



Time to Renovate Your Website?

10 Ways to Energize Its Marketing Impact

By Ellen Eason, Partner

Eason Communications LLC

© Copyright, Eason Communications LLC, 2010

You are losing business if your website is not helping you make sales. It is your company's online "storefront" and, like a physical building, it must be renovated to evolve with your business. A website that was adequate years ago no longer reflects the current benefits of using your goods and services. And quite often, new online features and web promotional techniques emerge, so you need to keep up with – *and preferably exceed* – your competition. Here are some ways to boost your online presence:

- **Design for marketing**

Develop a website plan that supports your firm's strategic marketing objectives. What role does your website play in the process of generating business: Lead generation? Relationship building? Business development support? PR? Direct sales? Your senior marketing staff and agency should be very involved in this architecture long before the details are implemented by a webmaster.

- **Make your site more user-friendly**

Is your site easy to navigate? Make it easy to find important information and to get back to the home page. Position prominent navigation links and organize information in a logical structure. Messaging and compelling copywriting are key. Don't annoy visitors with lengthy Flash introductions darting across the screen. Some say that the most popular action on the web is "Skip Intro." Also, keep in mind that many visitors will be viewing your site on a mobile device that does not display graphics or Flash elements. Another reason to focus on the copy.

- **Copy is critical**

When considering search engine optimization (SEO), keep in mind that content is king. Search engines don't recognize images and Flash. However, they do recognize keywords used in the headings and body copy on your web pages. This information is one of the elements that is used to rank your site in search engine results.

- **Update your site regularly**

The more often a website is updated, the better search results will be. Spiders – also known as web crawlers – recognize when new material is added to a site. Your results usually improve when fresh material is added, because your site will gain greater prominence in organic search features of Google, Yahoo, Bing, etc.

- **Feature news items prominently**

A website isn't a static brochure. One of the advantages of the web is that you can easily add news items and other timely information to your site. Featuring news about your company and industry trends keeps your site current and keeps visitors coming back.

- **Sell with graphics**

With the web, you have the opportunity to sell your products and services with graphics that reinforce your message or provide detailed information. Use artwork and multimedia that reinforce or support your marketing messages. If a video clip helps demonstrate your product or service, consider embedding a short video in your site. Now, it's easy and inexpensive.

- **Add links and other resources**

Adding links to related web sites on the "resources" section of your website can increase your search engine organic rankings. You should also offer useful resources about your industry and related organizations to increase web traffic. This will help you build traffic and develop online relationships.

- **Include multiple contacts – for sales information, media, etc.**

Ever been to a site and not been able to find out how to reach the company? Many people are impatient when they are doing research on the web. Make it easy for visitors to reach the right person at your company – or they might move on to your competitor. It's also important to include a physical address and a phone number. This builds credibility.

- **Cross-promote with your other marketing tools**

Your website is just one element of your integrated marketing strategy. Use other marketing tools, such as bylined articles, news releases, ads, direct-mail pieces, trade-show appearance, speaking engagements, networking events, social media and email campaigns, to drive people to your website. Be sure to include a link to your website within your news releases. When a news release is picked up by an online publication, readers will be able to click through to your site.

And, finally, make certain that your website reflects not only the image you want to portray, but also helps prospective business partners better understand how they can work with you or purchase your services and products. Communicate in clear, concise language without buzzwords and fancy doubletalk.

Ellen Eason is a partner in San Francisco-based Eason Communications LLC, a marketing communications agency whose services include developing online marketing programs. She can be reached at ellen@easoncom.com or through www.easoncom.com