Title:
Affordable Small Business Web Design - 5 Tips

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Summary:
When creating an affordable Web site for your small business, there are certain
things to keep in mind from a design perspective that can make or break your
site. Even if you do not plan to spend a fortune on your site, paying attention
to each of these items you will ensure that the final product is something of
which you can be proud.

Here are 5 tips for designing your small business Web site, even on a budget:

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Article Body:
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Here are 5 tips for designing your small business Web site, even on a budget:

Tip #1: Make sure your Web site loads in 5 seconds or less: Have you ever tried
to view a Web site only to find that it takes 10 or 20 seconds to come up on
your screen? Unless it has been recommended by a friend or you have some other
burning desire to visit the site, you probably likely gave up and moved on. The
first 5 seconds is very important in terms of the attention span of your
visitor. During that period, you need your site to load and for the visitor to
be able to "get" what your site is about. If it takes longer than this, your
visitors will run out of patience and leave. Tip: if you want to show off a long
flash presentation, try featuring it on a page other than the home page.

Tip #2: Limit the menu bar to 5 options: Your Web site needs to be singular in

purpose and focused in appearance. If your site is trying to be all things to all people, it will end up being of value to almost nobody. The simplicity and focus of your site design is reflected in your navigation and symbolized on your home page by your menu options. If you believe your site requires more than five menu options, make some of them sub-menus that are available only after the user selects one of the five main options.

Tip #3: Make clearly visible a call to action: Ever shopped at an IKEA? Their stores have a non-traditional layout that allows you to look around freely and yet literally leads you from one section to another, right on through to the multiple cash registers and food goodies waiting for you at the end of your path. Let this serve as a model for how to set up your Web site: on every page, you need to make it abundantly clear to your site visitors just exactly what it is you want them to do. Do you want them to contact you? Order your product or service? Add a comment to your Web site? Whatever it is, make this call to action very easy to spot both textually and graphically from anywhere on the site.

Tip #4: Provide free and clear access to additional help options: You do not want to lose sales (or visits, or whatever your goal for your visitors maybe be) just because you failed to give someone the chance to ask a question. Just as with your call to action, make it clear to visitors that no matter where they are on your site they can easily locate help via phone, e-mail, live chat, call back, user forum, or knowledge database. Hint: present the various options in a prioritized manner depending upon anticipated user needs.

Tip #5: Show consistency among other design elements: The look-and-feel of your site as a whole is really just a combination of all of its individual components. Pay close attention to every detailed component of your new site. Use appropriate colors and graphics, pay attention to font size, make sure your messaging is readable and makes sense, and make sure images look crisp and appealing. Items that you think are minor might form the basis for whether someone chooses to stay on your site or find that of a competitor.

Whether you are designing your own site or hiring a professional designer, pay attention to these items and you will have a winning site for your small business, even on a budget.