

Building a Website for Your Specific Customers

By Kristie Stangeland © 2011, All Rights Reserved

Have you ever been to a website that made you feel as if you were an outsider looking in? The images, the design elements and even the copy were all about the company. It wasn't welcoming or inviting and it didn't help you see how these particular products and/or services could help you. Those are sites I refer to as "company-oriented."

Then there are the web pages you click to that seem to read your mind. The navigation makes sense to you, the layout is clean and the text speaks your language. These are "customer-oriented" websites and their tendency to outperform company-focused sites is tremendous.

Truthfully, every organization should have a customer-oriented website. But most don't give the client much thought. Chalk it up to lack of experience or bad advice from others. Once you understand a few basics, developing a website that attracts and converts people specific to your target audience is easier than you might think.

It's All About Them... It's Not All About You

This is a tough fact for many people to swallow. Hard as they try, they can't get past the fact that their website should be all about them. And right there you see where this line of thinking originates. It's not really "their" website.

You build a website FOR your customers, not ABOUT your company.

Think of it this way: pretend you want to buy a gift for your cousin's birthday. He's an avid reader so you believe a book would be the perfect gift. Do you browse the titles looking for something that catches *your* eye... something intriguing to *you* or do you scan the list in search of a book about his favorite hobbies and interests? Of course, it's all about him. This same mentality applies to building a small business website.

Change Your Shoes & Get a New Perspective

Step back from your normal viewpoint. Hang up your company hat and put yourself in your customer's shoes. These are folks that don't travel the back roads of your industry. They aren't familiar with the jargon, the latest technology or the structure of your business. Neither should they be. So why confuse your site visitors with language, images, navigation and other design elements that are foreign to them?

Instead, approach the new design or redesign of your website from your customer's point of view. Ask existing clients what language they might use to describe some of the products, services or processes your company offers. Get their feedback on which order web pages should be provided and what they feel is a logical way to approach the delivery of information.

If your company deals primarily with women (perhaps a daycare center or a ladies-only gym) choose pictures and colors appropriate to that audience. Most parents wouldn't feel comfortable with a daycare site draped in dark colors, accented with vibrant orange and flashy graphics. Even if those are your favorite colors, they might cost you some business by making your target market wary.

It's all about them. It's not about you.

The bottom line for building a small business website for your specific customers is this: With every decision, with every choice, ask the question, "How will this benefit my target customers?" If the answer is, "It won't," choose something else.

Have a website that's not working? Need one that can help your business grow? Before you build a small business website, get Kristi's book "Effective Websites for Small Businesses" at <http://www.EffectiveWebsitesForSmallBusinesses.com> today.

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