Why Doesn't My Website Work? - Check List For Existing Sites
Part Three – Making Your Website Part of Your Business

Introduction

It was established in a meeting way back in August 1996 that a website would not generate new customers on its own. This might seem fairly obvious but it actually took around three meetings to discover that our website was not going to generate any business unless something else was done.

The site had been built, it had not been registered with search engines, (indeed it had not even been registered with all of the staff), its address was not included on any standard company documents and no one was checking the user statistics.

It was dead in the water, so every penny that had been spent on it was potentially wasted if we had decided to leave it as it was. Fortunately the MD was convinced that he should be getting business from the web and he did the most important thing anyone can do for a website – make it someone's responsibility.

Responsibility

Once the website belonged to someone within the company the whole thing was looked at in a different way. It was no longer the thing that the web developer built, it became a KPI (Key Performance Indicator) for a member of staff and was talked about to some extent in almost every meeting.

In those days it was very usual for a technical person to take responsibility for the website, but we didn't do it that way. Instead the website became the responsibility of the assistant to the MD. She was very organized and had the authority to communicate with the technical and non-technical staff.

Being a highly organised person the first thing she did was to make a list of things she needed to do as part of her new responsibility. However she had no experience and so had to go to the boss to find out exactly what it was that he was expecting from the website.

Knowing Your Goal Posts

The list was short. He wanted inquires from potential customers and he wanted existing customers to lodge enquiries about new product releases through the web site. With this knowledge here is the to-do list that Lisa created:

1. How can potential customers find our website?
2. How can existing customers find our website?

Lisa also thought it worthwhile to do some quality control and she posed a third and very important question:

3. What do people (other than the MD) want from the website?

Lisa went on to learn a little about search engine registrations – it was a lot easier back then. Then she updated all of our standard documents (including invoices and statements) to include our web address. As new business cards were ordered they also included the web address, as did all of our stationary and marketing information.

Within about 2 weeks we could be found through search engines and within about six months most of our customers knew about the web site too.

Lisa handled all of the incoming email enquires from the website and forwarded them to the sales or support people.

Measuring Success

So the course had been set and what Lisa needed now was a way to track results and get the rest of the staff involved. Below is an approximation of the worksheet Lisa used to track the activity of the website, along with explanations for the metrics she chose to measure.

Website Visitors – these were the visitor figures reported by the stats package provided by the hosting company.

Emails from website form – all were directed to Lisa, she distributed them to the support and sales people as necessary.

- A positive email enquiry was one where the user was seeking more information on a product or service we handled.
- A negative email enquiry was one where the user could not find any information on a product or service that we offered.
- A useless email enquiry was one for a product or service that we did not offer.

Phone calls from website users – were categorised in the same way as emails.
People directed to website – both the sales and support people kept track of how many users were directed to the website for current and future information. As a side effect, this also kept track of how comfortable our staff were with the information on the website.

Products/Services not currently offered – at first these emails and phone calls were seen as useless, but it turned out that it gave us a good indication of where the holes were in the market. As a result we were able to introduce new services to fill that gap.

More information wanted on – this metric provided an indication of what sort of detail prospects and customers were expecting on the website.

Website Stats for the Month of ....

KPI	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
Website Visitors					
Emails from website form					
Positive prospect email enquiries					
Positive customer email enquiries					
Negative prospect email enquiries					
Useless prospect email enquiries					
Negative customer email enquiries					
Phone calls from website users					
Positive - Prospects					
Positive – Customers					
Negative – Prospects					
Useless enquiries					
Negative - Customers					
Directed to website					
Prospects referred to website					
Customers referred to website					
Products/Services not currently offered					
More information wanted on					

The Outcome

Within twelve months, under Lisa's supervision the website became a significant part of the business. It was demonstrated that it could not only attract potential new business it could save money and time on servicing existing customers. Support people saw it as a way of automating boring and repetitive tasks, while the sales and marketing people saw it as a great source of leads and an excellent two-way communication tool for prospects and customers.

To start, the additional costs to the business were insignificant, but as the benefits became more obvious and were quantified (especially) by the sales people, more money was invested. The website continued to provide a return on investment because it was always someone's direct responsibility and it was never left to manage itself.