

Website Planning and Online Marketing
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Website planning: domain names, hosting, architecture, design, navigation, writing effective content.

Blogging for business: business benefits, blog software, creating content.

Marketing your business: search engines/directories, community links, paid advertising, offline marketing, social media, email marketing.

Cutting edge: mobi websites for cell/mobile devices.

Learn how your business can benefit from free and low cost technology solutions.

Followed by technology Q&A.

INTRODUCTION

BIOGRAPHY

My name is Cherie Carroll. Since 1997 I have owned and operated my own website design and hosting company, eMedia Master LLC.

I am self-taught. I read online tutorials and learned to how to hand code then I realized there was software that would create websites without any of that knowledge. Knowing how to hand code has been a great advantage because I can look at code output from any software and find problems. It also allows me to create websites that are more search engine friendly.

I have taught classes on Website Planning, eCommerce Planning, and Online Marketing through Boyle County Community Education. I was the business and technology speaker at the 2005 WEDO (Women's Economic Development Outreach) at Centre College. I have presented several business and technology workshops for Lincoln & Boyle County Chamber of Commerce. From 2007-2010 I served on the Board of Directors for the Lincoln County Chamber of Commerce. I have also participated in small business conferences through the Small Business Administration at Berea, Danville and Somerset KY. I have been an editor with the Open Directory Project aka DMOZ.ORG since June 2002.

EXAMPLES OF WORK

Single page websites, multi-page websites, mobi websites, e-commerce

<http://goosecreekcandle.com>

<http://cedarcreeklakeoutfitters.com>

<http://dannyprestonfloors.com>

<http://espressorepairandsales.com>

<http://joeyandthecruisers.com/index.html>

<http://coastalbrokeragefl.com>

<http://benandjeannette.com/>

<http://lincolncountychamber.com/>

<http://lincolncountylibrary.org/>

<http://cedarcreeklakeoutfitters.mobi/>

<http://fsnbstore.com/>

WHO NEEDS A WEBSITE?

Every business needs a website. Many people now turn to the internet in addition to or instead of the yellow pages to find the products, services, and information they want and need. Even the smallest business will benefit from a business card website with contact info and product or service summary.

In “11 Ways to Market Your Business” Bob Phibbs, known as the Retail Doctor, suggests “Put up a website that at least lists hours, location, testimonials, special promotions, etc.

A website gives more exposure for the least amount of money to advertise your product(s) or service(s). Being online can be the turning point for your business.

A website offers the ability to change or expand your message as your business changes and grows. A website reduces your customer service costs by having general business information, answers to frequently asked questions, business hours, etc available. A website offers accurate stats on the number of visitors and page views. A website allows shoppers to find your business.

Does your competition have a website? If they do and you don't then you are already at a disadvantage. If they don't then now is the time to get the advantage on them.

PURPOSE / TARGET MARKET

What is your purpose for being on the internet - information, sales, customer service?

Who are you trying to reach - current, new customers or both?

WEBSITE BASICS

There are 4 main components of a website: domain name, hosting, design, and seo.

DOMAIN NAME

A domain name is WhateverYouWantToUse.com You should choose a domain name (preferrably ending in .com) that is easy to remember, easy to spell, as short as possible, and relevant to your business.

Examples of good domain names:

ksrc.com - initials of Kentucky Society for Respiratory Care

MiracleFarmLLC.com - Name of Business

KyRealEstate.com / KyBookStore.com - combination of generic words

HOSTING

Web hosting is basically renting space on a server which will allow your website files to be viewed across the internet. The important terms you need to know about hosting are disk space and bandwidth. Disk space is the combined size of all the files that are part of your website.

Bandwidth is a measurement of the volume of information transmitted over the internet. It's based on the size of website files (pages and images) every time they are viewed over a certain amount of time. Very few websites require more than 50mb of space. Bandwidth with most providers is sufficient with the exception of websites that are graphic intensive or include video.

DESIGN

ALL websites should be designed to be fast loading, easy to navigate, and search engine friendly.

Avoid

Avoid flash and javascript especially on your home page. They make the load speed of the webpage longer and can interfere with search engine optimization.

Fast Loading

Websites need to be fast loading because #1 people expect it and #2 speed is now one of the factors Google uses for ranking websites in their search engine.

Easy to Navigate

Make sure navigation is easy to find and easy to use.

Preferably along top/left side of page.

Navigation should be text, not images, for search engine purposes.

Color background or hover is ok.

Choosing Website Colors

Be sure that the background color and text color contrast enough to make it easy to read. If you have a logo for your business you should make sure those colors are incorporated into your website. If you are having a website designed for you it is best to use an online color chart and specify the exact color code you want them to use.

<http://kywebmaster.com/ColorChart.pdf>

Keep Scrolling to a Minimum

I've been saying it for years. I ALWAYS tell clients, "Try to keep home page content so people don't have to scroll down." Now according to Jacob Nielsen, "Web users spend 80% of their time looking at information above the page fold. Although users do scroll, they allocate only 20% of their attention below the fold."

Horizontal attention leans left. "Web users spend 69% of their time viewing the left half of the page and 30% viewing the right half. A conventional layout is thus more likely to make sites profitable."

Consistency

The design, and navigation should be consistent throughout every page of your website. This creates your company brand on the internet.

Header

The header should also be the same throughout your website. It should include your company logo. Your company name and phone number should be prominent on every page of your website so it's natural to have it built into the header.

Keywords and Metatags

To choose keywords/phrases think about what someone would put into Google or another search engine to find your type of business.

Although metatags are used for search engine positioning they are part of the website code and must match the content of the webpage in order to be relevant. I normally suggest deciding on metatags and then writing the content for each page.

Title (70 characters) Be specific - not "home" "about us" "services". Use the most important keywords with your business name. If city, state will fit use it too.

- Bad: <http://chillinaz.com> "Chill"
- Good: "Goose Creek Candles : Scented Candles and Gifts"

Keywords: (1000 characters; 45 keywords/phrases)

Description: (160 characters; simple business summary including key words. Very likely to show up in Google description.)

Category: Similar to what you would choose in the Yellow Pages.

Home Page Content

The purpose of your website should be obvious from its home page. The most important information should be towards the top of the page. Your company name and phone number should be prominent. I suggest 2-4 short paragraphs (2-5 sentences) that tell who you are, what you do, how customers can benefit from your product or service, where your service area is (if applicable), and why visitors should choose your product or service over others. You want to give enough information to let visitors determine if you have the product or service they want in 2 minutes or less. You **MUST** include your keywords/phrases in the content, especially on the home page. Use additional pages for more details.

Architecture

I suggest laying out your plan on paper before beginning to create your website. When dividing your content into pages keep the following guidelines: One subject, 3-5 paragraphs (250-300 words) per page.

Write for Online, Not Print - How Users Read on the Web

People rarely read web pages word by word; instead, they scan the page
As a result, Web pages need to employ scannable text, using

- highlighted keywords (font and color variations)
- meaningful sub-headings (not "clever" ones)
- bulleted lists
- one idea per paragraph (users will skip over any additional ideas if they are not caught by the first few words in the paragraph)
- the inverted pyramid style, starting with the conclusion

Images

All images used on the web should be in jpg, gif, or png format.

All images should have "alt tags". Alt tags are a simple text description of that image in the website code. If a user has the browser set not to display images, or is using a screen reader, they will rely on this text to tell them what the image is. They are also useful for search engine ranking.

Although images can be resized on the webpage with html code all images should be resized and then inserted into your webpage. The primary reason is to keep the overall size of the webpage as small as possible. It also makes the images clearer.

Wrong way to resize: chilllinaz.com

Original image 883x218, 22.5 kb

Resized image 277x68, 5.6 kb

WEBSITE = ESSENTIAL; SOCIAL MEDIA = SUPPLEMENTAL

A website for your business is essential to build your own brand.

Facebook, Twitter, etc make good supplements and should point to your own website for more details. The downfall of these supplemental sources is that they are subject to change on a whim and there is nothing you can do about it.

BLOGGING FOR BUSINESS

Why should your business have a blog? To promote your products/services, establish authority, and increase search ranking.

Regular updates to your website which bring people back again and again will increase sales. You can avoid paying high costs for website maintenance by adding a blog to your website. A blog is not a replacement for pages of regular content but it will allow you to add new products/services, events, specials, sales, product reviews, news, etc to your website with a simple form.

Why not use one of the free blog sites? Free blog sites come in limited styles, often include advertising, and they increase search engine rankings for that particular service, not your business! You need a blog on your own website so the focus is on you, on your business. It should be customized to match the main part of your website.

The interval at which you post new content determines, in part, how often Google will revisit your website. If people know you update your blog on a regular basis they are more likely to make repeat visits to your website.

Subject Line: Concise, Keyword Rich

3rd party links (minimal): Research, news, etc (open in new window)

Content: new products/services, industry news, press releases, in-depth product descriptions, company history, product reviews, how-to articles, tutorials.

Post full article content in your blog. Use a lead in from Twitter, Facebook, etc to your blog. Again this is, in part, to aid your search

rankings and keep your visitors focused on your business.

TWITTER <http://twitter.com>

Create a profile: photo, location, website address, bio (160 characters)
Your twitter name is limited to 15 characters. Keep it simple, preferably using your real name or business name.

Tweets (posts) have a limit of 140 Characters

Regular schedule - daily/weekly

Helpful & informative posts: industry news, specials/sales

FACEBOOK <http://facebook.com>

Create an account: photo, phone, address, website address, 200 character biography. Your facebook name must be 5-50 characters long. Keep it simple, preferably using your real name or business name.

Create a page for your business.

Posts have a limit of 420 characters.

Regular schedule - daily/weekly

Helpful & informative posts: industry news, specials/sales

GOOGLE PLACES <http://Google.com/places>

It's targeted, free traffic. Search results are based on relevance and geographic distance.

- Business name - actual, not descriptive.
- Address, phone number, url.
- Geographic are you service.
- Up to 10 images.
- Operating hours. Biz description and even reviews. Payment Types Taken.
- Create online coupons.
- Place Page Posts: real time updates (up to 160 characters) announcing special sales, events, and new products. Limit one post appearing at a time.

Verify by phone or postcard.

GOOGLE PROFILE <http://google.com/profiles>

A Google profile is simply how you present yourself on Google products, such as Google search. It allows you to control how you appear on Google and tell others a bit more about who you are.

With a Google profile, you can easily share your web content on one central location. You can include, for example, links to your blog, online photos, and other profiles such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and more. You can also allow people to find you more easily by enabling your profile to be searched by your name. Simply set your existing profile to show your full name publicly.

You can add photos from Flickr or Picasa, write a short bio in the About me tab, add your contact information - you control who sees it.

DMOZ aka OPEN DIRECTORY PROJECT <http://dmoz.org>

Data goes out to partner sites, such as AOL Search, Google, Netscape Search, Yahoo Search, and hundreds of other sites.

Go to dmoz.org and find the most appropriate category for your website. Click "Suggest URL" at top of page.

TITLE OF SITE: Must be actual business name (no description allowed)

SITE DESCRIPTION: up to 30 words, do not repeat business name, facts only - no adjectives/adverbs (i.e., the best, quality service, etc).

COMMERCIAL EMAIL <http://www.ftc.gov> (search for can-spam at top/right)

The CAN-SPAM Act established requirements for those who send commercial email, spells out penalties for spammers and companies whose products are advertised in spam if they violate the law, and gives consumers the right to ask emailers to stop spamming them. It's smart to read this and make sure your business is in compliance.

eMail newsletters should be what is considered opt in (with recipient's approval) and have clear instructions on how to unsubscribe in every email sent.

The footer of every email should include name, business, phone, website link. Address, fax, etc optional.

WHY SEARCH MATTERS TO LOCAL BUSINESSES

(January 2008) According to a report based a survey conducted by WebVisible and Nielsen/NetRatings, search engines such as Google, Yahoo!, MSN, and Ask have become consumer's most widely used source to find a local business from which to buy. The results reported 73% of consumers used search engines when seeking local products and services - more than any other media type.

(March 10, 2010) Nearly all consumers (97 percent) now use online media when researching products or services in their local area, according to BIA/Kelsey's.

- 90 percent use search engines. \
- 58% report using an online coupon when shopping for products or services in their local area in the past year.
- 19% report making an appointment online in the past 6 months for a service other than a restaurant reservation (e.g., business appointment, health care appointment, auto service or personal service such as a beauty shop).

Steve Marshall, director of research, BIA/Kelsey. "The data suggest we're at an inflection point where the balance of power in local shopping is shifting to online."

ONLINE MARKETING TIPS

Domain Name Exposure

Don't forget to put your domain on anything and everything: business cards, newspaper ads, magnetic signs or lettering on your vehicle, stationery, envelopes. Also be sure to use it as a signature for every

email you send and every message you post on message boards.

Inbound Links

Inbound links to your website are good if they are from a high ranking website. Chamber of Commerce and other organizational online directories are the best source of quality inbound links. Many local newspapers have an online section for local links and only require filling out an online form with your company information.

MOBILE WEBSITES AND MARKETING

90% of users with mobile internet have used it to search for a local business. As cell phone usage increases it becomes even more important to have a .mobi website. Although other top level domains can be used for a mobile website the .mobi domain is preferred because some It has mandatory rules and non-compliance will result it the domain name being put on hold status.

File size is of great importance because most people pay to view websites on their cell phones according to file size. mobi websites are intended to find your business and share the most essential information with it's viewers.

Recommended Free / Low Cost Software

Calendar

Sunbird - GetSunbird.com

PDF File Maker

PDF Creator - <http://sourceforge.net/projects/pdfcreator/>
(Creates PDF files from any Windows program.)

Instant Messenger

Trillian - <http://www.CeruleanStudios.com>
(Supports AIM, ICQ, MSN, Yahoo Messenger, and IRC; has secure capabilities for AIM/ICQ.)

Portable Applications

Carry your favorite applications on a usb drive and use it on any computer without installation. Portable apps include Firefox (web browser), FileZilla (FTP), Open Office (MS Office alternative), Sunbird (Calendar), and 7-Zip (File Compressor). Get them all for free at PortableApps.com!

What Are You Searching For?

It doesn't matter as much what you're searching for as it does what you're using to search the internet. Try the FREE version of Copernic which allows you to search 90+ search engines and directories at once. It automatically weeds out duplicate entries. You can set it to search, click a button and perform other tasks while it pulls in results and lists them with the most relevant entries on top.

Copernic Agent - <http://copernic.com>

AVG Beats Norton in Antivirus Arena

EVERYONE needs a good antivirus program regularly updated and running on their computer. Norton and McAfee are the ones that are usually pre-

installed on new computers. They have a 30-90 day trial and then you must subscribe (and pay) for it to continue working.

AVG is a great antivirus program. I've personally used it for about 3 years now. There is a free version for personal use; commercial use has a free 30 day trial. Why do I consider AVG the better antivirus program? It's not a resource hog like Norton so it doesn't slow your computer down. I've also personally seen it catch viruses that Norton and McAfee didn't. That's enough reason for me!

<http://free.avg.com/>

Browsers - No, Internet Explorer Isn't the Only One!

The most used alternative browsers are Firefox, Chrome and Opera. All of these browsers use less computer resources than Internet Explorer which means you'll get everything done faster. Your computer is also safer just because you use one of these alternative browsers because most virus and spyware attacks are exploits of Internet Explorer.

<Http://GetFirefox.com>

<http://www.opera.com/>

<http://www.google.com/chrome>

Firefox has many add-on extensions available that will enable you to do anything a browser can possibly do. Yes, Firefox is my browser of choice.

<https://addons.mozilla.org/extensions/?application=firefox>

Email Alternative to MS Outlook

One of the most popular non-Microsoft email programs is Thunderbird. It's simple to set up multiple emails and folders.

<http://getthunderbird.com>

FREE Alternative to Microsoft Office

Open Office is a FREE alternative to Microsoft Office. It allows you to read, save, and create MS Office compatible files including Word, Excel, and Power Point. <http://www.openoffice.org>

Find FREE Open Office templates for personal and business use at <http://templates.services.openoffice.org/>

FREE Accounting Software

FREE full edition of Peachtree First Accounting. (For service businesses.) <http://www.peachtree.com/productsServices/tryPeachtree/>