

Website Marketing 101

Door 41 Solutions
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Lesson #1 - Begin with the end in mind

Before you began working with a website designer, you probably thought of a few reasons why you wanted a website. You probably wanted an online presence, but what you may not have considered is that you need a website to be a conversion machine for your business. This conversion machine—your website—should attract visitors and turn them into customers, clients or members.

In order to do this, you must first answer the question, "What is your ultimate business objective?" Is it to increase profits, membership, donations?

And how do you reach that objective? How do you increase profits, membership or donations?

These are questions that you must answer before you can develop a successful website for your small business. Once you answer those questions, you then want to know...

How does a website become a conversion machine to help you meet your business goals?

For example, if you want to generate leads, do you have a form to capture visitor's contact information so you can keep in touch with them and share offers, sales or new services?

Research shows that it takes 5 to 9 encounters to convert a lead.

If you want to update people about programs and events, do you have a form to capture contact information so you can send a weekly or bi-weekly newsletter?

As you think about it, you can see that you need to go one step beyond putting the information on your site. You want to capture visitor's information so you can continue to communicate with them and provide them with valuable, relevant information about your business or organization.

Another way your website converts visitors is by providing them with relevant information. Information that addresses needs, concerns, problems that they have right now in their lives.

This is valuable information...information that they feel is worth their attention, time and even their money. Information that they can implement right now, today and see a difference in their lives.

It also communicates to the prospect that you know and understand the concerns and problems that keep them up at night. And that you can provide relief for those concerns, and solutions to their problems.

What you may have noticed is that I did not say, "Your website should explain the history of your business and the features of your products or services." That's right, your website should not be about you. It should be all about your prospect.

Assignment:

Take some time and answer the following questions before you go any further...

1. What is your ultimate business objective?
2. What are your prospects' most pressing concerns or challenges?
3. What solutions do you have for them?

4. What could you offer in exchange for their names and email addresses?
 - See this article for ideas: <http://www.door41.com/2008/12/the-one-thing-you-cant-afford-not-to-have-on-your-website/>
5. What type of information or products could you email your visitors, at least weekly, that they will perceive as valuable and relevant?
 - Learn more about creating incentives in this newsletter article: <http://www.door41.com/2008/12/the-one-thing-you-cant-afford-not-to-have-on-your-website/>

Lesson #2 - Good looks aren't enough

In lesson #1, I mentioned the importance of making sure that the language on your website speaks to the needs of your client and doesn't focus on your credentials.

In this lesson, I'm going to talk about this more to drive the point home. It's that important.

The bottom line is that your website must have substance and this substance comes in the form of quality, frequently updated content. This fresh content gives people a reason to come to your website over and over again. If it provides enough value, they will probably tell their friends about it and they may also become regular visitors of your website.

This is one reason that blogs are so popular. Many bloggers update their blogs daily or at least 3 times a week.

When you initially had your website developed, you may have started out using content from existing brochures and you probably thought that was okay....but, it's really not.

It's okay to include a page that gives a brief overview of the history of your company, but you should try to frame it in a way that emphasizes why you understand your clients and are the best company to serve them. Your website should focus on benefits, not features of your products and services.

What's the difference?

A feature is - A faucet with an automatic shut off valve.

A benefit is - Having a lower water bill and saving money.

When you talk about benefits, answer this question for your prospect, "So what's in it for me?" Focus on the results.

Your website should engage your readers and make them want to do business with you. You only have 3 to 5 seconds to grab a reader's attention online. You can't afford to lose that attention. You also don't want to focus the quality content on the home page and ignore the other 10 pages on your website. These days visitors often enter your website on a page other than the home page.

Testimonials of current or past clients, customers or members whose lives have benefited from your services and products are powerful and influential. These testimonials should address the most common objections that your prospects have.

Providing articles, podcasts and videos that share your expertise and help you communicate your ability to help your prospect are also effective ways to communicate with your prospect.

Assignment:

This week, I want you to...

1. Take an objective look at your website and determine if it's all about you or your prospect.

Use this calculator if you're unsure: <http://www.futurenowinc.com/wewe.htm>

2. If you find that you're not quite hitting the mark when it comes to writing customer-focused language on your website, consider hiring a copywriter.

3. Make a list of your product or service features and then on the opposite side of the paper, list the benefits customer gets as a result of each feature. You may find this to be more challenging at the onset, but it will get easier as you go along.

Check out these articles for more examples:

- <http://www.michelfortin.com/the-oft-confused-features-and-benefits/>
- <http://www.entrepreneur.com/magazine/homeofficemagcom/2000/december/34942.html>

Lesson #3 - Don't let it get stale

We've talked about the importance of goal setting and creating quality content, but it doesn't stop there.

For search engine optimization and more importantly for your visitors, you need to be able to answer YES to this question, "Is my website content fresh, new and constantly changing?"

Think about it, would you return to a website if after the second time there was no new information for you?

Think about the websites that you visit frequently.

Why do you go back...again and again...I bet it's because they always have something new for you, right?

You're going to find that many successful websites rely on returning visitors for much of their traffic.

The truth is...it's much easier to convert returning visitors into paying clients. The more often people visit your website, the more trust you gain. Over time, they begin to view you as credible and any initial doubts they once had fade.

Here are 4 ways to keep your visitors coming back to your websites:

1. Start a blog...and update it regularly with useful tips, product and service updates and industry-related news that will be helpful for your visitors. People love to feel like they're in the loop and on top of new and popular trends and information. In addition to building your credibility, a blog adds a personal touch and lets your clients get to know you. You can also make it easy for them to share your information with "share this" buttons.
2. Post surveys and encourage comments. Surveys, polls and discussion are other ways to encourage interaction on your website. People like to share their opinions, provide input and get involved in debates. Pose questions and prompts that relate to your business and the needs and concerns of your target market and they'll come back to find out what others have said.
3. Hold contests. What if you had a contest that required visitors to take quizzes, share ideas or complete puzzles to win a prize? You bet you could get people to come back to your website and maybe even send a few friends.
4. Incorporate an online discussion forum. When you start a forum, you give your visitors a place to share their opinions, interact with others with similar interests or problems. Forums are known for their ability to build community. You will find that many community members will return religiously, even daily.

Assignment:

1. Decide how often you are going to update your website and carve out time on your calendar to do it. I challenge you to add significant, substantive content at least once a week.

If you want to take it one step further, choose one of the other strategies to implement:

1. Start a blog

2. Post a survey
3. Hold a contest
4. Incorporate an online discussion forum

Before I go, there's a great trick if you choose to start a blog. You can set aside an hour or so on one day to write and schedule several blog posts to be published on future dates! Pretty cool, huh?

Lesson #4 - They won't know unless you tell them

I hate to tell you, but the old saying, "If you build it, they will come" does not apply to websites.

Search engine optimization (SEO) may help Google present your site to people searching the internet. However, if your web designer isn't an SEO specialist...and many aren't...you'll need some help.

Don't despair. Your time and effort can give you results. Tell your prospects about your website online and offline:

Online you can...

1. Submit articles addressing prospects most pressing concerns to directories like www.isnare.com (\$10 to distribute 5 articles to several directories) or www.ezinearticles.com (free)
2. Identify several blogs that are in your field, that you enjoy reading and post comments. The "website" field is usually optional, but not for you—make sure you enter your website there.
3. Identify discussion forums in your field and respond to forum posts. Make sure that you use your keywords (Website Marketing for Small Businesses) in the link instead of your business name, unless your business name includes those words.
4. Identify companies and organizations with which you have existing partnerships and ask them to post your link on their website - give them a link with a keyword phrase (i.e., Door 41 Solutions, Websites for Small Business Solopreneurs).
5. Identify online directories (general and specific to your industry) and submit your website to be listed.
6. Create accounts and profiles on social networking sites and include your website address (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn).
7. Create presentations related to your field and upload them to www.slideshare.net - include keyword phrases throughout the presentation and place your website address on the last slide (transcripts of slide text shows are search engine friendly).
8. Include your compelling offer (that you use to develop a mailing list) in your email signature.
9. Go to Yahoo! Answers (<http://answers.yahoo.com/>) and answer questions in your field. Include a link to your website in the source box.

Offline, you can...

1. Print it on your business cards, invoices, flyers, handouts and coupons.
2. Announce it at meetings and to other organizations.

But here's the key...when you print it or announce it, give people a reason to visit your website. Don't just say, "Visit our website."

Why should they go? What's in it for them? What can they get there that they can't get anywhere else?

Instead, say...

- "Visit our website for coupons"
- "Visit our website for a free video that will help you..."
- "Visit our website to learn more about registering for this upcoming event"
- "Visit our website to be entered in a contest to win..."

You get the idea.

1. Check out this past newsletter article for more ideas: <http://www.door41.com/2009/01/website-marketingoffline/>

Assignment:

1. Create a profile on Facebook and LinkedIn and include your website where they ask for it.
2. Create a procedure or script to share with employees to incorporate advertising your website and its special offers to customers on a regular basis.
3. Identify at least one online directory for your industry and create a free account that allows you to post your website.
4. Post comments on at least 3 blogs this week.
5. Answer at least one question on Yahoo! Answers.

Lesson #5 - One of the Most Important Pieces of the Search Engine Optimization Puzzle

No one can deny that Google plays a pretty prominent role in search engine optimization (SEO). Everyone wants their site to be on the first page of results for a given search. The truth is that for many businesses, that's a very difficult goal to attain. If that is a goal of yours, you may want to seek the help of an SEO specialist and know that most likely they will charge you monthly.

Why? Because SEO isn't a one shot deal. You can't do one set of activities and get instant results that maintain over time.

The good news is that you can work on one of the key elements to successful SEO without an expert. That element is link building.

What is link building and why is it important to Google?

Well, we know Google likes fresh, new, changing content, but there's another more important piece of the Google puzzle...Google likes popular sites.

For Google, a popular website is a credible and relevant website.

How does Google know if your site is popular? By how many relevant sites link to your site. How can you create these links or begin "link building"?

Well the good thing is, if you've begun to work on the list that I gave you in Lesson #4, you're making good progress. All you need to do is make doing these things part of your daily or at least weekly routine and over time you will build lots of incoming links for your website:

In addition, you can...

- Make a list of associations, groups and organizations that you are affiliated with and ask them to link to your website.
- Think about what services and products complement yours, but aren't competing for your business and ask the owners of the businesses to place your link on their website.

I hope the picture is getting clearer and you're beginning to see what is involved in successful website marketing. I also hope you are not overwhelmed.

Just take one step at a time and it will get easier.

Assignment:

So, this week, I want you to repeat some of the assignments from lesson #4 and make a list of organizations, groups and businesses that might provide a link from their website to yours and call them.

You never know unless you ask, right?

Bonus:

Check out my SlideShare presentation on what you need to know about Search Engine Optimization:

- <http://www.slideshare.net/michelle1908/search-engine-optimization-for-clients-presentation>

Lesson #6 - Track your progress

How will you know if your conversation rates are improving?

Google Analytics is the answer.

Google Analytics (www.google.com/analytics) is a free program that provides helpful reports about your website traffic. But keep a clear mind when you look at these numbers. Don't get excited right away if you have 2,000 visits to your website.

Keep your goals in mind and look at the other numbers that give you the bigger picture. Look at how long they stay when they visit. Do they come to a page and immediately leave?

Ultimately, you want to know if they are doing what you want them to do. If you have a form on your website to collect contact information, you probably have another page for the thank you message. You can compare the overall number of visits to the home page or landing page to the number of views for the thank you page and calculate your conversion rate.

If you choose a quality email marketing software program, you can also run reports to see how many people joined your list for any given time frame.

You can also see how many people clicked on your offer in the email. Overall, you want to see the number of subscriptions and the number of conversions increase.

If your goal is to provide quality content that you want people to stay and read, then you probably want to focus on the length of page views or visits.

Identify what numbers will tell you that you have met your goal and work toward making a difference.

As a side note, it seems like for many years, everyone emphasized the number of hits a website received. This was a huge mistake and a poor indicator of anything, really. A hit is generated when any file is downloaded from your web server. This not only includes the html file, but it also includes each image, each movie, each audio file, each document that is linked to that page. That number is truly meaningless.

You want to focus on visits and if you use Google Analytics, that is what you will see.

Assignment:

So, for this last lesson, I want you to sign up for a Google Analytics account - www.google.com/analytics and make it a habit to keep an eye on the numbers at least once a week.

I want you to also take particular notice of the number of visits to your thank you page and compare them with the total visits to your website.

I hope that these five lessons have helped you move toward a more effective website marketing campaign for your small business.