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**SMALL
BUSINESS
WEBSITES:
YOUR QUESTIONS
ANSWERED**

One thing in today's business world that we have to accept is that technology and the Internet play a critical role in our businesses and everyday lives. We can order pizza, do our grocery shopping, and pay our employees with just a few clicks of a mouse. Even more interesting, we can do it from our cell phones. How about that for technology!

When you need directions, a phone number, or want to find out if a certain business offers the services you're looking for, or if you want the price of such services then you go to the company's website.

If you are looking for a place to spend your marketing money, look no further. A website is definitely the place to put it. I did a quick survey of 10 random businesses I contacted from the local Chamber of Commerce and asked them two questions, first, do you have a website? Second, if so, when was the last time you updated it? Are you ready for the numbers? 7 out of 10 did NOT have a website and the other 3 have not updated their website within the last 6 months. Most small businesses think they cannot afford a website and that they could spend that money elsewhere, this is a huge mistake. More people are searching the Internet each day looking for information. A website will give your customers 24/7 access to information about your products and services. Believe it or not, it has been reported that some people will not even do business with you if you do not have a website. Here are a few examples of what a website can do for your company:

- Provide testimonials from satisfied customers.
- Show your menu.
- Advertise specials and promotions.
- Provide directions so customers can find you.
- Provide photos of your work.
- Sell products and services.
- Fundraising efforts

Your Questions Answered:

1 - Websites are too expensive and I cannot afford it. Depending on the definition of "too expensive", this may very well be true for some, but having a website developed is affordable. You can have a basic informational website created for less than \$800.

2 - I am not technology savvy; I don't know how to update a website. This is a fair statement. If you have a website, you definitely want to keep it updated and you don't have to be technology savvy to accomplish this. You can have someone update the website for you for a small monthly fee, or you can do it yourself. There are some simple tools on the market that can make this task easier for the non-technical person.

3 - I don't need a website. If you think you don't need a website in today's world, you are sadly mistaken. If you choose not to have a website, you are not completely tapping into your customer base and in some cases potential clients will not do business with you because of your lack of an online presence.

4 - Who cares if I have a website? Your customers care. If you do not have a website, you will be doing your customers a disservice. They want their questions answered about your products and services and to see if your product or service is a fit for what they are looking to purchase. Information is a very powerful resource.

5 - I already have a marketing strategy and it has worked for years. That's great. But what if you can make it better? There is no limit to success. Coupling other strategies with a web strategy can be a winning combination.

6 - I don't sell things online, why would I need a website? Your company may not sell merchandise online, but you do sell something. The something you are selling is probably being sought after by a large portion of people searching the Internet. People want immediate results and a website is a fast and easy way to provide your visitors with the right information.

7 - I prefer the "personal touch." Our new customers come to us because of the personal service they receive. A website seems so impersonal. It won't add any value to "our customer base." I often hear this. Websites are not meant to develop a relationship with a potential customer, they are meant to engage your customer and extend the relationship. The website will provide your existing and potential customers with information which will bring them to you and then you can provide the personal touch and build your relationship.

8 - We already have all the customers we want, we are too busy already. I don't know if this is a good thing or a bad thing. In any case, websites are not just for getting new customers; they have a variety of different purposes. In this case, I guess the proper application would be to help keep all of the existing customers this business has. Websites are a great tool to communicate to your existing customers about your specials, upcoming events, return policies, and other valuable information.

9 - OK, I need a website, what do I do now? First, define a purpose and goal for your new website. The design should include basic information describing who you are, where you are, what you do, and how to contact you, or it can be as comprehensive as you wish. Next you will need someone to develop and host your new website. Finally, you will need to develop a plan on how to update your website as well as how often.

Are you a small business without a website or haven't updated yours in months? If so, take a few minutes and think about how your business could be helped by creating or updating a website. New business usually doesn't fall in your lap; you have to go get it. Having an updated website is an affordable way to get new business.



Thank you for reading this article

If you have any questions on the contents of this article, feel free to contact Bill Campbell at bcampbell@balancelogic.com or 301-396-8455.



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Small Business Websites: Your Questions Answered

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