

Make Your Web Site Work More So You Can Work Less

By C.J. Hayden

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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 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.

See you at the top of the rankings,
C.J. Hayden, MCC

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 www.getclientsnow.com

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