

digital Solutions, Inc.

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The Digital Corner

Business/IT News & Views from the Trenches

Client Newsletter

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The Digital Corner is a free client newsletter from Digital Solutions, Inc.
<http://ds6.net>

Digital Solutions is a web design and consulting firm that helps businesses migrate to the Internet. Our clients improve their organizational performance and sales results through efficient, effective and creative use of Internet resources.

You'll find we are a competitive resource for website development. Through the years we've developed a streamlined system for creating satisfied clients and dynamic websites.



5 WAYS TO TELL IF YOUR WEBSITE NEEDS AN OVERHAUL

by Marc A. Ohmann

"Redesign" is not a dirty word. In fact, as a website owner, "redesign" should be one of your favorite words. A website redesign (or overhaul or update), is a natural part of a flowing and evolving business strategy.

In the same way that a "one size fits all" concept does not work for websites, leaving your website design static also harms business results.

Websites are a key part of your business tactics to increase sales and inform/educate customers. Whether a site is e-commerce or purely informational, websites are tools that need regular evaluation against business goals. In other words, websites should be considered an ongoing project, not just a one-time development effort.

We love to help clients with redesigns, and here are 5 ways we have clients assess whether their sites are ready for an overhaul.

1) Your website is too difficult to update regularly in-house.

When was the last time you added meaningful content to your website? Updated products or services? Is your answer, "Hmmm, it's been awhile, it's too hard/time-consuming/expensive"? Then it is time to develop a site whose design, layout, technology, and formatting make it easy to update.

Websurfers are a voracious group; they want and need to get regularly updated information. A sure sign of a defunct business is to see, "Our Newsletter, June 2003." The prospect will think you aren't very web savvy, marketing savvy, or you don't know your business. A well-designed website allows the owner to make frequent, easy, relevant, and important additions to content.

2) You don't know how many visitors come to your website and how many of them are converted into customers.

Are you using web analytics? Do you review data on site performance? Remember, only a small

percentage of visitors will buy or give you contact information. You want to improve visitor-to-buyer conversion rates. A site redesign and tracking statistics will improve your ratios and sales.

3) Leads generated from your website are not "quality" leads, or the leads from your website aren't looking for your most profitable products/services.

You want prospects who contact you through your site to be "pre-sold;" that is, they have found the information they need and are ready to buy your product or service. Ask yourself,

"Am I getting requests for my most profitable products/services?"

"Are all my prospects asking the same questions after visiting the site?"

"Are visitors aware of all my services and products?"

Web shoppers are usually searching for a product or service. You can carefully lead prospects to items through careful site construction, and through delivering information they need to become a "pre-qualified" buyer.

4) Your website is not consistent with your brand image and other media.

"Branding" is a hot term today. Tom Peters, author of In Search of Excellence and The Brand You, says,

"Anyone can have a Web site. And today, because anyone can ... anyone does! So how do you know which sites are worth visiting, which sites to bookmark, which sites are worth going to more than once? The answer: branding. The sites you go back to are the sites you trust. They're the sites where the brand name tells you that the visit will be worth your time -- again and again. The brand is a promise of the value you'll receive."

As you create your unique brand image, one that your customer and visitors can trust, you need to make sure that all materials are consistent: from business cards, ads, stationery, and fax sheets, all the way to your website and emails. Your website and brand should be instantly recognizable to customers.

5) Your website is not easy to use, or it is hard to find content.

Many sites lose up to 60% of web buyers who abandon their shopping carts during the checkout process. Additionally, many consumers will spend less than 30 seconds glancing at your home or landing page to see if the information/product they want is there. Obviously, your goal is to keep consumers on the website until they provide you their contact information or purchase a product.

You are not the best person to evaluate how easy your site is to use. Nor are your employees or friends. You are all too close to your site and products, and this hampers your ability to analyze the site from a user's perspective. The site needs to be designed for a first-time user, or a customer with only basic internet skills.

If your site does not instantly convey what is available, and then can get the customer there in less than 3 clicks, your site needs an overhaul.

Marc A. Ohmann is the Founding Principal of Digital Solutions, Inc. He can be reached with comments or questions at marc@ds6.net or by calling 952-703-3996.

CASE STUDY: GR PROMOTIONS, INC.

Here is an actual real-life problem-solution story where we helped a client transform their business!

THE PROBLEM:

GR Promotions is a local distributor of promotional products for business. Their website was a few years old and difficult to update. Customers had a hard time finding the right products.

The vision of the team at GR Promotions was to categorize all the products. Selecting a category or vendor would then make shopping easy for the customer.

THE WORDS OF OUR CLIENTS

"I can't begin to thank you for all your hard work, commitment and dedication to getting our site up and running.

It truly is refreshing to deal with a company like Digital Solutions, who goes above and beyond the call of duty to make a "site" look super.

Thanks for all the terrific ideas on how to improve our site. I will definitely be giving out your name when someone says, 'Do you know someone who can create websites?'

I'm proud to be able to let everyone know just who did our website."

--Jennifer Crowder, GR Promotions
<http://www.grpromotions.com>

ABOUT US

Digital Solutions was founded in 1999 as a means for Twin Cities businesses to easily and cost-effectively manage their IT resources.

The administrative projects quickly expanded to include web hosting and Internet programming. In 2000 Digital Solutions incorporated and to this day remains a competitive resource for local web development.

After nearly 6 years of helping businesses migrate to the Internet, we have developed a streamlined system for creating satisfied clients. Our process ensures our customers' satisfaction.

At the end of every project we ask for customer feedback because we strive to always improve our process. Our goal is not sales but satisfied clients.

They also wanted an updated look and feel to the site, and easy-to-use administrative features to streamline the process of updating site content.



BEFORE:

- * No categories
- * Poor navigation
- * Too much white space

OUR SOLUTION:

The Digital Solutions design team started from the ground up. First, we created custom site graphics and developed an optimized database backend. The ongoing process of adding, modifying, or deleting product lines can now be done in-house by GR Promotions staff with a few simple clicks of the mouse.

We also added a prominent customer testimonials section so prospective customers can review all the outstanding accolades GR Promotions has received.

The new site also includes a promotions section where predefined promotions appear at various times during the year, giving the site an always-updated appearance.



AFTER:

- * Categories on left
- * Area for promotions
- * Simple top navigation
- * Clean layout
- * Photo of sample products
- * Testimonials

<http://www.grpromotions.com>

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Q&A: YOU ASK, WE ANSWER!

Each month we'll feature one of the most-commonly-asked questions we get about web development and internet marketing.

Q: How long does it take to create a new site from scratch?

A: It depends!
There are many factors which influence our ability to get a new website up and running. These include things like how much copy has to be written, if databases have to be created, shopping carts enabled, or design work developed.

We have completed sites in as little as 24 hours! However, the majority of our brochure sites are live within two weeks.

Database sites and eCommerce sites generally go live 30 to 60 days after initiation of the project.

If you have a question you'd like to see answered in "Q & A: You Ask, We Answer," email it to marc@ds6.net

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