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How Good Is Your Website? Take This Quiz And Find Out! A Poorly Designed Website Can Hurt More Than It Helps

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Although the Internet has been around for decades, the World Wide Web—what most of us think of as the Internet—has existed just over 10 years. Today, a website is the mark of an established business. But a poorly designed website can hurt more than it helps. To find out how your site measures up, take the following quiz:

Warm-Up Questions

Let's start with a couple of easy questions:

1. How often do you check email? Award yourself five points if you check email throughout the day, three points if you check it at least daily, one point if you check it every other day, and zero points if you check it less frequently or don't use it at all.

2. Do you have a website? Award yourself another five points if you have a website already. Business owners who don't will be left behind as younger generations mature. Today's teens and twenty-somethings—prospective customers for many of us—take online access for granted and ignore those who don't provide it.

The Real Test

For questions 3-11, give yourself two points for each "yes" answer, one point for "sort-of" (if applicable), and zero points for a "no."

3. Do you have your own website address? Your website should be set up with an address like <http://www.mybusiness.com>, where "mybusiness" is, of course, your business name. Many people still use free hosting services, where they get an address such as <http://www.geocities.com/mybusiness>, or <http://home.att.net/~mybusiness>. Not only is this harder to remember and more difficult to type correctly,

it is one of the tell-tale signs that you own a small business. Obtaining your own website address is inexpensive, and it announces that your business has arrived.

4. Is your email set up at your website address? Many business owners have a beautifully designed website but continue to use old email addresses, like joe@aol.com, jane@charter.net, etc. This is another indication that you run a small business. If you have a website, set up emails at that address: joe@mybusiness.com, jane@mybusiness.com, etc. If you dearly love your old email address, keep it, but route all your emails to a single mailbox so that you only have to check email in one place. And only send mail from your website's account—otherwise people will see the old address and continue to use it.

5. Does your website have an attractive and appealing graphic design? An unattractive, poorly designed website will turn visitors away and detract from your professional image. Remember, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so if you have any doubts about your site, ask a few friends to visit it and offer candid feedback.

6. Do you know your website audience? Your website should be oriented to the people likely to visit it, so keep current and prospective customers in mind when designing and building the site. What information will they search for on your website? Whatever that may be for your business, make sure you include it.

7. Is your website well-organized and easy to navigate? Now that you've got the right information, the next question is whether visitors can easily find what they need. Is it obvious where to click?

8. Have you optimized your writing for the web? Website visitors are notoriously

impatient. They do not like to scroll or click. If your home page doesn't grab their attention and promise to answer their questions, they will move on to your competitor's site. Website pages must be short and well-organized, with additional detail available within a single click.

9. Does your website accurately reflect your business? Your website is a reflection of the company you've built. Does the text and graphics convey the image you want to project?

10. Can your visitors find you in the real world? Always make sure contact information is available within one click of the home page. Phone numbers are very important, but a street address provides added credibility.

11. Is visitor information secure? If you conduct online sales, you must use encryption to ensure online safety. Even if you don't, it's still a good idea to create an online privacy policy. At a minimum, promise not to spam anyone who sends you their contact information—and keep that promise!

Bonus Round

For the next three questions, give yourself four points for each "yes," two points for each "sort-of," and zero points for each "no."

1. Can visitors find you in the most popular search engines? Achieving high rank in popular search engines, such as Google.com and MSN.com, is difficult; it can take a lot of time and money to consistently meet this objective. Advertising with a service such as Google Adwords is a more cost-effective means to guarantee that prospective customers can find you.

2. Is your website listed on every market-

ing piece you create? Help visitors find you in cyberspace—include your website and email address on your business cards, your brochures, sales flyers, signage, and anything else your customers may see.

3. Is your website up-to-date? In a world that demands instant gratification and up-to-the-minute news, visitors will be unimpressed by year-old announcements and out-of-date service lists. Review and update your site at least once a quarter.

How Did You Do?

Tally your score and check your results:

31—40 points: You have done an excellent job of creating a professional online presence. Keep up the good work!

21—30 points: Your website is looking good. Consider making a few improvements to create a perfect site.

11—20 points: You've established

yourself online, but you could do even better with a little more work.

0—10 points: You're running a little behind the times. Start with your own website address, email, and a small, but well-designed site. Used correctly, you'll find it is a powerful marketing tool for your business.

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