

What Your Website Should Be Doing For You

A Presentation for Business Networking International

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Contact us

dockery design
Hillsborough, NC
27278

919.381.8108
www.dockerydesign.com

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What can a website do for me?

- Free up manpower
- Answer questions at all hours
- Provide directions so people can find you
- Quote your opening hours
- Publicise events or special offers
- Provide your wine list or menu
- Show off your awards
- Show photos of your venue
- Take bookings or advance orders

Your website multiplies the effectiveness of any word of mouth, print, or other advertising—backing you up all the way.

What should my website do for me?

Its not what it can do for you, its what it can do for your customers.

Service! That's what a good web site provides, the same as a good employee. In fact, your web site IS you— your representation of your company for visitors who come to your site. Just as your office does.

Your visitors come to your site to gain information, make comparisons, or to get help. They want to buy or sell without making a mistake. You're there to make them feel "taken care of." Thus, your website's job is to assist customers in making the right decisions.



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Track and Measure Feedback

Use your website to track your visitors and measure their feedback. Here are some of the tracking measures you should be talking to your web designer/builder about. In fact, these should be part of your company's annual or quarterly review.

- How many visitors come to your site
- How many aren't visitors human (i.e. spiders from search engines)
- How many visitors are new vs. old
- How long does each visitor stay
- What do visitors go the most
- What graphics, words, pictures, etc. are generating the most responses
- Which search engines are getting you the best prospects
- Where are customers coming from
- How many pages does the average visitor view
- What are your website rankings
- How much money have you made from the average visitor
- Who are your biggest money-making customers
- If you use PPC, is it working and paying for itself
- Which links are bringing you visitors and are they converting to customers

Your Website Should Encourage People to Act!

The purpose of a website is to encourage action. A successful ecommerce website gets people to spend money. A successful intranet helps people do their work more productively. Your website should have as many calls to action as possible. The more a person acts on your website, the more likely your website is to succeed.

Developing an action-oriented website begins with your homepage. A reader will leave your homepage for three reasons. Firstly, they realize they're in the wrong place. Secondly, they feel there is nothing of interest to them on the rest of the website. Third, it is too complicated or takes too long to find the information they want.

Have a look at the Microsoft homepage. Practically every piece of text on the page is written with the objective of bringing you deeper into the website

A great website will allow people to act in a variety of ways. People should be encouraged to:

- Buy your product, call, or complete some other transaction with you
- Get in touch with you
- Contribute to a discussion forum
- Subscribe to a newsletter
- Fill out a form
- Download something
- Inform someone about your website and its content
- Print out your content

- Link to you
- Republish a selection of your content (where appropriate)
- Mark you on Social Network
- Follow you or connect with you through a Social Network

The above list describes 'action points' on your website. Wherever you design an action point, it should be thoroughly tested with target readers to ensure that it is as easy as possible to complete. Every action point should have a statement encouraging feedback, so as to ensure that it can be constantly refined. It should also be tested regularly, so as to ensure that it is still working properly.

If someone wants to act on your website you've done well. Help them to complete that action in a friendly, clear and simple manner. Then, and only then, is your website achieving its objectives.

Your Website Should Make Money, Not Cost Money

Think about it, successful businesses have well trained, well paid and properly incentivised sales people. Without our sales people we probably wouldn't have a business. You're constantly managing, coaching, and helping your sales people to help you. We measure their success with daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual reports along with performance evaluations and customer feedback metrics. We recognize the importance of their physical dress and appearance, their ability to communicate verbally and in writing, and how cleanly they

submit their orders and follow company practices. We do all this because our sales people are the face of our company and that means that our sales people are an asset we can't afford to mismanage or we'll face serious consequences.

Here are some questions for you and your online sales person:

First, be honest with yourself. Is your web site a star sales person or getting ready to pack their bags for greener pastures?

- Does your website communicate everything about your business that it should?
- Do you measure the website's success (weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually)
- Does your web site have all your current products, services and pricing
- Can your customers find your address, phone, and email address online
- Is your web site ready to take orders and provide a smooth experience doing so?
- Does your website answer questions clearly?
- Does your website talk marketing nonsense that customers neither care about or have time to read (ouch, talk about my weakness!)
- Is your website, professional & suited to your business image?
- How well does your web site sell against your competition?
- Does your web site know of current job openings at your company and always have an eye out for new talent?

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If you answered yes to all those questions congratulations - you're a star and so is your web site. For the rest of us (and I do mean US) it's great to get a wake up call once in a while to remember what's important.

Realistically, a typical small to medium sized business makes their web site when they open their business and then just leaves it. Maybe your site is one of those cut and paste beauties from 1999 that your kid cousin made for you. Or you have one of those cookie cutter web sites a media sales rep put together for free so you'd buy an ad from them in the Yellow Pages or Newspaper. Let's face it, this isn't how you'd treat your star sales person.

I know that comparing a live sales person to a web site is a little extreme. But it's a much better way to think of your site than a static brochure. Wasn't the old point from ten years ago that your website was a sales person that never slept, got sick, or took a day off? Wasn't that a relief. Yes, your web site DOES offer these advantages but you'll never make a star sales person of your web site without investing in the same kind of process, management focus and attention to detail that you use with your sales team.

Should you really bother with all this work? Is it a worth while investment in your time? To sum it up, there are more people online today shopping and buying (both locally and nationally) than the people who DON'T refer to the web in buying situations. The days of ignoring your online sales person and not suffering any consequences are over.

What A Website Can't Do For You

It can't create content or copy automatically. You will need to analyze your business and identify what you want to promote and how you want to say it. The process needs to lead to the discovery of what makes you, your products or services, unique or better than the competition.

Online success is directly linked to how desirable your products or services are, how competitively you price them, and how they are presented. If you offer professional services, you need to present your services in a clear, credible way that sets you apart from the competition. The word credible is especially important. There are too many fly-by-night operators in today's world, who take advantage and run; the Internet is no different. Your image and honesty must be above reproach.

Not just any website will do . . . your website needs to be worthy of your business image. It must be professionally executed to deliver your message at a caliber par excellence. A good web developer should have a background in graphic design, and a desire to keep professional website development costs at a level that will remain affordable. I like to call it 'affordable excellence.'

Excellence is not a skill. It is an attitude.

How to drive traffic:

So you've got a great website. How can you make it more popular, rise higher in the search engines, and generally help to make your website known?

- Search engine placement
- writing articles and newsletters
- Pay Per Click advertising (like google adwords)
- Comment on forums and blogs. Add your website into your comments or signatures
- Press Releases
- Write an Ebook
- Blog, Guest Blog (write for another) or video Blog about your products or services
- Run a free teleseminar or webseminar
- Sponsor or co-sponsor an event
- get listed on local services and maps like google and yahoo

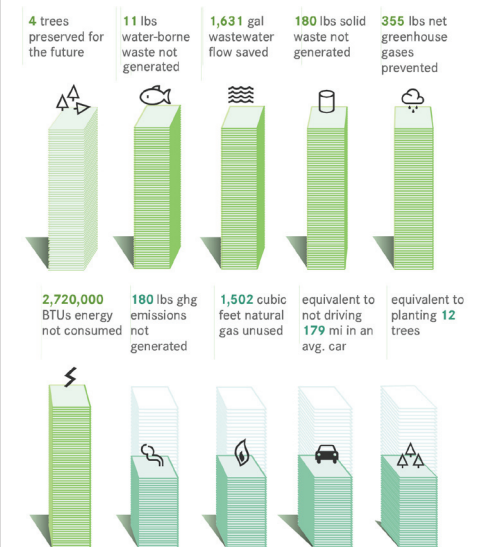
About the author.

Tyler Dockery is a designer, consultant, and educator with specialties in print production and web mechanics. Tyler is a member of MENSA and Arts Commissioner for Orange County, North Carolina, and the Lead Creative at Dockery Design. He has worked in the field of Design with such prestigious firms as Environmental Design in Georgia, as well as Generate Design, and Knotts and Associates in North Carolina.

Visit the Dockery Design team at www.dockerydesign.com

Just how "Green" is this?

Rather than print 10,000 copies of this whitepaper, I have chosen to produce it electronically. Because of this method, the environment has benefitted as follows:



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