

Web Tips – Getting Started

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So, you have decided to have a web site created...what next? Here are some special keys that will assist you with important elements of your web site development.

First of all, **consider the purpose of your site.** What are the results that you expect your site to produce, and within what time frame? List the expected value your site will create and by when. By having you bring this to the table in the beginning, we can help you create a site that will meet your specific needs, and produce the results that you are looking for. Possible site purposes might be: increase our sales by a certain dollar amount within a certain time period, lower order-processing costs, build a customer database, reach a new market, be first to market with a new product, generate more leads via the web and e-mail, collect customer satisfaction data, distribute up-to-the-minute information to employees worldwide, communicate and impress brand image, be the first local business in my industry to have our own site, make it easier for people to do business with us, and the list goes on and on...

Next **consider the specific identity of your target market.** What distinguishes the customers that buy from you -- the people that need your products and services -- the people whose problems your company solves? Keep that demographic group in mind as you plan and develop your site. Give them MORE than they expect from you, and you will develop a loyal client base that will keep your business growing exponentially via word-of-mouth advertising. Use this thinking as you develop and gather the materials for your web site. What will your target market be looking to see from you? Your site should communicate who you are as a business effectively to your target market, and most of all, **invite them to do business with you now.**

Along with us, **consider the architecture and user-interface of your site.** What will make your site easy to use? What will make you easy to do business with? The design of your web site is crucial. You want to create a site that will keep your users attention for the maximum time possible, and keep them coming back to your site as often as possible. Without an inviting, informative site, users may loose interest – or worse yet, with a poor design, they may become frustrated with trying to navigate your site and decide never to return, or not to do business with you. You will want a web site architecture that best organizes your information to achieve the desired business results.

Start thinking about how the marketing of your site fits into your overall marketing plan. Without an effective marketing campaign for your web site, no one will know about your site; needless to say, your site will get few "hits," and you won't be generating very much new business with your new tool. Yikes! Commit now, to having a dynamic marketing strategy for your site. If your site budget is not the size of Mount Everest, not too worry! When it comes to web sites, quality is more important than size, because you can add to the size any time. Improving the quality is a bit

We appreciate having the opportunity to contribute to the success of your business!

more complex, but sometimes a facelift can be just the thing to increase the traffic and productivity of your site.

If you are an entrepreneur, and haven't done this already, **crystallize your thoughts about who you are as a company**. If you do not already have a mission and vision statement, a written set of company values, and a target market in mind for your products or services, this is the time to distill all of those ideas down and wordsmith them into some very succinct statements (or hire a company like us to wordsmith for you!) As you are eliminating the "fluff" from the truly important elements, please remember that these decisions are not forever – you can change them any time you like. These will just be your guiding principles for now, until you approach the next level of your business. As every entrepreneur knows, at each key juncture in the development of your business, you may shift certain elements of your focus to allow for the greatest profitability. Grant yourself permission to make decisions now, for now. This is the good news about web sites. You can always change them. And you should plan to keep your site fresh, in order to keep your customers interested and coming back.

Gather the existing text and graphic materials that you want to utilize for your site. Choose the items that really represent what you want to communicate about your business, or have these developed by us.

Choose a designer that is attentive to your needs, and committed to producing the best results for you. You want a designer that has a commitment to doing high-quality work, and has a good eye for design. Look at the work of potential designers, and notice whether they communicate effectively with graphics, whether their page layouts look clean and balanced – not busy and overwhelming. The placement of each piece of text and graphics should have a specific purpose. Be aware of the navigability of their sites that you visit. Is it easy to find the information you are looking for? And is it easy to order or find information about the products and services being offered? Is it easy to BUY from their sites?

Ask lots of questions if web terminology is new to you. Be willing to say you don't know, so you can find out answers! Don't let "computerese" intimidate you. Have us explain any elements that do not make sense to you. We are very good at educating people about what the possibilities are on the web, and are happy to have you call and ask questions. We want to be your company's web people.

For more information, education, or a quote for your web site project, please call (310) 371-3275, or e-mail us at info@rlwd.biz.

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