

WHY?

FIFTY REASONS WHY YOU NEED A WEB SITE

WorkingDialogue

Eight years into the 21st century
and there are still people wondering
whether their business or organization
really needs a Web site.

50
Here are fifty reasons why.

Promote Your Services

It is hard to showcase services in a store, or office. The Web allows you to introduce the service, the professionals providing the service, and how several services can complement each other.

Promote Your Products

A Web site allows you to showcase your products for everyone to see. You can explain the benefits, compare it with other products, or show testimonials of happy customers that already bought the product.

Promote Your Organization

People buy from people. People support organizations and causes that they believe in. A Web site is a fantastic tool to promote an organization and build trust. A well-developed Web site can convey trust and credibility, making people to buy from you, or support you.

Promote Yourself

Whether you are a professional looking for a job or an expert in your industry, you can show that to the whole world by having a comprehensive Web site. The use of an associated email address also increases perceived professionalism. A letter from someone@me-the-expert.com will certainly open more doors than an email from a hotmail account.

Promote Your Ideas

Political campaigns are now all over the Web. A Web site can be a powerful way to promote your ideas and build a following of like-minded people. Or you can just write online journals ("blogs") to vent some of your thoughts and concerns.

Promote Your Events

Have a fundraising event? Want to promote your business with seminars, workshops or a tradeshow? You will increase awareness when you create a Web site for the event. Show dates, programs, prices, and driving directions – to name but a few features that will be greatly appreciated by your target audience.

Sell Your Events

Want to take it a step further? You may even want to consider selling (or pre-ordering) tickets for your events on a Web site. Shorter line-ups, less expenses, increased attendance.

Sell Your Organization

Whether "selling your organization" is a figure of speech (to convince people) or a true selling effort, a Web site can be considered a very valuable asset to your organization.

Sell Your Services

A Web site can be a great tool to not only promote, but also actually sell your services. You can automate many repetitive tasks, such as registration, billing, collecting, and much more. Whether you are selling consulting services or speaking engagements: you can effectively do it with a Web site.

Sell Your Products

A few years ago, after all the dot-boms, people lost faith in e-commerce. Now e-commerce is booming. Gift moments like Christmas and Valentine's Day show record sales numbers, and money-guzzling giants like Amazon and eBay are generating increased revenue. Offering a great user-experience and minding usability is the key to success.

Save Costs

By integrating systems and automating certain tasks, you may be able to actually save costs. For instance, by integrating your e-commerce Web site into your inventory and accounting systems. Build extranets to connect with suppliers and clients alike. You can provide downloadable documents on a Web site rather than mailing them out. The opportunities are endless.

Build A Community

Want to be perceived as a leader? Want people talking about you, or provide a platform for people to share ideas and ideologies? A Web site, especially with a forum or bulletin board, can be a great help in building an online community. It may even be the cement that keeps an offline community together, because of its empowering character and 24/7 availability.

Share Pictures, Sound And Other Files

Watch wedding photos, enjoy funny commercials from all over the world, listen to music – on a Web site. You can use it to share media kits, sound bites, or PowerPoint presentations. A Web site is a great tool to exchange multi-media.

Offer Service 365/24/7

This may not be of great value to you (it may even be a burden...), but to your customers it is very empowering and important. The Internet puts the Web browser in control – and if you are not there, you will be more and more passed over in favor of an online competitor.

Answer Frequently Asked Questions

Answering the same questions over and over again can be a great waste of money and employee morale. A carefully crafted list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), posted on a Web site, can reduce the stream of repetitive questions so your Customer Support department can actually start supporting customers, and your sales department can really devote their time to selling!

Improve Branding

Branding is a way to differentiate your product, service, or company from its competition, and create loyalty. The content of a Web site, its style and tools, such as newsletters, allow for many ways to differentiate yourself, make the visitor feel good about you, and build loyalty. More worrisome, if you do not do this, a competitor may snatch not only your prospects sales, but also their loyalty away from you with their Web site! **Eat, or be eaten!**

Reach A Local Market

More and more people use locally defined keywords in the search engines, which indicates that they use the Internet do find local information. “Used cars Cleveland” or “San Antonio real estate” are obvious, but mentioning a Web site in a local ad may do wonders in terms of converting a reader into a customer.

Reach A Regional Market

A Web site is one of the easiest tools to expand your exposure into a wider geographical area. Want to move your business from just Houston into the whole of Texas? A Web site allows you to do that.

Reach A National Market

Political campaigns are just one example where Web sites are being used to service a national audience. Offering a national specific version of your product, such as Tylenol.ca, is another one. You allows you to offer information about specific national tax and delivery charges, or appeal to national pride.

Reach A Global Market

If your target audience is “the world,” then you really need a Web site. But you knew that already, didn't you?

Reach An International Market

If you target specific international markets, it may be highly effective to design dedicated Web sites for them. By targeting your US customers on a “.com” site while servicing your Canadian clients with a “.ca” site, you are able to cater to the specific needs and expectations. It allows you to avoid confusion by separating different currencies, taxes, fees, and prices onto different Web sites. You may even want to consider offering Web sites in different languages, such as a specialized “.nl” Web site, in Dutch, for your loyal customers in The Netherlands.

Reach A Specialized Market

Do you sell cat and dog helmets? Are you into monoclonal antibody production (link opens in a new window), or other biotech products? Whatever niche market you may service, a Web site will expand your possibilities of promoting or selling your product or service – wherever in the world your prospects may be.

Test New Products And Services

With a little bit of help from search engines and directories, or by linking from high-traffic Web sites, you can create a new Web site to test new products or services. You may even keep quiet about the fact that you are behind this new product or service site. A dedicated Web site can prove to be a very valuable test case before fully launching your new success – or quietly taking it off the market again if the market is not quite ready yet.

Solicit Feedback From Customers

A contact form on a Web site can provide you with a lot of valuable information from customers, prospects, and other interested people. You may even get them to take an online poll – especially if you say they can win a prize as a reward. And if the stakes are high enough, the free word-of-mouth promotion will start automatically.

Start A Movement

Want the U.S. Army out of Iraq? Want to preserve a local trail? A Web site is a most effective way to promote your viewpoint, recruit volunteers, build a community (by adding an online forum), make press releases available, and much, much more.

Spread Ideas

Even if you do not want to start a movement, a Web site allows you to share your views and ideas with like-minded people in your community or all over the globe. It also allows you to easily explain things by means of adding audio, video, or animation to your Web site. It can be like having your own radio or TV station.

Educate

Online education can be very effective; more and more people are taking courses over the Internet. If you provide workshops, or complete courses, you may consider offering them online.

Update Information Quickly

Catalogues have been around for a long time, and they still prove to be successful. Newspapers are still a popular way to find out what is going on in the world. They have one major disadvantage, though: you cannot update them very quickly. A Web site, however, allows you to make changes almost instantly.

A Sales Tool Outside The Office

Employees away from the office can be kept informed with a Web site. A new press release? A new price list? Newsworthy things happening in your industry? You can quickly post information like that on an Intranet, which is a Web site only available for your employees, so they can see it wherever and whenever they want. If you add features like a forum, you are also able to facilitate 1-to-many communication between employees.

Integrate Supply Chains

By offering your clients online ordering you are able to integrate whole supply processes. You can offer them password-protected areas with their information, such as prices, year-to-date ordering information, and more. This can be considered additional customer service or you may be “encouraged” to do so by powerful clients or suppliers.

Reward Clients

By offering clients access to a Web site just for them, you can reward them for their loyalty. This Web site can for instance be used to offer specials, unique tips, or other benefits. You can create an online club for loyal customers.

Run Contests

If you want to run a contest, a Web site may be a very viable solution. With a carefully chosen domain name, it can foster word-of-mouth promotion (“tell a friend!”), you are able to track all the entries in an online database (without having to enter them manually), and you are able to promote it with links from other Web sites, or search engines.

Communicate With Your Target Audiences In Their Own Language

In 2003, Web sites for the main candidates in the California Recall election did not have sections in Spanish – even though many Californian voters are Hispanic. Addressing your target audience in their native tongue will certainly improve your chances of success.

Inquiry Marketing: Be Found – Period!

Speakers at a recent advertising conference mentioned “advertising is dead.” Interruption marketing does not work as it used to, due to video on demand, TiVo, the Internet, etc.. Consumers are more and more difficult to reach. Instead, they are in control; they are searching – on the Internet. It is inquiry marketing. Search and be found, or fail to be found and lose the customer.

Improve Communication

Print literature, though still important, only allow for a few lines of communication. A carefully crafted Web site can guide your clients, suppliers, or employees through page after page of information.

Change Communication From One-To-One Into One-To-Many

Conventional marketing tools allow you to promote or sell 1-on-1. A Web site can cater to many prospects at the same time. An effective Web site will also help you generate “buzz”: word-of-mouth promotion.

Share Basic Business Information

People use the Internet before calling or visiting your business. They want to find quick answers to basic questions. What are your opening hours? Do you offer payment plans? What is your phone number or email address? Do you provide the service or sell the product they are looking for? **These are the days of “Inquiry Marketing.”**

PR Tool

A Web site can be a great public relations tool. You can post press releases, articles, or a complete press kit – with pictures, sound files, bios, and more! You can also start a forum or blog.

Expand Your Service Or Product Offerings, Exclusively Online

A Web site allows you to differentiate your product or service offerings. You may want to consider offering slightly different services online than you do offline, for instance to foster repeat visits, using it as a test market, or target different geographical areas than you do with your store or office.

Communicate With Audiences Worldwide

The world is your oyster – especially with a Web site, which allows you to communicate with audiences worldwide (as long as you both understand the same language). **Geographical locations or time zones are no longer a problem** with the 24/7 availability of a Web site.

Cross-Sell

When it is busy in your office or store, not everyone will be able to speak to one of your sales people. Opportunities to cross sell (“did you see that we also sell...”) are lost. But on a carefully constructed Web site, you can make sure that people are exposed to other offerings that may be of interest to them.

Increase Customer Loyalty By Giving Them More Control

These are the times of inquiry marketing, and anything-on-demand. Your customer wants to be in control and Web sites are a perfect example of that. The customer decides what they want to see, and when, and if you do that right, you will have acquired a loyal customer.

F U N

Web sites allow you to present your target audience with something fun. Photo images can help make a point or convey your message. Skillful copywriting can be used to solicit a wink and a smile from time to time. Sales is all about emotion and Web sites allow you many ways to evoke these in a favorable way. But make sure that the FUN is appropriate, or else you will be evoking powerful negative emotions.

Family Sites

Many families are no longer in the same geographical area; they may even be spread over several countries. A Web site can be a great way to keep in contact. Share pictures, movies, stories on a Web site for all family members to see. Added benefit: you will have an email address @ yourname.com so you will never have to change addresses again! (Not even in case you decide to switch Internet providers)

Make Life Easier

Web sites can make your customer's lives easier and their experience with your business better! Look at online banking or ticket ordering. Whole new industries have emerged because people want to be able to do things themselves, from their home or office – because it is easier.

Find Employees

A highly effective way to use a Web site is to use it as a recruitment tool. You can obviously use it to post vacancies, but you may also consider placing a more general invitation to send resumes. This way you may already know the right person for the job before a vacancy even occurs.

Pre-Ordering

A well-promoted product launch on a Web site allows you to take fully automated pre-orders. This is a great tool to supplement your sales force. You can have an online product presentation so that enthusiastic clients and prospects can pre-order immediately.

Build An Appetite

Pre-launch campaigns can be highly effective. Web sites can be used to build the buzz, have a few teasers, a countdown clock, press and news releases about the ongoing campaign. You may even show a picture of just a tiny part of the new product: "can you guess what it is?"

Email Address Forever

Let's say that your domain name is agoodname.com. Using email address you @ agoodname.com is a good way to promote your Web site, because people will guess your Web site based on the email address. And if you keep your domain name indefinitely, you will have that email address indefinitely. No more sending of emails to your friends and business, stating that "you moved to another email service provider; can you please update your address book?"

Play With The Big Guys

Many small companies successfully take on big businesses. Web sites can be relatively inexpensive (compared to running a brick-and-mortar store), and with proper usability and search engine optimization your Web site can be as good as your larger competitors, or even better!

50

That's fifty... are you ready now?

If not, here are five more reasons!

Check You Out Anonymously

One of the things many people like about the Internet is that they can research anonymously. No pressure. This is why it is so important that you have a Web site that is easily found on the Internet – you cater to the preferences of your target audience.

People Expect It

By having a Web site, you show the world that you are a viable business. **Not having one makes you suspicious** in the eyes of many prospects. It is silly but true: a Web site will enhance perceived professionalism.

Facilitate Knowledge Building

You can use a Web site to sell seminars or e-books, for people to learn from. You can create password-protected modules so people can learn online. You can build forums where people can exchange questions and answers. A Web site is an ideal tool to facilitate the exchange of knowledge.

Competition Forces You To

Your competition will force you to get a Web site, if you do not already have one. Customers (especially the newer generations) will demand you have a Web site, and will pass you over if you do not have one. It is a matter of adjusting to shifting market conditions. And things will continue to shift, at an amazing speed – just look at how fast the Internet has become an integral part of our lives.

Enhance Marketing Effectiveness

Success does not come from doing one thing right. What you need is a marketing mix and a Web site can be a powerful ingredient. Mentioning a Web site in a radio, TV, or print ad may just be the thing that wins people over – especially if the online experience feels similar to the offline communication. **Having a Web site enhances the effectiveness of all other marketing efforts.**

Conclusion

If your business or organization does not have Web site, at least one of these reasons will probably apply to your situation. If you decide to have a Web site built, make sure that the designer has the right skills and knowledge to make your Web site as effective as possible. Good marketing and business advice, usability consulting, and search engine optimization are just as important as creative design skills. Your Web site should not only look great, it should be easy to find and easy to use.

About WorkingDialogue

By combining strategic thinking, creative design, and marketing expertise, WorkingDialogue helps entrepreneurs, businesses, and organizations meet their marketing and communications objectives — creating brand awareness, impacting behavior, and generating new opportunities. WorkingDialogue designs and produces marketing literature, Web sites, corporate identity and print advertising.

WorkingDialogue

1022 Violet Avenue, Hyde Park NY 12538

tel: 845-233-4217

www.workingdialogue.com