

Websites as businesses

Turning a website into an income source is a common practice for web-developers and website owners. There are several methods for creating a website business which fall into two broad categories.

Let's start by taking a look at the most common types of Web sites and examine some of the issues involved in creating a Web site that will build a close and ongoing relationship with your prospects and customers. This will provide you with a framework for creating your own Web site, one based on the customer development cycle.

There are four types of Web sites:

Inner-directed Web sites are created from the business's point of view. The home page typically features the firm's logo and accomplishments. Inner-directed Web sites lack a focus on specific products or services. These sites typically feature photographs of buildings, lists of accomplishments, and testimonials from satisfied customers.

Information-oriented Web sites provide more information about the firm's products and services. These sites function like electronic brochures in that they communicate the same types of material as found in brochures. Information-oriented Web sites reflect more of a customer focus but fail to communicate urgency or establish a two-way information exchange with the Web site visitor

Transaction-oriented Web sites assume that every visitor is ready to buy and, accordingly, place an emphasis upon price product features and benefits and place a premium on urgency; price is used to encourage visitors to order "right now!".

Relationship-oriented Web sites that attempt to forge long-term bonds with Web site visitors by establishing an ongoing dialog with them, fine-tuning the relationship between buyer and seller, and rewarding previous customers so they'll not only buy again, but also recommend the firm to their friends. Relationship-oriented Web sites are intended to advance customers along the customer development cycle.

* Source - Streetwise Relationship Marketing On The Internet

1. Online Information Businesses

While most business websites serve as a shop window for brick and mortar businesses it is increasingly the case that some websites are businesses in their own right. These websites are fully self-contained businesses entities offering, for example, immediate downloads of retail software on payment of the product's price via their shopping cart.

2. Online Shop Businesses

Some websites offer no products at all but provide free information with income coming from clicks the visitors make on advertisements. There is a wide range of monetizing used on such sites and the sites themselves are actively traded and bought and sold as going concerns.

3. Brochure Sites

Brochure sites are very common. Their purpose is to act as an extension to a company's sales and marketing efforts. They usually "don't do anything" other than provide information to prospective buyers or clients with the hope that the company will be contacted by e-mail or phone for more information.

4. Communities

Web communities come in all sizes, but in all cases they bring together people that share a common interest. Sometimes web communities are run by people who are also looking to sell products or services.

5. Portals

Portals, as the name implies, act as gateways to information from various sources. The goal behind a portal is provide relevant information to user's without requiring the user to spend a lot of time searching. Ideally the information gathered is tailored to the visitor.

Web Site Design

For many individuals and companies their website is an expression of who they are and what their place is in the market. As such, they want websites which provide unique character and designs to capture the eye, the curiosity, and the attention of the user. That uniqueness is very often expressed in special graphic designs that are brought to the process by the user. On the rare occasion when the user does not have a specific design in mind, it is the function of the graphic designer to help them collate the essence of what they want to express on line and reduce it to a series of graphic images.

At **Thunderdome Systems** we understand that this work is personal in nature and reflects a very deep sense of self that has great meaning to the client individual or company. We also understand that financing is seldom if ever unlimited. So we try to work closely and patiently with our clients to come up with the designs that will satisfy their business or personal needs, and we try to give a little bit more so that they can feel that they are very special to us. Indeed, we make an effort to be sure that every client can easily feel that they have received an excellent value for their money.

Getting Stated:

Free Initial Consultation - We'll sit down with our client for a little while and talk about what they want to do and what they want to express in their site. If the client requires a domain name we can begin the search and acquisition of one, and if they have some drawings and artwork that gives a general sense of the design they have in mind we can review that. We can usually get a sense of what is involved so that the client can understand what is possible and what kind of cost is associated. ***Note** - Once the domain name has been acquired, the nameservers will be pointed to the hosting server in order for the site to resolve as soon as possible. This makes the "Move In Page" visible to any visitors.

Design Consultation - At this point we want to establish the basic architecture and overall theme of the website. We begin to put together the designs the client may have brought to the process, or determine the specifics of what will be required to build the site that they have decided that they want to publish. Our attention is focused on getting the specific layouts to the individual pages as well as the links and extras which may be associated with the build. It is a time to format all the text that will populate the site and describe whatever the central topic of the site is.

First Draft - Whenever something is in a beginning stage, most people are not particularly willing to have their page seen until it is the way they want it. Accordingly, our policy is to put up what we call a "Move In Page" on the clients site, and to publish the work in progress to a private location where they can see it on the web, determine whether it satisfies their requirements, and have as a reference in guiding us to tweak the site to get it where it needs to be.

We publish a first draft to a demo site and forward a link to that location to the client by email. Clients can access the site remotely and contact us direct by phone or by email to instruct us as to whatever changes they may feel are appropriate. This process has allowed us to actually conduct business over extended distances. Even in the case of international sites we offer consultation on the use of VOIP software that allows for machine to machine calling world wide at no cost.

Follow up Drafts - Realizing that some sites may take longer than others to get just the way the client likes them, we follow up each update contact with a new draft on the remote site for the client to view. As long as changes to the site are in accordance with the agreed to designs, this process continues at no cost until the client is satisfied. Changes to the original design, additions, or other kinds of changes may be subject to additional charges. However, should this be the case it is our policy to advise the client before the fact to assure that they have full knowledge of any pricing changes.

Publishing - Once complete, the "Move In Page" will be brought down and the site will be populated with the clients website. This is called, "Going Live." The day the site goes live the client can begin to do business.

Portfolio



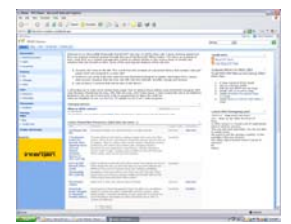
Mobile Data Tools - A start up company researching medical solutions through improved and enhanced communications services. This company was developed and implemented through the Wake Forest/Bowman Gray Business School incubator.



New Horizon Education - A small business focused on getting books to children for education from distributors worldwide.



Panthers Pride - This site was first published in 2001 as a fan site for the Carolina Panthers. I has provided a strong community atmosphere emphasizing bringing fans together face to face. It has a forum and has generated sites with a direct link such as www.catman-good.com (The Home of Catman) and a sister site, www.pantherspride.de in Germany. This site developed a footprint across 12 countries and most of the US.



Thunderdome Systems - We too have gone through evolutions which have included flash heavy sites and a SharePoint Intranet site. Thunderdome has pioneered active web based office facilities to allow for their representatives to stay actively in the field and communicate directly through web portals to accomplish such business tasks as are necessary from day to day.



Using a variety of designs and a variety of developmental engines, **Thunderdome Systems** makes every effort to give the client the best possible results in their web sites. Our philosophy of providing a higher standard of service delivery drives us to do everything possible to assure customer satisfaction. We make the clients profitability our principal concern and so make cost efficiency and effectiveness our highest priorities.

Call Us For A Free Consultation today (336) 391-7833