

Web success- tips and tricks

The webmaster's biggest job is to get their traffic up and keep customers/visitors coming back. Building the site is one thing, but simply building and posting a website does not guarantee traffic. In fact, a website could be beautiful and an example of all the latest technology and still not attract a single visitor if not promoted correctly. Here are 10 tips to guide you to success with your website.

(1) The internet is a new medium.

At least compared to print, it is. A website is a waste if it simply re-hashes something which could easily be put into print. Don't have the site be just an online brochure. Put up features which take advantage of the internet as a medium of communication. Filter information for them. Provide search capability. Provide interactivity with features like forums, quizzes and tools. Web visitors like to interact.

(2) Treat the Customer's Time as Valuable.

When a person visits your website, you have their attention for that point in time. You either need to use it or you will lose it - fast. Most visitors have short attention spans, what you need to design your site homepage so that it grabs their attention and provides what they are looking for right away. Its like walking into a restaurant. If you walk in and just stand there and nobody comes to greet you, you might wonder what is happening. But, if the hostess comes and greets you right away and walks you to a table, then you will be there for awhile and eat. The same analogy goes for websites. Don't overcomplicate your website homepage. Best results will be obtained if you make it very clear where to click to find what they need.

(3) Design the site for customers, not the company.

Your site needs to satisfy the needs of customers, not the company. So, don't post content which is not really useful to the site's customer. And avoid over-flattering marketing hype about the company. It inflates the ego of the company more than it helps your customer.

(4) Involve the Visitor.

Keep the visitor involved and make them feel like a valuable contributor. Actively ask for the feedback and suggestions. Ask for communication from your visitors and answer that communication swiftly. When getting that communication, capture their email address. This will allow you to communicate with them long after they have moved on and forgotten about you.

(5) Keep it Current.

You need to have content on your website which is timely and relevant to the customer's life. Posting month-old news is not interesting. Posting dry product information which never changes is not interesting. Yes, you need to have product information and other information on your site that won't change much, but you can also post more timely content. You can, for example, post content about how your products can be used in certain situations in life. Provide tips and techniques - things which are immediately applicable and solve a problem.

(6) Pay Attention to Form/Design.

Some sites simply over-do it on the eye-candy. Big graphics just for the sake of graphics often impress the site's designer more than the visitor. Do not use graphics that are large and purposeless. Remember, some visitors may still be accessing your website via dial-up. Your site needs to load up quickly for all users. A slow website will cause your users to leave quickly. Also, pay attention to graphic and design size. Many web designers operate on fairly large screen resolutions and sometimes forget that even though a graphic looks great to you, it will appear enormous to somebody on a smaller resolution. On the flip side, don't go too light on graphics. A site which is poorly designed and using the default font and no color is not very aesthetically pleasing. Any web visitor, whether they admit it or not, judges your company by your website unless they have something else to go on. A well-designed site communicates professionalism. A poor design makes the site seem like an afterthought.

(7) Promote.

When a visitor communicates to you via email, it is best to use a web form. not only will this keep your email address from being picked up by spammers, it will also allow you to ask your customers for their email address and then store that address for later use. Employ the "push/pull" marketing strategy. A visitor coming to your website is the pull, but later you want to push content back to them in the form of a newsletter or other promotional material. Start a mailing list and use it. Invite visitors to sign up. Promotion makes or breaks a business, and as long as you respect the ethical considerations of your mailing list, you should use it.

(8) Don't Operate in a Cocoon.

The internet is a medium which is shared by millions. When you set up your website, don't operate as if you are a self-contained island. Get out there and keep in tune with what is happening on other websites related to your own. Participate in forums. Post links to other websites and ask for a link in return. Form partnerships with other sites if it is appropriate. When it comes to communication, people like personal contacts. Hiding behind general email address like "sales" and "info" is OK as long as there is a way to also email you directly. A company site which allows email direct to the

management is good. Just remember how much you hate calling a company and getting stuck in their phone system. Sometimes you just want to talk to somebody. Give your visitors that ability.

(9) Have a Plan to Attract Repeat Traffic.

Use newsletters, out-going email, contests, forums, clubs, auctions - anything that will cause people to return to your website. When posting links to other websites, don't just send your visitors somewhere else. They may never return. Provide them an exit page. Give them a pop-up when they try to leave your site. Or at the very least make external links open in a new window.

(10) Track Your Visitors

Pay attention to your site's statistics and react accordingly. What are people reading? How are they finding you? Do they just come and leave right from your homepage? How long as they are on your website? Do they return? This data is immensely valuable in fine-tuning your website based on customer needs and wants. Remember, the biggest mistake of any webmaster is designing the site for what THEY want. A successful website is designed for the target audience, not to impress the site's owner.

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