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# Two Pros Weigh In On Web Site Marketing

In the December 2003 issue of *Agency Sales*, two professionals in the field of constructing web sites were interviewed for an article entitled “Don’t Get Left Behind With the Web.” We revisited them this month with a few questions on the importance of reps participating in these effective marketing tools. What follows are observations on the subject by Bill Floyd, who heads The Dunesberry Group, an advertising rep firm in Falmouth, Massachusetts, and his partner, Keith Peck, president of ElectricSmarts.com, Glastonbury, Connecticut.

**ASM:** If a rep doesn’t already have a web presence, should they seriously think about it? Why, if they’ve gotten along without one for a long time?

**Floyd:** “In the past, if a printed publication published a special issue that was loaded with information about which reps carried what lines, as well as vital contact information and services available at each agency, would a rep even consider not participating? Especially if the information was being made available to every customer and prospect in his area?

“If the answer is ‘no,’ then why would a rep choose to not be present in the largest and most comprehensive directory that has ever been available — the Internet?

“The issue is often not whether or not a rep needs a web site, but rather, is he comfortable with this new medium? Does he understand it and can he comprehend its power? If the answer is ‘yes,’ the

question becomes moot. Not only can the Internet deliver information faster, smarter and more efficiently than printed paper ever could, it is interactive and fosters two-way communication.

“Also, remember the Yellow Pages? Young people have grown up with the Internet. The Internet is their Yellow Pages. To them, if you’re not on the Net, you don’t exist.

“Finally, if you were a manufacturer considering agencies you wanted to sell your products to, would you not deeply consider their ability to market themselves using all the tools that are available? How can a rep watch his competitors develop this powerful technology and be comfortable being left behind? If you want to be a player, you’ve got to be in the game.”

**Peck:** One rep organization we recently developed a web site for told us that while trying to secure a new line, the prospective prin-

cipal was adamant about reviewing his web site to help evaluate the rep’s credibility. Unfortunately, the rep didn’t have one. That was enough to convince him he needed to get moving.”

**ASM:** Some reps maintain their time is better spent out selling. They don’t want to spend time on creating and updating a web page. How do you respond to that?

**Floyd:** “I’d agree with them. But rather than stop there, they should hire or outsource somebody who

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understands the potential and capability of the web. Learn as you go and give him your marketing input, but don't try to become something you're not. I've seen two bad approaches. They either

- Avoid, avoid, avoid getting involved altogether, or
- Take it on and try to do it themselves.

“The best approach is to hire somebody trained to build web sites. Internet strategy and production is a whole new skill set.”

**Peck:** “A lot of information about your organization and the lines you carry, (e.g., education, product knowledge, etc.) can be communicated by your web site to prospects, allowing you to spend

more time with customers and qualified prospects. It need not be a major time commitment to create using a professional developer, and the content most subject to change can be linked from your site to the companies you represent.”

**ASM:** Can you discuss the importance of having a real pro work on your web page; that is, versus having your brother-in-law or someone like him who does it part-time?

**Floyd:** “Would you hire a high school student who is taking auto shop to fix your new Mercedes Benz? He may know more than you do, but if you don't know anything, that's not saying much. We're talking about your professional image here. In many cases your web site will be the first impression for potential principals and customers. Spend the time and money to warmly and competently invite them to conduct business with you. Chances are they have been on hundreds of other web sites and know the difference between the good, the bad and the ugly. Make sure yours is the good. Let Uncle Charley stay Uncle Charley. Don't put him on the payroll just because he knows some HTML.”

**Peck:** “Like anything that represents your company, e.g., business cards, literature, etc., your web site is often the first impression your company makes. It should be professional in its look and feel and should contain the proper content that a professional group can help you attain.”

**ASM:** What's the future hold for those reps not able to establish an electronic, web presence?

**Floyd:** “Many will continue to exist and conduct business as they always have. However, what is the future for reps who don't own fax machines, or cell phones, or computers? I'd never say they can't do business, but they will operate with one or two arms tied behind their backs. And, I suspect they will continue to be less attractive partners for progressive manufacturers who do utilize the latest technology and marketing tools.”

**Peck:** “To be considered a credible sales organization, it becomes more and more essential that you have an Internet presence. Imagine trying to present yourself to suppliers or prospects as a credible source of information and sales support without a business card, a cell phone or a fax machine. It would be unthinkable.”

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