Show, Don't Tell
4 easy ideas to drive visitors to action

A particularly valuable way to create content for your Web site is by addressing your customer's problems. And the most authentic way to do this is by applying the "show, don't tell" rule. Novelists and actors use "show, don't tell" all the time; they use action to communicate rather than stultifying narrative. To make a reader feel that a character is happy, a novelist could tell us that the character is happy through narration or have that character use dialog to say: "I'm happy." While either one gets the point across, these approaches are not nearly as effective as words that show that the character is happy, such as: Her eyes sparkled and she danced a little jig.

The same show, don't tell rule applies as an effective way to create Web content that specifically addresses customer problems. And once you develop rapport with your online audience by showing them that you understand their problems, you can lead them to the goal of your site such as generating leads or making a sale.

Idea # 1 > Have your customers show how your product is used

Where previously you might have listed your target-market segments and the customers your organization serves in these segments, why not create a library of customer stories that demonstrate in real-world scenarios of how organizations make use of your product.

Idea # 2 > Demonstrate the product or service directly

You could include photos of the product in action or online demonstrations and tutorials. Content that shows how your organization solves customer problems is vastly more effective than simply listing products, or even writing all sorts of copy that tells how your product works.

Idea # 3 > Create content that drives action

Successful Web sites have a clearly defined goal--to sell products, generate leads, secure contributions, or get people join--and deploy a content strategy that directly contributes to reaching that goal.

Idea # 4 > Lead prospects to the goal

At the best sites, content draws visitors into the sales-consideration funnel and channels them towards the place where action occurs. The action mechanism is not hidden nor is the organization's goal a secret. When content effectively drives action, the end of the sales funnel--an e-commerce company's "buy" button, the business-to-business corporation's "please contact us" form, or non-profit's "donate" link--are found in logical places, based on content that leads people there.