

Just An Expensive Electronic Brochure Or A Profitable Site?

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By Richard D S Hill

Most websites are just expensive electronic brochures that do very little or nothing for the business concerned.

It is strange how business sense seems to go out of the window when it comes to the internet and the world wide web.

The internet and internet protocols (IP) provide many businesses – especially those in the SME sector – the chance to improve their productivity and profitability dramatically. But too many see it as "too difficult" or "too expensive" or something that they just "don't [want to?] understand".

They have been however convinced that they "must have a website or they are not even in the game".

Yet too many businesses' whilst they have ignored the opportunities that IP offers them at such a reasonable cost, once they have built their website then proceed to ignore that!

It's very strange. How many businesses would say?

- * 'Let's build a new store and then leave it empty';
- * 'Let's plan a direct mail campaign buy all the kit and then not bother to buy the stamps to send it out';
- * 'Let's pay for the stock and then just store it'.

Yet those are the equivalents of building and paying for a website and then not promoting it effectively in ALL advertising and promotions INCLUDING the world wide web itself.

One can see why people think it might not be worth the effort. There are over 55,000,000 top level domains on the web. There are nearly 12,000,000,000 web pages with about 10,000,000 added daily! On the other hand web based business is growing at 15 – 25% compound annually

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There are millions of web searches by millions of people every day [See Google Zeitgeist to get a flavour of what people search for – the other 'big cats' Yahoo and MSN also have similar pages.] Please ignore the fact that the most popular searches are actors and news etc. What do you expect? There are plenty of more 'mainstream business' searches too.

Some examples of the other UK searches that are done:

– Builder over 150,000 times in May 2005 – builder Bristol 57 times.

– Fashion over 800,000 times – far too many for me to bother with says the local retailer. Oh yeah! Click here – notice what the search engines can do now!

– Hotel was searched for over 5,000,000 times in May 2005. Hotel Bath was searched for 1,652 times; Bath Spa hotel 497 times, hotel Bath England 263 times and hotel Bath UK 228 times and there are a bucket load of results in the 100 plus searches category.

Over 85% of people use a search engine to find their way around the internet the majority use Google but Yahoo and MSN also have very large numbers of followers and cannot be ignored. There are also thousands of smaller general and specialized search engines and directories that are regularly used.

If you are not working the search engines, familiarising yourself and your business with Pay per Click marketing, building up your prospect and customer email list and using your website to generate prospects that lead to sales then why bother having a website?

So you will ask how do we go about all of this?

Clearly the obvious answer is ask us to do it!

But a few tips are probably more what you were looking for! So:

– Look at your web marketing plan as a long-term effort to grow your site to be the best most comprehensive (local / regional / national / interactive / amusing / something) resource on your product or service.

– Be clear about what makes your site better and more valuable to your site visitors.

– Make sure each page within your site targets and is optimized for only one or two keyword phrases each.

– Use 2 – 6 word phrases instead of one-word keywords and you'll get more targeted visitors as well. Search your top keyword phrases on the various search engines so that you are aware of the competition and the volume of sites already successfully ranking for the terms you are targeting.

– Use this information to help you with Pay per Click campaign development.

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– Add new information to your site regularly. Resources, white papers and tips not only add value but will naturally work wonders as keyword targeted pages. Offer the type of information those seeking your product or service will find useful and search for and that other sites will want to link to. You need to have well written content of value; not keyword stuffed ramblings.

– Use the resources and downloads you offer to build your database.

Finally, just one other point – it doesn't "happen the next day". The technology is fast but search engines are programmed to provide the most relevant results – that means they realise that longevity is important and expect that good sites understand that they have to be 'proven' to rise up their rankings.

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<http://www.e-crm.co.uk>

helps you to grow by getting you more customers that

stay with you longer. We provide practical solutions that pay for themselves. We help you to make sure that your marketing works.

Make Your Web Site Work More So You Can Work Less

By C.J. Hayden

Do you know how your web site fits into the overall marketing strategy for your business? Do you have a strategy for your web site as a marketing tool? If you're like many entrepreneurs I speak with, you probably don't.

All over the world, small business owners are spending thousands of dollars on building and maintaining web sites without being able to answer one big question: What do you want your web site to do?

Creating a web site without a marketing strategy can be an expensive and time-consuming mistake. Here's an illustration from the more familiar world of paper and postage. Imagine that you hired a graphic designer, printed 5000 four-color tri-fold brochures, and when the boxes arrived, you asked yourself, "Gee, what shall I do with these?"

That scenario may sound a bit embarrassing as it stands, but let's take it further. Suppose the first idea that occurs to you is mailing your new brochure to a list of 500 names you collected by exhibiting at a trade show. But then you realize that you didn't design the brochure as a self-mailer -- all 6 panels are filled with graphics and copy.

To mail your brochure, you will now need 500 envelopes. Of course you want to use the ones printed

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with your address and logo, but how much do those cost a piece? And do you have 500 in stock? What will be the cost in money or time to get envelopes printed, addressed, and stuffed? How long will all this take? Was any of this in your budget when you had the brochures printed?

The brochure example can tell us much about what goes wrong in creating web sites. Many sites are constructed to be simply electronic brochures. Entrepreneurs often get their sites designed by sending their printed brochure to a web designer, and saying, "Put this on the Web."

So here's what is wrong with that. If you want your web site to attract traffic, your web site must be **DESIGNED** to attract traffic.

You have a choice in designing your site and integrating it with your overall marketing strategy. You can choose to make your site an electronic brochure with no consideration of how to attract visitors built into the design. If you do this, it means that you must direct traffic to your site by other means — advertise, promote, exhibit, speak, write, network, prospect, mail, call, etc.

Unfortunately, most small business owners find this out after the fact. They put up the site and then slowly realize that no one is seeing it. So they start spending time and money on banner ads, on-line malls, classifieds, postcards, bulk email, posting articles, exchanging links, and more.

The alternative is to design your site to attract traffic in the first place. If you're going to spend all the time and money to build a web site, doesn't it make more sense to have the site bring you customers

rather than you having to bring customers to the site?

To create a high-traffic web site, it must be search-engine friendly. 85–90% of all web site traffic comes from search engines. When a customer types in a keyword phrase you hope will bring them to you, your site needs to be one of the top 10–30 results shown or that customer will never get to you. To earn top positions in the major search engines, you or your web designer must know the guidelines each engine uses to create its rankings, and mold your site to meet them.

Some of these guidelines relate to the content of your site, and how it is organized. Others have to do with the technical details of how your site is constructed. If you don't want to know these specifics, you'd better hire someone who does. That's the problem with letting just anyone who calls themselves a web designer create a site for you.

Looking at a designer's portfolio of completed sites will tell you only a small part of what you need to know about their abilities. Who wrote the content for those sites? Who designed the page layout and navigation? Where did the graphics come from? And here's the most important question: What did the designer do to make those sites search-engine friendly?

It's a rare person who possesses the four-way combination of design ability, technical expertise, marketing know-how, and search engine savvy to create an attractive, useful web site that will attract traffic **AND** generate paying customers. You know which of these capabilities you already have, and what new skills you're willing to learn. Make sure you hire people who have the rest.

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C.J. Hayden is the author of Get Clients NOW! Since 1992, C.J. has been teaching business owners and salespeople to make more money with less effort. She is a Master Certified Coach and leads workshops internationally. Read more of her articles at

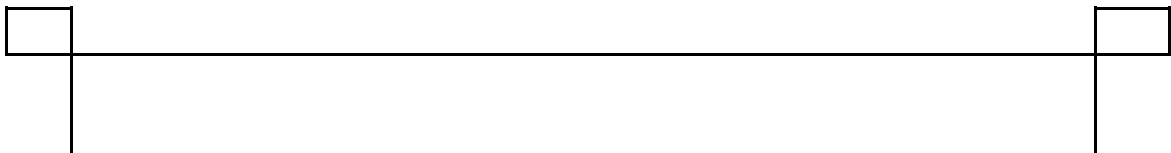
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