



The Importance of Microcopy

**Or, Why Content
Strategy Matters to
Even the Smallest
Pieces of Content**

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A Tale of Two Doormats




A Tale of Two Doormats





A Tale of Two Doormats

Think about the different messaging these two doormats each convey with just one word.

- What does “Welcome” communicate?
 - What does “Leave” communicate?
- 



More Doormats: The
Nice



More Doormats: The
Naughty

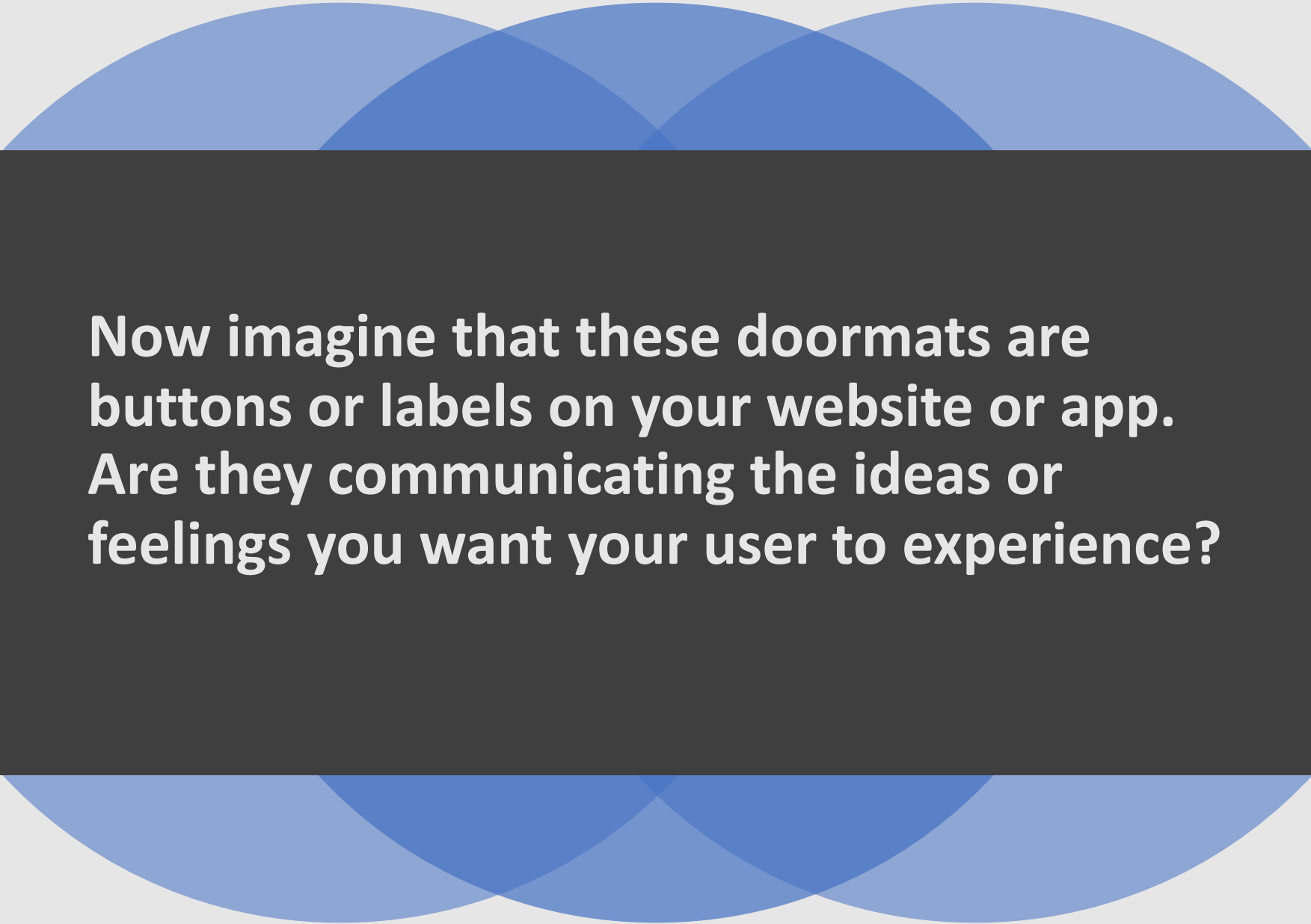


More Doormats: The Nerdy

What do all of these
doormats have in
common?



Content



**Now imagine that these doormats are
buttons or labels on your website or app.
Are they communicating the ideas or
feelings you want your user to experience?**

What is Microcopy?

Microcopy is a small piece of written copy that helps a user perform a task or understand context. It can be:

- A word
 - A phrase
 - A short sentence
-
- Button text
 - Navigation labels
 - Error messages
 - Alerts
 - Instructions or Explainers
 - Hints

Microcopy is Important Because

It helps users perform tasks



How many times have you tried to create an account on a website and gotten an error message?



But the error message doesn't tell you what's actually wrong?

Does the username need to be an email?

Is the password in the wrong format?



You have no idea. Then someone has to write an FAQ and you have to search the Help or Support topics and probably not find what you're looking for anyway.

Example: Mail Chimp

- This example from Mail Chimp tells you exactly what's wrong. "Sorry, we couldn't find an account with that username." Or "Sorry, that password isn't right." And then offers to help you recover the information.
- The microcopy tells the user why they're experiencing an error and offers a solution to the problem.

The image displays two overlapping screenshots of the Mail Chimp login page. The top screenshot shows an error message: "Sorry, we couldn't find an account with that username. Can we help you recover your username?" Below this message are the "Username" and "Password" input fields. The "Username" field is empty, and the "Password" field is partially visible. The bottom screenshot shows a similar error message: "Sorry, that password isn't right. We can help you recover your password." Below this message, the "Username" field is highlighted in yellow, and the "Password" field is also highlighted in yellow. The "Password" field has a "Show" button next to it. At the bottom of the bottom screenshot, there are "Log In" and "Stay logged in" buttons, and links for "Create an account" and "Trouble logging in?".

Mail Chimp logo

Sorry, we couldn't find an account with that username. Can we help you recover your username?

Username [I forgot](#)

Password

Mail Chimp logo

Sorry, that password isn't right. We can help you recover your password.

Username [I forgot](#)

Password [I forgot](#)

..... ☐ Show

☐ Stay logged in

[Create an account](#) · [Trouble logging in?](#)

Microcopy is Important Because

It sets users' expectations



Example: InVision Enterprise Sign-Up

At the end of the signup process, the microcopy concisely communicates the expectation that the user will receive an email with further instructions — and does it in a conversational way.



Keep an eye on your inbox...



We will be in touch soon with details about how to get your team started with InVision Enterprise.

[BACK TO INVISON](#)

Example: Dollar Shave Club

This is from their homepage. With just a handful of words, they're telling users what they'll get. The button microcopy is a nice, conversational imperative.

The screenshot shows the Dollar Shave Club homepage with a dark wood-grain background. At the top is a navigation bar with links: MENU, OUR BLADES, OUR PRODUCTS, GIFT, HOW IT WORKS, REVIEWS, ACCOUNT, and a BOX icon. A central video player shows a man in a white shirt and tie standing in a warehouse, with the text 'DollarShaveClub.com - Our Blades Are F***ing Great' overlaid. Below the video are social media links for Like, Share, Tweet, and Follow @DollarShaveClub, along with follower counts. To the right of the video is a large headline: 'A GREAT SHAVE FOR A FEW BUCKS A MONTH.' followed by 'No commitment. No fees. No BS.' and a large orange button labeled 'DO IT'. Below the button is a green speech bubble icon with a smiley face. At the bottom, there's a section for 'SHAVE TIME. SHAVE MONEY.' featuring an open cardboard box with a razor inside. To the left of the box are three razor options with prices: \$1/MO + \$2 SHIP, \$6/MO SHIPS FREE, and \$9/MO SHIPS FREE. Below these is a 'CHOOSE YOUR BLADE' section with the text 'We have 3 high quality options for you.' and a green speech bubble icon. To the right of the box is a 'TREAT YOURSELF' section with the text 'Pop on a fresh new blade when you want.' and a razor icon.

DollarShaveClub.com - Our Blades Are F***ing Great

A GREAT SHAVE FOR A FEW BUCKS A MONTH.

No commitment. No fees. No BS.

DO IT

SHAVE TIME. SHAVE MONEY.

CHOOSE YOUR BLADE
We have 3 high quality options for you.

TREAT YOURSELF
Pop on a fresh new blade when you want.

Example: Intercom

This is a nice example of how to use microcopy to communicate expectations in a video link. By telling the user how long the video is, you're giving useful information that helps them decide if they want to consume the content.

Chat with them,
answer their
questions, and help
them become
customers.

 WATCH THE VIDEO (2:25)



Microcopy is Important Because

It reassures users




Example: Simple Steps Code

This piece of microcopy concisely reassures the user that when they request the JavaScript road map, they won't also be signing up for spam. No one likes spam. Except Monty Python.

Tell me where to send the **JavaScript** road map, and it's yours (takes 10 seconds).

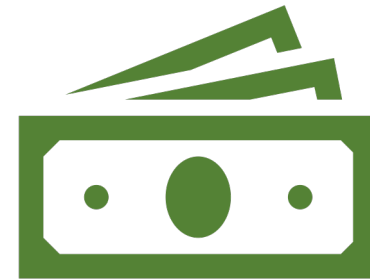
Yes, get the free road map

 I hate spam. Your email is safe.



Microcopy is Important Because

It helps drive conversions




Veeam Backup & Replication

#1 VM Backup



NEW: Version 6 is now available!

-  [Product Highlights](#)
-  [Product Datasheet \(VMware\)](#)
-  [Product Datasheet \(Hyper-V\)](#)
-  [What's New in v6](#)

Next Steps

- [» Download](#)
- [» Buy now and save](#)
- [» Request a quote](#)

"We are thoroughly enjoying Veeam since we've acquired the licensed version. As a result we see the need for additional licensing due to our expanding virtual space." Thanks a lot

Case Study: Veeam





Veeam had this language on a product page. Seems legit, right? But in an on-page survey, they noticed that a lot of users were asking for a price, not a quote.

Veeam Backup & Replication

#1 VM Backup



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"We are thoroughly enjoying Veeam since we've acquired the licensed version. As a result we see the need for additional licensing due to our expanding

Case Study:
Veeam

So they changed one word in their microcopy and tested it.

Case Study: Veeam

A one-word change from “quote” to “pricing” in the link text resulted in a **161.66 percent increase in clicks**.

Good Microcopy Should Be

Clear

Informative

Helpful

Written in your users' language

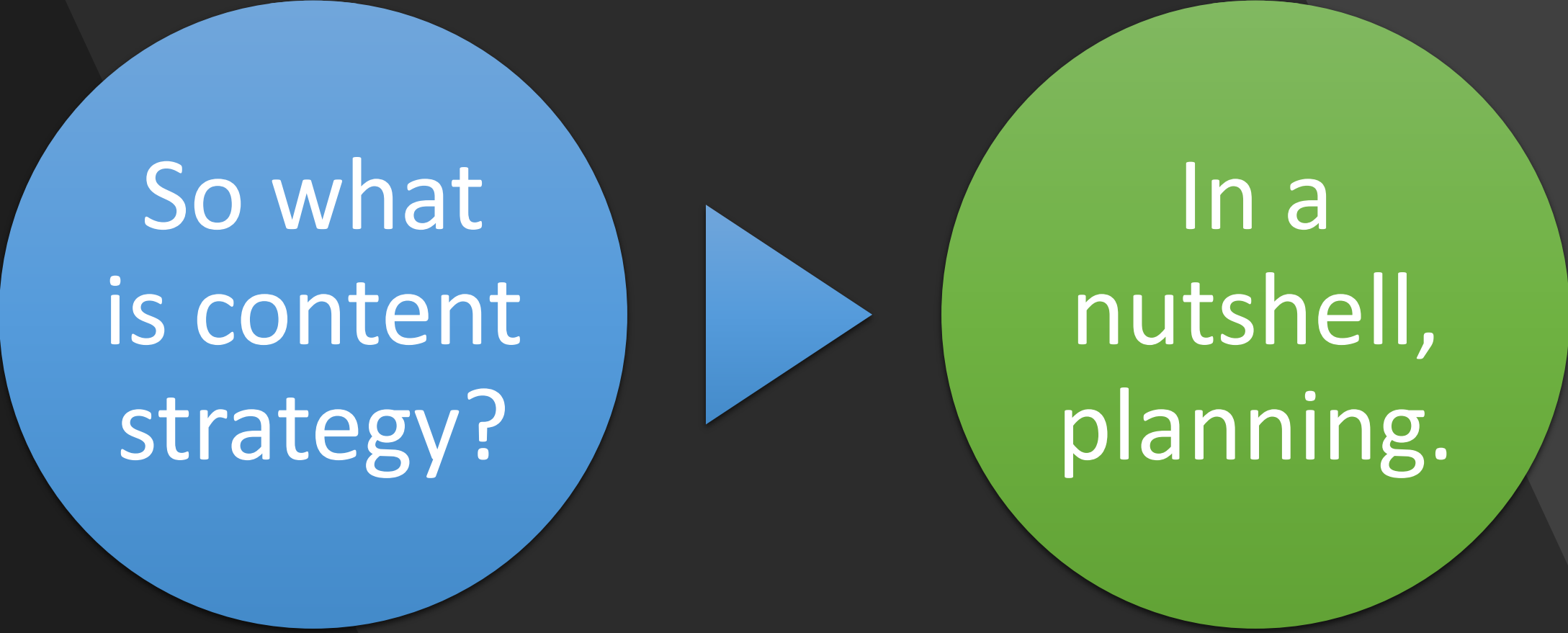
The Role of Content Strategy

Microcopy = Content

(even if it's just one word)

Content = Content Strategy

The Role of Content Strategy



So what
is content
strategy?

In a
nutshell,
planning.

The Role of Content Strategy

“Planning for the creation, delivery, and governance of useful, usable content” — Kristina Halvorson

“A content strategy is the high-level vision that guides future content development to deliver against a specific business objective.” — Hannah Smith, Distilled

The Role of Content Strategy

Content Strategists may:

Perform qualitative content audits to identify where existing content can be improved or where there opportunities for content to meet business needs

Interpret analytics to determine how users consume or interact with content

Perform competitive research and analysis

Talk to businesses / clients to help identify how content can meet their needs and goals

Work with UX researchers and designers to identify user needs and how content can meet those needs

The Role of Content Strategy

Content Strategy plans for:

The big picture of your content

What the content will be — what types

How the content works together to inform or guide user experience

The structure of content across your project (often overlaps with information architecture)

That's all just as true for microcopy.

You need to:

Know your audience



Plan for how the
microcopy fits into
overall user experience




Document it
(e.g., which pages need
error messages, what's
the common lexicon for
microcopy)





Key Takeaways

- Content is all around you (even on doormats)
 - Good content takes planning, even the tiny bits
 - If you have access to content strategists on your team, talk to them! They're usually nice people, although they might be a little weird sometimes.
- 



Some fun reading for your copious free time. OK.
Maybe relevant is a better word than fun.

Content Strategy for the Web, Second Edition, Kristina Halvorson

<http://a.co/d/bJpbLkL>

The Content Strategy Toolkit: Methods, Guidelines, and
Templates for Getting Content Right, Meghan Casey

<http://a.co/d/j8EaPhO>

Microcopy: Discover How Tiny Bits of Text Make Tasty
Apps and Websites, Niaw de Leon

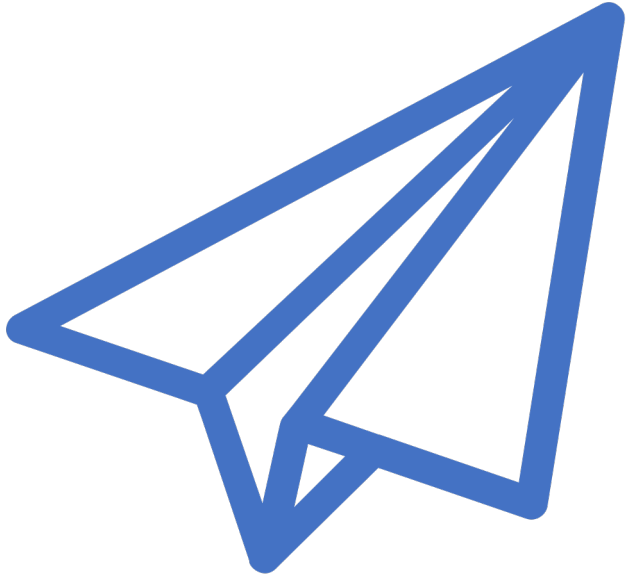
<http://a.co/d/5ERdnOx>

Microstyle: The Art of Writing Little, Christopher
Johnson

<http://a.co/d/3tJD5Pt>

You've Got 8 Seconds: Communication Secrets for a
Distracted World, Paul Hellman

<http://a.co/d/gHzGcNE>



Connect With Me

Hit me up with questions after the con! Let's talk content strategy.

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