

How to Create Remarkable Web Sites

by Carol Dunitz, Ph.D.

With so many people on line today, it is imperative to have an Internet presence. Those who are Internet savvy expect to find you there. Without a web site you appear dated and obsolete. And that can lose you a lot of business.

Set up a great site that attracts new customers and bolsters your sales. You can do it by investing some time, resourcefulness, and good judgement. Here's how:

Put Your Best Foot Forward. Make sure your home page grabs the attention of those who stop by. Use an enticing headline. Have some sharp graphics. Visitors will want to know more. They will remain to explore what you're offering.

Be Compelling. Your visitors have been spoiled at other sites. They expect fabulous graphics and you will disappoint if you do not provide them. That being said, all the bells and whistles in the world do not replace great content. Make sure your site is well written -- concise and to the point but not so short it doesn't tell your whole story. Be sure to proofread for spelling, grammar, and punctuation, too. Writing copy that attracts customers and draws them in is the work of a professional. Just because someone speaks English does not mean they can write well. Don't settle for writing that is dull and awkward. It will impact on your sales.

Limit Your Graphics. Graphics are great. They titillate visitors' senses and make them hanker for more. But take caution! Too many graphics may take too long to load. You risk a click that takes your prospect to another site. And that's bad business. Don't make visitors to your site wait too long.

How long is too long? Try visiting your site on a computer that is several years old. How much patience does it take to wait for your page to appear in full form? How do you feel while you're waiting? Chances are other people out there on the world wide web will feel the same way.

Avoid The Online Brochure Syndrome. Many companies use their web sites as an additional place to publish their brochures and sales literature. Visitors are not looking for reruns. They expect new, fresh material that they can't find elsewhere. Take advantage of this interactive medium to provide stimulating materials and tantalize prospects to return often.

Let Your Hair Down. Kick your shoes off. Loosen your tie. Treat the Internet like the liberal venue it is. Stuffy is out. Way Cool is in. Creativity is appreciated. Visitors to your site want information. But they also want to be entertained. Give them what they want. But don't get too commercial. It will backfire.

Vitamins, Minerals and Nutrients. Load your site up with lots of good stuff. A web site that has a lack of content cannot be rescued by all the glitz and flash in the world. On the other hand, a page with content accompanied by savvy multimedia effects is a winner. Provide appealing information about your service or products. Take time to educate those who visit your site. The web is not the place for hard sell. Let people know how you are different and better than the competition -- and be able to back it up. Consider including a testimonial page.

Click. Click. Click. The content a web visitor seeks should never be more than three clicks away. Make it easy for your visitors to get the information they want and then return to your home page. Dynamite! Staying Cool means being dynamic. Update your site on a regular basis. This will keep people coming back. And that's what you want, isn't it?

E-mail Link. Make it easy for your visitors to place orders and contact you. Have a place on your site to place orders. Have another where you can be contacted for other feedback.

Under Construction. Be a good designer. Clean up and put your tools away between remodeling stints. No one likes to visit a site that is always under construction. Make sure you are ready to receive company most of the time.

Follow these guidelines. And if you get tripped up, consult a professional.

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