

Don't Get Burned By Web Designers

If you bring up the subject of web design with small business people, it wouldn't take long to find someone who has been burned by a web designer. Perhaps they have even come to the conclusion that a web site is not worth the expense. Let's look at how and why that happens, and outline some success principles that will help you when you need web design services. Since so many web designers get it wrong, the web design principles that actually work may surprise you.

One of the problems with web design is that software programs have made it seem easy to create a web site. If you have the software, it would not take you long to build a web site. There are an abundance of inexpensive templates available to make it even easier to put together a web site. Getting a professional looking web site is not difficult at all. So you may wonder, why is that a problem?

The process of creating a web site does not end with making it look professional. In fact, that could very well be one of the least important aspects of a web site design. Let's face it, there are ugly web sites that make a lot of money. Since life is not fair, there are great looking web sites that make little or no money. I'm not saying the professionalism of your web site is not important; I am saying it's not enough.

There is a serious flaw in the web design industry, and small business owners are especially prone to fall victim to it. The problem is that usually, very little business planning goes into a web site design. Too many web designers are more concerned with selling web design than taking the time to build an effective web site.

This deficiency stems from the fact that very few web designers are marketing people. Small business people do not have big advertising budgets, so they are easily attracted to the low rates of average web designers. Good marketing means setting priorities and effectively using your resources to accomplish goals.

The one element I find seriously missing in web design is the very thing that is fundamentally important; that element is uniqueness. A Unique Selling Point (USP) is one of the basic tenets of marketing. You must answer the questions: why should I buy from you, and, what makes you different from my other choices? If you fail in this area, your web site visitor will not be kind to you. They will leave and not come back; they will probably not tell you why they left either.

Read your web site copy to see if it contains another common error. Your web site copy should speak to the visitor, address their needs, and solve their problem. It must compel them in some way. You need to draw them in and sell them on your solution.

When you take notice of how many web sites violate these basic marketing principles above, you will begin to see how you have the opportunity to rise above your competitors. Just think, if the majority of business web sites are violating even these most basic principles, how much more could you benefit from hiring a web designer who understands marketing?

There is a lot of emphasis placed on search engine optimization (SEO), and there should be, because this is very important if you want to have your web site found by people using the search engines. For most web sites, search engines account for 80% to 95% of all visitors. However, as important as SEO is, if you have a web site that is not creating sales with the visitors you are already getting, SEO is the wrong priority.

The next principle is the one you will probably find the most surprising. People actually read web sites! Yes, they do have a short attention span, and we will look at that point next, but they do read. There have been many studies done to document the way people use web pages. Even though so much attention is given to graphics, the studies show that well over 75% of the time, web page users read the text before they notice graphics.

This does not mean that graphics are unimportant. Visual elements are one of the many advantages a web site can provide. When you consider that people use the Internet to seek information, then it does make sense that they will read your web site's content. Providing the right information can mean the difference between winning a customer, or surrendering them to your competition.

I also promised to cover the short attention span issue. It is often called the 3 second rule. According to web studies, if you cannot capture the attention of your visitor in approximately 3 seconds, that's how fast they usually leave your web site. I suspect the reason is because so many web sites are such a horrible waste of time, that people's patience has been worn down. The solution is to have a fast loading page that quickly clues them in that you can solve their problem. If they can "skim" in a few seconds, and you grab their attention, you have successfully drawn them in so they will stay a while.

Statistically, it takes 7 visits before you make a sale. If your web site is not done correctly, you will have dismal results because you can't get them to come back seven times. That is why so many web site owners are disappointed with their success. That is why some web designers provide what seems to be a bargain, while other web designers have to charge more to give you a better value. It takes more time to plan and create a good web site design.

The good news is that most of your competitors will go for the bargain and suffer the same fate as everyone else who does not realize the value of an effective web site design. Very few of them will invest the resources needed for success. If you do, you can win. This does not mean you need the big budget of a major corporation, or that it has to be expensive, it just means you need to be willing to do better than average. The rewards are much greater when you stretch beyond the norm.

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