

First Impressions

By Bob Osgoodby

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First impressions are extremely important if you hope to do business on the Web. After you refine your ads, and if you make your pitch to a targeted group, you will start to get visitors to your web site. Here is where many would be entrepreneurs drop the ball.

Putting up a web site is not a difficult task, but designing a good one is, and if you don't pay attention, it might be working against you. Think about it, the web site is not only the first impression of you and your business, it is crucial to your success or failure.

People don't waste a whole lot of time when visiting a site. If it isn't professional looking, they may just "click away". While looks are important, you must spend time on developing good copy. Copy written by affiliate programs has been seen over and over, and while it may have been effective at one time, it is so overused that people immediately recognize it for what it is.

In addition to good copy, which of course has no spelling, grammar or punctuation errors, it has to clearly state what you are offering. Many web sites offer a real challenge to try to figure out what they are trying to sell. The offer should be the first thing they see. The information must also flow logically, and not leave a lot of questions unanswered.

In addition to complete information on your offer, it must have a call to action, which entices the visitor to purchase from you. It must also have an order form, or instructions that are easy to follow. It is also a real plus to let the prospect know a little bit about you. Your picture on the site can go a long way to help instill confidence.

There is some confusion on the value of links. Some advocate that a good web site should be divided into separate sections connected by links. Others feel that a single long web page will score higher in the search engine rankings.

There are basically two types of links. One goes to a completely separate web page, and is considered an external link. Another type is referred to as an internal link. These point to different "parts" within the same web page. Both have value, however internal links are a little friendlier. If someone clicks on one and the next "part" logically flows from the previous one, people will be more inclined to read on.

While it is a good idea to have your links on the side of the page, you should avoid the use of frames, which divides the page into two logical pieces that can be independently manipulated. At the current time, sites constructed with frames are not search engine friendly, although this could

change.

Links should be clear as to where they will take you. It is crucial that the titles of the links, not only make sense, but actually take someone to that information. Each site should have links that are unique, and it is not a good idea to have information in the target, that is not specified in the link.

If you have someone design the site for you, remember that their expertise is in web site design, and most likely they will know little, if anything, about what you are doing. They can construct the site and make it look good, but the copy and information flow is your responsibility. You should always take a break from the copy writing, and if at all possible, have someone else proof your work for grammar. Also you have to be careful of words that pass spell check, but are actually an error. Don't confuse words like "there" and "their".

Once you have the basic framework finished, it is now time to test it. Try to corral as many people as possible to review it. Is it clear and an effective presentation? You should probably avoid friends unless you are sure they will give you an honest evaluation.

The first impression your web site makes is crucial to success. If people have to "jump through hoops" to find out about your offer, or if it doesn't portray a professional image, the odds are they won't buy.

Bob publishes the free weekly "Your Business" Newsletter Visit his Web Site at <http://adv-marketing.com> to subscribe. As a bonus, get 40,000 FREE E-Books from Larry Dotson, when you visit <http://www.ldpublishing.com>

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