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How To Supercharge Your Website

By "Jason A. Martin"

I am often asked "Jason, I get people to my website, but nothing happens. What am I doing wrong?" Is this you? Did you build a website only to have people come and leave? If so, you can still save your website. By following some tried and true rules, your website can become supercharged and be all that you envisioned.

First, we need to dispel one myth. The Internet amazes almost no one anymore. When I started in the early 1990's it was a whole different story. Today, the Internet is a major force in our lives. Instead of saying things like "Wow! Look at that!" we are saying "Been there, done that." However, some people know this and go to the wrong extreme by over complicating their website.

Rule One: You are not an artist.

Ok, maybe you are, but you still don't need to use every available color and font in the known universe on your website. Take a look at any newspaper. How many colors and fonts do you see? Many are black and white print with a splash of color here and there. Their type is sure and steady. The USA Today is one of the more colorful papers out there and even they don't go nuts with color.

If your website is a visual car wreck, your visitors will end up leaving. Your website could look like a piece of art, but if the message gets lost, it is a waste of space. Keep your colors simple and pleasing to the eye. If you look at some of the most successful websites, you will notice they usually have a simple color scheme.

Rule Two: Your website is not a puzzle.

Have you ever been to a website for the first time and seen information all over your screen? If so, you most likely felt overwhelmed and you probably left. Here is a fact. The more orderly your website is in regards to content layout, the more focused your visitor will become on the content. Content that is not in an orderly fashion is sometimes coined as "hip", but the end result is a less focused visitor.

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Does this mean you need a plain boring website? Of course not. However, due care is warranted when laying out content. I would like to direct your attention to the newspaper again. Most newspapers use grids to layout their content. Look at the newspaper. Even though it has a wealth of information, you feel right at home. This is the same effect your website should have.

Spend the extra time and figure out how you can best lay out your content. Always design with the first time user in mind. Keep navigation as a top concern. You don't need fancy flash buttons and other doodads. If the visitor can not use your website with ease and minimal distractions, all is lost.

Rule Three: Keep your focus.

How many websites have you went to that spend valuable homepage space welcoming you to the website? Think about this for a moment. Why is this necessary? What could be put into its place? When a new user goes to your website, you have literally seconds to interest them enough so they stay. Do you want to waste that valuable time with a welcome message?

When you turn on TV to watch your favorite show, does the show start off by welcoming you to Channel X and Show X? Of course it doesn't. The whole point of this section is to illustrate just how important space is. You do not have the luxury of time to have fluff on your website. Your ad copy (text/images) must be lean and mean.

Another common mistake I see on ecommerce oriented websites is the whole "who we are" speech on the homepage. When a new visitor comes to your website, they don't care who you are. They care about what you can do for them. Keep your focus on the visitor's needs and not your own. Before you spend time talking about yourself, you need to give the visitor a reason to care. Because of this, it is best to put all your text about your company on other pages. There is nothing wrong with putting a blurb about your company on the homepage, but it should be limited and to the point.

If you find yourself at wits end, it is time to call in the experts. My company, MarketJunction.com, can help you. Are there more than three rules you ask? Yes, but I selected three very important ones for you in this article. My website, JasonAMartin.com, has more informative articles. Follow these three rules and you will be well on your way to a supercharged website.

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Book Review - Guerrilla Marketing For Free

By Adam McFarland

Sure, advertising is easy if you're Pepsi or Apple, but what if you don't have millions of dollars to throw at TV and print ads? Any business owner out there looking to cut their marketing budget should look no further than *Guerrilla Marketing for FREE - Dozens of No-Cost Tactics to Promote Your Business and Energize Your Profits* by Jay Conrad Levinson.

We've all heard examples of businesses that spend nothing on marketing and yet never seem to be lacking in customers (Krispy Kreme Doughnuts comes to mind), but how do they do it? On the first page of the book Levinson lets you know that it is possible to grow a business without spending a dollar on marketing, but that it takes a lot of energy and time. Each of the simple tactics the book discusses (there are 100) are deceptively simple and, according to Levinson, have proven track records.

All that you need to get started is a telephone, a computer, a printer, business cards, and access to the internet. After that you will not spend another dollar. Techniques range from the relatively obvious, such as "write a marketing plan" and "have a website", to not-so-obvious things such as "establish a referral program" and "get involved in your community."

Many of the tactics involve giving to receive. In addition to doing volunteer work in your community, Levinson suggests joining local networking groups, giving away your product for free to non-profit organizations and schools, and doing free presentations on your area of expertise to local organizations. Levinson's tactics will not just help improve your bottom line, they'll help you become a more altruistic entrepreneur.

If there's one downside to the book, it's that some of the techniques involving computers are outdated. For example, Levinson suggests advertising on free online classified sites. That may have worked years ago, but these days those sites are covered in spam and I doubt that any business would gain anything from listing on them. The book was written in 2003, so most of the techniques are still pretty valuable, but there's just a few that stand out as infeasible in 2006.

When reading *Guerrilla Marketing for FREE* by Jay Conrad Levinson, I found myself constantly putting it down and jotting down ideas that could help supercharge my business. Levinson truly invokes your creative juices. And the best part is that all of the techniques cost you NOTHING. This is a no-brainer purchase for all entrepreneurs and small business owners.

Adam McFarland owns iPrioritize (

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