Website Willpower

4 tips for getting the most out of your website

Your website is what you make of it. There are no grand secrets when it comes to having an effective website for your business. A little foresight and preparation can help you determine what you need from your site, whether you’re about to launch or have already been online for a while. Browse through our tips to get some pointers for getting the most out of your website.

1. Here’s a simple, but very important, question: What do you want your website to do? Answer that, and you’ll have a good idea of what direction you need to go in. Some businesses just want an informational page with their service offerings and contact information. Others may want to display a portfolio of services or sell items online. Don’t forget to include the basics: a description of what you do, your contact information and the location of your business if you have a brick-and-mortar store. Make sure that all the information is clear, that the website navigation is straightforward and that the pages flow in a logical manner. Make it as easy as possible for potential customers to follow up with you. If e-commerce is more your thing, you’ll probably want to look into getting third-party help for setting up an effective online store.

2. There are some basic components to your site that you’ll want to pay close attention to from the beginning. Not just any domain name will do. A memorable, easy-to-spell name will make it easier for your customers to find you and remember how to reach you online. It’s even better if your business name matches up with your web address. If your preferred .com name is already taken, you can try a close variation or check into .net, .biz or one of the other extensions. The way you communicate with your customers through your site is important as well. A free e-mail service doesn’t look very professional, so consider setting up e-mail accounts for yourself and your employees that use your domain name and don’t contain advertising. Be sure you have the capacity to handle queries. Nothing turns off a customer faster than never receiving a reply to his e-mail they’ve sent you.

3. All these tips won’t do you any good if you don’t have any website visitors. That’s where smart marketing tactics come in. Online marketing through search engine advertising can be an affordable and effective way to drive traffic to your site. Submit your website to major search engines, like Google and Yahoo!, so it also appears in the free listings. In addition, make sure that your site appears in your local online Yellow Pages. Targeted banner ads and e-mail marketing can be key components in your plan. Don’t forget about the offline world. Include your website address in your sales literature and on your business cards.

4. You’re the best judge of how much time or employee manpower you can devote to building, maintaining and marketing your website. Be realistic about your web presence levels and consider bringing in an outside expert. That’s where services like those offered by Network Solutions can be a boost for your business. Expert designers are available to turn your website dreams into reality in a fast and affordable manner. They can not only build your website, but also help you determine the online marketing steps to take to get the most out of your web presence. Whether you just need a basic informational page or you need to launch a complex web store, an experienced designer will save you time, generate professional results and help keep you on budget. A strong website is no longer a luxury—it’s a business must.

For more information on growing your business online, go to www.entrepreneur.com/etips.

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