

Put your website to work for you

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So, your business has a website. Great! As we've said before, "It's a credibility issue -- these days a business is expected to have a web site." But wait a minute; what's the site doing for you?

Sure, your website is helping your customers get to know, like and trust you by building awareness, providing information and shortening the selling cycle, but could it be doing more? YES!

Things change rapidly in the web world. It's easier than ever to put your website to work: collecting names and e-mail addresses, providing visual product demos, and transacting online. If your website is not doing some, or all, of this, you're missing the boat!

By now you realize the importance of building a database of customers and potential customers so that you can stay in touch with them by providing valuable information, incentives and specials. This can be done easily by offering a free, downloadable "whitepaper" or report on a key issue or frustration in your industry, with (of course) your hints and tips on how to solve the issue. If you don't fancy yourself as a writer, look for writing services you can find on the web and have a professional do it for surprisingly little cost [e.g. <http://writingandeditingshop.com/>]

Offer a download that can be retrieved after the prospect enters his or her name and email on a pop-up form. Presto! They have your free report and you have their name and email, and what's more important, permission to market to them in future. You can do something similar by asking prospects to sign on for your periodic newsletter or blog.

Some businesses sell products or services that can be demonstrated using an online video demo. Video production is cheap and easy with all of the cameras and software available now. An online demo can clarify the benefits your product or service provides, but not only that, it can help your prospect to get to know you if you appear in the video.

An added benefit is that your video can greatly increase the traffic to your site. Post the video on YouTube, and other video posting sites, with a link to your site. Google actually can search just for video content. This means adding a video makes you a lot more likely to be found among the millions and millions of sites on the web.

Finally, what are you doing about online transactions? With services like PayPal.ca and others, it's really easy to set up a shopping cart so you can actually sell on line! No need for anyone to come to your store or business -- you're open 24/7 and the payments flow to your bank account for a small transaction fee. You get a notice of what was sold to whom and all you need to do is ship it out!

And, should we add, you also have a new name and email to add to that all-important database.

Ken Burgin and Elizabeth Walker are the Marketing Masters (www.MarketingMasters.ca), a full-service marketing and advertising partnership that helps build busy businesses. Send your ideas on How to Thrive in Times Like These to liz@marketingmasters.ca or ken@marketingmasters.ca, or call 1-866-908-5720.