



Marketing PowerBoost

Make Your Web Site Work for You

You've built a great web site. Now what?

By Susan Baka

A good web site can leverage your marketing and sales success head and shoulders above the competition. It's a way to powerfully showcase your products/services to both existing and potential customers and facilitate ongoing two-way communication with your most important target group. But one of the biggest mistakes I see my clients make is to launch a well-planned, dynamic web site, and then fail to keep it up to date.

You may have a terrific web site...but people won't continue to visit it unless there is a compelling reason to do so. And once you lose visitors, they're not likely to return. Here are some tips to maintain the value of that significant up-front investment:

- ***Always publish news online first***, whenever you have a story to tell – such as a new product or service or announcing an award won. It's faster than most other forms of communication. Other vehicles such as brochures or broadcast e-mails should include your web address to push readers to your site where you can continue to market to them.
- ***Keep the home page fresh and vibrant***. Use it as a tool to help you – eg. If your sales or customer service staff are receiving the same question over and over, include a “Did You Know?” box on the home page, or if you're hosting an event and attendee registrations are low, post a reminder on the home page. And don't underestimate the power of good photos; also consider rotating images (images that change each time the browser is refreshed).
- ***Never keep out-of-date information live!*** Nothing loses visitor trust like stale information. Develop a routine/schedule (eg. review/change home page text weekly; review remaining pages at least monthly) and schedule the removal of time-sensitive information at the same time you post new info.
- ***Be responsive***. Respond to Contact Us and electronic questions within 12 hours or next business day.
- ***Review the whole site periodically*** to check for changed/old/missing text. For example, do you have products/services that are no longer offered or any new ones that should be promoted?
- ***Be consistent***. It's a big part of the brand and user experience. Each click of the mouse should let users know that they're still browsing the same site. And, after posting a new item, check to ensure it's consistent in style and that no text was dropped.
- ***Scan the competition***. Look at best-of-breed sites in your industry to get ideas for enhancing yours.
- ***Hire an online writer***. If you or your staff are too busy to take ownership of the content, find a writer who specializes in web sites to ensure the money you spent up front keeps delivering



results. Remember not to confuse “content manager” with webmaster. Tech savvy experts don’t always have the time or skills to write crisp, consistent and compelling messages.

Be vigilant, consistent and timely with your site maintenance. The best web sites are chock full of bits of useful and interesting information and, at the same time, consistently deliver the “big picture” key messages about the business.

Susan Baka is President of Bay Communications & Marketing Inc., specialists in business newsletters, web sites and marketing vehicles that showcase your unique selling proposition. Let us tell your story.

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