You Need a Good Website for Your Business

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You Need a Good Website for Your Business

A Good Website is the 21st Century Business Card

There's at least one type of business that probably doesn't need a website – a convenience store that sells mostly beer, cigarettes and lottery tickets. If you own one here in Scranton, you need a great location, not a great website!

For most of you who own businesses in the Scranton area, a website is a must. Keep in mind, even if you have no need of an online store for e-commerce, your website will be the way you begin to connect with new prospects and keep in touch with current clients or customers.

Welcome to the 21st Century! Just like you invest in business cards, having a well-made website is an integral part of your business presence. In fact, your website's Domain Name (or URL) should appear on your business card, right below your phone number.

That's because you're most likely to have a clientele that's online. If you have a service-oriented business, most of your prospective new business contacts will begin their search for a business like yours in a search engine.

Of course, word-of-mouth still works very well. It's just that, very often, word-of-mouth is spread by email! If you have a website, you make it easier for those that love and respect you to pass along your best contact information by email.

So, What's a Good Website?

A good website is easy to read, easy to navigate and friendly to the reader. A good website doesn't call attention to itself – it invites the reader to take the next step *you* want him or her to take. That could be to call you on the phone, sign up for a newsletter or proceed to your online shopping cart.

In fact, for most local business owners, their website needs to be clean, uncluttered and simple. The main page (called a "landing page") should show the reader what the business is all about and point to specific sub-pages that talk about specific merchandise, products or services.

Each of the sub-pages should keep things simple and be easy to follow. Always

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assume your reader is an intelligent, motivated 8 year old, not a rocket scientist or someone who "knows your style" already. You don't need to talk down to people. You do need to speak simply and plainly. It's your obligation to make sure you are *not* misunderstood.

So, What's *Not* a Good Website?

A website that's not good is made to please the person who made it, not the target audience. Here's an example:

An all-black background with green type. I have no idea why this is popular, but it is. It's sometimes made even worse by having all the "clickable" links displayed in a Dark Gray color.

Now, aside from the fact that there are plenty of people who are blue-green color blind, the mere fact that the Web page is displayed in a way that calls attention to itself is bad. That's because you don't want your reader to remark about the layout, color scheme or design. You want the reader to remark about *your business*!

The same goes for ALL CAPITAL LETTERS, blinking horizontal rules, animated images that really have nothing to do with your on-page content, too many different colors of type and the like. Unless you are a hardened Direct Response marketer who's constructed ads for the back of comic books and tabloid newspapers, avoid visually shocking content.

Always think about your "Ideal Customer" -- which demographics apply to this person, especially if he or she is older than, say, 35. Deliver your message with what you say, not how you say it *visually*. This brings up the next point.

Content is King!

A very good website has lots of good, written content. That content is focused on the reader. It's called *customer focused copy*. This kind of writing talks to you, not "at" you.

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Put simply, it has a lot of "you", "your" and "yours" in it. It has very little "I", "me", "mine", "we", "our", "us".

If you'd like to see an example of the *wrong* kind of copy, check out a few sites or display ads by lawyers (who like to call themselves attorneys). "We have a combined total of 150 years experience", "We won $12 gazillion dollars for our clients", "We are proud to serve our clients".

Here's the right kind of copy: "You're probably hurt, or in trouble with the law. You may be in pain, confused and uncertain what to do next. How good would it be to speak with someone who will listen to you with respect and compassion? How important is it for you to find a lawyer who can help you take the next step in getting justice? Call 555-1212 and speak with someone who can help you do just that!"

You may have also noticed that this report talks to you, in the same way. So far, there's only one first person pronoun (aside from the bad lawyer copy) in the whole thing (and it's in green)!

The next thing you need to pay careful attention to is the difference between a feature and a benefit:

- Features are what you think is cool about a product, service or your business in general
- Benefits are what satisfy the selfish desires of buyers.

People who want something are selfish and impatient. They only want to know two things:

1. "What's in it for me?"
2. "What *else* is in it for me?"

That means if you're selling widgets, **don't** say, "We have a nice selection of widgets. Special orders are our pleasure." **Do** say, "Come see the widest selection

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of widgets in the Scranton area. If your particular widget isn't in stock, you can get it delivered to you in 48 hours!"

See the difference? The first one is talking about what the business owner thinks is important. The second one talks about what the business owner *knows* is important to his customers.

And Now, a Strong Call to Action

Okay, you've been friendly, approachable and focused on your clientele. What's next? Pull the reader into taking the next step in your sales process.

In most cases, you want someone who's landed on your website to pick up the phone and call you. Those of you that have to build some trust and rapport before people will call you may need to have folks sign up for a newsletter or email alerts first.

No matter what your sales process is, getting the reader to do more than passively read is the ultimate goal of your website. This is where a strong call-to-action pulls the reader into taking that next step.

You may hate lines like "Call Today!" "Call Now!" "Pick up the phone and call before it's too late!" Tough. That kind of approach works.

Again, this is not about you and how you feel about things. It's about what works in practice. Chances are, you are not your ideal customer. It's also a safe bet that you aren't an experienced marketer, who's tested and proven the right way to get people to take action.

If you'd like to argue about this point, just dial **570-344-8762**, Monday through Friday, during business hours. Ask for Vince.

No, really!

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In Conclusion

You really need a good website because it reflects on you and your business. A shoddy site that looks home-made seems to broadcast that you aren't doing well enough to afford a decent Web presence. A site where style overwhelms substance may make you feel good, but it probably won't improve your bottom line. A self-referential website that talks mostly about you (a lot of references to I or We) won't build any rapport with people. A site that leaves it up to the reader to take action or not tends to get a lot of "not".

It's your business. You're in business to make a profit. Make sure your website does everything it can to make you more profit.

Regards,

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