

Created by: Edward F. Nesta

## Getting back to Basics with your Website

Is your website a marketing tool, useful and effective, or just a flash in the pan? With tools like the Internet and a website available to every company you wonder why the attention to their customer is not their number one focus.

Where did we go wrong with our website? Why is it not yielding the results we had planned, or what we were looking for?

This is just the tip of the iceberg for companies whose single biggest marketing tool is their website. It is well documented, and even more so now that the USA is in the midst a few financial difficulties, that roughly 75% of jobs are created by small companies. How do small companies continue to exist and compete with a Business-to-Business (B2B) or Business-to-Consumer (B2C) model? Well, we have the Internet and the existence of a company website to thank. But, not everyone is reaping the rewards that they should. Many websites still lead with technology and have not stepped back to understand the basics and what customers want.

So, what are a few of the landmines that companies continue to step on?

How about the use of flash technology for their website development? Okay, you say that this is a very well known problem and that very few companies are falling into the flash technology trap - wrong. I have spoken with numerous companies over the past 10 months that are buried within the flash phenomenon. Having already spent their approved website money and not completely understanding what is happening to their Internet presence, companies seem to be frozen with no ability to move forward. I worked with one company whose website was what I would call a 'stealth website' that was flying under the radar of the top internet search engines. The site was entirely built on flash technology and it had no information available to be cataloged by the search engines. So, for all intensive purposes it might as well not exist. To make matters worse, the website development company submitted a maintenance contract to the website owners for monthly optimizing of the website that they built with no optimization within it; nice work if you can get it. The flash subject could be a separate 100 page paper in itself, but rest assured I will not venture that deep at this time.

I believe that the single most important step you should take when looking at a new or redesigned website is to first solicit input from a website marketing expert and not a technologist [website designer]. Top notch website development companies also have marketing arms to bring to the table for customers so that the marketing aspects are factored in before the programming of the website, but this type of company may be a bit more expensive than you can afford. What you are looking for is a framework of your business and how it will function on the Internet which will be critical in the design of the website. In addition, you should receive an overview of the technology optimizing requirements and that Search Engine Optimizing is more about marketing and positioning than it is about technology.

Following this line of thought, develop a logical model of what your website should be before starting on the physical aspects, this discussion has helped companies work through internal business process challenges (landmines) as they map out how the website will handle them. It is amazing on how long internal processes continue on as is and untouched within companies before someone asks the question, Okay, how do you want the website to handle this? I have taken part in discussions with companies regarding what was thought to be a simple business process that ends up becoming a complete process redesign. However, in most cases, the business processes were reviewed prior to a website being designed and built, thus saving a lot of money and frustration on website redesigns.

Other landmines that catch companies are: websites that are built for information and not with the basic in mind. Basics such as, "How do I communicate with my customer?," "How easy is it to find products and information?," "Is my brand and product experience consistent with other materials and mediums that I am using?," and lastly, "Am I working on a relationship that I can move forward and work with?" Your website should always focus on the basics and if you are doing these correctly, you can evolve and incorporate other new Internet Marketing concepts seamlessly. Why do I say seamlessly? Because, you will know your customer with regards to what they are looking for and where to find them; these are two points that are at the center of most of the new Internet Marketing tools like Web 2.0.

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How about the companies who were on the leading edge with regards to websites, they had one of the first sites up on the Internet, and now can boast of having been through 2, 3, or more changes over the past 10+ years. So, what is the next step? Well, the next step is less reaction and more focus towards stabilization, which for companies who have spent a lot of money and time on their website will welcome with open arms and closed checkbooks. The next step is the same as dealing with someone who walks into a showroom or picks up a brochure on your services, you have to find the most direct route to get the customer to understand your product as well as the real issues, and how you can help them. In the past, websites were built as the point of convergence for a promotion, with all the materials sent out channeling the attention back to the website, and when the promotion was done you reworked the website. Now, the Internet has taken on a different persona, it has become a window that customers can open and close as they wish; it is all about control by the customer. So, where is the stabilization? This is the back to the basics of building a relationship with your current and new customers. Customers are becoming more and more savvy, so don't insult them with streaming video that starts playing the minute they get on your site, or different boxes of information that pop up as they scroll through your site, let the customer determine what and when they want to see something. I am not saying to exclude these elements, yes, provide the enticement for them, but let them decide on the course of action.

I thank you for your continued support of Luxury Experience, and as always, your comments are welcome, so please send comments to: [Publisher@L-E-Company.com](mailto:Publisher@L-E-Company.com).

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