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Smart Business Brief

Advice for Success!

View your Web site from the target's perspective

You may not be eBay or Amazon.com, but if you have a Web site, you're in the business of selling online. Most companies rely on Web sites not for eCommerce but to build awareness of their products and services. In some ways, their sites function as brochures. But, unlike a brochure, a Web site offers opportunities to share exciting news quickly and inexpensively. You may not accept orders and process credit card payments, but your Web site should be an effective sales and marketing tool.

Take a look at your site – does it reflect the value of your products and services in today's economic environment? Consider the point of view of your target audiences. Targets typically include current customers, prospects, job seekers, and the press. Depending on your business, other targets may include suppliers, partners, former employees, and regulatory agencies.

Current customers – What have you done lately?

Is your site up to date and compelling? Existing customers will lose interest in a static site, and you will lose a marketing opportunity. Web sites must change to reinforce the value of the business relationship.

- A newsletter can direct customers to the site for exciting news on product launches or industry awards. Make your company newsletter accessible online in PDF format or start an e-mail subscription list. Chances are your hosting company offers affordable, easy-to-use tools for maintaining a list and sending e-mail updates.
- The changing seasons (tax time, holidays) are reliable sources of new content. The business calendar and market conditions provide relevant fodder for B2B-oriented firms.
- Create a "Q & A" area where your company's experts tackle issues of concern in your industry.
- Check out your competitors' sites? How can you top their content?

Your employees may be the best source of new ideas. Encourage them to brainstorm ways to reach and engage existing customers.

Prospects – What is so great about you?

To differentiate your business, you must communicate the unique value of your products and services. Recognize that the value changes over time, depending on the economy and competitors' moves, among other factors.

- Descriptions of products and services are marketing messages, not sacred scriptures, and should be updated regularly.
- Create new case studies and testimonials. Touting last year's achievements is dangerous if the technologies or methods used have become common or obsolete.

The Press – Only recent news is fit to print

No news is bad news. If the "What's New" section reads like last winter's calendar, you project inertia. If you can't commit to regular updates, you may be better off removing the news entirely.

View your Web site from your targets' perspective, and you will discover new ideas for making your site an effective marketing tool that showcases a vibrant organization.

