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CASE STUDY: A Disciplined Approach to Web Site Optimization and Customer-Focused Content

## How a home-based solo wedding planner in Maine caught the attention of *Boston Weddings Magazine* and boosted bookings well into 2009

By Pam Foster, Founder and Senior Copywriter, Web Content Optimization  
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About a year ago as I write this, Diane York asked me to advise her on the weak performance of her Web site. It wasn't showing up in Google search rankings, and her online inquiry rates were minimal to say the least.

Looking at her original site, I found that the very nice yellow/floral banner graphic took up nearly all of the space above the fold – leaving very little room for a headline or other key messages for visitors.

I also noticed that the copy was in large paragraphs that were not formatted for easy reading/scanning. The copy wasn't bad, but it focused on Diane and her services – NOT her target prospects and what they're searching for.

Simply put, this beautiful and promising site was not clearly written or designed for the optimal customer experience...and was not optimized for search engines. Luckily, there were some wonderful elements already in place (elegant graphics, a nice voice in the copy, beautiful photos and compelling testimonials).

### A disciplined process to content clarity and optimization

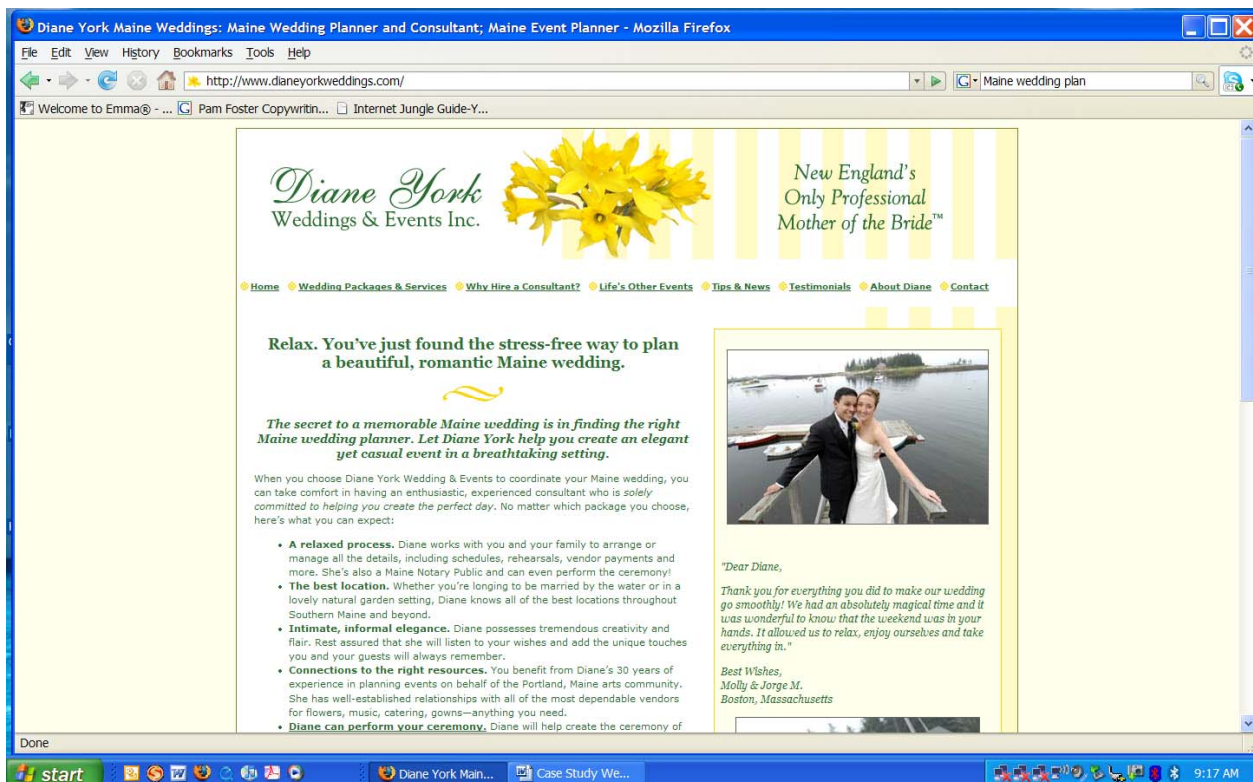
I had developed the ContentClear™ Marketing Method for Web Site Optimization that includes a number of tools that help guide marketers to content clarity. Using two of those tools, the Web Purpose Brief and Web Creative Brief, I worked with Diane to identify the following:

- **What is the main purpose of your site?** (Generating qualified inquiries/leads for Diane)
- **Who is your target audience?** (It was brides-to-be and their mothers)
- **What is their biggest concern or desire regarding the planning of a Maine wedding?** (The prospects were hoping to have an elegant, memorable, scenic Maine wedding but were overwhelmed by the logistics and were fearful of messing up such an important event)

- **What emotions are involved?** (Anxiety, fear, frustration, being overwhelmed, “It’s such an important event – it has to be just right”)
- **What action do you want them to take when they arrive at your home page?** (Review the various wedding planner options and contact Diane for a consultation)
- **What unique promise can you make compared to other Maine wedding planners?** (There were several, including Diane’s relationships with top-notch vendors, her knowledge of incredible scenic locations that would be available, and her elegant style. She has also been called a “professional mother of the bride” and we took advantage of that terrific phrase. She has trademarked it.)

There were many more questions involved in our initial discussion, but these were the most critical for getting to the heart of what Diane’s Web site should be saying to potential clients.

Working with Diane’s Web designer (Pheonix Studio), I reworked the site’s home page text (and eventually the other pages as well). This is where we ended up in a re-launch last summer:



## Keyword phrases were the key

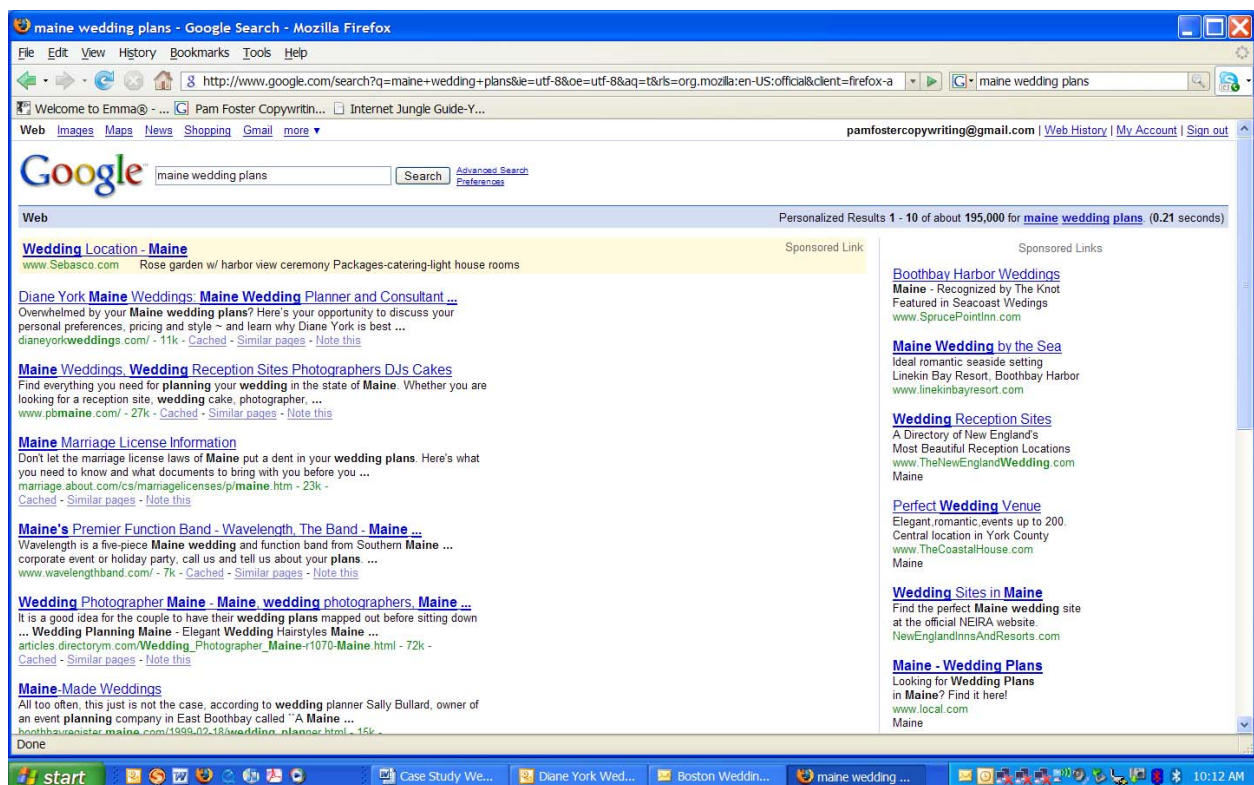
When I set out to rewrite the text, I focused on two aspects of the site. First, I needed to ensure that the content immediately appealed to the prospects’ state of mind and their deepest desires and hopes for a perfect Maine wedding. In addition, I needed to consider the words or phrases prospects were using in Google and other search engines to find a Maine wedding planner.

I asked Diane to provide words she felt would be useful. She provided the following information based on her Contact Us form.

“Here are some of the words that brides use to describe their day:  
romantic; intimate; elegant, informal/casual; beachy/natural/outdoors/scenic; relaxed, no stress; unique.”

I researched those phrases, as well as the obvious words for Diane’s business: Maine, wedding, weddings, plans, planner, planners, planning, etc. I developed a core set of keywords and worked them into the page titles, meta tags, headline text, subhead text and body text. In other words – all the main areas for search engine optimization and site visitors.

Remembering that it can take weeks for Google’s Web crawlers to pick up new content, we were delighted to see Diane’s site slowly climb up to page 1 of the rankings. Currently her site is on page 1, spot 1 in the organic (unpaid) results for the keywords “Maine wedding plans.”



### “Media-optimized” – an added bonus!

Diane’s current Google ranking results are pretty exciting and they’ve certainly boosted the number of leads and contracts she’s acquired for her thriving wedding business. In fact, she recently reported that her Maine Elopement Packages are selling like hotcakes!

But another main benefit to Diane’s business is one that we didn’t initially seek out.

The media is finding her site and promoting her business – *unsolicited* – as they write articles, stories and recommendations related to Maine wedding planning resources.

A couple of weeks ago, Diane e-mailed me and the Phoenix Studio Web designer this delightful message:

“Hi ladies,

Imagine my surprise, reading *Boston Weddings Magazine* and finding my name in print (page 107) as 'local planner' (i.e. local to Kennebunkport). No-one from the magazine had contacted me; this was unsolicited. As you know, you can't buy that kind of advertising!

I owe thanks to both of you (and Mr. Google) for helping people, especially magazine writers, find me online.

This afternoon, I was interviewed for *Port City Life* magazine (Jan/Feb, 2009 edition). So far this year, I've spoken to *Portland Press Herald* (this story was also run in the *Kennebec Journal*, resulting in a wedding for next year in MA), *MaineBiz*, and a WMTW-TV feature segment.

Again, my thanks to both of you for helping to get me on the hallowed 'first page' of Google. Diane”

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## Conclusion

This is just one tiny example of a business that has reaped the many rewards of a disciplined, methodical approach to Web site optimization. Any size business can benefit from a strategic, clear process that will improve Web site performance with prospects, search engines, and even the media.

No matter how you approach your Internet marketing strategy, a clear Web site optimization system can go a long way toward growing your leads, sales, conversions, media buzz and competitive positioning.

To learn more, you may want to check out the ContentClear™ Marketing Method for Web Site Optimization, a clear, methodical 7-step approach to increasing Web conversions and sales.

*Pam Foster, senior copywriter and online content consultant, is the founder of the ContentClear™ Marketing Method for Web Site Optimization ([www.contentclear.com](http://www.contentclear.com)). Her diverse 28-year marketing communications background includes writing and consulting for many types of industries promoting B2C and B2B products and services. She has 13 years of experience in Web content writing and strategy, SEO, and information architecture, as well as direct mail – all for clients such as L.L. Bean, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Maine, the American Cancer Society, Harper College, AWAI, Downeast Energy and many others.*

*Pam is co-author of 9 Easy Steps to Planning a Profitable Web Site and several other books under the Internet Jungle Guide brand ([www.internetjungleguide.com](http://www.internetjungleguide.com)). She has won 100+ marketing awards including New England DMA (Direct Marketing Association), Web Marketing Association, Telly, and Catalog Age. She is an AWAI Copywriters Wall-of-Fame honoree. Pam works mainly with larger corporate clients, helping them optimize their Web sites to boost conversions and sales. She also offers personal coaching services to copywriters looking to elevate their Web content and client service skills and learn her 7-step Web site optimization method. You can contact Pam at [pam@contentclear.com](mailto:pam@contentclear.com).*