtesy of Sunset Lake Camp by David Yeagley

The goal of effective, clear website communication is to ensure that your viewers do not have to think too hard when they land on your website.

When your prospective customer looks at your website and in a few seconds feels overwhelmed, then they feel frustrated. When they feel frustrated, they lack trust. When they don't trust you, they won't sign up for your camp, let alone stick around on the website for a while.

The goal of effective, clear website communication is to ensure that your viewers do not have to think too hard when they land on your website. Your marketing presentation should be simple, easy to read and have a message that is clear and actionable.

Think about the Google search engine. If you go to www.google.com right now, you'll find a blank white page with nothing more than the search box. There is nothing else on the page that distracts you from what Google wants you to do — search. The simplicity leaves no question as to what we are supposed to do next when we land on Google's site. When it comes to a website homepage, simplicity is the key to efficiency.

Your website shouldn't go as far as having a white screen with just one button on it like Google, but there are a handful of elements that can be pared down or even deleted altogether to avoid information overload on your website.

Let's take a look at five key elements that can be deleted on your website to clear the clutter, ease frustration and increase sales and registrations for your camp.

1. Delete extra words in your mission statement.

Your mission statement is one of the most important marketing pieces for your brand. It should help your website viewers quickly understand exactly what your camp does. However, when an organization is crafting its mission statement, they often unintentionally ramble on and on about their company, thinking that more information is better.

Unfortunately, in the harsh world of Web, people aren't going to read a five-sentence mission statement word for word anymore. They're more likely to scan it or even skip it. So, your mission statement should be quick, concise and clear so that people read it and understand the heartbeat behind your camp.

PRO TIP: Delete any extra words to trim your mission statement down to one sentence only. The one sentence should articulate what you do (in the simplest form), explain how you're unique and different from your competitors and also showcase how your camp will change a camper's life.

2. Delete unimportant navigation tabs.

Your website's navigation is like a road map; it shows your users a directory of your pages and where to find information. Most organizations throw all the pages (or tabs) in the top navigation, leaving the viewer to fend for themselves to figure out what to do, where to go and how to navigate the site. Upwards of 20 or more navigation tabs can seem overwhelming for the viewer.

Your navigation tabs should focus on your main programs and offerings. This immediately makes your homepage more clear and actionable. Everything else, including pages such as FAQ, job opportunities, etc., should be secondary. You can have these pages linked in your footer, or just linked smaller and less prominently elsewhere on your homepage.

PRO TIP: A good rule of thumb is to cut down your main navigation tabs to about six or fewer. This will help funnel your audience and direct them to where you'd like them to go. ►

Digestible Design

Creating an optimal homepage layout

Your website is your digital front door. It is vital to have a website that clearly articulates what you do, attracts your ideal guest and guides them toward what to do next: Register.

Make sure that your streamlined content is laid out visually into easily digestible sections. Here are a few must-haves for your homepage in order to capture the attention of your viewers.

On the Top

Before any scrolling takes place, you need to communicate briefly who you are, what you do and visually showcase your environment. Here's what to include:

- Your logo and a simple one-sentence mission statement
- Simple navigation highlighting your main programs or offerings
- Large imagery to visually showcase what someone can expect from your camp (such as activities, environment, spiritual transformation, etc.)

In the Middle

After a brief overview of your camp, you'll want to get a little more specific by highlighting the main programs, campground benefits and social proof that your programs change lives in the middle of the page. Here's what to include:

- Several of your most popular (and money-making) programs with a prominent call-to-action button that tells your viewer what to do next (for example, "Book Now" or "Schedule a Tour")
- Key benefits that your camp of conference center offers (e.g.: a promo video)
- Several strong, one-sentence testimonials that highlight one specific point

On the Bottom

Wrap up the bottom of your homepage with other information that is vital to your camp.

- Social media links and an email newsletter sign-up, so you can stay in direct communication with those interested in your camp
- A secondary navigation with other important pages such as "About Us," "FAQs," "Job Opportunities," etc.
- Contact information and location: address, directions, map, phone number, email address, etc.



Photo courtesy of WinShapeCamp



Photo courtesy of Eagle Lake Camps

3. Delete unnecessary text and copywriting.

While you may think your website needs 100 percent of your content, your homepage will perform 100 percent better when you can get that down to about a quarter of what you initially thought there should be.

In the book *Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability*, Steve Krug says, "Get rid of half the words on each page, then get rid of half of what's left." This will leave only the most important information on the page.

PRO TIP: When deleting and cleaning up your content, make it a priority to keep and highlight the benefits of your organization. Instead of only focusing on the practical bells and whistles your facility offers, focus on what the immediate and long-term benefits someone would get out of coming to your camp or taking part in your offerings. Is that spiritual growth? Experiencing some form of transformation? Is it renewal? Whatever the main benefit is to their lives, highlight that. Tapping into emotions and showcasing how your organization changes lives is the key to a successful sale.

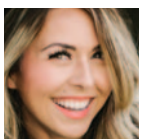
4. Delete excess buttons (aka: "Calls To Action").

A call to action is a button or link that tells someone landing on your website exactly what to do next. For example, this button might be below information about one of your offerings and it could say "Book Now" or "Schedule a Tour."

Even though a call to action is one of the most important elements of a website, you want to make sure to use it sparingly. The more buttons and calls to action there are on a website, the more the viewer will start to see them as added noise and begin to ignore them. So, delete excess buttons and only highlight one or two strong calls to action.

PRO TIP: To determine what you want your call to action to be on your homepage, ask yourself what the end goal of your website is. Is it to get someone to sign up for a week at camp? Create a call to action that directs people to register. Is it to get someone to book a tour of your facility? Create a call to action that directs people to give you a call. Whatever it is, make sure that it looks like a clickable button so that it's noticeable and recognizable on the page.

A good rule of thumb is to cut down your main navigation tabs to about six or fewer. This will help funnel your audience and direct them to where you'd like them to go.



Promise Tangeman is the CEO and creative director of Go Live HQ, a website design company that builds easy-to-use, customizable website templates and fast-launching, beautiful custom websites. She's a professionally trained graphic and Web designer and a certified digital marketing strategist. She's married to Brian Wurzell, the worship pastor at Hillside Community Church in Rancho Cucamonga, California (and worship leader at CCCA's BOLD conference this year). Christian camps hold a special place in both of their hearts as they met each other through a Christian camp in their early 20s.

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5. Delete extra words in testimonials.

Naturally, people tend to be skeptical creatures, and this tendency can only make it harder for you to convince them that signing up for camp is a worthwhile investment. That's where real, personal testimonials can play an important role in persuading your potential customer that this may be the best decision they can make.

Hearing an outside, unbiased voice can be invaluable, but it must be short. The same rules that apply to your mission statement apply here as well. The majority of people will not take the time to read a review that is four paragraphs long, so delete any extra words and whittle that testimonial down to one or two strong sentences.

PRO TIP: We recommend each testimonial only highlight one theme, benefit or idea. One tangible and memorable point will be more likely to stick with readers and influence their decision.

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Deleting content on your website and making these changes will focus your message, strengthen your brand and, more importantly, increase your camp sales and registration.

One of the most beautiful aspects of your organization is that a "sale" isn't just about paying the bills or lining your pockets, it's about changing lives. So, taking the time to strategize and refine your website should be one of the highest priorities to allow your camp to reach more people and impact the masses. ■

**"They are a Godsend...
I expect these to last 20 years!"**
- Seth Weimer,
Green Valley Lake Christian Camp



Custom
colors
available!



ESS
universal

**ADULT
HEAVY
DUTY
BUNK BEDS**

**Rated: 500lbs/platform
No Springs, No Squeaks
Bed Bug Proof**

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