

Is Your Website “Goldbricking”?

(Answer These 8 Questions to Find Out!)

by Michael J. Dowling

As a small business owner, you'd get pretty angry if you saw your marketing manager goofing off on the job four hours of every eight. But your company's website might be doing something similar without your even noticing!

Your website is often the first – and sometimes the *only* - image of your business your potential clients and customers see. And it's potentially one of your most powerful tools for increasing your profitability. But if your company is like most small businesses, your website – like that marketing manager – is operating significantly below maximum effectiveness.

To Find Out If Your Website is Goldbricking, 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 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. Your benefits must be so strong that your prospects will be moved to choose you!
- 3. Is your website's copy clear, concise, and convincing?** Or is it verbose, rambling, and boring? 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. Streamlining your copy by 15% can increase the impact of your site by 30%.
- 4. Is your site well designed?** If it's difficult to navigate, visitors will leave in frustration. If the colors, writing style, and graphics are inappropriate for your target audience, they'll disappear without a trace.
- 5. Does your website convert visitors into leads and leads into buyers?** Make it easy for people to sign up for your newsletter, download your white papers, request sales information, place orders, and take the other actions you desire.
- 6. Does your site back up your sales claims 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. All are convincing evidence that you know your stuff.

7. **Does your website's copy anticipate and overcome objections?** Neutralize the questions and concerns your prospects might have by addressing them directly and convincingly. Offer a money-back guarantee or other incentives to help put your potential buyers at ease.
8. **Is your website optimized for search engines?** Place the right keywords in the right places to increase your search engine rankings. But integrate them into your copy so they do not detract from your marketing message.

How Does Your Website Rate?

If you answered “no” to any of the eight questions above, congratulations! You share something in common with most other small business owners: Your website has room for improvement.

Are you ready to invest a reasonable amount of time and money to make your website more productive? If you're like most other small business owners, you might feel somewhat hesitant.

What's causing this hesitation? Why is it so easy for small businesses to tolerate money-losing websites?

I'll suggest four reasons why owners and managers tend to give their websites less attention than they deserve:

1. **They can't visualize their websites' full potential.**

Website statistics reveal how many visitors have come and gone, where they've come from, and what pages they've visited. But they don't tell how much money businesses are losing every day because their websites are operating at less than peak productivity. If owners could better appreciate the profit potential of their websites, they'd devote more time and resources to maximizing their effectiveness.

2. **They think they are too busy.**

The daily pressures of business make it difficult for owners and managers to take the time to step back and objectively evaluate their websites. “Urgent needs” tend to steal time and resources from the strategic actions essential for long-term success.

3. **They feel too constrained by tight budgets to make the necessary improvements.**

But the truth is, companies that have sub-par websites are LOSING money 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If they did the homework necessary to assess their websites' profit

potential, most would discover that modest commitments of time and money would generate sizable returns on investment.

4. They lack the expertise and the detachment to accurately evaluate their websites.

But that's not a good reason for doing nothing. It's why small businesses should periodically ask outside professionals to help them assess the performance of their websites and make recommendations for improvement.

Conclusion

Companies that continue to tolerate “goldbricking” websites will continue to lose money they should be making...and they won't even realize it!

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