



Your Website Coach



DIY: What to Put in Your Site – 11/30/06

Clearly, the previous column on “building your own website” is a topic that has been in the minds of a number of you judging by the questions and comments that followed that printing. René Goldsby of STARStrategies, LLC summarizes the question well; “I will be using a web developer to build my site, but before I arrange a meeting, I want to have a plan in place. How do I determine *what* pages I need for my business?”

I must first congratulate you René, for understanding how important it is for **you** to have the plan in place. It is reasonable for you to expect guidance from your web developer, but know that your developer expects guidance from you too! Having a plan in place that includes: site pages, navigation method and layout requirements; will really expedite the creation of your new website.

To determine what pages should be in your website, visit competitor sites and look at the pages they’ve included. You aren’t concerned with the aesthetics of the site at this point; rather you are only looking at what pages they felt were important. Look at these pages from two perspectives: as a business owner and as a customer. From the business angle – do you feel that the pages you see are delivering important information to the visitor? Is that data required in order for the consumer to make an informed decision? From the consumer angle – are you finding what you need on the site? Do the pages clearly identify the data you are seeking? Do you feel like you’d be ready to call and do business based on what you’ve gleaned from the site?

It’s important that you not fill your site with unnecessary pages just because you can. Instead, make every page information-packed and avoid redundancy across the site. For instance, I often see websites that have About Us and Company History pages. They put their family fishing pictures in About Us and a lengthy saga in Company History. The best solution is to choose one, do a complete, but summarized history on your business, and include interesting facts like your passion for what you do. A mission statement would fit well on this page, too. Instead of a Contact Us page, you may choose to include your contact info on every page in the **same** spot. If you are a service oriented business, a Frequently Asked Questions page is very helpful to your visitor as long as it contains *frequently asked questions*. If your site is going to have more than 10 pages and/or contains a lot of information, a site map is a must-have. FYI – site maps are useful to search engines too!

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