



Start thinking differently if you want to succeed

By Martin Pollins

If you want to improve your bottom line using the Web, you'll have to start thinking differently. The same old marketing and sales models of the past are simply not going to work on tomorrow's new multimedia Web.

Web-audiences want more than a sales pitch or product specification sheet from your website.

The Web has evolved from its early days into a fully functioning multimedia communication environment.

If you've followed all the rules and listened to all the conventional wisdom, and you're still not getting what you want out of your website, maybe now is the time you should try a different approach.

Most companies are missing an opportunity to transform their relationships with customers and prospects. They are simply not using their websites to full advantage. Their focus is too often upon the superficial appearance of a website rather than whether it is functional, engages users and enables them to help themselves.

Here are some key lessons for change and survival in the teeth of the recession.

Listen, Learn, Retain and Recall

Human beings are hardwired to listen, learn, retain and recall information based on how the brain receives information. People just don't like reading information on computer screens.

The linear narrative (storytelling) delivered by the sound of a human voice, enhanced by the moving image of a real person is how information is most effectively transmitted. It's about communicating the message and how best to deliver the content.

The Web's hyperlinked nature is a two-edged sword. As quickly as people can be directed to a website by high search engine ranking or reciprocal links, they can also leave at hyper-speed when they are frustrated by reams of text, outbound links, and distracting advertisements. People want content delivered in familiar, easily understandable, and digestible formats - audio and video.

Recession survival depends on the Internet

Research by the internet company Easynet Connect shows that 45% of businesses regard the web as vital to their safe emergence from the economic crisis. The critical difference between now and the recession of the early 1990s is the web.

In March 2009, the digital agency Design UK said that businesses wishing to boost their productivity may like to turn their attention to the usability of their websites and the online errors they contain. Design UK uses an eye tracking machine to see where on the page online users focus the most of their attention on and where their concentration begins to tail off. This provides a detailed insight into how customers interact with a website which can reveal key recommendations for maximising the usability of websites and help companies to get more from their online budget.

Going from a static website to a multimedia one

Traditionally, websites are divided into sections that provide information on the company, the products and/or services, clients, help resources, company news and PR initiatives, and contact information.

These traditional website elements have to be reformatted into more effective program-style presentations using video interviews, expert opinion, and "how to" sessions, as well as audio FAQs, knowledge bases, and product or service descriptions. Testimonials, success stories and corporate histories can be turned into entertaining and compelling video documentaries that establish brand personality and build confidence.

The website of tomorrow

The narrowcast communication-on-demand website model will deliver information formatted in audio and video programs. Text and static pictures will be provided for those who need to print hardcopy information for reference purposes.

This model offers businesses the ability to take advantage of the Web's full communication capabilities and the hardwired nature of people to respond to human-based presentations that enhance attraction, comprehension, retention and recall of information.

If you want to make your point, get your message across, and attract interest in what you do, you have to provide quality content that is entertaining, compelling, and above all memorable.

As successful as some companies may be with their PPC (pay per click) programs, the vast majority of small and medium size businesses are not.

It is impossible for every business that is prepared to pay for placement or for SEO-expertise to be number one or even on the first page in any particular search category. There are just too many companies in similar businesses, with similar objectives to all rank on the first page of search results.

As a consequence, businesses will begin to focus on delivering more effective content to truly interested Web-visitors who take the time to find you on the Web or who respond to your direct marketing efforts.

More emphasis will be placed on how long visitors stay on a site, and what visitors learn and retain from that site rather than spending money on attracting just more random traffic.

Delivering meaningful content to interested audiences takes precedence over attracting volumes of uninterested traffic.

Advantages of new generation websites include:

- Users can be helped to do difficult activities and checks can be built in to avoid quality, commercial, regulatory and other risks.
- It's smart to enable site visitors to undertake tasks previously performed in-house in a 'winning way' as it speeds up responses and enables bespoke solutions to be quickly developed.
- Even with complex products and services, on-line tools can be used to enable a visitor to assess their requirements and configure solutions. On-line support tools can automate routine tasks and provide support for every stage of the buying process.
- Suppliers who commission more interactive and supportive websites gain from greater user

understanding of the relevance and value of their offerings and capabilities. Other benefits can include fewer errors, higher success rates, greater customer retention, less support staff, and increased order value as users may discover other offerings and additional possibilities while assessing their requirements.

A White Paper published by popular Better Business Focus author Prof. Colin Coulson-Thomas, shows how a period of economic recession can be the ideal time to introduce a new generation website that can benefit both customers and suppliers in a variety of ways. Prof. Colin Coulson-Thomas, author of 'New Generation Websites' says:

In a recession, customers need to assess alternatives and evaluate different possibilities. Suppliers that enable them to do this can generate goodwill, obtain incremental business and secure competitive advantage.

It's a fact: new generation websites offer opportunities to both increase engagement, satisfaction and sales revenues and reduce sales and operating costs during a period of economic recession.

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About the author:

This article was issued to coincide with the launch of Bizezia's new website at www.bizezia.com. The article written by Martin Pollins MBA, FCA, CTA, former ICAEW Council Member, the Founder of The CharterGroup Partnership and LawGroup UK and now Managing Director of Bizezia Limited.

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