

## Your Website is a Strategic Marketing Tool

If you're starting a new business or want to re-position an existing business, a website is one of your most valuable tools. It can communicate your business to a wide range of potential clients. It can attract potential clients who want to learn more about what you do.

Your website is an important part of your media mix. It is an integral part of your marketing strategy. You want to be sure that you make it easy for your target customers as well as casual visitors to understand who you are and what you do.

A website can build your brand identity. Every time someone clicks on your website, they're experiencing your company brand. You want to engage them at first glimpse and you want to be sure you're hitting your target audience.

### Building a Website


There are lots of companies offering templates and guidelines for building your own website. It may look fairly simple, but beware! Unless you're a website developer, don't go the "do it yourself" route. Hire a professional web designer to build it for you. Why? Because even a quick look at a poorly designed website can produce a negative reaction to your company.

If you're a marketing aficionado with strong writing skills, go ahead and prepare the content. If you're not used to writing for the consumer, hire a professional to write the content sections. You'll need to consult with the writer and programmer to ensure they understand what you want to convey through your site, but let them produce it.

### General Content and Layout

Visitors to your website are all potential clients. As soon as they arrive at your site, you want to tell them who you are. People want a quick, succinct view of who you are as soon as they open the site. You have about 7 seconds to get their attention. Put your best foot forward, but make it simple. Your objective is to invite them to probe deeper and find out more about your company.

What else? Include a section about what you do. This is where you differentiate your company from your competitors. Include a section about your company's management team. Put in a section outlining your company history. Don't forget to describe your



products and services. Again, keep it simple and easy for the reader to understand. Keep the acronyms and jargon to a minimum. More data? If you have customer testimonials, this is the time and place to use them.

### Other Tools

Search Engines can be major brand builders. Sign up with search engine companies if your business is one that clients would normally seek in a web search. For example, if your business is a conference calling business, your prospective clients might search the web to locate a telephone conference service to replace the poor one they use now. Typing in the words “conference call” which takes them directly to your URL and website is a good way to attract new customers.

If your business is a management consulting business based on your surname, it might be unproductive to sign up with a search engine under “consulting” or your surname. The former is too vague and would have hundreds of choices. The latter is too esoteric; if they know your name, it’s likely they already know who you are and don’t need to perform a search.

### Other Applications

Today, a website is a potential Point of Purchase in addition to being a source of information about your company. Building the capability to shop on line, provided you have a secure site, can add a revenue-generating stream to your business.

### Keep it Fresh

Add new content to keep your website fresh. By providing the latest information, you will attract visitors to see what’s new. If clients perceive your website as an industry resource, they will visit often to get current data. In addition, Search Engine Spiders track websites that provide fresh data. You will increase Search Engine postings as you add new content such as press releases, white papers, testimonials, etc.

And don’t forget to archive. Even as you add fresh data, archive previous articles, announcements, press releases, and industry news. Archiving provides a depth of information about your company and demonstrates stability.

### Conclusion

Your website is an important marketing tool for educating potential customers as well as building your brand. Make sure a visit to your website is a positive and informative experience. It’s their first impression of you and your business. You want them to recognize your value and buy your products and services. In the end, you also want them to come back.