

# Your Web Site Bites!

by LAURENCE KAUFMAN

I have just returned from a relatively random tour of the world — rep sites on the World Wide Web. What a downer! With rare exceptions, the manufacturers' representative community has failed to harness the potential of the Internet to serve the (varying) interests of individual firms, nor have very many steered visitors to the information about the rep function on the sites of their associations — MANA, NEMRA, ERA, etc., much less “sold the system” on their own sites.

I find the failure of professional field sales organizations to do any meaningful online selling particularly surprising because so many reps were quick to embrace the potential of the web years ago, when it first began proliferating as a communication vehicle. With the benefit of hindsight, it appears that the early adopters were stimulated by the attractively low cost of entry enabled by some association's early Internet Service Provider. It appears as if reps

embraced the potential — the question is, has anyone realized the potential?

It's easy to list specific mistakes I saw on my recent tour, but the over-arching missing element seems to be a clear sense of why you have a site in the first place. Too many reps appear to have gone online without knowing why. Even if your site is only what commentator Steve Jackson calls a glorified poster, you need it to convey the right message about your company. According to Jackson, if your site does nothing else, it needs to establish trust in the mind of your visitor. (Learn more at [www.conversionchronicles.com](http://www.conversionchronicles.com). Although aimed primarily at e-commerce sites [trying to sell something online], those whose sites are e-business can derive a lot of good ideas here.)

---

### Establishing a Goal

What's your goal for your site, and what are you doing to mea-

sure your results as they relate to that goal? Who comprises the primary audience you want your site to reach, and what are you doing to get them to your web site? Are you after casual surfers — in which case you should be optimizing for search engine pick-up — or are you primarily interested in the prompt and efficient delivery of information to people you already know and whom you send to the site? In my wanderings, I saw only one site making a major effort at providing “backroom efficiency” for exchange of specific, transactional information with principals and customers. That falls within the purview of what I see as the two main goals for a rep web site: helping customers or acquiring principals. They are not mutually exclusive, but I am inclined to believe that the best way your site can help you attract new principals is by demonstrating how effectively you serve customers.

Now for specific mistakes I saw during my web tour:

1. Amateurish or dated graphics. You never get a second chance to make a good first impression.
2. Non-functional opening page, telling visitors to “enter here.” They have already entered in their own minds; why are you making them do so again?
3. Failure to provide convenient or intuitive navigation.
4. Visitor counts. That's

***Too many reps appear to have gone online without knowing why. Even if your site is only what commentator Steve Jackson calls a glorified poster, you need it to convey the right message about your company.***



This is a regular series of articles on technology that appears monthly in *Agency Sales*. If there are any subjects that you feel should be explored, or if you have any comments about this subject, please contact the Tech For Reps editor at: [alaplante@MANAonline.org](mailto:alaplante@MANAonline.org).

nobody's business but yours.

5. "Last update" information that is far in the past. Your visitor will trust the currency of information on an undated page a lot more than on a page last updated in 2001.

6. Flash or other motion, or sound effects, that don't add and only distract.

7. Pages marked "Under construction" or "Coming soon."

How does your site rate?

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

*For a free expert access consultation on marketing issues, including web sites, call: (312) 649-9410 or e-mail your URL to [lkaufman@bworld.com](mailto:lkaufman@bworld.com) and explain what you want your site to accomplish, and how you are measuring its performance.*



Copyright © 2007, Manufacturers' Agents National Association

One Spectrum Pointe, Suite 150, Lake Forest, CA 92630-2283 • Phone: (949) 859-4040 • Toll-free: (877) 626-2776 • Fax: (949) 855-2973  
E-mail: [MANA@MANAonline.org](mailto:MANA@MANAonline.org) • Web site: [www.MANAonline.org](http://www.MANAonline.org) • All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is strictly prohibited.