

Is Your Website Working?

Small business owners who have been around more than ten years remember well the days of high-cost



printed marketing pieces. Small businesses spent hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars for design and printing of glossy company brochures. Unfortunately, most of them became obsolete almost as soon as the ink was dry. Storage rooms had boxes full of unusable brochures and other marketing materials.

The slightest change rendered those impressive pieces useless.

Maybe the company changed location and the address was outdated, your phone number changed, the government changed your telephone area code or postal zip code, email addresses changed or key staff had changed. *Poof!* You have a carton of totally worthless marketing materials.

Technology and the Internet have changed marketing drastically. Not only have marketing channels changed from print to virtual, but now changes to those printed brochures can be made in seconds, and printing can be done in smaller quantities at lower costs. Web sites are now our front line marketing channels in a technology-infused society. Yellow Pages in phone books are seldom used to find vendors and suppliers now. Newspapers and magazines are dying a slow, painful death, so their value in terms of advertising your company has been greatly diminished.



Compare the limited amount of information that could be included in a printed company brochure to the limitless amount of information a website can provide. Web sites have nearly limitless types of information you can provide about your company, its products, your company culture, your credibility, customer service, warranties, options, price lists. You get the idea. A four- or eight-page company brochure vs. hundreds of times more information that customers can use in making buying decisions.

There is no 'shelf-life' with a web site as there is with those gorgeous - and costly - printed brochures. Websites provide the ease of making necessary changes at little or no cost and in a timely manner. Add a new product or service? Quickly update the web site. Just received a glowing letter from a satisfied customer? Add that testimonial to your site to build credibility. New key staff member brought on board? Upload their photo and biography so customers will see the infusion of new talent and skills your firm has added. Quick, low cost changes and no boxes piled in your storage room.

That said, how well is your website working for you? How useful is your company web site for attracting visitors - the right kind of visitors - and converting them to paying customers? Do you even know? It is imperative to follow the necessary metrics through a service like Google Analytics.

It is also important to know how many visitors are finding your site, where they are located, what pages they visited, where they 'entered' and 'left' your site. It is beneficial to know what kind of technology your visitors are using and what browser they use. Without this in depth information, you may never know if your site is working for you or not. Is your website working in the way you intended - to your greatest advantage?

There are quite a few website software options available for taking a DIY approach to your web presence. But, should you? Is it the best route to take in creating something as important as your online presence? Creating a good website is not a simple task. Many start-ups and very small companies assume they can just make their own site and it will be good enough. Well, maybe that's true and maybe it's not. Just having a site is no longer enough.

It takes a combination of web development skills, marketing insight, an eye for design and a well thought out plan to create and launch an exceptional website to represent your company. Your site needs to stand out among the competition. If your message is not getting delivered to the right people in a way that will make them want to come to your site and become a paying customer, your site can be like those boxes of worthless brochures collecting dust in your storage room.

How well is your website working for you? Is it attracting the right people and businesses that fit your customer personas? Are they buying anything? Has your site and your offerings caught their interest and engaged them? If you are interested in a fresh pair of eyes reviewing and analyzing your existing site for areas of improvement, Maurer Consulting Group can help.

For more useful and actionable information on small business topics, visit our '*Designing Strategies*' Blog at: <http://www.maurerconsultinggroup.com/blog> For help planning marketing for your small business, contact Terri Maurer directly at 330.293.3999 or by email: tmaurer@maurerconsultinggroup.com

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Terri L Maurer, FASID is a business management consultant specializing in planning and strategy for the interior design and furnishings industries. With more than thirty years experience in the industry, she knows the players, problems and solutions to bring focus and direction to companies looking for growth and success. Contact Terri today to discuss how she can help put your firm back on track.