

Why Your Small Business Needs A Website

Many established, non-technology related small businesses don't see a need for their own website. Why on earth would a salon or a smaller retail shop need to be on the internet? There are many answers to that question.

Websites are a key marketing tool these days. You don't have to be selling anything online. Simply having a web presence can introduce your business to a whole new clientele who may never have known you existed.

Having your own basic website in 2006 is comparable to listing your business in the yellow pages in 1986. You wouldn't consider not listing your business and phone number there. A large percentage of small business' clientele has historically come from people deciding they need a product or service and locating someone who can meet their needs by simply opening the phonebook. Well, that is still true today, but a lot more of these same potential customers are turning to the internet for the same reason.

Now, following that logic, isn't it enough just to list my company with the online business directories and yellow page services? The answer simply is no.

For example, several weeks ago I was out of town and discovered that I needed to get an oil change immediately. As always, I logged on to several yellow page sites to see what my options were. As expected, I got a list of about 40 different places I could go. So, how did I decide which company to use? Simple, I found the ones that listed not only their phone numbers but also had a link their websites. There I had all the information I needed at my fingertips. I found out the hours, locations with maps and directions and most importantly pricing information and any specials they were currently offering. I ended up using a smaller, non-chain company that had invested in putting up a very basic site.

Believe me, I am not the only person who shops for products and services this way. Without having some form of web presence, you are missing out on an entire segment of potential customers.

As a small business owner myself, I certainly understand the reservations that many of us have about investing money into some marketing concept that seems nontraditional to me. Maybe you aren't comfortable with computers and internet and don't wish to become so! You don't have to be, but are you really willing to let your competitors take business from you?

There are many options for getting online. If you are interested in learning and building your own site, there are many companies out there that will include some form of web design software with their monthly web hosting costs. If you want to get something a little more professional or have no interest or time to do it yourself, there are many companies out there that specialize in web design.

If you decide to hire someone to design your site for you, make sure you compare the services offered and compare prices. Like any other service you purchase, there will be a wide range of prices and many different options. Take your time and really think about what you want from a designer and make sure they understand the objective of your new website.

Also, it is key that you feel comfortable in communicating with your designer. You also need to make sure that you know any hidden costs up front. Hiring someone to build your website can be like hiring a contractor to build your house. There are literally thousands of variables that can increase your cost, so you need to have a contract up front that outlines how much you are paying, usually with a deposit before work begins, exactly what you are getting for that price and a guarantee of the time it will take to complete the site. There are so many web designers out there that you don't need to work with a person or a firm that make you uncomfortable in any way.

In conclusion, whether you have a small "mom and pop" retail shop, restaurant, doctor's office or any other type of small business, you are missing out on a large part of the market by not having a basic presence on the internet. Don't let fear of the unknown keep you from being discovered by a big pool of potential new customers.

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

About the Author

Dana Wallert is the owner of DW Office Solutions, an online virtual assistance company offering complete web design and maintenance services. Find out more about virtual assistants and web design packages at <http://www.dwofficesolutions.com>