

## **Does Your Website Need a Makeover?**

### **Answer These 8 Questions to Find Out.**

**by Michael J. Dowling**

My wife and teenage daughter enjoy watching a reality TV show called, “*What Not to Wear*.” The show's guests are ordinary people who are nominated by their friends and relatives because they are “walking fashion disasters.”

I have to admit that it's amusing to watch the nominees stand awkwardly by as fashion gurus Stacy London and Clinton Kelly begin the fashion transformation by throwing out virtually every piece of their wardrobes.

Most guests on the show don't want or think they need a makeover. But by the end of the program, when they see their “new look” in the mirror, their reluctance and fear have turned into excitement and gratitude.

#### **Does Your Website Need a Makeover?**

Like the guests on “*What Not to Wear*,” you may be the last to know.

Why? Because when you're totally enmeshed in the daily pressures of your business, it's hard to take the time to step back and objectively evaluate your website. Besides, you might lack the expertise to make an accurate appraisal.

But your website is important! Often it's the only image of your business others see. It needs to be professional and effective if you want to make a positive impression and get the results you want.

If your website isn't up to snuff, you're losing money right now! A modest investment in upgrading your website can pay big dividends.

#### **To Find Out If Your Website Needs a Makeover, Answer These Eight Questions:**

- 1. Can visitors to your site quickly discern what you do and why they might need your products or services?** If you don't emotionally connect with them in the first few seconds, they'll move on.
- 2. Does your home page clearly present your USP?** Your USP (Unique Selling Proposition) is the major advantage that differentiates you from your competition. It must be so strong that your prospects will be moved to choose you!
- 3. Is your copy clear, concise, and convincing; or is it verbose, rambling, and boring?** Streamlining your copy by 15% can increase the impact of your site by 30%. Focusing on the benefits of your products and services will excite your potential buyers.

Focusing primarily on the facts and features of your products and services will put them to sleep.

**4. Is your site well designed?** Make sure that it's easy to navigate and inviting to read. Choose a writing style, colors, and graphics that are appropriate for your audience.

**5. Does your website make it easy for visitors to take the actions you desire?** Design your site so that it converts visitors into leads and leads into buyers. Invite them to sign up for your newsletter, download your white papers, request sales information, place orders, and take the other actions that will build your business.

**6. Do you back up your assertions with supporting evidence?** Testimonials are powerful sales tools. Scatter some throughout your site and place the rest on a separate "Testimonials" page. Showcase completed projects and samples of your work. Offer free downloads of white papers and articles you have written. They're convincing evidence that you know your stuff.

**7. Do you anticipate and overcome probable objections?** Neutralize the questions and concerns your visitors might have by addressing them directly and convincingly. Offer a money-back guarantee and other incentives to help put your prospects at ease.

**8. Is your website optimized for search engines?** Have you placed the right keywords in the right places so as to increase your search engine rankings? Have you successfully integrated keywords into your copy without diminishing the impact of your marketing message?

### **A Brief Word about Marketing**

While we're on the subject of search engine optimization (SEO), here's a word of caution. Beware of SEO "experts" who promise to catapult your site to the first page of Google. Most are more interested in your money than your rankings.

Before you spend lots of money trying to rank high with the search engines, ask yourself how important search engines are to your business. Only a few businesses will get top billings, and they'll expend lots of time, money, and effort to do it.

Use cost-effective methods to get your message out and drive traffic to your site. For example, consider publishing a newsletter or blog. Send out news releases. Submit articles with links to your site to on-line directories, so they in turn will make them available to thousands of websites.

For sound advice on intelligent Web marketing, read "*Guerrilla Marketing on the Internet*" by Levinson, Meyerson, and Scarborough and "*The New Rules of Marketing and PR*" by David Meerman Scott.

**Well, What's the Verdict? Does Your Website Need a Makeover?**

If you answered “no” to any of the eight questions above, it probably does. Don’t delay in making the necessary investment of time and money to upgrade it. The sooner you act, the sooner your new, improved site will be increasing your profitability 24 hours a day, 7 days a week!

Michael J Dowling is a writer, editor, and ghostwriter of books, articles, and Web copy that enable individuals and organizations to increase their visibility, credibility, and profitability. He has an MBA from Columbia Business School (NYC), where he was a Harriman Scholar, and is the author of three published books. Visit <http://www.michaeljdowling.com> to learn more.

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