

Top 10 Mistakes When Creating a Website

I recently sponsored the monthly luncheon meeting of the South Shore Women's Business Network, and gave this presentation. (I love that network!) Here is basically what I said, but it's somewhat diminished from the live version, where I tossed the "Top 10" signs behind me, like David Letterman! :-)

10. Letting someone else buy your domain name.

Your domain name (ex. www.loiswood.com) expires every year, so others (your website designer, your office assistant) shouldn't have control of that, **you** should. They will get the annual renewal notices instead of you. If your relationship with that person ends somehow, you now have no idea what is happening with your domain name. Once a domain name expires, it is a huge amount of work to get it back, if you can at all.

9. Not looking at the website designer's portfolio.

Does their work look like what you want? Do those websites have good search engine optimization? Are there broken links? Is there a good quantity of work to look at, with lots of variety? Also ask some of the represented clients what it was like to work with that web designer.

8. Not having everything ready when starting the website design.

Before you start, look at other websites, bookmark three that you love and three that you really dislike, and be ready to explain why for each. Have all of your content ready at once, from text to graphics to a site map, otherwise the process is very inefficient, wasting time and money.

7. Losing your log-in information.

It is crucial to keep track of username/password for your domain name, your website login, your email sign-ins, etc. Also, who is your hosting company, and do you pay them monthly or yearly? What is your account info with them? Print all this out, put it in a safe file, and keep in on your computer in a safe place. Don't lose any of this information, it is a huge amount of effort to try to get it back.

(over please)



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6. Hiring someone who doesn't ask the right questions.

One of the first questions your website designer should ask is: "Do you want to update the website yourself or have the web designer do it?" Also, they should ask if you plan to change the scope of the website later? Add photos in a gallery? Do you at some point want to set up online shopping? Will you be adding pages later? Will there be a database or other login areas later?

5. Not knowing what you want from your website.

You should know the basics of what you want your website to do and look like. Will it be static? Simple? Lot of graphics, or lots of text? Do you want to blog? Online shopping? A sign-up capability for classes or programs? Do you want to capture info from visitors? Should the site be complex? Playful? Serious?

4. Making your website by yourself.

A few people can do this, most can't! Creating a website is labor intensive, and very technical. What if there are problems that you can't figure out, who can help you? You should be working on or in your business, doing what you do best to grow that business. It will take you longer to work on your website than it would for a graphic/web designer, we do this all day, and are much faster than will be. Getting these tasks off your plate and delegating to an expert is good!

3. Not planning a budget for your website.

Do some research, ask your colleagues, see what range websites can cost. Have a budget in mind for what your business can afford. If necessary, you and the website designer can talk about perhaps doing work in phases instead of all at once.

2. Not having consistency of your brand.

Your website, business cards, brochure, rack card, pens, **everything** should convey the same look and message at all times.

1. Not keeping your website fresh!

You've got to update your website at LEAST once a month. Don't let expired materials stay on there, fix broken links, add news and updates, blog, do "specials," whatever it takes to look like an active, lively, update-to-date site.

This is one more facet of what I do... not only create attractive and functional websites, but also educate people about issues like these, and help clean up any problems they might have in these areas!

Cheers! Lois



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