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CONSULTING

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The why's and why not's of a website revamp

The website is an important weapon in a company's marketing arsenal. It can perform multiple functions – establish your company's online presence, showcase capabilities, generate leads and even transact business. Websites can nicely complement push-marketing techniques and, if crafted well, can draw audiences in, thus enhancing a company's brand. Clearly, websites are too important a marketing tool to be taken lightly.

Does your website need a facelift?

The website is the “online face” of your company and must reflect your company's position accurately, and hence draw the right audience.

Here are eight questions which will help you decide if you need to consider changes to your website -

1. Has your business undergone a significant change, such as an M&A or a change in ownership that must be reflected on the site?
2. Has your business completed a re-positioning or re-structuring exercise that requires to be communicated to the market?
3. By scanning the home page, is a visitor unable to determine your competencies and assess your knowledge as they stand today?
4. Has the last revamp been done several years ago, and consequently, does the content on the site barely represent a fraction of what you could offer to customers?
5. Does your site generate marginal traffic and leads?
6. Does your site have little or no interactive elements?
7. By doing a critical comparison of your site with a competitor's, do you feel that your site needs a big boost?
8. Is your site an online equivalent of a brochure (static, 'salesy')?

Website changes should be driven by compelling business reasons such as the above. Do not embark on frequent aesthetic overhauls as they not only cost money but also break continuity, and hence impede the branding process.


If any of these questions solicit a positive response, then your site needs to be carefully evaluated and the extent of changes required needs to be determined.

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Significant changes must be treated like any other business investment and justified through a business case that clearly enumerates the outcomes. A considered decision can be made, based on the expected outcomes.

Common mistakes you don't want to make while revamping your website

Over the last eight years at Prayag, we have worked on several websites for companies in the IT / ITeS industry, and our role has provided us an opportunity to observe at close quarters how companies approach website development or changes. The most commonly cited reason is the lack of sufficient quality traffic. Other good reasons include altering the site to reflect new positioning, new portfolio of service offerings, bolstering the track record and so on.



However, many a time, we see companies lose sight of the end goal and the three most common reasons are:

Obsession with Design

When it comes to design, everyone has a view and this very often results in endless iterations and contradictory feedback. Reaching a consensus takes time and effort, which could have been invested in more value adding activities ! We also find that companies obsess endlessly with the minutiae of design. Marketers need to understand that the precise shade of green or the careful positioning of a grey line is not going to draw traffic to the site; while aesthetics increase appeal, they cannot substitute for poor content.

Communicating all that I have

A website is supposed to present a compelling story about the company, thereby motivating prospective buyers and employees to learn more about it. Therefore, the website must contain relevant content presented in a crisp and easy-to-read fashion. However, many companies desire to tell all — assuming mistakenly that a succinct description of capabilities is not sufficient to convey the value proposition. Nothing can be further from reality. An average B2B website visitor spends under three minutes on any given site and in that short period has to assimilate what the company has to offer and be stimulated enough to learn more- so, brevity is the essence of compelling content.

Being someone you are not

Some companies expect a website makeover to be the panacea for all their problems. Not only that, they try and project an image through the website that does not gel with the company's personality or core capabilities. For instance, a typically conservative business should not project a flashy image on their website; this does not strike the right chord with the targeted audience, especially with those who interact with the company. Similarly, exaggerating one's capabilities is bound to backfire as it will impact the credibility negatively.

Four areas you need to focus on

Now that we have dealt with what not to do, here are some must do's during a website revamp:

Content rules

When contemplating a revamp or a major change to the website, companies must remember the key motivation for audiences to visit and spend time on the site. Visitors typically learn more about a company and are incentivized to spend a longer time if the company's message strikes a chord and if the content supports this messaging adequately. While design is still an important component, visitors who matter usually do not pay significant attention to every design detail.

Demonstrate that you can think

Prospective customers are reassured when they see sufficient evidence of a company's thinking capabilities leading to how they can help the customer. After all, it is far simpler to engage with a company that can contribute meaningfully rather than someone who needs explicit directions. The website is a great way to showcase a vendor's consulting or consultative skills.

Online marketing

Most companies have underleveraged online marketing, leaving untapped a powerful channel to further their business opportunities and brand. With a well-planned and rigorously executed online marketing strategy, companies can attract better quality leads and also improve their brand image significantly. Some of the basic vehicles to be explored are: optimizing the site for SEO, frequent content updates to the website, incorporating Web 2.0 elements such as blogs and RSS Feeds. However, this requires sustained quality efforts to ensure the desired outcome and only companies committed to such efforts will see the results.

Measurements

A culture of periodically gathering and analyzing website metrics must be cultivated. Several tools are available that give an indication of the effectiveness of the website. One such is Google Analytics, a powerful tool which is easy to use and gives good insights into website traffic and SEO effectiveness. Analytics reports give important cues on what needs to be changed on the existing website.

Is revamp the only way to make changes?

Not necessarily. Website makeovers or revamps are not always warranted, and significant change may also be brought out by deploying point solutions such as reworking the content and messaging or implementing an SEM strategy without disrupting the design. A clear understanding of the expectations and objectives from changes to the website is therefore necessary to decide on the right change strategy.

Concluding thoughts

Websites are a key marketing vehicle that can prompt visitors to engage in a meaningful dialogue with your company. A well presented website speaks volumes about your company and can be an effective pull-factor for your business. Finally, a website needs to be up to date and reflect who you are accurately. A revamp is not the only answer to improving website effectiveness. Pick the right strategy depending on what outcomes you desire.

Prayag has recently come up with it's annual website benchmarking study WebWatch 2009. To download the report [click here](#).



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