

## **Create a Website to fit your Image**

A website is virtually free advertising, but potential customers must visit your site for it to be effective. A website is a great format for getting additional information to the public, information you could not include in print ads or fliers because of budget constraints or space availability, but the public must be driven to your website for it to be effective.

Depending on your service industry the medium can be anything from Yellow Page advertising, direct mail (fliers), newspaper advertising, Penny Saver or your local newspaper Services Wanted section. Once the consumer has been driven to your site, you must display the appropriate material or message to encourage potential customers to pick up the phone and dial your number.

A website should convey to consumers exactly what your services are, and this should be accomplished in as concise a manner as possible. Rambling on about your company will not excite consumers and may discourage them from contacting your firm. Concise means short and to the point. Remember your mission statement. A website is a great place to display your mission statement, but your website must provide more information.

Your web statement must touch the consumer more deeply than your mission statement. To this end, you have the requisite format and opportunity to accomplish this goal. Do not fail to excel in this arena. A website is only as good as the information placed on the site. Your site can be flashy and

attractive, but the message is the important factor in web success.

It is appropriate to explain your experience, your knowledge, what areas you service and what sets you apart from others in your industry, but this must be accomplished in a style and content that does not create boredom. If a consumer cannot determine your services and skill level within a few seconds of reading, they will exit your site and search for another.

It is not inappropriate for you to search other more flourishing sites to determine what makes their message so successful. If you know of a site that has a great deal of success with the consumer, copy their style. Copying their style does not include copying their content. Do not copy their content. If you copy their style, and use your message, perhaps your site will be even more successful. You do not want to copy someone's web statements or information. Consumers will visit multiple sites and they will know the original from the imposter. Also, many sites are copyrighted and you can experience financial loss for copying these sites.

***Remember to:***

- ***Write out your message before placing it on your site.***
- ***Read your message several times.***
- ***Rewrite your message several times.***
- ***Have others read your message several times.***
- ***Ask for comments; both critical and positive.***

- ***Keep changing the content and style of the message until you arrive at a copy everyone can agree upon. A copy that is right for your company.***

You might think it impossible to get everyone to agree on a specific message, but this is not true. If a message is great, and that is what we are looking for, getting others to approve of the message is not difficult. Take criticism from others for what it is, constructive. Criticism and or critical suggestions help us define our message and usually the individuals reading your proposed message are just like the consumer who will read your message once posted.

Do not be overly sensitive to criticism. However, if you are certain your message is correct in the current format and content, do not let others dissuade you from posting the message. They may not know your business the way you do, and even though they are trying to help, the changes to your message may be unacceptable.

The manner in which you write can also be indicative of the manner in which you communicate verbally. If the language on your website is broken and difficult to understand, a consumer may deduce from your site that you and your company will be difficult and unprofessional. If you cannot write an effective message for your site, have someone else write the message.

Many individuals are great orators but lack the confidence or necessary skills to be effective at the written word. There is nothing dishonest about having someone else, someone great at written expression, write your web message. Remember, success is not determined by how many calls you

receive from your marketing plan; success is measured by how many customers you obtain from that marketing program.

Someone else's message may facilitate the call, but you and your staff are on the front line facing the public.

Ultimately, your skill, and the ability to communicate your message verbally, will determine whether your marketing plan is a success or failure.

***You must create a website that fits your image.***

***Meaning, your website must reflect:***

- ***what you do and how well you do it***
- ***your experience in the industry***
- ***the professionalism of your company***
- ***Why you are better than the competition***
- ***What they can expect with your service***

Your web image is important to the image you desire for your company. If you desire a professional, stable, local community image, you would not have a rock band playing or pictures of past parties displayed on your home page. I know this may sound strange, but it does happen. Some sites use their business site as a personal site for current friends and anyone who would like to be a friend. Stay focused on your business and save the time you have afterhours for friends.

***It is nearly impossible to know exactly what everyone wants when they visit your site, but I can tell you this:***

- ***they do not want to be offended***
- ***they do not want to waste their time***
- ***they do not want to get lost in your site***

If a consumer is offended by your site, they will leave. If a consumer feels he/she is wasting their time on your site, they will leave. If a consumer cannot simply navigate your site, they will leave and never return. Simplicity is the key to many sites. When a consumer can navigate a site and not get lost, when a consumer can obtain the information needed in a short amount of time (which is relative), when a consumer feels comfortable with your site, they will eventually contact you to determine if you are what they see on your site.

When a potential customer contacts your office from your advertising, or website, you must be professional in your presentation and have the information they require. If you cannot answer their questions in a proficient manner, or satisfy their requests, a marketing plan, any marketing plan, cannot be successful.

The objective of a marketing plan is to get the consumer to call your company, but the main objective of your company should be to successfully turn that phone call into a valuable customer.

The individual must be interested because he or she responded to your marketing vehicle. If you do not turn that call into a customer, you can blame no one but yourself. If your marketing plan is creating the calls, but you cannot close the deal, marketing is not the problem. Reassess your message and your phone presentation.

Most service professionals know what should be placed in their advertising message, and the calls received as a result of their marketing plan are implicitly for the industry which they service. Be certain your message is appropriate and exact. If you do not make a mistake in your marketing message, the only thing left to blame for a failure to acquire the customer is either the mailing list or your phone or personal presentation.

I have always placed the blame on myself for any failure to communicate with potential customers. However, there are times when exigent circumstances occur and these circumstances take the opportunity of acquiring a new customer out of your hand.

#### **What are exigent circumstances?**

- 1. A consumer may be looking for a different service than the one you provide.***
- 2. A consumer may not have the necessary discretionary funds to retain the service company and is just seeking information.***
- 3. A consumer may already have service and is just checking on the proficiency of their current service company.***

There are additional reasons a phone call is not turned into a valuable customer, but the above reasons are a few not attributable to a poor presentation. If your marketing plan is generating the necessary calls, or your website is directing callers to your office, and the callers are looking for the service you provide, there is no reason you cannot expect a one

hundred percent closing rate. Is this realistic? Probably not, but why not shoot for one hundred percent and settle for ninety-nine?

I cannot tell you how many websites I have visited where I have no idea why the website is there. I cannot tell you what service or product the site sells without a great deal of investigation. I cannot tell you where the home office is located or where the service is performed, and the site definitely does not display professionalism.

A site must display openly and efficiently the information the consumer is seeking. The site must also display your contact information and location. Most individuals want to contract for services with a local company. If a consumer has no idea where you are located, he or she will usually move on to another site; perhaps one with more user friendly information.

Your contact information should be on the home page and should include your address and contact number. Many sites have a Contact Us page, and while this is acceptable, your contact information should also be on your home page; either at the bottom or along the side in plain unobstructed view.

There are many web professionals who believe they know what makes a great website, but I can tell you the only thing that matters is the amount of customers generated by your site.

Many web builders will advocate adding numerous bells and whistles to your page as attractors. This is expensive and unnecessary. While many consumers may think your page is cool, they may spend more time watching your bells and whistles than looking for the requisite information.



