



The 5 Most Important Things to Include on Your Website **By Lois Carter Fay, APR**

If your company is like most firms today, you either have a company website or you are working to put one up. Today's web surfers are a sophisticated and impatient lot. Your links must work properly; your design must be easy to navigate and your information must be thorough, timely and accurate.

If your site and your web pages don't build quickly, you will lose these visitors in about eight seconds. Because of this, companies have to do everything they can to quickly grab the visitor's attention and keep them interested enough to want to learn more.

Here are five tips to make sure your customers and prospects find the visit to your website a pleasant and informative one.

1. Design an easy-to-navigate toolbar.

The specific location and design of your website's toolbar is not as important as the ability to quickly understand what information is available on the site. The toolbar can run horizontally across the top of the site, or vertically along the left margin. It should be positioned in exactly the same spot on every page of your website, and it should consist of a few main buttons, such as "About Us," "What We Do," "How We Help You," "Free Stuff" and "Contact Us." You might also want to include a "Site Index" that diagrams where everything can be found on your website.

Of course, once the visitor clicks on one of the main buttons, the section can and should go "deeper," allowing the visitor to learn more about your company and what you do. For instance, under "About Us," you would include a history of your company, brief biographies of each of the key personnel, and a press room with news releases, low-resolution (72 dpi) and



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high-resolution (300 dpi) photos of the company's principals, background information, and other pertinent information.

2. Tell your visitors how to get in touch with you.

Unless you are putting up a website simply for your own pleasure, you'll want to make it easy for visitors to contact you. There is nothing more frustrating for a web visitor than to look for contact information and not be able to find it. With so much Internet fraud going on today, your customers will want to know that your company is a legitimate business. So, on **every page** of your site, it is important to include your company's logo, name, address, toll-free number, voice number, fax number and e-mail address.

Of course, you can (and should) have a "Contact Us" section on your site. This page would also include a fill-in-the-blank form designed to capture the name, address, phone and other pertinent information about your visitor. And, of course, the web page would include all of your contact information so they can call, fax or write to you, too.

If you would like to prevent automatic email-gathering programs from harvesting your email address from your site and spamming you, a fill-in-the-blank email form can help you.

3. Explain who you are and what you do for your customers.

This section is basically your company's corporate brochure. It may begin with your vision and mission statements, letting all your visitors know how you run your company and what you expect your future to bring.

It also lists all of the key information about your company's history, personnel, products and services, and it discusses everything you do for your clients/customers. A listing of your clients would appear here, along with sample problems and solutions that your clients have overcome with your help. However, you may consider providing general information here with a link to the specific examples discussed in number four below.

4. Show why your clients/customers work with you.

Remember that all of your copy on the site should be written from the perspective of your customer. What benefits do they derive by working with or buying from you?

This section of the website can include case histories and sample problems and solutions. Consider putting up a portfolio with pictures of your work or



descriptions of what you have done for other clients. Testimonial letters from satisfied clients would fit in here, as well. You want your web visitors to not only understand what you do, but you want them to pick up the phone and hire you (or buy from you) to create the same miracles for them. Include as much statistical data as you can in this section.

If you are selling products instead of services, you'll want to include pictures of your products, enticing descriptions that are benefit oriented, and a link to your shopping cart. Customer testimonials can help you sell more product.

5. Give your clients/customers something to keep them coming back.

There are many reasons that web surfers visit sites again and again. One way to increase traffic at your website is to offer useful free or almost-free information on your site. You can offer free reports, white papers, or "how to" articles. If you are a retailer or wholesaler, you can run Internet specials and notify your customer base about the specials via email or through traditional mailing methods. Even if you are in a services business, you can also offer products for sale, such as booklets and books that offer more in-depth information about your area of expertise.

Periodic, electronic newsletters that contain useful information are another way to keep visitors coming back. And the great thing about all of these traffic-producing methods is that they allow you to capture information about your guests. If you require that your visitors register on site to be able to download the information or sign up for your newsletter, you can develop a powerful and useful database in a very short time.

Remember that a website is a work-in-progress and should not remain static. Just as your business grows and develops, so does your website. Don't forget to keep it up to date!

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Self-employed since 1990, Lois Carter Fay is the owner of [Strategic Business Partners](#), a marketing consulting firm that develops ideas and strategies to grow your business, [Words For Websites](#), a website writing and strategy business, and the [Marketing Idea Shop](#), an online resource for marketers and small businesses. She

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