

The Seven Things Your Website Must Accomplish

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Websites all have the same common purpose, which is to sell a product or service. What the site “sells” can include a product, a service, information, a political candidate, a cause, a community, etc. Regardless of whether a website collects money in exchange for its product, its purpose is to **sell** to its customer.

Whether you are a solo practitioner or entrepreneur, a non-profit agency, a multi-national corporation, or a teenager with something to say, your website’s ability to sell to your visitors needs to be a top marketing priority.

Depending on what you offer, the selling process can fall anywhere on the continuum from an immediate sale involving only one touch, to an extended long-term process with repeated touches.

However, no matter what your product, or the length of your sales process, your site must at least accomplish these seven goals in order to be effective:

1. Instantly convey what you offer in a compelling way.

From the moment your prospect lands on your home page, you have only a few seconds to capture and **keep** their attention. This is why well-crafted copy is essential. If you can’t instantaneously pique the interest of your visitor, the rest of your site may as well not exist...and in the next micro-second it won’t, if you don’t engage your prospect from the get-go. You and your site will vanish into cyberspace with the click of that dreaded red spot in the corner.

2. Create trust immediately.

There are many angles from which to approach this. You must create an instant first impression that is inviting and sends the message of trustworthiness. This can be accomplished with both graphics and content. An understanding of consumer psychology can be very helpful. What is it that creates a safe and comfortable experience for your web visitors? What attracts them? What repels them? Is there anything about your design or content that creates uneasiness? How can your site be more inviting?

3. Make the distinction between you and your competition.

If you are like most businesses, you offer a product or service that a consumer can easily buy from someone else. Therefore, the primary job of your website is to clearly communicate what distinguishes you from your competition and to keep your visitors from returning to Google to find them. Why should they hire you over someone else? What's the fastest and most effective way to communicate that? *What* do you tell them and *how* do you tell them? Again, this is something that can be accomplished in a variety of ways. What are your options? Which are the best choices for your business?

4. Make it worth the trip for your prospects. Give them something of value immediately.

The culture of the Internet is that it is a rich resource of valuable material – much of it offered for free. Web visitors expect this and the more you can accept and accommodate that expectation the more likely you will win their business...or at least their bookmark. Your visitors have many choices and unless you give them a reason to stay on *your* site, they will click out as fast as they clicked in. Don't waste their time. Give them something of value to read while they are there, to take with them or to return to later. What would be of interest to your ideal customer? How can you give it to them? How much should you give away for free? How can you give them something free and still move them toward a sale? The answers to these questions will be unique to your specific business. Luckily, websites are not static. You can make changes at anytime after testing and tracking the response to your give-aways.

5. Portray your credibility. Show your prospects that you know your stuff.

An important role of your website is to prove your credibility. You can certainly include well crafted copy that describes your experience, the merits of your product, the features of your service - but those are just words. Well written content may be convincing to your target audience, but if you can **show** them in addition to telling them, they will be more easily convinced. If you sell jewelry, obviously the quality and size of your photographic images are of utmost importance. We've all been on websites that feature product photographs that are too small and/or of poor quality. Many sales are lost when a customer leaves a site without clicking "checkout," because they were not given enough information to convince them of the quality or suitability of the

product. If you are a portrait painting instructor, you would not only want to display great images of your artwork, but may also decide to describe your teaching philosophy. Additionally, you could illustrate the portrait painting process from start to finish with a photograph and description of each phase of the painting.

If you offer a service, it can be more difficult to portray your credibility, but there are always unique and creative ways to “strut your stuff” online. For example, if you are a tax accountant you could feature a tip sheet on what to look for when purchasing bookkeeping software, or provide case studies touting the tax money you’ve saved your clients. If you are a computer repair person you could provide testimonials from satisfied customers or create a webpage listing specific troubleshooting tips one can try *before* they call you. If you are a successful realtor known for your speedy sales of homes, you could post a graph showing the time on the market of the homes you’ve listed, compared with statistics of national or local averages. If you are a plumber, you may decide to guarantee a specific arrival time and promise to wear a belt to keep your pants up!

6. Give the prospective customer a good reason to contact you immediately and invite them to do so.

What do you have to offer your prospect that will entice him or her to contact you? Focus on how you stand out from the competition. Why should he or she contact you now? What do you want your visitor to do before they leave your website? And how can you get them to do that?

7. Make it safe and easy for the prospect to contact you.

Whether your site features a form field or an email address and phone number, make it as easy as possible for prospects to get in touch with you. Present your contact information in a clear and concise manner that is user-friendly. Don’t make visitors hunt for it because they won’t hunt for long. Make sure that no matter where they are on your site they are only one click away from your contact information. And don’t make them jump through hoops by asking them to complete a lengthy form field (unless your business seeks highly motivated, carefully screened customers). Give thought to the context and present your contact information in a way that reassures the potential customer. If you do a good job of creating trust and portraying your credibility, your visitor’s will be more willing to take the step of contacting you.

So there you have it - the basic essentials of website effectiveness. Obviously, I've touched only the surface of what makes a website successful. You have many questions to answer as you create the content and design, or re-design of your site. It is a complex process requiring the ability to weave together these seven elements with detailed information about your business in a way that elicits confidence, trust, interest and action from your visitors.

The good news is that there are infinite possibilities of website design, structure and content. The bad news is that there are infinite possibilities of website design, structure and content!

Hopefully, these guidelines will get you headed in the right direction.

It can be a daunting task to plan your website. If you'd like to talk with me about how to create a website that serves as a marketing tool, [Contact Me](#) for a **Free Initial Consultation**.

Or Request a [Web Design Price Quote](#)

No Cost – No Obligation.

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