



Website Design for Your Business: \$149

The future of your business will be determined in about 8 seconds.

So what is success really worth to you?

There is no shortage of web designers who will build a website for your business for less than the cost of a new inkjet printer, that's for sure. But, what is the difference to your business between a website that costs \$150 and one that costs \$10,000? *Good question!*

Very simply, the difference between a \$150 website and one that costs *fifty, a hundred, or even a thousand* times more is what can be measured. Any reputable online marketer will tell you the same thing. Unless the performance of a website can be measured then spending even \$150 could be a total waste of money. Spending \$10,000 on a website that can't be measured for success should be a criminal offense punishable by a good flogging.

How is performance accurately measured on a website?

Online marketers like MELCOOPER/CGM *SearchMarketing* use all sorts of analytical tools, or *website analytics*, to answer such questions as:

- *How many unique "hits" is a website getting?* A competent online marketer does not use old-fashion "hit counters" which have been notoriously unreliable in terms of giving marketers accurate information. Instead, special tracking codes are embedded in each of the pages on the website that collect information about the number of actual unique visitors.
- *Where (geographically) are visitors coming from?* This information is important because it gives the online marketer clues about where to spend (and where not to spend) *money* on online advertising for the website.
- *How long are visitors staying on the website?* This information tells the online marketer whether or not the information on the website is being perceived as useful and valuable to the visitors. If visitors aren't staying on the site long enough to "convert" (make a purchase, fill out a form, pick up the phone, etc.) then changes have to be made to the design of the website to test which elements work and which ones do not.
- *Which individual pages on a website are getting the most visits – or the least visits?* This

tells the online marketer what topics on the website are of the most interest to visitors. The pages getting the most visits get more attention by the website designer and online marketer in an effort to get even more performance out of those popular pages.

- *What “keywords” are visitors using to find the website?* Once the online marketer determines what keywords visitors are using to find the site the content can be further optimized to emphasize those keywords. Optimizing pages on the site serves to increase relevancy and the overall “quality score” of those pages. The higher the relevancy and quality score the easier it becomes to get a first page search engine ranking over time.

Can a website that only cost a few hundred dollars to design benefit from website analytics. Of course! But applying such website analytics to an inexpensive, poorly designed website usually results in making major modifications to the site's original design – the cost of which could easily exceed the original investment in the website. In those cases it's often better to “tear the house down and start over” than to repair a bad structure.

Revenues are not a reliable measure of website performance or value

Suppose that you had a website that you could prove was responsible for pulling in \$10,000 worth of new business over a 12-month period. If you only paid \$150 for the site you might think that this was a wildly successful investment. Fact is, if the website lacked the benefit of website analytics you would not be able to answer any of the following questions with any real precision:

- How many visitors left the site prematurely because it looked unprofessional or contained weak, outdated content?
- How many visitors left the site without converting because it was too difficult to find needed information?
- How many conversions were lost because the site didn't display correctly using a variety of web browsers (browsers other than Microsoft Internet Explorer)?
- How many *potential* visitors couldn't find the site on the first page of a search using Google or Yahoo?
- How many visitors did not request product or service information via email because web forms were not used *throughout* the website.

It is far more likely that a more robust site – *even one 50 times the price* – with better navigation, optimized content, more engaging graphics, more compelling *calls to action*, a higher search engine ranking, wider browser compatibility, and the analytics to monitor its performance would have competed more successfully. Such a site would more likely have generated *\$1,000,000* in new business instead of a measly \$10,000.

So, how much should you spend initially for a new website?

Before you can decide how much to spend on website design you have to first ask three basic questions about your business:

1. *What are your business goals?* Maybe your goal is to use the website and your other online marketing assets to grow your business overall by 20% next year. Or, maybe you would like to increase customer loyalty (something that *can* be measured) by 40%. Or, perhaps you want to drive 25% more traffic into your brick-and-mortar store.

As with any form of business expense, a set of achievable business goals should determine the size of your investment in a website. If you make an *investment* in your website based on expected goals then you'll probably make money. If you don't treat the website as an important investment towards the achievement of those goals, then you will probably NOT make money.

2. *What are your online marketing objectives?* A good online marketing objective might be to dominate online searches in your local market for 10 major keywords that you've identified. Or, maybe you want your website to achieve an *organic* first page ranking in the U.S. for 3 critical keywords within 5 months. Or, maybe you just want to increase unique visits to your website by 50% within 3 months.
3. *What is your marketing message, how valuable is it to you, and how do you want to communicate that message to the world?*

- Are your business cards and stationery professionally designed and printed with a distinctive design using high quality paper and inks, or do they look homemade?
- Are your office phones always answered with a helpful, professional greeting or do callers get treated as though they've *interrupted* someone's day?
- Did you *invest* in a professional website design that generates measurable results or did your nephew build it in his spare time for beer money?

Ultimately, a company's marketing message gets communicated in many different ways. In order to succeed in today's marketplace a company must invest well to communicate it's marketing message online in the most professional manner possible and in a way that emphasizes measurable outcomes. The company must then commit to constantly monitoring and testing how that marketing message is delivered online to its target audience via the website and other online marketing assets (social, email, mobile, blogging, and others).

Conclusion

The average visitor to a website takes about 8 seconds to decide whether to remain or click away to a competitor's site. High-quality, professionally-produced website design that keeps visitors engaged and produces measurable results will naturally increase a company's chances for reaching its stated goals and objectives. The size and scope of those goals and objectives should be what determines the size of the investment in any website design project.



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