

Is Your Web Site Killing Your Business?

By Deborah M. Collier



You've invested in a beautifully designed, technically functioning web site, but why aren't you generating the sales you need? You are not alone in this common dilemma facing business leaders, who make the fatal mistake of relying on their web designer to act as an online selling and marketing expert.

Deborah Collier, President at The Certificate in Online Business, discusses and offers business owners and business development teams, valuable tips on how to increase their online sales.

A successful web site is about more than making a quick sale. Quick and immediate sales rarely happen. Of course it depends on the product or service and the price. The truth about online selling is that the majority of your web visitors spend time getting to know your company and brand. They will explore other company web sites, social media networks, testimonials and price comparison engines, and often take time to consider making a purchase. Your web site should be an online selling channel or marketing medium that builds a relationship with your customers, echoes your brand and enhances your reputation.

If you believe that a well-designed web site alone will make you money, then you will be sadly disillusioned. While good design quality is an essential ingredient to a high performance web site, there are a number of more important factors to consider.

Effective Internet marketing involves four elements:

- Driving an optimal number of the right kind of visitors to your web site
- Engaging and building relationships with your audience once they arrive
- Converting them to buyers
- Maintaining repeat business

So how do you do this? Lets start with the first element, gaining visitors to your web site.

Develop and Optimised Internet marketing strategy

- Make sure you know as much about your audience(s) as possible
- Consider what messages you want to convey to them and what media you will use
- Find out what marketing channels and activities will get you the most visitors to your web site, for your budget
- Consider how you can make these activities work together, particularly with your web site content and other digital and non-digital marketing materials.



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Engage Your Customers

Once you've attracted your visitors, you must engage them. How do you do this? Individuals are most engaged by relevant and useful products and information, entertainment, interactivity, play and education.

- Grab your web site visitors attention within 4 seconds, with catchy headlines, powerful graphics or media
- Make the web site as user-friendly as possible ensuring visitors can find what they are looking for easily
- Ensure the design and content echoes your brand, and conveys what you want your customers to think and feel about you
- Don't over clutter web pages and ensure that both the design and content are of good quality
- Ensure your web site is accessible by all mobile devices as well as desktop computers, and their web browsers
- Write interesting articles and blogs, allowing customers to feedback where appropriate
- Allow them to interact with you on social networks and to use social media to discuss and advocate content on your web site
- Entice them to subscribe to your newsletter, or community, if you have one and get them to join you social media networks

Make the sale



There's an art to online selling. Think of your web site or mobile application as your shop window, and your communication as your best sales person. How would you present your products and services to a customer standing in front of you?

Here are a few tips: -

- Ensure that products and services are merchandised carefully – demonstrating all their features and benefits clearly, using the right media, and also cross-selling other products and services at the right time and place on the web site
- Consider and plan special offers carefully, and consider where you should notify customers about these on your web site, social networks and newsletters, for example
- Ensure you web pages are structured to position selling and call-to-action messages, in the right places on the site – A web page should be treated like real estate.
- Ensure a fast, easy and secure buying and checkout experience, supported by accessible customer service and pre-sales help
- Don't forget about reliable trackable product delivery, after-sale service and customer follow-up

So you've delivered the right product or service to your customer in a simple, efficient and satisfying way to both your business and your customer. So what's next?

Enhance Your Relationship with Your Customer

Building relationships are key to successful business, no matter what channel you use. There are a number of ways that you can do this. For example, it's important to build a customer community that encourages feedback in forums, social networks and other media. You can enrich your community by creating engaging and useful content such as reports, newsletters and articles that allow both your existing and potential customers to know you better, interact with you and advocate your organisation and brands.



It's important to take charge of your web site and online marketing. Take control of the content strategy, carefully planning out the navigation, the content, product merchandising and checkout experience. Good web designers are wonderful at design, and great programmers can create the most fantastic functionality, but we cannot expect them to be online sales people or great marketers. We need to respect their skills, guide them and work with them to deliver the best results collaboratively.

Deborah M. Collier

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Deborah is the founder of the Certificate in Online Business™ (COB) series of globally-recognised industry qualifications, which were established in 2008. She developed the reputation of the programs among well-known brands gaining testimonials from Directors and managers at government organisations and leading companies such as Mars, Schneider Electric, House of Fraser and Procter & Gamble. Deborah leads the strategic direction of the training programs and company. In addition, she oversees marketing, partnerships and licensing.



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