

Stacy's Information for New Websites

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Goals and Target Audience

Your eventual choice of marketing messages and specific marketing programs are all driven by your websites' goals and your visitor's wants and needs. Think about those things FIRST, before you begin writing content.

Decide the purpose (goal) of your website; the way(s) it will assist your business, book, or service(s) and the demographics of the people you hope to drive to your site (your target market).

Website Goal – Some examples of website goals could include:

- To generate lead for products or services
- To directly sell products
- To provide support for existing customers
- To provide sales force support

A website can have more than one goal, but it should have one primary goal, which will drive your website's structure and choice of applications.

Website strategies/programs (how the site will help your business, products, and/or services) – These are more specific than goals. At this point, you should begin choosing the types of content and functionality your website will offer. Examples include:

- Generate leads for my products and service by (a) making it easy for visitors to contact me and (b) providing information that makes my products/services appealing.
- Directly sell products by having online ordering and payment functions.
- Provide support for customers by making online customer service available and providing online troubleshooting.
- Provide sales force support by having customer order status online for sales people to access and making product specification sheets available.
- Provide email registration for monthly email campaign – stay in touch with customers monthly – build customer base and loyalty.
- Provide blogs, forums, video applications, and RSS feeds, for real-time applications.

Target audience profile (the demographics of your website visitors) – Imagine the type of people who would find your website most useful. Describe them in terms of needs, behaviors, situations, their professions and other demographics (age, where they live, income, hobbies, etc).

Initial Marketing: After you have established your website structure, but before you begin working on your website content

Keyword Search

If you are able to incorporate significant keywords into your website from the beginning (keywords are words people plug into search engines to find a website) your website has a better chance of attracting high-quality visitors through search engine referrals.

Ideally, choose a relevant keyword phrase or two for each page of your website and work those phrases into your text (specifically headlines) and navigation links. Include your keyword phrases in a way that flows well and appears natural to your website visitors. Also, include the keyword phrases in the title and description tags in the header section of your website pages.

Initial Design: Before you begin working on your Website's content

Navigation: How many pages will your website need? I suggest you start out simple, keep your content to the point and keep the site simple to use and navigate. For most small businesses 2 – 5 pages is more than plenty to convey your message and products.

Typical pages might be:

Index (home page)

Services

Products

About Us

Contact

Before you begin to write your content, decide how many pages your website will offer and what each page's use and main message will be.

Writing for the web means making content...

- Short
- Scannable
- To the point (rather than full of fluffy marketese)

Web content should also

- Answer users' questions
- Use common language rather than made-up terms (this also improves search engine visibility, since users search using their own words, not yours).

Back to Basics Web Design

Users don't care about technology and don't especially want new features. They just want quality improvements in the basics:

- Text they can read
- Content that answers their questions
- Navigation and search that help them find what they want
- Short and simple forms (streamlined registration, checkout, and other workflow)
- No Bugs, typos, or corrupted data; no bad links and no outdated content

Stacy's design tips:

- Keep content simple – use bullet points, headlines, and break content into readable chunks of information. Don't make any paragraph more than 3-4 sentences.
- Pictures speak a thousand words...but keep them simple, professional and optimized (ask me about this).
- Make your website "sticky" give folks a reason to stick around (and a reason to return). Offer monthly updates, a forum, blogs, and monthly specials - offer value through free advice and resources, build your reputation as an expert in your field.
- Treat your website – your eBusiness, no differently than you treat any other business decision – don't be overwhelmed by the technology. Do a bit of research and expect your website to be an integral working part of your business. If you don't know how to make that happen, then by all means, hire the work done. But be knowledgeable enough to ask the right questions. Read up on web design basics, SEO, and website marketing.

Marketing Activities for Launch

Write a press release about your ebusiness – submit the article to all industry related websites!

Industry specific directories to list your site...search your industry; at a search engine, type the words "(your industry) directory" – also use the search words "(your industry) submit site" or "(your industry) submit URL" - you'll be surprised at the number of industry directories you'll find to list your site – and most often times for free.

Affiliate links: Think of all the local businesses in which your products and/or services would be a good counterpart. Approach those businesses about shared links.

Also – check out your competitor’s sites...do they have links? Would those same businesses be a good link partner to your business? Then contact those businesses about sharing reciprocal links. The more links you have to your website from other quality websites, the more visitors you will attract and the better your site will rank in the search engines.

Publicizing Your New Website Offline

Another component of establishing an initial web presence is to notify all of your offline contacts about your new website. Write a press release about your ebusiness – submit the article to all local and regional papers. Also, publicize your URL at every point of contact with potential website visitors. Splash your URL everywhere; on invoices, business cards, letterhead, bumper stickers, your company’s sign and yellow page listings. Don’t limit yourself to the written word - your answering machine and cell phone messages can also advertise your new website.

Some suggestions for further marketing:

- Provide a discount coupon, available only online, and advertise it offline
- Send postcards or notes to website visitors via "snail mail"
- Spend one hour each day on prospecting new customers or visitors
- Implement a customer loyalty program
- Offer a gift with certain orders over a certain amount
- Write press releases to announce important news
- Hold an online chat
- Launch an affiliate program
- Add testimonials to your Website
- Study your competition!
- Launch a pay per click advertising campaign (yahoo, google, msn, ask, etc)
- Develop a mailing list of "hot prospects" and send them a brochure about your Website