

10 Things Your Website Must Have

TO BE SUCCESSFUL



Websites come in all flavors and stripes, reflecting the wide variety of companies and the businesses they serve. While some sites are ecommerce sites selling products directly from the site itself, most are virtual calling cards and store fronts designed to communicate a series of messages. The question is, what message is your website communicating purposely or indirectly about your business?

If done correctly, your website should communicate:

- Who you are
- What you do
- Why you do it better than your competitors
- Credibility and authority
- Incentives for the reader to contact you
- Easy ways to be contacted

While there are many ways to communicate these important points, here are some universal truths your website needs to compete successfully online:

1. RESPONSIVE DESIGN:

As of April 2015, Google announced that they will no longer return non-mobile-ready sites in searches that originate on a mobile device. This means that for any searches performed on a smart phone or tablet, non-responsive designed websites will no longer appear in the results. As of 2015, according to a report from Google, more searches are now done on mobile devices rather than desktops. So if your website is not mobile-friendly, it essentially doesn't exist for more than 50% of searches.

2. ONE PAGE FOR EACH PRODUCT OR SERVICE

Each product or service you offer should have it's own, individual product or service page. As described in or previous post about Content Marketing and how to segment your website, your core product and services pages should be separate to allow the search engines to more easily and effectively index your website and it's content. If you were a lawyer, for instance, and offered divorce services, real estate services and personal injury services, lumping them all together on one page will not help distinguish one from then other in the eyes of the search engines. The reason, is that someone doing a search for a real estate lawyer is a different prospect then someone looking for personal injury advice. Aside from SEO and the search engines, it's just a good idea from a usability standpoint, too.

3. CALL TO ACTION

It may be obvious to you but not to your website visitor. What do you want them to do when they get to your website? Sprinkling various calls to action throughout your website encourages the desired response. A visitor may not be ready to pick up the phone and call you right then, but they might be willing to request more information by filling out a contact form, or opting in to a whitepaper download or following you on Twitter or Facebook. Provide several different options to engage with your visitors so you can begin to either follow-up or provide additional content that educates them about your Unique Service Proposition (USP).

4. LEAD CAPTURE

Your site should be working for YOU and your business, remember that. Your website should be communicating with prospects and customers alike as well as becoming the mouth of your marketing funnel for generating leads. One of the most effective ways is to deploy some type of data capture strategy that provides valuable information and insight in exchange for an email address so you can follow up later. Consider creating

landing pages with a cool tool like Lead Pages that integrates with many popular email marketing programs such as Aweber and iContact.

5. CONTACT INFORMATION

Make it slam-dunk easy for people to get a hold of you. If you're in business and have a website don't be coy about displaying your COMPLETE address, email and phone number. Unless you're in the witness protection program you WANT people to be able to reach out to you and your business. Work from home and don't want to have strangers showing up at your door? Get a PO Box. Worried about getting email SPAM, post your email address like this: gene at samsonmedia.net. Don't want people to call you? Why not? Again, you're in business! If you're really so concerned about getting Robo calls and other annoying types of calls, get an inexpensive answering service to screen and forward your calls (this also increases your level of professionalism). Make it stupid easy for people to reach you in a variety of ways.

6. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

You know who you are and what you do but is it immediately obvious to anyone else visiting your website who may be unfamiliar with your business? Don't take for granted that people will know. Make it immediately apparent what you do by clearly stating what your business does right up front on your home page. Even something like a short paragraph with the heading: THIS IS WHAT WE DO that offers a concise explanation what you do and then links to your expanded ABOUT US page would be very helpful. Another way to reinforce what you do at a glance is with a great tagline. Take Samson Media, for example. Samson Media could be many things but we clarify that quickly with the tagline: "Strength in Online Marketing." OK, so now you know :-)

7. PERSONALIZED ABOUT US PAGE

Even though it is the Internet, people still want to deal with other people and that means knowing what people they are dealing with. Don't just have some bland "Mission Statement" to explain who you are and who you serve on your ABOUT US page. Nothing wrong with an overview of your business and what you're all about, but mix in photos of you and your employees, if applicable. Explain some of your "why" and details about your backstory, experience and how you arrived at the business you're in now. Even if you're a big company, a message from the president and photos of the office and employees go a long way toward humanizing your brand. People want to know this stuff. Tell them a story that gives them a real sense of who you are and why you're in business.

8. APPROPRIATE LOOK & FEEL

Each business has a look and feel that is industry-appropriate. Yes, while you may want to cut across stereotypes of appearing like a stodgy accounting firm, you don't want to go overboard and appear frivolous. Even if you are the most fun accounting firm to work for, your website still needs to project a sense of competency and credibility that people look for in an accounting firm. Conversely, if you are a party planner, you want to emphasize style and fun and not appear too serious, stodgy and bland. Ways to convey the appropriate look and feel involve using the right color palettes to convey the right impression. Rely heavily on your website designer to help you with this. Complimenting your logo's colors is a great place to start. And keep in mind you can counter and balance a more corporate color palette of blues, greys, whites with some fun images of staff, office parties and outside events to achieve the proper balance. A bright, primary-colored website will be more appropriate to a daycare center than a nursing home just as more corporate colors such as blues, greys, whites are probably better suited to banks and investment advisors. You can get some great color theme idea at the Adobe Color site [HERE](#).

9. USE BASIC SEO

Despite the massive changes in the world of SEO over the last two years one thing that is not going away soon despite the constant proclamations to the contrary is keywords. While SEO is a very deep and complicated topic, the fact remains that people still search using keyword phrases and in order for your site to even be considered in search results relevant to your business, you need to have your important keyword phrases represented consistently and visibly throughout your web pages. In addition to on-page SEO, you'll need to have keywords added to your background code in places like your ALT tags and image file names. Your title tags are still an important signal to the search engines about what your site is about, unlike keyword tags which have become nearly meaningless. Other ways to boost your SEO rankings is to get inbound links from other sites by creating content worth linking to. Having video on your site (and home page) is also good since it keeps people on your site longer, which is a top ranking factor.

10. BLOGGING

Last but not least is a blog. Websites without an active blogging component are nothing more than static brochures. Having an active blog as part of your website is the number one tool for attracting not only the search engines but prospects who are in the buying mode. Your blog becomes the living, breathing area of your website that allows you to educate your customers and prospects about your products and services. As we've written extensively about in the past, Always Be Educating should be your marketing

mantra. The thinking is: by creating good, relevant, informative content on your website, you help people make a buying decision. And if done properly, by helping people make a buying decision --- they'll buy from YOU!

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