



Your Website Coach



Business Website Basics: Part I – 7/29/05

Most business owners know that the Web holds answers for just about every conceivable question they may have regarding owning and maintaining a website. The question that isn't as easily answered is: *How does one know what they don't know?* The holes that are left after reading an article summarizing web tips and information are the holes into which many business owners fall because they weren't aware that preliminary steps had to be taken before implementing the information found in an article. Further, as a web developer, it is easy for me to forget that areas of web development that may be routine to me, are very foreign to a client. It is my hope that I can become a resource for website owners who have questions but are not sure where to get the answers. To facilitate this, I feel a Question & Answer format will be most useful for those interested in owning and maintaining a website.

For my maiden voyage, I've asked Stella Woitulewicz of *Info-to-Action Coaching, LLC* (www.info-to-action.com) to supply me with questions she has about developing and maintaining a website.

Q. Why should I invest time and money in developing a website? I get all my business from word of mouth.

A. The most important reason for having a web presence is that it allows you to play on the same global field. These days, having a URL (web address) is as commonplace as having a business phone number. Most people are using the Web to do their reconnaissance **before** they make contact with a business. Even if they have every intention of entering your brick and mortar store, they want to scope you out first. A URL is also being used as a validation tool; your customers are now *expecting* you to be on the Web. Someone may first hear of you by "word of mouth" and next, they are most likely checking out your website. Not having a website can change their perception of your company.

Q. I'm thinking of hiring a web designer. What qualities and experiences should I look for?

A. One of the very first things I would do is go to their website, look at their portfolio and ask yourself these questions:

- Do you like what you see?
- Are testimonials posted for you to read?
- Can you contact previous clients to get their feedback? (Very valuable!)
- Is there a company history or bio that gives you important information about their experience in web development?

If all the above points have passed *your* inspection, then make sure **you feel** you have clear communication with your developer. I would not get hung up on whether or not they've worked with a business similar to yours, that shouldn't matter because you are supplying them with the content. Instead, focus on the ease of communication because in any project, communication is **key**. If you encounter a web developer who does not post a portfolio, you should wonder "why". You should also be careful of those who "build websites on the side" or "as a hobby". They may not be able to make your business their focus, nor have the experience and training under their belt to bring your ideas to fruition.