Recipe for Constructing an Effective Web Presence

BY **SHAWN BROXSON**

Replacing the showroom floor of the '60s and the towering headquarters building of the '80s, a company's website is now the public face — and initial point of contact — for most businesses. Your website delivers that critical first impression to your customers, and the time that you have to make that impression is minimal at best. Look at most web metrics reports, which track website traffic and how long a visitor paused at each page, and you'll see that on average the typical user looks at fewer than two pages per site. It's discouraging to know that you cannot depend on your potential customers to dig deep in your site for product or company contact information. You also cannot depend on potential customers even knowing *what* it is your company does. With so little time, so much competition and so many opportunities to be harnessed, what can be done? Lots.

Start with the end result in mind. Most commercial entities are using their sites for one reason and one reason only: to create qualified sales leads that result in sales. Therefore, there are three overarching best practices that can be applied which will support this goal and make your site the destination of choice.

Tell Them Who You Are

Assume nothing. Assume that the visitor coming to your site knows nothing about your company or what you sell. You have seconds, maybe minutes, to impress your prospect. Place your elevator pitch on the home page so that visitors don't have to click through numerous pages to figure out what you do. Consider structuring your site with "entrances" labeled by visitor-type. For example, "Are you a manufacturer?" "Are you an agent?" "Are you a member of the press?" will guide your visitor to content that has been designed to address their specific needs. Also, in addition to having the right content at your site, leverage the use of rich Internet technologies — such as Flash — to visually communicate your story and keep your site interesting to the visitor.

Give Them Something to Do

The days of successful sites that simply put up static product information and generated sales are numbered, if not gone all together. Give your visitors ways to interact with your site. Again, rich Internet technologies open the door to virtually unlimited options. By enabling prospects and customers to view and interact with products, watch engaging video demonstrations and read relevant content, you're encouraging them to spend more time at your site, which translates into better brand recognition. In fact, at Cynergy Systems, we created a separate site, CynergyTV (**cynergyTV.com**) that lets our potential customers view video demonstrations of our application. Remember, the more your users interact with your site, the longer they stay. The longer they stay, the more engaged they are and the more likely you are to gain a customer.

Tell Them What to Do Next

The most critical component of a successful sales-centric website is a clear call to action. Often the call to action is buried deep within the site, like a pot of gold at the end of a long rainbow. Don't make it hard for your visitor to figure out why they should be doing business with you. Make the call to action readily visible by making it part of every page on the site. At Cynergy, when we study usability we too often find users come to the site, like what they see and then cannot decide what to do next, so they abandon their search. If you want them to call you, tell them to call you! It's potentially as simple as putting 'Call Us' with your telephone number on every page of the site.

When creating your site or redesigning your next site, make sure to take a step back and look at the site from a potential customer's view. Leverage the latest interactive technologies to tell your story for you and really make a great first impression on your future customer. 🆎

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