

Back to Me: Why You Should Talk About Yourself

By Claudia Temple

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There's a little Web secret that can help you kick off relationship-building with a visitor's first stop at your site. Tuck some personal stuff in the nooks and crannies of your site.

Walmart's an expert at this. If you read the Walmart Sunday supplement, you'll see every model is the daughter, cousin, or nephew of some Walmart employee. Same on the web site. No, it's not to save on modeling fees...they do it to create a personal connection with you, the reader. Walmart uses real kids just like yours, and even tells you their names. And it works.

While researching web sites, surfers often click first on pages where they expect to find information about the people in your company. Visitors are often more curious about the folks behind the site, rather than the technology or the mission.

Why? Because people do business with other people, not companies, corporations or web sites. Buying a CD or umbrella from a web site can save the customer time and aggravation (more often than not, we hope), but the real relationship is built between that customer and his perception of who is handling the transaction at your end. Every time you deliver at a customer touch-point, trust grows and the likelihood of a loyal relationship increases.

Where do these trust-hungry people go when they hit your site?

You might see a click path from the home page to "Management," "Team," "Customer Support," or perhaps "Jobs"—frequently the sections of a site that reveal something about the people who work there. These visitors are gathering morsels of information before they take the big leap--to buy something or to accept your content as truth.

The question for content developers and site designers then, is are you giving the customers what they're looking for? It's up to you to let the real people who are the company come alive on the pages of the web site.

Run through this checklist to see if your site relies on your employees to show the company to its best advantage:

Your copy speaks directly to one person--the visitor reading it.
Casual, interesting photos of employees are found in multiple locations.

A scanned signature of the owner or top dog appears on the site.

The 'About Us' section includes information about the team, entertaining bio's of key players including tidbits about their personal interests, or other human interest nuggets.

Extras like "Employee of the Month" or News from the Service Department incorporates current information about specific staffers. Bonus points if it's updated frequently.

Some site pieces are written in first person (I is the operative word), reflecting a person's voice rather than the impersonal tone of the corporation.

Content authored by individuals representing key departments is easy to find.

Getting personal on your web site doesn't mean revealing private information to a nosy world. Revealing the personal side of your people conveys that you are committed to the human side of business. It reminds visitors that you diligently back up your promises to your customers, and that's the real reason people buy from you...the second and third time around.

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