

# Biz BUZZ



## You Will Be Judged On How You Look

If your website doesn't portray the right image for your business it could be failing you. More and more consumers are searching for information online before deciding to make a purchase and your website is often your best chance to make a good first impression. It's actually better to have no website at all, than to have one that makes your business look unprofessional and has visitors questioning your credibility. Things to remember when designing your site include:

- **A domain name is essential.** A short, memorable domain name makes it easier for customers to find you and provides you with a professional email address.
- **Stay on target.** Your website and all of its elements (photos, graphics, colours, text) should be designed and developed with your target audience in mind.
- **Your website should be attractive.** Websites are judged by content and layout. If your site isn't visually appealing visitors will be less eager to return regardless of how interesting or useful your site is.
- **Keep your navigation simple.** To ensure information is easy to find, your navigation should follow a logical process and buttons need to be properly labeled, easily identified and in the same place on every page.
- **Keep it consistent.** Your website should have a consistent look, feel, and design. Keep the colours, fonts, and images consistent throughout the entire site. Your logo, buttons, and body text should be in the same position on every page.
- **If it wiggles, flashes or pops, stay away from it.** Avoid animated graphics, flash, splash pages, and pop-up windows; they slow down your website, distract from your message and annoy visitors. Consider the fact that none of the biggest companies, or the most successful websites use them (look at Amazon.com or Ebay.com).
- **Make it easy to read.** Reading from a computer monitor is straining to the eye. Make it easier by using black text on a white background. If you must use a background make sure it is subtle, with few graphic elements, and provides a strong contrast to the text.
- **Size does matter.** Visitors will not read through huge blocks of text or long pages. Keep your web pages short and brief. Use bullet points, pull-quotes, and descriptive headers to break-up long sections of text. If you have a lot to say, consider dividing long pages into several smaller pages, or providing a short summary with a link to download a PDF document that can be printed out and read later.
- **You can't highlight everything.** Use bold, italics, pull-quotes, and highlights sparingly. On each page, pick only one key point that you want emphasized and make sure it stands out. Trying to direct the eye to several different points will be counter-productive. Remember the underline is for links only, visitors expect underlined words to be links to another web page.
- **Keep it fresh.** Because the web is so accessible and cost-effective, visitors are expecting your website to be current. Frequently updating your site is critical.

It's true the content of your website is important, but the look of your site and how your message is communicated is equally important. Have your site designed by a professional and make sure your customers get your message and judge you as worthy of doing business with.



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