

# Orchard House Communications

A quarterly newsletter ❁ Winter 2006

## Your Web Site as Valuable Real Estate

By Gloria Hildebrandt

**Good Web sites meet the readers' needs. To create a site that does this, it's crucial to realize how people use the Web. Most of us are rapidly searching for information. We aren't initially interested in reading long blocks of text. When we get to your home page, we're wondering if we've come to the right place, if your organization does what we think it does. So make it easy for us. Give us this information up front.**

Your home page is probably the one seen most often by most people. Many people won't go past it. Consider this page to be the most valuable piece of real estate in your entire site.

This is probably not the place for your mission statement or a letter from the president. This is the place to state what you do and what your competitive advantages are, as briefly as possible.

Point-form lists are great. Whenever you have a list of products or services to name anywhere in the

site, it's a good idea to use bullets. If you have more to communicate about each one, consider providing a click-through link so that readers can jump to more detail if interested. Make it easy for us to get what we want.

Another way to break up text and make it easier for skimmers to read is to use descriptive headings and sub heads. Our eyes leap to things that stand out, and good headings convey the essence of information. If we only read sub heads, we

should get a good idea of your most important points.

As we become more interested in your organization, we may explore your site further. In-depth descriptions, sales pitches, articles, news releases, newsletters and other ma-

terials have a place under specific categories of the site. Let readers seek them out as they settle in to read all about your organization.

If you keep your home page simple, to-the-point and complete with the basic information, your Web site will be able to return your investment in its valuable real estate.

## The "Work" of Dream Assignments\*

**As editor of *Caledon Living*, I've recently had to subject myself to all sorts of luxurious spa treatments, for free, for a guide to the spas of Caledon we put together for the winter issue. A sea salt scrub, aromatherapy massages, hot stone massages, pedicure, manicure, several facials, a mud wrap, a paraffin wax hand treatment – I've had to endure them all, and then write about them.**

I've also been burdened by free samples of expensive cleansers, moisturizers, lotions, serums and other things I'm not sure how to use.

In doing this research, I became spa-ed out. While trying to keep working on my business, I've had to dash off in the middle of the day to an appointment where I'd have to get naked, lie under warm covers, and let perfect strangers have their spa way with me.

Sometimes I had no idea of what was coming, like when I was asked to choose a fragrance that would be added to a seaweed-smelling mixture that was then poured into clean bath water, making it look like someone had had a toilet accident. I was then invited to soak in the bubbling solution for 20 minutes. Journalism can be scary.

Then I'd have to return to my office, check my phone and e-mail messages, and make notes on the spa treatments. If you go to a spa on a weekend

or holiday, you get to nap afterward. Not investigative reporters like me.

I had a similarly demanding assignment a few years ago, when researching for a speech I was writing for Labatt Breweries. I was instructed to go to the Bier Markt (Beer Market) in Toronto, sample a good range of beers and have lunch, which would feature beer as an ingredient in every dish. Two courses and a peach fruit beer for dessert later, I knew a whole lot more about beer – and I got to expense it. Thanks, Labatt!

Never let it be said that writers have an easy time of it. We have to be dedicated, hard-working and flexible enough to go almost anywhere and do almost anything, any time. Just like war correspondents. Life can be tough, but committed writers suffer through it.



\*Thanks to fellow writer Donna Papacosta of Trafalgar Communications ([www.trafcom.com](http://www.trafcom.com)) for suggesting this article idea.

### Love that Mixed Metaphor!

"You go to the well too many times, you're going to get burnt."

TV sportscaster at the CFL Western Conference

This newsletter of communications ideas and strategies is free to marketing and corporate communications professionals. Hard copy is on 100 per cent post-consumer recycled paper.

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# Letter to the Editor

In my Fall 2005 newsletter, I had an article called "The Banishment of Exceeding Expectations." In it, I urged the retirement of the frequently used saying "exceeding customer expectations." I received an interesting note in response to this, from Mark Ellwood, president of Pace Productivity Inc. ([www.getmoredone.com](http://www.getmoredone.com)):

"Why do so many words keep getting longer? My pet peeve is with words that add 'ness' at the end. For instance, 'responsiveness' instead of 'response.' Or 'analysis' (heard on the CBC) instead of 'analysis.' Your newsletter contains a whopper! 'The banishment of exceeding expectations.' Instead, how about 'A ban on exceeding expectations?'"

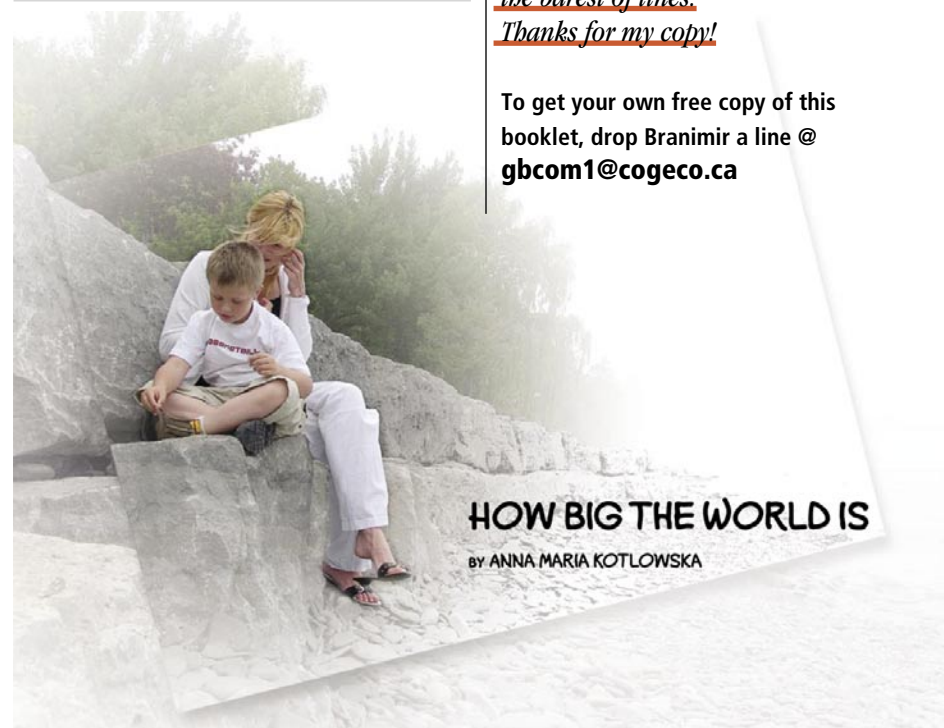
In an exchange of e-mail, Mark went on to point out "When words and phrases are lengthened to sound more important, that's a crime. On CBC, I heard someone discussing issues 'not just of poverty, but of impoverishment.' Really, now..."

Do you have a comment, complaint or opinion to share? Send me a message, and I'll publish it in a future issue, with your permission, as I did here with Mark's.

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**BRANIMIR'S ACTIVITIES** (👉 Branimir currently is busy with a corporate identity review, creating collaterals and redesigning the Web site for STANMECH Technologies. For the Canadian Alliance for Long Term Care, he's developing a corporate identity and for Ontario Long Term Care Association he is preparing collaterals for the Long Term Care Convention & Trade Show. (👉 Branimir's also in the movie industry, designing graphic identities for two documentaries, one called *The Full Hindu*, on marriage customs and traditions in India, and the other called *Yogis, Beggars & Snakes*, about business in India. (👉 Finally, he's designing the 2006 summer camps catalogue for the YMCA of Oakville. (👉 Branimir has also developed another

<b>Branimir Zlamalik</b>
of  gb.com unlimited
<b>Creative art direction, graphic design, illustration, fine typography, wayfinding solutions, design and project management.</b>
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booklet, called *How Big the World Is* written by Anna Maria Kotlowska, with illustrations by Leo Zovic and photography by Branimir. This was Gloria's reaction to the work: *Another interesting piece for your collection of creative work! It's a charming little story – very minimalist, which can be difficult to write – and the photos, illustrations and image collages are great. I like the illustrator's style of cartoon. He conveys a lot in the faces with the barest of lines.* *Thanks for my copy!*

To get your own free copy of this booklet, drop Branimir a line @ [gbcom1@cogeco.ca](mailto:gbcom1@cogeco.ca)

## Comments About Gloria's Recent Work:

“I'm most impressed by the speed with which you were able to prepare a succinct and accurate written presentation of such a complex issue. I think that it's very good.”

Peter MacGowan, Blue Highlands Citizens Coalition

This was in response to an article Gloria wrote about a citizens' group which is objecting to the development of a wind turbine farm being built on the Niagara Escarpment.

“Thanks for all your help and your quick responses. Good customer service is alive and well!”

Wendy Nunn, Oakville Literacy Council

Gloria was happy to work with Val Sanna of Ignition Design & Communications ([www.ignitiondesign.ca](http://www.ignitiondesign.ca)) on a brochure for this literacy group.

“Our first issue of The Lakeshore Villages was a huge success! A large part of that is due to your writing. Thank you, again, for all your hard work on these stories... I will be in touch with you shortly regarding assigning stories for the up-coming issue.”

Halyna Parypa, Piper Group Inc.  
Communication and Design Services

Piper Group has taken over the publication of a newsletter for three BIAs in west Toronto, and Gloria is providing some articles for them.