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Due to the digital internet age of today, businesses must have a strong online representation in order to capture the attention of potential customers. When you think about what is involved when it comes to expanding, promoting, and advertising your business, the internet can no longer be ignored.

In the past, advertising a business via television, Yellow Pages, radio, or newspaper ads would take a huge chunk out of any marketing budget. But they were necessary expenses that companies had to use if they wanted to see their businesses flourish.

With the invention of the Internet, marketing has become faster, easier, and less expensive for businesses to connect with local consumers. Long gone are the days when companies are forced to pay a fortune for a small, 30-second slot on the air or for a small corner in the local newspaper that will only run for a few days.

Instead, the internet is the “new age” form of marketing. With a professional website, businesses can now have a “home” online that is often referred to as a virtual representation of their brand.

Once a website is developed, it can work to help businesses generate more leads and customers 24hrs. per day as long as the website is fully functioning. The best part is that it doesn't cost tens of thousands of dollars to have a website designed; and maintaining it on a monthly basis is mere peanuts compared to traditional advertising costs.

Consumers today are extremely internet savvy as the internet plays a huge role in our daily lives. So when it comes to purchasing local products and services, most consumers go online first to find businesses that can give them what they need.

If your business does not have a website – or if your website is outdated, not visually appealing, or barely functioning – you could actually lose a lot of potential customers to your competitors.

Why?

Because people today expect businesses to be as involved online as they are. If your website is lacking, this could be a direct reflection on how consumers view your company.

Not only that, but your website needs to be pleasing to the eye, fast-loading, contain valuable content, and have conversion tools in place if you want it to help you generate more local attention.

While your website should be attractive, it should have a professional look that is not overwhelming. So be careful not to overdo it with extreme graphics and colors that could turn off your visitors.

Also, your content should be presented in a way that visitors instantly know and understand how you can help them.

According to a study conducted by Statistic Brain, the average attention span of an adult in 2012 is around 8 seconds. Moreover, 17% of 60,000 pages last less than 4 seconds, and out of 111 words on a page, only 49% (that's around 50 words) are being read.

That means, on average, that you need to be able to get your message across in 4-8 seconds, and have your message complete in less than 50 words!

It's important to keep in mind that "looks are not everything" when it comes to having an effective website. Your website could be beautiful; however, in terms of usability, functionality, and access to information, it could be a nightmare for visitors.

Therefore, it's also important to make sure that your company website runs smoothly, contains all of the proper conversion tools, and allows visitors to find the information they need almost immediately.

Here are 12 reasons a bad website could actually HURT your business:

- 1. A website that is not "visually appealing" misses out on the opportunity to gain instant trust and credibility.**

Approximately 78% of Internet users conduct product research online.

Since product research will more than likely dictate whether or not a person chooses your business, being able to tap into this market ensures that existing and potential customers online will be able to learn about your products and services quickly and easily.

However, if your website does not have the professional appearance that consumers expect, they will bypass yours and continue their search for a company they feel "fits the bill."

The moment they click your website, they get their first impression of your company; and how you present your website is a reflection of how you present and manage your business in their eyes.

Overly flashy websites with colors that do not mesh well can cause visitors to leave. On the other hand, websites that are a little bit too "plain" can also be a turn-off for your potential customers.

So it is vital to come up with that perfect, professional balance in order to keep them on your website longer.

2. A website with no way to keep visitors engaged and coming back will not help bring in more sales.

Some studies show that companies that blog receive approximately 55% more web traffic than those that don't. In fact, nearly half of businesses have acquired a customer through their company blog.

The search engines love fresh, relevant, consistent content. Therefore, those websites that fit this profile receive higher rankings than those without it.

If you are not posting content to your website on a consistent basis, your ability to rank higher than your competitors will be difficult.

It's basically free marketing; instead of using "traditional" advertising methods such as having someone stand outside your store to hand out flyers, websites allow consumers to learn about your business at their own convenience without the traditional costs or hassles.

However, if your website and/or blog are not properly equipped to convert your visitors into customers, you risk losing them altogether.

3. A website that is not linked to your social media profiles will miss out on a huge opportunity to build relationships with website visitors.

Approximately 67% of B2B companies and 41% of B2C companies have acquired a customer through Facebook.

Never underestimate the power of social media marketing; it has taken the online world by storm in recent years and is not expected to slow down anytime soon. One way to make social media work for you is by integrating it with your company website.

Every company needs to have their social media icons linked on their websites as this is a way to connect with website visitors for the long-term and add them to your social following.

This will allow you to build relationships with them, turning more of them into paying customers.

Whether your company is targeting customers or other businesses, online marketing via social media is extremely beneficial.

On the other hand, even though consumers can find you on social media, they will eventually check out your website too. So if it is not up to par, potential relationships could be jeopardized.

4. An outdated website is a complete turn-off to your visitors and will hinder your ability to fully use all of the helpful website tools available to you.

Nothing is more frustrating for a website visitor than being met with a bunch of old, irrelevant content. Many businesses put up a website and then don't touch it again for years – even if their contact information changes.

An outdated website could also prevent you from integrating it with social media websites such as Facebook or Twitter.

In addition, you won't be able to use tracking tools such as Google Analytics, which is a program that allows you to track traffic coming to it.

Very few older websites allow blog integration, which means you've lost yet another valuable avenue to connect with your target audience.

5. A website that is not optimized for the search engines will struggle to get more local online attention.

Now, you might not think that this is a big deal, but business research suggests that most people don't go beyond the first three pages of any search engine results; in fact, most don't go beyond the first page.

The higher a website shows up in the results, the more attention that website will receive from consumers who are searching for what they have to offer.

If your website is struggling to be seen in the search engines, you could definitely use some optimization; otherwise, your competitors will continue to more local visibility.

6. A website that loads slowly will send visitors running the other way.

Most people expect websites to load within a few seconds. However, many business websites take forever to load due to various issues.

Busy consumers don't have time to wait minutes for a website to load. Instead, they prefer to move on to a competitor's website that loads quickly and gives them exactly what they need.

This is the perfect recipe for lost potential profits.

7. A website that is hard to navigate will frustrate visitors causing them to leave.

If your website is hard to navigate, this means that visitors will have a hard time finding the information they need. What's the big deal? Well, they'll leave almost instantly. No one wants to try to "figure out how to use your website" when they get there.

Your design and navigational layout should be simple; making it easy for your target audience to find the information they are looking for.

Your navigation should help them easily see where they are, where they have been, and where they can go next.

8. A website without a strong call-to-action lets potential customers slip right through your fingertips.

Want your website visitors to call you? Want them to email you? Want them to come visit you? Want them to download your free report? Want them to request a quote?

TELL THEM.

Many businesses neglect to use one of the most powerful techniques on their websites – a direct, strong call-to-action. If you don't tell your visitors what you want them to do, most of them will leave your site WITHOUT doing it.

Studies show that websites with a call-to-action are more effective than those without one – much more effective.

Therefore, leaving the call-to-action out is a very bad idea. In fact, it needs to be on every page of your website.

9. A website with your company's contact information "hidden" misses out big time.

Some businesses need and want their visitors to contact them in some form or fashion. However, many business websites' contact information is somewhat hidden.

If you are the type of business that wants your visitors to call you or visit you, your phone number and/or address should be prevalent on all of your website pages.

Putting your contact information on your “Contact Us” page is good, but it is not enough. It should also be at least on your home page for the best results.

10. A website that doesn't tell their customers where they are located, their hours of operation, or directions fall short.

For instance, restaurants definitely should have all of this information easily visible on their websites. Most visitors are going to the website just to find this information, so make sure it is clear for them to see.

Otherwise, they leave feeling frustrated in most cases; which could mean lost customers for you.

11. A website without an email capture form simply loses contact with its visitors – with no way to follow-up with them.

Wouldn't it be nice to have a way to “stay in touch” with every person that visits your website? Well, it's pretty easy to do with an email marketing campaign.

However, many businesses still do not have some type of email capture form on their website. Whether you have a customer loyalty discount program, or a free report with valuable information regarding your industry, you need to have some type of way to capture your visitors' email addresses.

12.A website that doesn't utilize graphics, images, videos, and other conversion tools does not convert as highly as those with them.

Graphics and images add a lot of value to websites – for one, it helps visitors get a quick visual idea of what the content is about without reading all of it. Not only that, but graphics and images grab the attention of visitors, making them more likely to read the content associated with the graphics and images.

Videos are another powerful conversion tool that most websites miss out on. Videos give you a way to communicate on a more personal level with your website visitors. Not only will this keep you on their site longer, but it also helps you gain credibility and trust.

More and more companies are actually turning to the internet to get the word about their businesses because online marketing is more practical and economical than traditional methods.

However, some businesses feel that just because they have a website up, they've done all they need to do as far as online marketing goes. But putting up a website is just the beginning.

How well your website works for you depends on several different factors. If your website is properly designed, it could possibly generate a huge amount of traffic and revenue for you.

On the other hand, having a poorly designed website can actually hurt your business by making it more difficult for you to convert prospects into customers. This is especially true for smaller businesses that rely on local consumers to stay afloat.

At a minimum, your website should:

- Clearly describe how you can solve your target audience's problems.
- Clearly describe the purpose of your website.
- Meet your audience's expectations as far as appearance and ease-of-use.
- Have up-to-date information and fresh, consistent content.
- Have a way to collect email addresses for follow-up purposes.
- Contain a strong, clear call-to-action.
- Make it easy for your visitors to contact you – such as having your contact details clearly visible on every page – including your address and phone number.
- Gives visitors the information they WANT and NEED.
- Turns visitors into buyers with powerful conversion tools.
- Is visually appealing and represents your business well.

Tips to Help Your Web Pages Convert Visitors into Customers

While website content will vary depending on the type of business you own, there are generally four pages that any website should have:

- Home Page
- About Us Page
- Services or Products Page
- Contact Us Page

Here are a few quick tips about each page to help you get the most out of them:

THE HOME PAGE

Think of the home page as your cover page for your website: it is the first page that attracts a visitor's eye. If you're not able to capture a visitor's interest with your home page, chances are that you've already lost them.

The average attention span for a customer browsing online is around 8 seconds, so that timeframe should always be your basis when creating content for your home page.

Is your homepage attractive enough to capture your customer's attention for at least 8 seconds, and does it contain enough information to tell your customer about your product or service to make them want to do business with you - or at least learn more about your product?

- Make your home page attractive enough to catch the eye, but clean and clear enough to help visitors get most of the information they need at first glance.
- Keep in mind that your home page is the starting point; so make sure that all the other pages of your website is accessible from it.
- Make sure your home page is not overly cluttered with text; only include enough information to show visitors exactly how you can help them. Also incorporate the use of bullets, images, and a lot of whitespace to help visitors skim the page quickly.

THE ABOUT US PAGE

This is basically where you get let your visitors know who you are you in-depth. Where the home page is your handshake, your about us page is your introduction.

For local businesses, the About Us page is very important because this is where you will make a personal connection with your potential customers and show them that they can trust you to give them what they need.

- Include everything that your customers need to know about your business, such as owner's name, business address, a short background, a mission statement, your business vision and your goals.
- Make the information short, easy to read, easy to remember, and easy to spot. A long-winded introduction is not necessary.

- Do not include irrelevant information about your business; “filler” or “fluff” text just makes your visitors lose interest.

SERVICES OR PRODUCTS PAGE

This is the meat of your website because it doesn't matter how pretty your home page is if your products or services are not desirable. Therefore, use this page to clearly describe your products and services from the standpoint of how they can help your visitors.

- List every product or service that you offer, as well as a relevant image and a short, yet informative description.
- Create a consistent, organized structure for your products and/or services page (for example, list your products according to prices, or your services according to alphabetical order) to make browsing easier.

CONTACT US PAGE

The Contact Us page tells your customers exactly how and where to reach you if they have questions, comments or support issues.

- Put all relevant information possible here, such as business telephone number, email address, physical address, etc. If you have other methods of contact, place them here as well.

- It is also a good idea to put a contact form on this page, which will forward all submissions to your company email address.
- It is not recommended that you put your personal contact information on this page, even if you're running a business out of your home.

As you can see, there are many things to consider if you want a fully-functioning, customer converting website that is built to help you bring in more leads, customers, and sales.

If done correctly, with care and professionalism, a website can be one of the most profitable investments any local business can make. The benefits you can get from a good website are worth much more than the initial costs involved in creating it.

I help local businesses to determine which critical factors are missing from their current websites, as well as design custom websites that meet their individual needs for the highest return on investment (ROI).

To learn more about how I can help your business in particular, contact me for a free consultation today!

Yours in Success,

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