Title:
Facelift Your Website

Word Count:
954

Summary:
<p>An up-to-date website will generate custom. But failing to keep it current will leave your customers unimpressed. </p>

Keywords:
Small Business Startup, Small Business Ideas, Small Business Specialists

Article Body:
<p>How many times have you refreshed the graphics or content of your website? Twice? Once? Not at all? </p>
<p>Many businesses are still hosting first-generation sites that went up at the turn of the millennium. Likewise, the majority of these sites are passé by today's "make-it-useful" standards. Sometimes embarrassingly so. </p>
<p>Internet-savvy businesses will refresh the content on their websites regularly. Think about the impression a site that's a year out of date will have on visitors. </p>
<p>It takes a little dated information for visitors to conclude they've hit a dead end . Plus, when a big-deal client clicks on your "urgent" invitation to attend an upcoming seminar, only to find that the event came and went a year ago he will feel annoyed and foolish. And you'll be toast. </p>
<p>So consider this a noisy wakeup call. It's the 21st century. Is your website still looking like it's 1999? </p>
Site Specific Suggestions
<p>Business sites obviously run a gamut. But for the purposes of site facelifts, differences boil down to how frequently you must make changes. Consulting services may update sites only quarterly or even annually. Ecommerce sites or research companies may require updates by the hour. </p>
<p>Whatever your needs, you can now find appropriate and affordable off-the-shelf software and third-party service providers to do the job. You can, for instance, put a fresh "skin" on your old site without disrupting any functionality. </p>
<p>Here are 11 ideas culled from web marketers and developers that can modernise your site without excessive costs. </p>
1. Reduce the Number of Site Pages
<p>Focus on redesigning only the core 10 to 15 pages, suggests Matt Greer, chief

executive at Zeeo Interactive, a Web design services company. You can then archive any remaining popular or highly trafficked pages into Adobe PDF or Microsoft Word documents that are suitable for download. </p>

2. Make the Site a Marketing Tool

<p>If you're not yet capturing data basics, such as which sites and search engines visitors are clicking from or which pages get most visitors, get started now. </p>

<p>Use pre-packaged software or a web services provider to capture detailed information about site visitors. "The first question to ask is: 'When visitors come to your site, what do you want them to do?' " says Erin Duckhorn, spokesperson for Crucial Technology, an online memory upgrade provider. Once you have answers, you can define the tracking metrics and develop the content, navigation and structure that will quickly satisfy your targeted visitors. </p>

3. Set up an E-mail Program

<p>Create an incentive for visitors to register or give you their email addresses.. Once you have addresses, send out useful emailings. But make sure who have explicit permission to do so - and don't cause more harm than good by bombarding them. </p>

4. Create an Online Reward for Prized Customers

<p>Treat your best customers with perks or discounts. "You can give them their own area of the site without any special technology," says Wally Bock, a web consultant. You can also, of course, email special offers. </p>

5. Speed Loading Time

<p>Fancy graphics and animations are obstacles in the path of getting to information. Make sure your visitors can easily find what they're after. </p>

6. Give Visitors Greater, Self-directed Control

<p>In the past two years, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts has reworked fairmonthotels.com [link] to expand online booking capabilities. Now, guests who make online room reservations can book dinner or spa services at the same time. The site has also added a "Fairmont Planner" that matches individual resort properties to guest profiles or needs, as well as a "virtual concierge" that offers more details about services. </p>

7. Invest in a Content Management System

<p>Stop relying on static HTML. Instead, invest in a reliable CMS (Content Management System) which lets you update your own website content without getting a developer involved. If you update content a lot, this will pay for itself quickly. </p>

8. Ensure Visibility on Search Engines

<p>The old home page of BreastCancer.org [link], a non-profit informational group based in Pennsylvania was dominated by a giant image of the organisation's logo, an illustrated character called Polly, which prevented search engines from finding the site. "The makeover moved a smaller Polly to the upper right corner of the home page and used text and text links to guide the not particularly Web-

savvy users of this site toward the essential information they came looking for," says Ilise Benun. </p>
9. Align the Site to the Organisation
<p>You mighty've reinvented your business a half-dozen times over the past few years. How appropriate is your site now? What about secondary channels or pages? "Many businesses grow their sites in piecemeal fashion," notes Kevin McLaughlin at Public/i, a public relations firm. "As new sections are added over time, the same messages or positioning is not always reflected in the copy throughout the company's entire website." Make sure your site's messaging is always in tune with offline marketing. </p>
11. Add Testimonials or Success Stories
<p>"Very few sites do this and there's no question that they add major credibility for buyers," says Philippa Gamse, a web strategy consultant. Ask long-time customers for quotes or permission to post their case histories and their satisfaction with your services. </p>
<p>Any of these ideas will help update your online presence. But the real advice is simply not to get lazy. Pay attention to your website whenever you shift direction or significantly grow the business. All marketing and messaging must be seamless — consistent, uniform, multimedia and multi-channel. </p>