

A pretty face is NOT enough!!! (when it comes to your website)

by Ivana Katz

Imagine meeting someone new. They have a beautiful face, lovely hair, stunning smile, drop dead gorgeous body and are dressed in designer clothes. Naturally you are attracted to their striking appearance, so you start talking to them.

After a few minutes you realise this person has no personality, only talks about himself/herself and has no interest in finding out about you. Any attempt on your part to speak gets shut down and if you do manage to ask a question their answer is usually "Yes, but ... let's get back to me".

How long do you think you would stay and chat to this person? Do you think you would want to become friends? Probably not.

And the same goes for your website! You can create the most stunning website, with flash animations, video or audio features, rotating logos etc but the truth is, if your website doesn't have any depth, no amount of "pretty" will get visitors to come back, let alone purchase anything!

Just as Dr Phil warns against spending your entire time planning a wedding (and spending thousands of dollars on it), instead of preparing for a lifelong marriage, many first time entrepreneurs become absorbed by the visual aspects of their website. They spend hours agonising over colour schemes and designs (and then spend thousands of dollars having special effects added), but sadly don't give any priority or time to the content of their website.

Every month millions of new websites are being added to the internet and you are competing against all of them! Even if they are not in the same line of business as you are, they are competing with you for

visitor attention.

And even if you do manage to get a visitor to your website, but fail to provide the necessary information, your potential customer will click away in seconds, never to be seen again!

As a new or prospective website owner, you are faced with three major issues, when it comes to having a successful website:

1. Driving traffic to your website
2. Converting visitors into paying customers
3. Getting customers to come back and purchase more

1. DRIVING TRAFFIC TO YOUR WEBSITE

This is a broad subject and has been covered by an earlier article, entitled "30 ways to promote your business and website on a shoestring budget". You can view it by going to: www.web4business.com.au/ArticlesIK30waystopromote.htm.

2. CONVERTING VISITORS INTO PAYING CUSTOMERS

This is one of the areas in which most business owners fail. The main reasons are that they:

(a) Don't provide information that their customers are looking for.

For example, if you are selling furniture and your website only features a "general" category of products being sold, but not specific items, their prices and measurements, the customer will go somewhere else.

If someone is looking on the internet for a sofa, they need to know whether it will fit into their home, whether it is within their budget and how it will look. The customer wants to know the information there and then. They are not going to wait until they can speak to someone on the phone or even drive to the store to find out. They will find another supplier (even an overseas one) who does provide the information. So when creating your website, PLEASE PLEASE ensure that you supply as much information as possible about each product and service, including its price (or price range).

(b) Don't make it easy for their customers to find the information.

It is important that your website is easy to navigate. This means placing your navigation bar at the top or left hand-side, as this is the first place majority of people look for. Contact details should be displayed not only on "Contact Us" page, but also at the bottom of each page.

(c) Don't prove their credibility.

Sure many companies speak about themselves and how great their products are and why you should buy from them, but the reality is no-one really believes them. International Marketer and author Darrell Berg-Smith (www.darrellberg-smith.com) says that you should "Forget selling; prove your expertise. Start to position yourself as the expert on your product or service. You don't do this by claiming to be the expert, or displaying your impressive CV. You do it instead by sharing your knowledge and giving your customers helpful, relevant information, without a sales gimmick and for free."

Another way to prove your credibility is by simply placing testimonials from happy customers on your website. If you don't have any, GET THEM NOW!

3. Getting visitors to come back and purchase more

In order for your customers to come back to your website, your first transaction with them must prove flawless. Your products/services need to be delivered exactly as stated on the website and be delivered on time (or sooner). In reality, you should under-promise and over-deliver. Provide your customer with bonuses, such as free information. If for example, you sell baby products, you can send your customers tips on how to settle their baby, a list of child-friendly services in their area, advise on baby skin care etc.

You should also include as much

information as possible on your website - free resources, articles, reports, ebooks relating to your industry, service and products. You can easily source free information on the internet. If you need help with this, please contact me (ivana@web4business.com.au) and I will gladly help. This will ensure that your customers will keep coming back to your website, even if it is just to get information. The more they visit, the more you will stick in their mind as an expert and the next time they are ready to order your products/services, you will be their first choice.

Another way of staying in touch with your customers is by sending them a regular newsletter. This can be done, weekly, fortnightly or monthly. You can do it manually if you don't initially have many subscribers, but as your subscriptions grow, you should consider using inexpensive mailing software such as GetResponse (www.getresponse.com), which will not only handle your mailing list, but also allow you to easily send out newsletters.

Remember once you've created your website, the work doesn't stop there. You need to keep updating the content to keep your customers and search engines happy. Your marketing also needs to continue. There is no point in spending thousands of dollars on creating a beautiful looking website if no-one is going to visit it or worse still, refuse to buy products/services.

Ivana Katz is the owner of Websites 4 Small Business (based in Sydney, NSW, Australia), a company specialising in the design and promotion of growing, small and home-based business websites. She believes that every business deserves to have a successful website, no matter what its budget is. info@web4business.com.au
- <http://www.web4business.com.au>

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