

How You Know Your Web Site Sucks and What to Do About It

A Special Report by the Internet Marketing Agency

Inside:

- The right and wrong reasons to invest in a Web site
- Common mistakes businesses make with their Web site
- Seven ways to measure your Web site's effectiveness

Internet Marketing Agency

(480) 648-7586

www.internetmarketingagency.com

© Copyright 2009, Internet Marketing Agency. All Rights Reserved.

IMA
INTERNET
MARKETING
AGENCY

Maybe You Shouldn't Have a Web Site After All

Why do you have a Web site?

It's a question commonly asked of businesses these days. Many respond with something generic like, "to build our business," or "to make more money." Others admit their motivation for having a Web site is simply because they feel they need one. They justify their investment by saying "we have one because we have to have one, right?" Responses vary, but the consensus is that too many Web sites lack a clear purpose and set of goals.

It's estimated that there are between 108 and 500 million Web sites currently on the Internet. A miniscule fraction of these actually drive revenue or generate qualified leads. Yet companies are often spending thousands or tens of thousands of dollars developing a Web site.

"Too many Web sites lack a clear purpose and set of goals."

The odds are stacked against you.

Finally, without offending those who consider themselves "Web site design" experts, the fact is that there are no barriers to entry into the business of Web site design. Anybody who has access to a computer can be in the Web site design business tomorrow.

What does that mean? There are a lot of Web sites out there that fall short and a lot of money is spent to create them.

This leads to the next problem.

Most companies rarely consider the cost of developing a Web site, good or bad, versus the potential return on the investment.

- *Would you hire a sales person without any hope that he or she would be profitable for your company?*
- *Would you design a brochure that has a potentially negative impact on your reputation or company image?*
- *Would you place an ad in a newspaper, magazine or publication knowing that it wouldn't generate a single lead?*

And yet companies often invest thousands of dollars on Web sites that don't produce revenue, don't generate leads and actually make them appear less reputable.

Not every Web site is intended to be an e-commerce store or have a revenue generating function. However, every Web site should produce quality leads.

If not, then why waste your time or money?

The Importance of a Well Produced Web Site

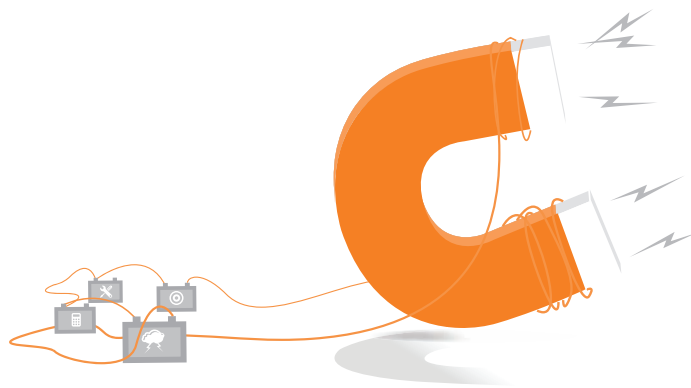
A good, well designed and executed Web site can be instrumental in, and often the cornerstone of, a business's revenue strategy.

A good Web site comes with an Internet marketing strategy that, as a whole, acts as a magnet, drawing prospects in then engaging them with quality content presented in an easy to use, intuitive user interface. Providing a quality user experience with your Web site will produce quality leads and convert them to sales online, all while supporting the brand and building the reputation of the company.

Consumer reliance on the Internet for information, entertainment, community and shopping continues to grow every year. The world of business and commerce online is booming. It stands to reason that building a user-centered, results-focused Web site should be included in any sound business strategy.

Digital Magnet: Web site revenue strategy

- *Draw interest*
- *Engage prospects*
- *Convert leads*



Mistakes Businesses Make When Considering or Revising a Web Site

Justifying the Investment

Just as many companies make the mistake of developing a Web site without a strategy and some clearly defined goals and objectives, many also invest money, time and resources into improving an existing Web site with the same lack of direction.

Investing in a new or upgraded Web site might be inspired by boredom with an outdated site, an updated corporate identity, a competitor's Web site or because of an "everyone is doing it so we should too" mentality. Investing in a new Web site or a redesign is a costly and time consuming venture. If it's not and you're thinking about a quick and cheap solution, you should consider if it's worth what it may cost you in reputation and image.

Consider your reasons for an upgrade, redesign or new Web site carefully.

- *Do they justify the investment?*
- *Will the results provide a return on that investment?*

The Right Reasons for Investing in a Web Site or Redesign

Conversion and Profitability on the Web

Very simply, a Web site should attract and engage prospects and convert them into customers. Its primary goal should be to produce measurable results in lead generation, conversion and profitability. It should incite users to engage with your brand. It should get them where they want to go quickly. It should nurture them through the sales cycle. It should cater to each user's individual needs and start a dialogue with your prospects. **Having a Web site for any other reason is simply a waste of time, resources and money.**



So how do you know if your Web site sucks?

There are seven criteria that we look at which, if missing, poorly developed or executed, will cut into potential profits and return on investment.

1. Strategy
2. Design
3. Traffic
4. Optimization
5. Technology
6. Development
7. Conversion

1. Strategy

As suggested before, most Web sites lack clearly defined goals and objectives.

Without this, it's difficult for a Web designer to build an effective Web site. What results is a focus on form over function. Aesthetics become the primary focus, regardless of whether it's usable or not.

The best Web sites are usable and engaging. They generate new leads. They convert those leads into sales. They support the brand tenets. They make money.

Repeat: A good Web site makes money.

If you're surprised to learn that, or if you find fault with it, you're not alone. That's why so many Web sites fail—they don't contribute to revenue.

Even if your Web site is not an e-commerce store and you have no products or services to sell online, can it still be making you money?

Absolutely. Lead generation is an essential function of any good Web site. If your Web site is generating quality leads for your business, it's making money.

What if your site is purely informational? What are you hoping will happen when people visit your site and gather information? Maybe you want it to make people think, "Hey, I like these guys. I'll call them to do business." This makes your Web site part of your conversion process. If you generate a lead offline and speak with that prospect on the phone, she might say, "I want to know more about your company." You might say, "Check out our Web site."

If she goes to the Web site and thinks, "Wow, I need to do business with these guys!" versus "Hum, not so impressive after all," you've got a Web site that makes

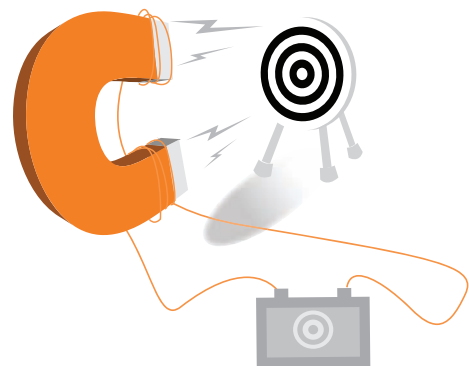
money. It supports your sales process. If your Web site sucks, you may simply lose the opportunity or have to do a lot of explaining to save the deal, in which case the Web site is actually costing you money.

The bottom line: A good Web site will make you money. A bad Web site could cost you dearly.

If your Web site is not making you money, then your Web site sucks.

Key Questions:

- *What are the primary goals of your Web site?*
- *What are secondary and tertiary goals?*
- *What are the measurable objectives toward those goals? Can a Web designer and a Web developer understand and effectively execute this strategy?*
- *Does your Web site make money?*



2. Design

Great Web site design does not mean eye candy.

If the creative doesn't perform, the design doesn't work. A poorly designed Web site can actually have a negative impact on your bottom line and your brand image. Each creative asset plays a role in user experience. Usability can be tested and measured. If usability tests determine that visitors are engaged with your Web site, we call this successful creative performance.

Consider the last time you searched for a vendor. For any given service, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of potential providers. How do you decide who to call? If you're like most people, you go with your first impression or your gut feeling. Content should be high quality and user friendly, meaning easily scannable and quickly digestible. Many people who design Web sites rely on personal aesthetic preferences rather than what prospects will want and be able to use.

If you have a poorly designed Web site, then your website sucks.

Key Questions:

- *Do you measure your Web site's effectiveness in terms of design?*
- *How do you determine what content to publish or what images and creative assets to feature?*

“Web design should be user centric, well planned and organized with optimized content and reflective of your brand.”



3. Traffic

Effective Web design does more than keep people engaged and convert visitors to customers—it actually drives traffic to your Web site.

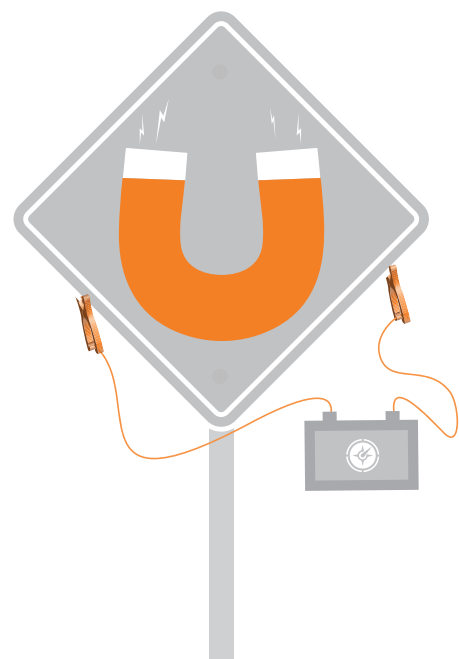
Having useful, usable, optimized content that's well organized and properly coded is the single most important factor in traffic generation. It ensures that when one of the millions of Web users out there is looking for what you have, they'll find you and see your Web site. If you have a stellar Web site but nobody sees it, it's essentially worthless. A strategic Web site design includes an integrated Internet marketing campaign to help generate traffic.

If your current Web site is not getting adequate traffic, then your Web site sucks.

Key Question:

- *How effective is your strategy to drive new traffic to your Web site? Are people able to find you consistently?*

“Web site traffic is the most crucial part to having an online business and is a key to the success of your online business.”



4. Optimization

The Internet is a dynamic and evolving digital world.

The way people search for information and how they interact with it once they find it has evolved, while the quantity of information online grows exponentially. This fact demands that search engines update their algorithms for indexing and ranking Web sites for search results. Keeping up with these changes and optimizing accordingly is crucial to being found by your best prospects.

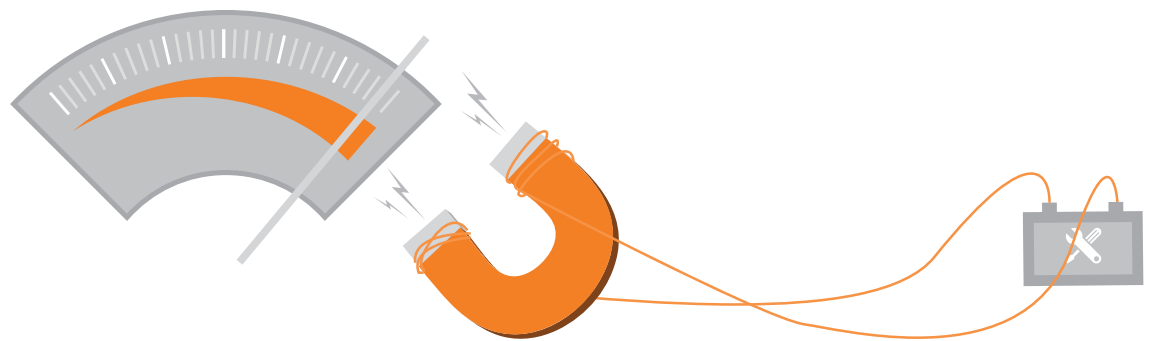
But optimization is not limited to search engine optimization. It also includes organizing the content on your Web site in strategic ways to maximize usability and creative performance. And this is also a dynamic process with continual testing and adjusting to get the most conversions possible.

If you are not engaging in effective, ongoing and dynamic Web site optimization, then your Web site sucks.

Key Question:

- *How often are you testing and changing the content, design and layout of your Web site to increase conversions?*

“If your site doesn’t rank in the top 10 or 20 results when doing a keyword search, your target audience won’t be able to find you.”



5. Technology

Most Web sites are static. The content rarely, if ever, changes.

Static content affects traffic generation over time because search engines have nothing new to index. Worst yet, static content also reduces the number of return visitors to your Web site. Having a blog simply isn't enough. A good technology strategy includes a solid content management system, supporting easy updating of content to keep your site fresh and dynamic.

Technology must also support usability. The user experience is greatly affected by pop ups, transaction glitches, error messages, etc. Technology makes your Web site functional. If your Web site is not dependably functional, you lose your prospect's confidence in your brand.

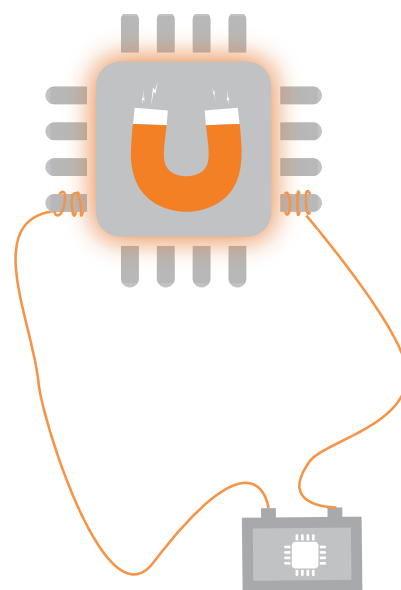
Your internal and back end functionality must also work dependably. If your content management system isn't intuitive and user friendly, your content won't get updated. A static Web site is an invisible Web site.

If your Web site is not easy to use, internally and externally, then your Web site sucks.

Key Question:

- *How easy is it for you or your associates to upload new content to your Web site?*
- *When was the last time the content on your site was updated? Can visitors easily experience and navigate your site without technological hiccups?*

“Technology makes your Web site functional. If your Web site is not dependably functional, you lose your prospect's confidence in your brand.”



6. Development

Too often, Web sites are separate from other core business systems.

Most Web sites sit on a rented server space with no performance tracking, no integration with other business technologies, and no way to draw on its data as a resource. Even Web sites that are designed for lead generation and online sales often operate independently, split from internal records and client relationship managers (CRM). A good Web site development strategy includes functionality to capture leads, generate revenue and develop relationships all while integrating that information across divisions with your company CRM, accounting, operations, marketing and customer support departments. An effective development strategy implemented the right way will save you thousands of dollars through increased efficiency.

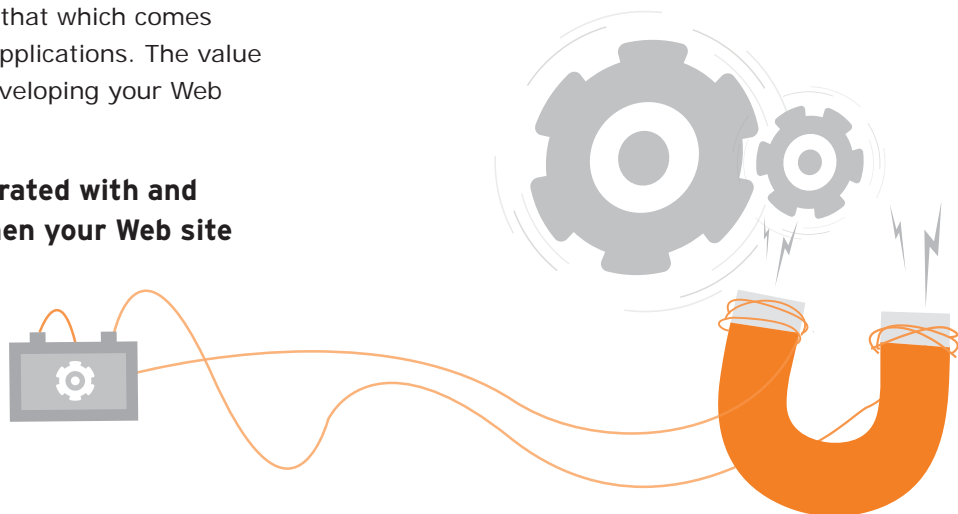
Most businesses run their departmental divisions as silos. The information is fragmented, duplicated, isolated within the systems of each business unit. Accounting, IT, Sales, Client Services, HR—they each have separate stores of information in multiple formats and versions. Some data is exclusive to a certain business unit, but most overlap. It's necessary for all business units to have access to the same accurate and up-to-date data, especially that which comes from your lead-capturing Web applications. The value of integration on this level in developing your Web presence is exponential.

If your Web site is not integrated with and across all business units, then your Web site sucks.

Key Questions:

- *Does your Web site integrate across all business divisions?*
- *Are there duplications, multiple versions of records, or separate software managing the production of different units?*
- *Are any business opportunities slipping through the cracks?*

“A good Web site development strategy includes functionality to capture leads, generate revenue and develop relationships .”



7. Conversion

It all comes down to conversion.

Is your Web site making money? If you've gotten all six of the above accounted for perfectly—you have ample traffic to your site, it's user-friendly and intuitive, the content is engaging and creative performance is up—what next? Is it converting prospects into customers? Is it making money? Whether conversion means capturing a lead or making a sale online, it's the ultimate goal of any Web site. Conversion optimization is a crucial element in any Internet marketing campaign. It's the most important step.

If your Web site is not converting well, then your Web site sucks.

“Is your Web site making money?”



So, What's Next?

If the information presented above has shown that your Web site may very well suck. Don't feel bad.

Most do. It's nothing personal. It's about doing what's best for your business. It's about your Web site making money. So what should you do?

Call us for a free, no obligation assessment of your Web site. We promise to be honest. We may ask a lot of hard questions, but we'll do so to uncover the problems and present you with the solutions based on our proven Digital Magnet methodology. If we aren't absolutely convinced that we can boost the return on your Internet marketing investment, we'll be honest about that too. If we can help, we'll prove it.

At that point, the ball is in your court.

Call us for a free, no obligation assessment of your Web site.

The Internet Marketing Agency
Phone: (480) 648-7586