

Is Your Copy Confusing Your Customers?

An acquaintance of mine sent me a bunch of links for a program she was considering buying. She was thoroughly confused and thought maybe she was just missing something: since she considers me more “internet-savvy” she was asking me to take a look for her.

There were several of them, some of which led to the same website page even though the text of each link was different. Most of them had come via an autoresponder email series which she was getting as a result of signing up for a free trial. My friend was confused because the initial sales-page she’d seen was advertising one online video-program, but some of these pages seemed to be directing her to purchase pages for various DVDs.

So I followed the link to the trial video. When it finished playing you were automatically directed to a sales-page. This seemed quite obviously to be advertising an online program. So far so good.

While the video was still up, I clicked on a link in the upper right hand corner which invited me to “learn more.” But this one didn’t lead me to the sales-page. This took me to a list of different programs – the live links each led to a mini-sales-script for a separate DVD-program. Each was about 1/3 the cost of the online program, but there were lots more than just 3 choices. Interesting....

Then I went to the emails my friend had forwarded – the ones with links which all read differently. These all led to the main-page for the list of programs on DVD. Remember, she had only signed up for a free trial of the *online video program*.

My friend wondered if the online video program was a combination of all of the DVD programs, since it mentioned something about 17 or 19 (I forget exactly) different components. This seemed to be implied, but it certainly wasn’t clarified anywhere.

Why was she being sent links to the DVD page when she’d signed on for a trial of the online program? Why did the “learn more” link by the video lead not to the sales page for that program but to an option to buy DVDs? If this company was offering the hard-copies as an alternative, why wasn’t this spelled-out?

I ended up telling my friend it wasn’t her: the company itself was confusing. She didn’t end up investing in the program. This is a classic-case where an organization will lose potential interested customers because they’re failing to be clear and they’re sending out conflicting information. They’re only one of many websites out there who are driving away customers, completely unwittingly.

Along the same lines, some older neighbors who browse the Web infrequently were ranting about the incompetence of some companies. They had been looking to attend a seminar and had arrived at a sales page. It outlined days and dates, what would be covered, bonuses for registering “now”... all the details you could possibly want...

except the price and location. The price they found when they clicked the “register” button, but they still had no idea where it was... so they’d clicked away in disgust.

Curious, I asked for the name of the seminar and looked up the site. There were the buttons in a neutral-type color and off-white lettering, running along the top of the sales-letter. They included the standard “home,” “about,” “testimonials,” ... *and “date and location”* which my neighbors had apparently missed.

Why had their copywriter not also included the location in the body of the sales-page – at the very least on the page with registration options? Your guess is as good as mine: I sure would have. It would only have taken, what, 30 seconds or less to type in. And okay, maybe someone a little less impatient, a little more motivated to attend the seminar, or a little more used to seeing different website-formats would have looked up at the buttons – if for no other reason that to find the “contact” information so they could send a question. But in the meantime, this company has lost 2 ticket-sales when an extra bit of information would have made the sale.

On the surface both companies seem to be doing – or excluding –things which you might think are just plain careless. But there are a lot of organizations doing similar things and it’s costing them profits every day. The sad thing is I’m sure they have no idea and if asked they’d assure you all of their copy is crystal-clear.

Be sure the information you have up or send out is complete and logical. Have someone you know who is outside your company read through your material or sign up for your autoresponder series... and listen to their feedback if they have any ifs ands or buts.