

3 Mistakes Companies Make With Web sites

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When the Web was young, there were no rules and making money on the Web was a pipe dream. Times change; these days your Web sites need to contribute to your bottom line. It needs to help you sell more or help you better service your customers. If your Web site is not helping you make money then take a look at these 3 common mistakes and see if any apply to you.

1: Not knowing why they have a Web site.

People visit Web sites because they are looking for something. If you say, 'I Sell Blue Widgets' and they are in the market for blue widgets then you are reaching them. If you sell blue widgets but your Web site says "Here's a message from our CEO" then you won't reach them. Make sure that the point of your Web site is clear throughout the site. As they say in politics, 'Stay On Message'. You get 10 seconds for a visitor to understand what you do and care enough not to go on to the next site. Make sure that your entire Web staff understands the point of your Web site before starting to work on it. Work with your copywriter and designer to make sure that your message is concise, correct, and consistent.

Remember: If they don't understand, they won't buy.

2: Not knowing their audience.

Ok, so you have something to say. Do you know who you are talking to? The message you use to address a 20-something is not the same message you would use when talking to a 60-something. As with traditional advertising it is important to know your audience. Remember, your message is not just your content; it's your 'look-and-feel', your navigation and your choice of colors. Work with your designer to identify your target audience and design for them.

Remember: If you can't reach them you can't sell to them.

3: Not understanding the medium.

I was recently met with a client that insisted that the best use of their Web site was to recreate their coffee-table book for their on-line users. It's a mistake that many companies make. We had to explain that the dynamics of the Web are different than that of print. The resolution at which it is read, the place that it is read, and even the reasons it is read are all different from that of a book. You can put some of the text on-line for people to read or augment it with up-to-date information; but it's difficult to recreate the rich look and feel as well as the portability of a good book. Don't try and re-create a successful ad from another medium on the Web. Use the Web to augment other mediums. Provide your users with more depth and a richer interface than you can in other mediums.

Remember: Understand the power and the limits of the Web before beginning.