

What your website REALLY says about you and why it matters

By Peter Simmons

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Peter Simmons

peter@dynamiq.co.uk

www.dynamiq.co.uk <http://www.dynamiq.co.uk>

Everything you say and do says something about you. This has never been more true than in a text based environment like the Internet. You only have one chance to put across what you want to say. Use it wisely.

Getting a website right does take work and commitment. If you want it to succeed you must spend time to get it right and present the right impression to your potential customers.

During any conversation you can pick up extra clues from tone of voice, the choice of words used, the way it is said, pauses, etc. They provide emotion and meaning over and above the actual words being spoken. The same is true of text and other website content. There are extra clues of emotion and meaning and what you choose to write and how you say it can say a lot about you, your organisation and your priorities. These priorities are often clearly visible to every potential customer that visits your site and can therefore reveal a great deal about you.

It can reveal:

- *your business priorities,
- *how your organisation is structured and run,
- *whether you focus on your customers,
- *how you deal with things,
- *if you are easy to deal with,
- *your attitudes,
- *whether you pay attention to detail
- *if you are trustworthy
- *and more...

So, what is your website really saying about you? Are you sending out a positive and useful 'message' to your potential customers or practically posting a great big sign that says something far less desirable?

How do you know? There are some key things to look for on your website or any other website. Bear in mind also that there could be a combination of one or more of these together:

*Weak text/sales copy - text that lacks direction and order. If you decide to buy our products, fine. If you dont buy our products, fine. Big sign would read: "We're not really serious about this new web thing"

*Text heavily focused on you/your products - The message is clear. You are only interested in

yourself and therefore your site is too. Big sign would read: "We are great. Customer? Who?"

*No/wrong website focus - website either not focused on the customers needs or focused on the wrong things. The potential customer doesn't receive a positive and clear message about who you are, how you do business, etc. Big sign would read: "We either don't know or don't care about what our customers want". See also 'Not easy to use'

*Poor layout - poorly organised webpage/website. No clear sense of order. Lack of clear prioritising and decision making, probably a reflection of the organisation. "We can't identify and meet objectives" See also 'Not easy to use'

*Not easy to use - difficult to use website and website functions. Often these technical functions have the most sophisticated software known to man to do a particular function like buying a train ticket. Unfortunately they didn't consider how real people actually want to use the website or website functions. Big sign would read: "Oops! We were so busy enjoying doing the great software bit we love, we forgot the user"

*Too much text - we absolutely love to tell you how great we are/our product is. We'll try and bore you into buying our products with loads of text. Big sign would read: "Just buy our product you fool, we know best"

*"Brochureware" - existing brochure has been moved online. Token website. Does little for anyone. Looks great doesn't it?... (Not really a question, more a statement). We thought we should get a website because everyone else has one. Big sign would read: "LOOK we've got a website too!"

*Too much animation/other - extra stuff that doesn't serve any real purpose apart from distraction. We absolutely love flashing things/gadgets/buttons/scrolls/colours/fonts... the more the better. More an experiment than a business. Big sign would read: "Our web designer is great isn't he/she? or I should have been a programmer"

*Difficult to contact anyone - the online equivalent to an electric fence. Typically employed by big corporations. They've gone to great lengths to make sure it's very, very difficult to actually email anyone within the organisation. Big sign would read: "We are far too big and rich to speak to 'the little people' who actually buy and use our products. Go away!"

Did you recognise any of these from your virtual travels on the Internet? They are all present to some degree in businesses of all sizes and industries.

Does your site have any of them? If so, the message you are sending out to your potential customers is unlikely to help you succeed online. More likely it will have a harmful effect and direct influence on your image and reputation, customer visits and repeat visits, sales and repeat sales, company results, customer goodwill and contact, etc.

Make your site the best it can be. Work at it. Ask for constructive feedback. Make a commitment to getting your website to say the right things about you. It will still be paying you back long after you've done it.

Good luck!

Peter Simmons is editor of the DYNAMIQ EZINE. GET MAXIMUM RESULTS FROM YOUR WEBSITE! Increase your traffic, prospect conversions, sales, profits, referrals and more... START GETTING RESULTS RIGHT NOW with your \$129 WEBSITE EVALUATION ABSOLUTELY FREE at <http://www.dynamiq.co.uk/ezine> or email me anytime for immediate assistance <mailto:peter@dynamiq.co.uk>

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