

Can anyone even *find* your website?

By Myriam Dyck

Some designers, especially if they are not experienced professionals, will build you a website but not take any actions to list your site on search engines. This is the equivalent of getting a newspaper ad designed and then posting it on the wall in your office instead of putting it in the newspaper for people to see! Customers that you already deal with will see it... but you won't get new business from it!

Unless you are running print, radio or TV ads to drive traffic to your website, the main source of traffic is going to come from search engine results. When someone goes to Google, MSN Search, Yahoo (or whatever their favorite search engine is) and types in "*John Deere tractor parts*", you want YOUR site to pop up on that first or even second page of results if you sell JD tractor parts! Otherwise they won't know you exist and will get their parts from another site.

If you or someone in your company is saying "*We built a website, but we didn't see any increase in business...*" then you need to look over your website and fix it!

The most important step to getting your website performing well in search engines is to have clear text that says who you are, what you do, what you sell and what services you offer. Some repetition is all right, in order to increase the density of keywords in your text, but be careful – overdoing the same word too many times can actually reduce your results because the search engine thinks you are "keyword spamming" and trying to manipulate results.

The text must be "readable" to search engines. If important words on your site's home page are actually contained in graphics (I've seen business names only contained in the heading picture and not the text!) then the automated scanning robots can't read them. Same goes for animated Flash graphics or intro pages – only one main search engine currently even attempts to read text contained in Flash animations. Sites built using "frames" are also a liability, as some search engines just advise viewers not to look at sites that use frames due to the fact that some browsers doesn't support frames.

Pictures can have text appended to them ("Alt text") to describe products in the graphics. This provides an opportunity to use those key words again. Page titles (the ones that show up in the top of your browser when you view the page) should be clear and are an opportunity to give a good detailed description of your site and services.

When a site is built or reworked, it should be manually submitted to the main search engines so that the specifics about your site are listed in the search engine's database. Usually these "search bots" will come through regularly once your site is included in a search engine and will update if you make any changes or add new products.

There is a lot more to it than the above, but these are some very obvious reasons that I commonly see why a site is not coming up in search results.

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