

Ensure your website is a World Wide Winner



BY ERIC CAWLEY

Websites are the one type of technology every business must have. Without one, a business lacks credibility, the ability to build its reputation and a

competitive edge against other businesses. Cost-effective advertising, sales and customer service also suffer.

In some cases, having a poorly designed website can be just as bad, or worse, than having no website at all.

For example: I once had a client who insisted on having a number of website features that had no discernible meaning and stood out

like sore thumbs. Using data from reliable case studies, I tried to convince the business owner (to no avail) that the owner's concepts would reduce the amount of time people spent on the website.

Sure enough, six months later, the owner wondered why the website's bounce rate — the percentage of home page visitors who left, rather than continuing on to view other pages

within the same site — was dramatically increasing.

In other cases, business owners rely on the advice and/or assistance of webmasters to build their websites. Although this is appropriate, most webmasters are typically well-trained in programming, not marketing. This knowledge deficit is unfortunately very evident in many websites.

To ensure your website is as good as it can be, evaluate your direct competitors' websites and others in your industry. You should be able to answer these

questions:

- Which websites pull up near the top of the search results?
- What is compelling about these websites?
- How developed is their search-engine optimization (SEO)?
- How do they keep their websites' content fresh?
- What is their search engine rank for specific keywords?
- If they have blogs or social media accounts, how often do they post to them?
- How do their sites facilitate the buying process?

You may also want to visit various free, online

website-audit programs, like marketing.grader.com. Plug in your domain name and those of your competitors. See what's being done right, and what needs attention.

The saying is true: You never get a second chance to make a first impression. Make sure your most public form of technology — your website — exceeds the expectations of its visitors.

Eric Cawley is president of Complete Marketing Solutions, Meridian. eric@completemarketing.us; (208) 440-6754