

### 10 Ten in 10 Series: #3

## 10 Steps to a Successful Web Site

Of course you can build a Web site yourself, but why would you? A Web site is an ongoing, organic process. If not planned carefully, it will take months longer than you expect and cost much more than planned. Hiring a trained professional to work with you is absolutely the right thing to do. I don't do my own corporate taxes, or argue cases in court, or build an addition to my house (although I could, just not very well and not very quickly).

Web site design - or any design for that matter - is essential to the survival of a successful company. Doing it right requires the same process as creating other marketing tools. Your job as a business owner is to find the right contractor to handle your project. Depending on your scope, that could be a freelancer, a small design studio or a large Web site development firm. In any case, the process is the same. Here are 10 steps to success:

- 1. Create a list** of what you expect your site to accomplish.
- 2. Create another list** of what you would like to see included.
- 3. Create a budget** Based on what you feel is appropriate for your needs (if you don't know, ask colleagues and other business owners what they spend - relative to their gross sales).
- 4. Start acquiring potential candidates.** Ask colleagues for referrals. Do your research into the sites you feel are successful, and who designed/built them.
- 5. Interview potential candidates** (firms or individuals may be on this list). Share your lists with them.
- 6. Look for a good fit.** Can they do what you need? Do they have actual experience building a site appropriate for your business? Do you feel you can work with them for 3-9 months with honest, open exchanges of ideas? Do they have a track record of success? Do they really understand what YOU are trying to achieve?
- 7. Start creating** a Website. If you've done your homework, this process will go reasonably smoothly, with minimum surprises.
- 8. Review the site carefully.** Pay attention to the site map and wire frames in particular. Catching mistakes here is much less costly than in the programming stage.
- 9. Stay on task.** It's easy to wander off the path when working on Web sites. Many clients see what can be achieved, and since it doesn't have the permanence of ink on paper, make changes constantly. Staying focused on your original plan is the surest way to get your site up quickly. Have new ideas? Great, start planning phase 2.
- 10. Proof.** A lot. Be sure to have several people you trust read through your site maps, copy and explore through beta sites and soft launches. It's easy to assume your site works and functions well, but you're the one who planned it so of course it makes sense - in your world. Everyone experiences sites differently. Having other people review it throughout the various stages will go a long way to preventing embarrassing - and costly - mistakes later.

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*For over 24 years, Jim Shanman has provided strategic design and marketing solutions for companies of all sizes in a variety of industries. Working with manufacturers, retailers and non-profit organizations, Jim has created award winning projects that have helped companies improve sales and gain greater market share in their respected industries, and doing so in responsible, eco-friendly ways. Contact Mr. Shanman at [jim@asylumdesign.com](mailto:jim@asylumdesign.com) or (310) 204-4346.*