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HOW TO WRITE FOR SEO (BEYOND KEYWORDS)

PRESENTED BY JORDAN CAMPBELL

WHEN WE'RE DONE...

- A little bit more about me
- Key differences between traditional + digital writing
- How to format your copy for digital
- How to get the most out of your page layout
- The best site formats for users
- How to keep users clicking





ABOUT ME

I'M JORDAN. AND I LIVE TO
HELP PEOPLE TRAVEL DEEPER.

JORDAN CAMPBELL, TRAVEL BLOGGER

- TCK (Third Culture Kid) based in Metro DC
- Off-beat flashpacker
- 62 countries & all 50 states, drink in hand
- Travel + Adventure Show, Wanderful, TNN

BUT ALSO...

- Award-winning Creative Director
- 20+ years' experience with clients including Mastercard, BlueCross, Penn State + UMd
- Multimillion-dollar brands + website builds



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DISCLAIMERS

- Key differences between writing for print + “traditional” digital publishers versus for general websites, blogs + other media
- I may refer to them as “print/digital” or “traditional/online”
- It could be the case that digital editors are implementing these techniques *for you* as your content goes from draft to live
- It *could* be the case that digital editors are requesting *you* make these edits along the way
- It could *also* be the case that larger digital pubs don’t edit for SEO *to the hilt* because their traffic doesn’t depend on it
- Whichever way, it’s helpful to know these handy tactics





FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION...

- We all know that keyword SEO reigns supreme on the internet
- *However*, algorithm updates are now geared specifically towards understanding user intent
- Consider writing +UX the vehicles by which users achieve intent
- Keywords + *how you write* + UX = overall SEO page rank
- In cases where pages have similar keyword relevance, these other factors play a defining role in SERPs (Search Engine Results Page)



GOOGLE ONLY LOVES YOU WHEN
EVERYONE ELSE LOVES YOU FIRST.

WENDY PIERSALL

YOUR ACTUAL CONTENT

SHIFT YOUR PERSPECTIVE

What user problem are you solving?



**Content
is king**



**Don't forgo good
writing for SEO**



**Work those
headlines**



**Lighten up
your tone**



WHY?

- **Content is king:** It's ALL about the content. What do users want? What are they searching? How much are they searching it?
- **Don't forgo good writing for SEO:** The two are not mutually exclusive. Users (AND Google) pick up on keyword-loading, a type of black hat SEO.
- **Work those headlines:** Yes, be clickbait. But be honest clickbait. High bounce rates work against you.
- **Lighten up your tone:** Digital readers prefer informal text with an injection of personality. Studies show heavy use of marketing or intellectual jargon labeled "detestable" by users.

YOUR WRITING FORMAT

USER-FRIENDLY WRITING

Online content is consumed differently than traditional media.



Sans serif,
not serif



Heads +
subheads



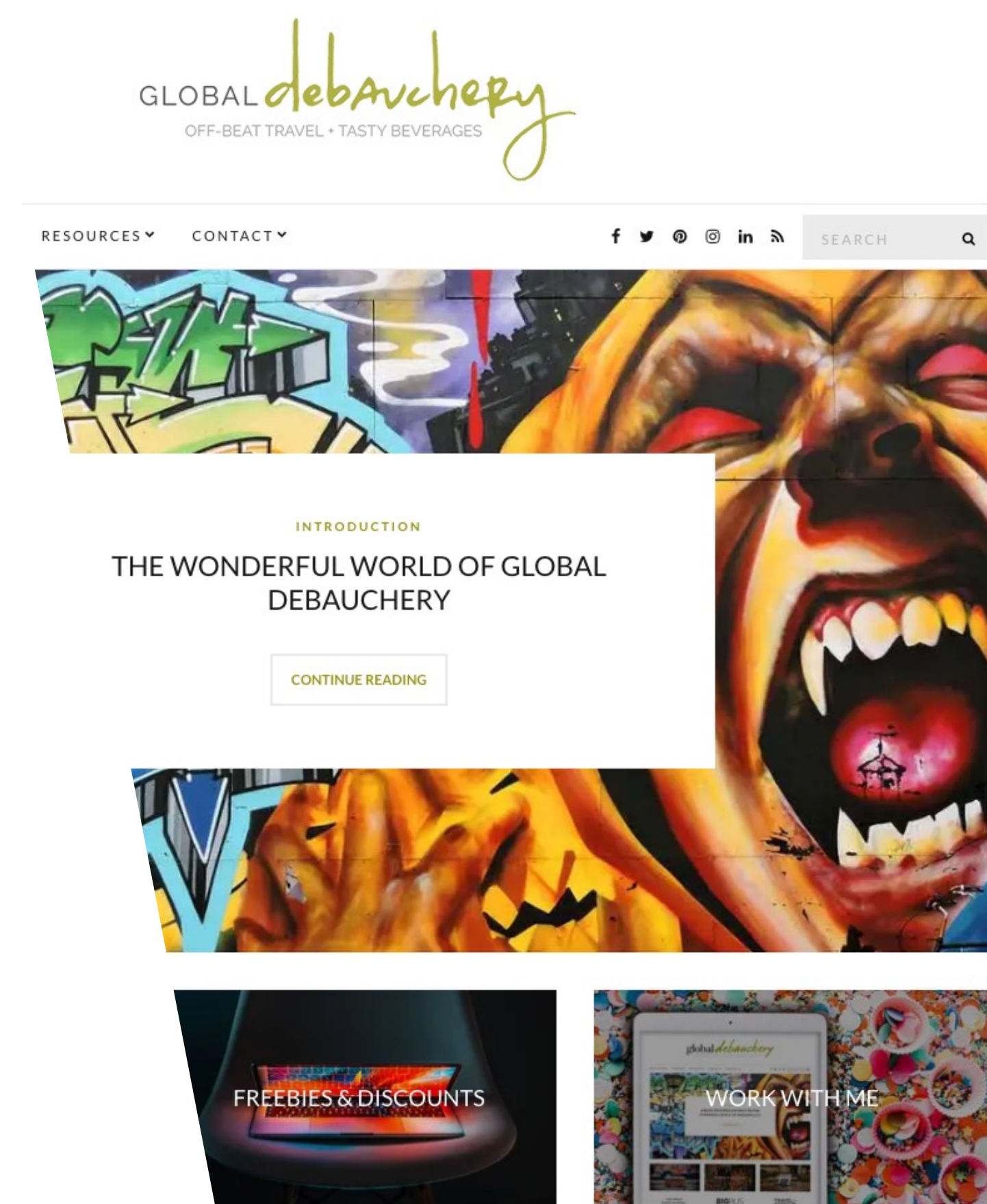
Para + post
lengths



Scannable
text

WHY?

- **Sans serif, not serif:** Digital legibility opposite of print, and Web reading is 25% slower than reading in print.
- **Heads + subheads:** H1s, H2s, H3s, etc. + lots of them. The average amount of time spent reading anything on the internet is two minutes.
- **Para + post lengths:** 300 words/para max, ~900–1200 words/post, or ~3,000 words/post.
- **Scannable text:** Studies found that websites scored 58% higher in measured usability when it was written concisely, 47% higher when the text was scannable.



YOUR PAGE FORMAT

USER GOALS + YOUR GOALS

Getting the most bang for your buck.



Optimize content
“above the fold”



Add a table
of contents



Add 3–5 internal
links per page



Give “somewhere
else to go”



WHY?

- **Optimize content “above the fold”:** The top third of your page is gold. Insert an internal link, an affiliate link, “you might like.”
- **Add a table of contents:** More user-friendly, scannable, white hat keyword hack—Google reads open ToCs.
- **Add 3–5 internal links:** Keeps users clicking, confirms your site as an authority, feeds SEO juice, reduces bounce rate.
- **Give the user “somewhere else to go”:** Through internal links, but also through “you might also like,” previous/next buttons, top posts list, latest posts list, etc.

YOUR SITE FORMAT

INDUSTRY STANDARDS

Just give them what they want.



Incorporate intuitive
site architecture



Select a mobile-
friendly theme



Have site-wide
menu + search



Optimize your
graphics

WHY?

- **Incorporate intuitive site architecture:** Don't try to be "original." People know where to find what and expect to find it there.
- **Select a mobile-friendly theme:** Relying on mobile more and more. Make sure elements are stackable, switch to co-blocks in WP, don't place fixed widths.
- **Have site-wide menu + search:** Simple user experience, aids users in finding content.
- **Optimize your graphics:** The average user waits 3 seconds for a page to load. Bogs down first paint, visual instability, users + Google hate long load times.



USER EXPERIENCE EXTRAS

THE BONUS ROUND

Taking it to the next level.



Consider
accessibility



Add a mailing
list sign-up



Incorporate
socials



Blast your
brand



WHY?

- **Consider accessibility:** Users love it, Google loves it. Color contrast, alt tags, languages, PDFs, etc.
- **Add a mailing list sign-up:** This is your money audience. They're invested, they'll be there if your socials go bye-bye.
- **Incorporate socials:** Used appropriately, they feed traffic to your site, reinforce your brand, gives you presence.
- **Blast your brand:** Be recognizable across multiple platforms, be a fierce personality, tout your wins.

THE WHOLE SHEBANG

(Photograph me.)

1. Content is king.
2. Don't forgo good writing for SEO.
3. Work those headlines.
4. Lighten up your tone.
5. Sans serifs, not serifs.
6. Heads + subheads.
7. Para + post lengths.
8. Scannable text.
9. Optimize content "above the fold."
10. Add a table of contents.
11. Add 3–5 internal links per page.
12. Give "somewhere to go."
13. Incorporate intuitive site architecture.
14. Select a mobile-friendly theme.
15. Have site-wide menu + search.
16. Optimize your graphics.
17. Consider accessibility.
18. Add a mailing list sign-up.
19. Incorporate socials.
20. Blast your brand.



IT'S IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER
YOUR COMPETITOR IS ONLY
ONE MOUSE CLICK AWAY.

DOUGLAS WARNER III

LET'S BE FRIENDS!

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QUESTIONS?

THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING.