

Knigh



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KnighLine

February 2003

A Publication of KnightWorks

Volume 1, Number 7

KnighWorks

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We're on the Web!
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"41 percent of small businesses reported an increase in their sales volume and 55 percent of small businesses with a Website said their Websites have generated a profit or paid for themselves...26 percent reported they definitely or probably will create a Website in 2003."

Web Works Wonders for Small Business

By: Ray Gordon Knight C.E.O.- *Chief Envisioneer Officer*

*This is the seventh in the series of articles designed to help small and medium-sized businesses improve their marketing and sales by **cost-effectively** increasing awareness, protecting their customer base and attracting new business. Prior articles are available at www.rayknight.com*

While most business owners today are well aware of the World Wide Web and the impact it is having on our business and personal lives, many have yet to add a Website into their overall marketing plan. Others have taken the first step to develop an initial Website, but are at a loss on strategic opportunities available to them to take their online presence to the next level. Each of these groups has the opportunity to integrate this important channel into their marketing plan as a way to accomplish one or more of the following objectives:

- Increase awareness about their business
- Generate new leads as potential clients
- Add another channel to their communications with existing customers and, in so doing, reduce overall servicing costs
- Add online sales into their existing business channel
- Cost-effectively introduce and make available multilingual marketing and sales information.

This article presents recent statistics on the importance of this media to the target markets mentioned and also presents a veritable menu of content options, a proven successful tip and a free offer.

The fact that the Web works wonders for small and medium sized businesses was highlighted in a recent study undertaken by Verizon Wireless. After launching a Website, **41 percent of small businesses reported an increase in their sales volume and 55 percent of small businesses with a Website said their Websites have generated a profit or paid for themselves.** Of the small businesses still without a Website, **26 percent reported they definitely or probably will create a Website in 2003.**

U.S. small businesses are still dedicating and even boosting funds to their Internet presence, a sign they now consider the Internet imperative to business. In the face of challenging economic times, 96 percent of small businesses said they still planned to maintain or increase their Internet expenditures in 2003.

Nearly half of small businesses with a Website – 47 percent – said they were more satisfied this year with their Website than they were last year and **42 percent said their Website has exceeded or met expectations this year.** Overall, 63 percent of small businesses surveyed said they plan to upgrade their Websites. In addition, 54 percent said they will add a list of products or services on their Website and 53 percent said they plan to change the design of their Website.

NOTE: In addition to businesses use of this medium, in this challenging economy, we have seen numerous individuals and executives that are now developing, or having developed, their own personal Website as an additional tool to use in their campaign for their next

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career position.

Whether a company or an individual is considering creating or upgrading their online presence, the same key considerations that need to be discussed and thought through are the issues of objectives, strategy and content. Content is one of the three “C’s” impacting online strategy, the other “C’s” are Community and Commerce. These will be covered in future editions of KnightLine.

Two Key Considerations-Objectives & Strategy

The most important question to consider in initiating a Web development project is what is the objective or objectives of the site. As with any marketing initiative, your particular objective (s) will give rise to the discussion of strategy (ies) to achieve those particular objectives. Here are a few different objectives you might explore as part of your online strategy.

- Is your site to be designed to provide some preliminary information about your company? This is commonly referred to as brochure-ware in that the site is an online, digital brochure about your company.
- Is it intended to stimulate interaction and two-way communications between your company and the visitors to the site? The focus could be on activating this channel as a way to service existing customers or to initiate a dialogue with potential new customers.
- Is it intended to create repeat traffic through the periodic addition of new content to the site?
- Is it designed to gather/capture information about your visitors and your target market?
- Is it designed to accept orders that are completed offline or to conduct sales online through the addition of an e-Commerce capability?

Over the years, we have seen many companies evolve from their first Website into the next generation site that typically includes the addition of more content, new functionalities and increased integration of the Web into the core processes of their business.

1 of the Three “C’s”-Content is King

One of the most frequent questions we hear from existing and potential clients is what information should be included in a company’s Website. While the content will vary from business to business, here is a menu of content sections that we find clients incorporating into their first, second or third versions of their Website.

- Home page-** A general overview about the business and the scope of the information included in the Website. This page can serve to orient the visitor about how much and what type of information is available on the site and where to find what they are looking for.
- Products/Services-** A description of each of the company’s key product and service offerings focuses on the features of each and the benefits to be derived through their purchase and/or consumption. While a simple approach would include a narrative about the products/services, a more comprehensive option is to create an online catalog.
- Clients-** An additional component of the Website is to provide some insight into the quantity and quality of business that your company serves. This section can amount to more than just “name dropping” by shedding light on the nature of the problem(s) your company helps clients solve or types of opportunities they capitalize upon by working with your company.

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- Testimonials-** Use third party testimonials from your clients, vendors and/or partners as additional credibility about your company. While one approach is to set up a specific page to present several quotations, another strategy is to set up a location on various pages of your site where this information is presented.
- About Us-** A general description of the company's history, mission and vision. This section can serve several purposes as it orients the visitor about the creation, evolution and direction of the firm. It should clearly convey the company's unique selling proposition and how it is positioned against its competitors.
- Case Studies-** Case studies are an effective way to provide a visitor with real life insight into how your company undertook a particular assignment. It can highlight the challenges faced, the methodology undertaken and the results achieved. Case studies can include the name of the company involved (with their advance permission) or be written in such a fashion as the actual client is hidden. Client testimonials incorporated into these documents can also be a strong selling tool.
- White Paper-** A White Paper is a handy device for a company to demonstrate or share its expertise and/or opinion about a specific topic that is of potential interest or impact to the company's target market, industry, allies or partners.
- Inquiry Form-** This form enables the company to take advantage of the medium as a potential lead generation source by offering visitors the ability to request basic information about your business, products or services.
- RFP-** The inclusion of a Request for Proposal form is a great device to identify serious inquiries that demand the company's immediate attention.
- Guest Form-** This simple device is one way to gain some insights into who is visiting your site and their thoughts, questions and comments.
- Site Map-** A section that presents a graphic picture of all the pages and sub pages of the site for easy reference for the visitor to find what they are looking for.
- Search Capability-** This function enables the visitor to input a particular word or phrase and quickly find the information pertaining to that topic.
- Contact-** A contact form should provide address, directions/map, phone, fax, and email addresses. One suggestion is to not relegate this to only one page in the site when you can have it show on every page in a footer format.
- FAQ-** A Frequently Asked Question page is helpful in providing visitors with an easy reference resource to obtain their own answers to the questions that potential clients most often pose to the company.
- Links-** This is a simple way to provide additional value to the visitors to your site by providing them with links to other sites and sources that can provide them with information, assistance or advice on those topics historically known to be of interest to them.
- Press/In the News-** A Press section of the site provides the visitor with an understanding of your company's most important announcements and developments over time. The In the News section provides them with a third-party's perspective on your company, products, services or initiatives through the reprint of articles that were distributed in traditional or online media. This content could be written, a sound clip or a video clip.

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□ **Traffic Counter-** A simple way to measure the amount of traffic to your site. An even better strategy is to have your Webmaster organize your use of a Website traffic analysis program like *WebTrends* that provides detailed monthly reports at a reasonable fee. These programs incorporate all types of useful information including, but not limited to, the following:

- General Statistics
- Top Documents
- Top Directories
- Most Downloaded Files
- Visitors by Number of Visits
- Top Visitors
- Top Geographic Regions
- Most Active Countries
- North American States and Provinces
- Most Active Cities
- Most Active Organizations
- Summary of Activity for Report Period
- Summary of Activity by Time Increment
- Number of Views per Visit
- Visitors by Time Increment
- Top Referring Sites
- Top Referring URLs

TIP 1: Still not sure, what to do with your first website or your next version, why not check out the websites of 3-5 competitors to see how they are taking advantage of this medium. Not only could it give you some ideas, you might learn something about the competition that you didn't know before!

TIP 2: In addition to promoting your website in your other printed materials and on your phone hold message, you can use it in phone conversations. One of the effective uses of a Website is what I refer to as the “WebWalk”. This technique is especially effective when dealing with a new contact or prospect on the phone that is not fully familiar with the contacted company. Simply ask the prospect if they have online access while on the phone. Direct them to your Web address and provide them with a guided tour of the major components of your site. This technique allows you to harness the power of the spoken word with the visual impact of your Website to create a lasting first impression.

TIP 3: As the web has become increasingly popular, the cost and time required to build your website or improve your existing one, is spiralling downwards. Just like you wouldn't build a house or office without a blueprint, make sure you get your objectives and strategy clear first and then move onto your content so that you know exactly what you want before you request a bid for your business.

FREE OFFER: Already covered the basics and seeking more advanced information on Web strategy, call me or send me an email (raygknight@hotmail.com) with WWW-TEN TIPS in the subject line and I'll forward additional insights and suggestions we use to assist our clients and potential clients to become the masters of their online destiny.

KnightLine is a publication of *KnightWorks*. Ray Gordon Knight, author is the C.E.O., *Chief Envisioneer Officer* of *KnightWorks*. Our entire focus is on *Passionately, Building Your Business and Brands*. We work with business owners and executives to implement practical, **no-cost and low cost proven business building and business improvement techniques and strategies**. We've developed our systems and processes over a 25 year domestic and international career as both a corporate senior executive and entrepreneur active in various industries. Much of the content included in *KnightLine* incorporates strategies and tactics we have personally applied to growing our clients' and our own businesses. KnightWorks is headquartered in Miami, Florida. We can be reached at 305-888-1905 or by email at raygknight@hotmail.com Read past articles & learn more practical techniques at www.rayknight.com .