



Designing Effective Websites

How to make your website work.

According to a survey done by Pew Internet & American Life in early 2006, fully 73% of Americans (about 147 million adults) are internet users, up from 66% (about 133 million adults) in January 2005.

More and more people are rejecting conventional information sources like magazines, newspapers, and tv and turning to the internet for their information search. Virtually anything they might want to know is just a Google search away. If you don't have a web presence or don't have a high rank in search engines, you're missing out on an extremely effective way to market yourself.

Most small businesses erroneously believe that if they just put up a quick webpage with information about their company, products and services, they'll start generating leads and sales through their site. Rarely does it happen this way.

Instead, most small businesses make one of these three fatal mistakes with their websites and quickly write off the web as yet another marketing tool that doesn't work.

1 Poorly defined objectives
Many businesses have no set goals or objectives for their website other than "to have a web presence" or "because our competitors have one." Good websites start with business goals like who are we targeting? What do we want them to do at our website? (Usually, that's to take some type of action like subscribe to your newsletter, download a free report, buy a product, or call you for a consultation.) And what's the compelling reason for them to do so?

2 Lack of focus on the users' goals
To say it bluntly, most people won't come to your site to learn about you. When they first come to your site, they are usually trying to accomplish something - whether that is to research a topic or to buy a product. The truth is that initially, people just don't care about you. They care about themselves, their problems,

and their time. They care about finding the results they are looking for. And they have control over how long they spend on your page and how much of your content they read. If you don't approach your web content with that in mind, your website won't be effective.

3 Poor layout and design
If your visitors can't find the information they are looking for, or the site is too slow, or it looks cluttered and overwhelming, your competitors are just a click away. Your visitors don't have the time to read every line of text on your page. They won't wait for your Flash animation to finish playing or to learn your illogical navigation system. If they can't find what they're looking for within 1-2 clicks, they'll assume it's not on your site and will click away.

Looking For More Marketing Resources?

Here are some additional resources we maintain:



Join our newsletter.

Each month, we publish a newsletter with how to tips and ways to market your business. Visit our site to join: morningstarmultimedia.com



WebDesignCoach.net

WebDesignCoach.net provides small businesses with articles, tips and advice on how to generate more leads and sales with their websites.



SEOGetListed.com

SEOGetListed.com offers tips and advice to professional services and small businesses who want to improve their rank in search engines.

The Secrets Of A Successful Website

Most small business websites fail because they aren't compelling enough to motivate visitors to take action. This is usually because of a lack of planning and an "I need it done yesterday" attitude.

Instead of taking a strategic approach to website design, they rely on the many options out there to "just get something up" - like using a template website, hiring a high school kid who knows html, or starting a blog. To them, having a website isn't a core component of their marketing plan. It's just an "online brochure" for their firm so that they can say they have a "web presence."

In contrast, a strategically planned website will have the following characteristics:

1 Clearly defined goals and objectives. You define specifically what would make your website successful in your company's eyes and how that integrates into your overall marketing plan.

2 Provides value to your visitors. Your website must focus on your visitors rather than your company. That means instead of thinking in terms of "we" and "our company," you think in terms of "you" and "your problems." Each person that visits your website has a purpose. How well does your site meet their needs, whether that is finding the information they are looking for, buying a product, or getting customer support?

3 Consistent, user friendly navigation. Having consistent, easy-to-understand navigation on every page is critical to an effective website, especially if visitors are looking for information 2-3 clicks

from your main page. Also, your navigation shouldn't overwhelm visitors with choices.

4 Professional presentation. Think of your website as your online office that your visitors are seeing for the first time. Your visitors don't know you, so they are judging you by your website's layout, graphics and content.

5 Trustworthiness. If your site makes visitors feel uncomfortable or impatient, they won't want to do business with you. Trustworthiness means that your site should load quickly, all the links should work, and you should have a privacy policy.

6 Optimized for search engines. Good sites are developed with achieving a high search ranking in mind. They use web standards compliant code, have appropriate meta tags, and contain keyword-rich content that is frequently updated.

Call us at 215-854-6404 for a free consultation.

6 Steps to a Successful Website

Here are the steps we take to develop new websites:

1 Plan Your Site - Lack of planning is why virtually all websites fail. This step involves defining goals and objectives, your target audience and their wants and needs, and what features your site will have.

2 Blueprint Your Site - This step involves understanding how visitors will use your site. Here, we map out the navigation, page structure, and placement of key features.

3 Design Your Site - This step involves designing your website with your users' goals in mind. Here,

we design 2-3 concepts for your new site and finalize a design based around the website's content and your company's brand and message.

4 Build Your Site - This step involves creating the graphics, coding the features of your website, and building your content management system (the administrative section that allows you to update your site without html experience or external programs).

5 Maintain Your Site - Good sites are updated frequently with fresh content. If you let your site languish

in limbo, you lose credibility with visitors. Every company should have a plan for who will add new content and how frequently. If you choose for us to build a content management system for your site, you'll be able to upload and change information 24/7 at your convenience.

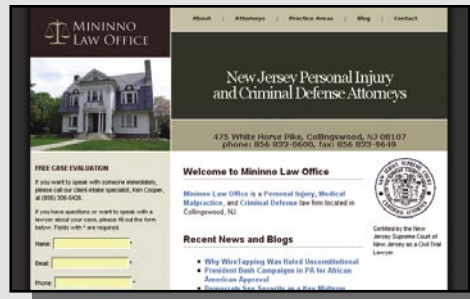
6 Market Your Site - Most successful online marketing campaigns include blogs, newsletters, exchanging links with other sites, writing articles, and advertising on search engines (pay per click) and relevant sites. We can develop an online marketing plan based on your needs, target audience, and industry to help you achieve your online goals.

Our Clients



American Board of Allergy and Immunology www.abai.org

The ABAI is a non-profit that establishes qualifications for specialists in allergy and immunology. They asked us to redesign their website to make it more user friendly, design consistent site navigation, and update the outdated design. We also consulted with them on how to create reader-focused web text that would clearly explain the benefits and importance of becoming certified with them.



Mininno Law Offices www.minfirm.com

Mininno Law Offices is a New Jersey law firm specializing in Personal Injury, Medical Malpractice, and Criminal Defense law. We redesigned their site and set up a pay per click search engine marketing campaign to generate qualified leads. They've achieved numerous originations because of it. In addition, we coached the firm on blogging and set up their new firm blog.



Weir & Partners LLC www.weirpartners.com

Weir & Partners LLP is a Philadelphia based law firm targeting business and financial clients. We redesigned their website to create a more sophisticated look, rethink their site navigation, and add fresh content. They also asked us to build a content management system so that their staff could update web content in-house.

Why choose us?

Our experience. Our skills. Our results.

Why should I hire you?

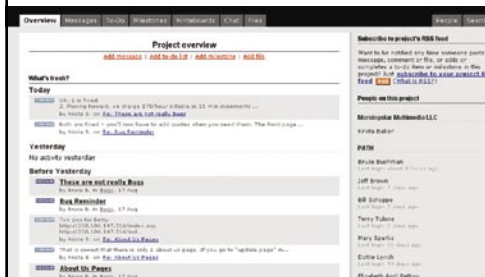
Morningstar specializes in creating user friendly, customer focused websites that generate leads for professional services. Members of our team have been designing websites since 1995, and we have formal training in business, design, and information technology. Since our company was founded in 2000, we've worked almost exclusively with professional services and service oriented non-profits who are faced with the difficult task of differentiating themselves in a competitive marketplace.

Can I work with you or should I work with a "local" designer?

We work with both local and national clients. Technology has overcome many of the barriers to communication. Conference calls can be just as effective as personal meetings. Email and the internet make communicating and presenting visuals easy and cost effective.

Each of our clients is also given personal access to our extranet site. There, you can learn the status of your project, see any to-do tasks we are still waiting for, check milestones,

and view all graphic design and copy samples in your personal account. Your personal account also allows you to post feedback and contribute to the project directly through our website.



Our company extranet allows us to discuss and document the status of all projects through the web.

Timeframe

Websites that require minimal custom programming usually take between 4-8 weeks to complete. Projects that are highly customized can take several months depending on project scope.

How much does a website cost?

There are quite a few factors that affect the final cost of your website. These factors include how many pages your site will have, how the website will be laid out, what editing capabilities you'll need, if you will sell products and accept payments, the graphic work involved, and any

features you're considering adding in the future. That said, our low end sites for solo practitioners generally start around \$2500 and our prices for mid size firms run anywhere from \$5000-\$10,000 (and up).

How can I edit my site's contents?

Virtually all our websites are designed with a content management system that will allow you to log into an administrative section through a web browser and add or change your content. Our clients find the system straight forward and easy to use and learn the system quickly with a short training session.

What types of payment methods do you accept?

We prefer checks but we do accept credit card payments through PayPal.

How do I start working with you?

Give us a call at 215-854-6404 to set up a consultation. All projects start with an initial consultation where we focus on your business objectives and expectations. If we both agree that we can help you, we will send you a proposal within 1 week. The project will begin when we receive an initial payment.

Call us for a free consultation or visit morningstarmultimedia.com.

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