



Is your website killing your company?

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I am alarmed by the number of otherwise brilliant businesspeople who are allowing their website to kill their company.

Many business leaders I meet are abdicating their responsibility to market and sell their products by handing this power to a web designer – believing their website IS their marketing plan. The web has become too prevalent, too easy. The Internet has lulled us into becoming lazy marketers!

Here are 10 ways websites can sub-optimize a business strategy and potentially kill off your business:

1. **No purpose.** Before you start a website, be clear about your purpose, audience, message, and call to action. You must have a clear marketing plan before you have a website. Your website must be part

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of an integrated and measurable initiative to build a link between customers and your company, brand and products.

2. **No promotion.** A website only works if people see it and respond to it. Once you have built your site, work it! Drive traffic to your website with advertising, promotions, mailings, putting the web address on your company literature, business cards, etc. “Build it and they will come” is a line from a movie -- not a marketing strategy.
3. **Ego trip.** It’s heady to see your product in cyberspace for the first time, but don’t let personal interests and emotions get in the way of effective marketing. A majority of websites focus on their company and not on the visitor, customer, or potential customer. A website should address your customer’s needs, pain, goals and educate them on how you can help them. Look at your website through the eyes of your customer. Is your website all about you? Don’t sell what you DO. Sell what they NEED.
4. **One size fits all.** Don’t try to sell too much, to too many people, in one place. Micro-market wherever possible. Design web pages for every market segment and customer need. That’s the beauty of the web – slice up that target market and communicate to them effectively and often.
5. **Unrealistic expectations.** A website is not a marketing plan. It is an output of a marketing plan and is only as effective as the preparation behind its execution. No website can overcome an inferior business strategy or lousy products. I have encountered people who think they will make money just by having an online presence. This is still business and you have to follow business fundamentals to achieve profitable growth. And remember, often times a website is NOT the most effective way to reach your customers.

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6. **Lack of measurement.** My teacher and mentor Peter Drucker, the famous management consultant would tell us, “If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.” Web analytics track every page a visitor sees on your website and a lot more. By analyzing your traffic you can see what needs to be improved and what people are responding to.
7. **Becoming stale.** It’s easy to build a website, relax and expect new customers. But nothing turns off visitors faster than an outdated website. Keep your site fresh, expand it, improve it. Keep making it easier and more fun to do business with you. Keep it alive and relevant.
8. **Forgetting your customers.** Don’t rely on customers to come back to your site on their own. Instead, capture their email and stay in contact with them. Send them new product announcements, press releases, follow-up messages, surveys, and newsletters. And when you do, make them happy you did it. Always leave them with some new information or insight that will make them glad they are doing business with you.
9. **Focusing on traffic, not conversions.** Many people focus on driving traffic to websites instead of achieving actual business goals. The ultimate goal for most businesses is to turn a website visitor into a buying customer but a conversion might also mean the visitor signs up for a newsletter, contribute an idea, responds to a poll, provides feedback on a product, calls a sales rep for an appointment, or donates money to your non-profit organization. Conversions lead to business growth, not just traffic.

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10. **No SEO.** In the past 12 months, I bought a car, a house and more than \$5,000 in consumer electronics. My first stop for research? A search engine. And I'm not alone. Today, the Internet is overwhelmingly the first place to go for shopping, entertainment, education and information. Consumers, suppliers, potential employees and other stakeholders will all be trying to find you on popular search engines such as Google and Yahoo. Not having your business show up in the top level of searches probably means leaving you're leaving money on the table. SEO has become a key, stand-alone marketing skill. Under-estimating the need to keep your site atop the search engine results can provide an enormous edge to your competitors. Engage in an on-going effort to keep your website relevant, important and in front of potential customers.

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About the author

Mark Schaefer is Executive Director of Schaefer Marketing Solutions, a firm providing marketing strategy and comprehensive out-sourced marketing services (www.businessesgrow.com). Mark has advanced degrees in both marketing and applied behavioral sciences and more than 25 years experience in global sales, marketing, new product development, marketing communications, and eCommerce. He has worked in more than 20 countries and developed successful growth strategies for both small businesses and Fortune 100 companies in the U.S., Europe and Asia. Mark is an award-winning business writer and lecturer and has five international patents for new product and process innovations. In addition to leading Schaefer Marketing Solutions, he is an adjunct professor of organizational management at Tusculum College.



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