

Have you ever met a Dick?

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(How to write copy for your website that works.) It's Saturday night. You're young, single and have been invited to the biggest party in town. You're excited and looking forward to a good time. The party, held at a luxurious home in an upmarket suburb, is filled with lots of interesting and friendly people. You start making your way towards the bar to get a drink when an attractive guy steps in front of you, holds out his hand and says with a big flashy smile, "Hi, I'm Dick!" "Oh good," you think, "the fun's starting already..."

Before you get a chance to introduce yourself, Dick has started talking again. "You're really lucky I spotted you! I can see you're alone here. I know it's not nice to be alone at a party like this. But I'm really good at making people feel at ease. In fact, I was voted most popular and outgoing guy in my class in high school. I am now a very successful businessman. My business won lots of local awards last year. Blah, blah, blah, blah..." Smiling politely, but desperately looking for a way to get away from this big bore who is only interested in himself, you notice the guy sitting quietly on the big leather couch near the bar. He's watching you intently. Smiling back at him, you excuse yourself from Dick and start walking towards the couch – after all, it is on your way to the bar... As you get nearer the couch, the attractive stranger stands and says, "Hello, I'm Dylan." Shaking his hand, you say, "Hi, I'm Tracy." "Could I get you a drink, Tracy?" Now this is more like it! Smiling your acceptance, you sit down on the couch.

***** Most women have an irritating Dick-like story to tell. But at least Dick gets remembered when the story is told. There is, however, another Dick-like story that does not get told. In fact, the Dick in this story gets forgotten as soon as the new acquaintance turns away. The Dick in this story is a website... We've all been to a website that behaves like Dick. The website itself is attractive enough, but the information you're greeted with shows concern for only one thing: the company's interest in itself. "We at Self-Importance, Inc have been in business for 10 years. We are the best business in town. We strive for quality, commitment, best results, mission, vision, passion, highly intricate, complicated, systems orientated, way-beyond-your-understanding, super tech, engineered, solutions for what you need. Please look around our website and if you want any more information you can contact us." The average visitor's reaction to a site like this is to go "close-click" as they set off across the Internet in search of the equivalent of the guy on the couch, Dylan. So what should you be putting on your website to make sure your visitor stops to have a drink with you instead of rushing away? Well, what did Dylan do to make Tracy decide to get to know him a little better? Simple really: he looked at her situation, figured out what she wanted, and then offered to get it for her. And that's what your website should be doing: it should show that you've spent some time considering your client's situation, that you've anticipated what she'll need in that situation and that you're ready to help with a suitable solution.

Step 1 Consider the situation your clients are normally in when they decide to do business with you.

- If you sell baby toys, your usual client either has a baby or is buying a toy for someone else's baby.
- If you sell hiking shoes, your usual client is probably someone who is planning some kind of outdoor activity.
- If you sell candles, your latest client is probably someone in the Western Cape who is suddenly enjoying far more romantic candlelit evenings, due to Eskom's power problems, than he had planned for the next 50 Valentine's Days.

Step 2 Anticipate what your client will require to decide to do business with you in this situation. You don't have to be a mind reader to do this. Just think about the usual requirements and questions your clients have when dealing with your business. What questions do they ask, what do they want to know about your product or service? What is important to them?

- Someone wanting to buy a baby toy will probably want to know if the toy is safe for babies. In this case, they will only be interested in the superduper secret material used to make this toy if it has something to do with making it safe for babies. If it has got nothing to do with safety, don't mention it.
- Someone planning a hike will probably want to know how to make their boots comfortable before wearing them for 10 days. They might also want to know how to keep them waterproofed.
- Your new romantic candle lover will probably want to know if you have economy packs. :-)

Step 3 Now, keeping your client's situation and requirements in mind, offer them the solution that will best solve their problem (i.e yours!) and show them how and why your product / service will solve their problem.

- Your toys, made with chew resistant materials so that little teeth can't bite out pieces and swallow them, are safe for babies from 3 months on. They have no small detachable parts and are specially shaped so that they can't fit into baby's mouth or smother the mouth and nose. Perfect to play with when mum and dad need their eyes elsewhere.

- Your hiking boots, while made of extremely durable leather, are pre-treated to make the "wearing-in" period short and painless – you can be sure of a comfortable hike just 3 days after buying and wearing them! They also come with a treatment solution that you use once every six months to keep them waterproofed.
- Not only do your candles come in economy packs but they are also aroma therapy candles so that you can be sure to enjoy a pleasant and relaxing evening free from stress (and power ;)
-) With websites, as with most things, you get to choose whether to be a Dick or a Dylan. But I think we all know who gets the girl (or the customer)...