

Advertising, Links & Banners – What belongs on a business website??

By Myriam Dyck

We've all expected to see a professional business site and then seen a flashing "You are the 1000th visitor – Click to win a laptop!" announcement at one time. Or been distracted by all the flashing whizzing banner ads across the top and amongst the text of a business website, making it hard to tell what is the business information. And then there are those Google ad boxes, half the time promoting the competition's sites...

So if you are a business owner with a fairly well-frequented website, and you think "hmm, I could make a little more money each month if I sold some advertising..", what are the common-sense guidelines?

First of all, and I probably shouldn't even have to say this, DON'T have any banner ads provided by your host or pop-ups from outside advertisers. That means the "Click here to win a..." type of ad. They have absolutely no place on a business website. Pay for hosting if your webhost is forcing you to have ads in exchange for free hosting. You are a business, not a MySpace fan site! The first impression that potential clients get when going to your site is worth the money. Delete any embedded scripts in the code of your site which are causing popups from other sites. Sometimes "free" fancy gizmo scripts you put on your site come with booby-traps.

Now, onward to banner ads. IF your website specifically showcases your company's product(s) and is just a few pages to present what you offer, you shouldn't try to get banner ads. The only exception is if you have an arrangement with a company you regularly deal with offering a complementary product to yours. In that case, you and the other company can just arrange a mutually beneficial ad exchange on each other's sites.

However, if your website has a lot of general information about the products, technical how-to information, help forums, etc. (in other words, things that a lot of people are coming to your site just to read) then you can consider selling advertising space on those information pages. You have the traffic so that your site has value for advertisers as they know their ads will be seen. Sell your advertising specifically to companies that have products in a similar field to yours, but are not direct competition. This way you are presenting a service to your site viewers as they can access more resources, instead of annoying them with unrelated and distracting ads.

Put all the ads in a clearly defined space that does not distract from the presentation of your business information. Confused viewers exit stage left! Ensure the ads are small graphics that do not take a long time to load, or they will slow down your site.

Myriam Dyck is a local freelance website designer from Richer, MB who is providing this information as a public service for business owners to assist the community. Articles also available online at www.dyckwebsites.com