

Newsletter

SPRING 2013

Five steps to 'engaging' website visitors

ON 28 October 2012, Monte Hubesch published a "5 step video process to 'engage' website visitors".

If you're considering updating your website, have a look at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9x2XfjnOns>

If this doesn't work just Google "monte hubesch on website design" as we did.

Why should you watch this Youtube presentation?

- Firstly, because Monte points out the importance of having a Youtube presentation on your home page.
- Secondly, he tells you the five steps to get the best result from your video. He tells you how to drag in the customers.
- Thirdly, he tells you to do it yourself. Home-made is best. You can even take the pictures on your cell phone.

If you really think you should leave this to a professional, look at the video, anyway. You'll be

better placed to tell the professional just what you want.

Monte Hubesch is CEO of Aussieweb Local Search, in Brisbane.

When designing your website, consider the following:

- Who are you trying to attract?
- How can you capture the visitor's email address?
- Design your website with the customer in mind, not yourself. Don't talk about what you can offer. Talk about finding solutions for the customer's problems.
- Who cares about your firm? No one except you and maybe your mother. Why should they? "About us" is only of use to increase your credibility. It does not need to be prominent.
- As in all marketing, references are invaluable. Put them into your website.

The roofer impresses with after-sales service

I WAS out getting my morning exercise when I met a fellow exerciser.

We stopped for a chat and she told me she had recently had part of her roof replaced. She was very impressed with the roofer.

Why? Six weeks after he had done the job he called at her house to ask her if the roof was OK. This small after-sales service can have a big effect on a customer, as it did in this case. The woman was incredibly impressed and is telling others.

Why don't business owners do this more often? Sometimes it's because they're afraid the customer will find a reason to complain. The

answer, then, is to ensure you do the job so well they have no reason to complain. You should always be confident in your product or service.

We suggest you start doing something like the roofer now.

Business is difficult. Get a reputation for caring about your customers and referrals will flow that much easier. A card or email once a year on the anniversary of the job would reinforce your marketing. It would help ensure you're not forgotten.

You might not necessarily get this customer back, but you do want to promote referrals.

Churchill quotes good for business

YOU can learn a lot from the late wartime leader Sir Winston Churchill to help you with your business.

In 1953 he won a Nobel prize in literature. You will find he uses short sentences and short words. This makes it easy to read and understand his works. There's your first Winston lesson – short words and sentences, when you write.

Now ponder on these quotes. We have added our comments in italics.

Solitary trees, if they grow at all, grow strong.

A business commentator once observed if a project is worth doing, do it yourself. We say, don't think you have to have a partner to run a successful business. It's usually better to go it alone.

Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.

You have not been in business, if you have never made a mistake. Keep going.

To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often.

No matter how long you have been in business, you can always improve what you do. Get used to making changes even though it challenges your staff to get out of their comfort zones.

A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.

Ricardo Semler points out the more difficult a task, the bigger the business opportunity. If you're in a competitive industry, learn to do the jobs everyone else hates to tackle. That's where the money lies.

If you're going to go through hell, keep going.



“There is no such thing as a good tax.” - Churchill

No comment needed on this one.

We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.

The more you can do to help others in business, the more you get out of it, business included. See also our article in this edition entitled “Building up motel income”.

There is no such thing as a good tax.

Do we need to add anything?

Do you rent your holiday home?

IF YOU rent your holiday home, you need to start keeping records now (in addition to income and expenditure) of the following:

- Who uses the home each day of the year?
- Their relationship to you.
- Rent charged to each person.
- Details of any repairs, including the reason for the repairs.

Replacement insurance - it's up to you

SAY goodbye to insuring your house for replacement. It was nice while it lasted.

In future, the risk of not getting full replacement value is going to be on you. You will have to work out what it will cost to rebuild your house.

There are all sorts of hidden extras such as resource consent, retaining walls and swimming pools, which can be easily overlooked. Add to this the volatility of the building industry.

Finally, when there's a crisis such as in Christchurch, scarcity is going to make everything even more expensive.

Be very careful working out the cost of rebuilding. It's likely to be higher than the market value of your house (excluding the value of your land). You could get a quantity surveyor's help. Once he/she sets up the measurements, it should be easy to key in new monetary values in following years.

Once you have a cost of replacement, you then need to decide how much you want to add to this figure to allow for delays and price rises.

Aim for triple-A in your business

THE business formula for success can be summarised in three words, in the following order:

• Available • Affable • Able

How many large businesses and those aspiring to be large do you know which have forgotten the three As? Many of them have just one A: Arrogant.

Small businesses can't afford to be arrogant, though a few of them think they can.

Available

Make it easy for customers to contact you. If it's impractical to get someone to talk to them when they ring, ask them to leave a message and tell them you'll call them back within ... hours. Then make sure you do ring them back. You might consider using the services of a message-taking company if you get a lot of calls – it could be worth the cost.

Affable

I know a receptionist who's so good at her job, it feels like she's smiling at you down the phone line. She never has a bad hair day. She's so good customers comment on it.

Able

This is last on the list because it's the least important. The first two help you to get your customer. This word is "able" – not outstanding. It's not so much about being good at what you do, but more about the perception of being good.

The man who asked

A YOUNG man recently set up business as an IT consultant.

When he sent his third bill, he asked, in an attached email, whether the customer was happy with his work. He then said: "Please feel free to pass on my details to anyone who might be in need of some assistance."

There's everything to gain and nothing to lose in asking for referrals.

Building up motel income

FRIENDS told us this story about the tourists who often stay at their motel.

Our friends would ask their guests if they wanted to do some washing. Then they would offer to transfer clothes to the drier and have them ready for when the tourists returned. In addition, they would provide a map of the area and point out places of interest their guests might like to visit when they moved on.

They would also suggest other places to stay.

This extra caring often led to tourists booking in again on their return journey, as well as reciprocal business from the referrals.

You might not run a motel, but there's a general business principle here. The more you give, the more you get back. Some organisations abuse this, particularly taking advantage of new business owners. Be selective.

BRIEFLY

Smile

If someone looks glum and doesn't have a smile, try giving them one of yours. It's great for bucking up your staff.

Google that number

Try searching on Google to find a business phone number quickly. Even if you get the name slightly wrong, Google will help you to correct it. You might find Google more reliable than the Yellow Pages because some businesses no longer pay for a listing. You'll also find lots more information about a business.

Minding the children

You can't claim for employing a baby sitter while you go out for a business dinner. Care of your children is a personal cost.

Safety reminder

Companies using contractors are responsible for the contractors' health and safety.

Save interest and penalties

You can buy overpaid tax from a tax intermediary. If you have a tax problem, consider this opportunity for reducing Use of Money Interest and possible penalties. Some firms pay too much tax and have a surplus credit with the IRD. You may be able to purchase this extra tax. Talk to us for more details. Time limits apply.

Good ideas

Ideas are like good pens – if you don't hold onto them they get lost very easily.

A thought

You get what you expect – whether you deserve it or not.



Business cards stored with app

SEVERAL new apps for smartphones and other mobile devices are out there to make your business life easier.

Some are downright silly and a waste of time, but some are useful. One worth looking at is an app to convert business cards. You know what it's like – a drawer full of business cards which get pulled out when you suddenly need a phone number or email address.

There are apps for all sorts of mobile devices, but for people with iPhones and other Apple iOS devices, there's Card Munch. With this little app you can photograph the business card with your smartphone and the business networking company LinkedIn (who provide the app) convert the data to an electronic form. This is then added to your device's electronic contacts. An Android app is in the pipeline.

CardMunch is apparently very accurate because real people do the processing. And it costs nothing, at least at the moment.

The advantages – other than not having to sift through physical cards when you're looking for a contact – is that you can search inside the app; and you can add the card as a contact in LinkedIn.

It's just another way of storing business cards so you have them available on the run.

Being good at what you do is only a small part of business

YOU might be particularly good at what you do.

Unfortunately, this is only a small part of being successful in business.

You also need to learn a multitude of other skills such as time management, people skills, how to hire staff and, most importantly, how to grow your business.

You can get these skills in a variety of ways including reading, going to seminars, webinars and so on.

A great way to grow your business is to get a suitable mentor.

If you're interested in this option, take a look at this website: www.business.govt.nz



TAX CALENDAR

August 28

1st instalment of 2014 Provisional tax if you pay three times a year (March balance dates)

September 30

2nd instalment 2014 Provisional tax (December balance dates)

October 29

1st instalment of 2014 Provisional tax for those who pay GST twice a year (All March balance dates)

November 28

1st instalment of 2014 Provisional tax (June balance dates)

Another invoicing scam

THERE'S a business operating out of the United States, but based in Latvia. It issues invoices for re-registering patents and trademarks.

The person who told us this story said he received a hard copy invoice from an Auckland address which included email and phone number. He has a trademark which requires annual renewal and the payment of a significant fee. The invoice appeared genuine, so he paid it.

He said, "Had it arrived by email, I'd have been suspicious."

In due course he discovered the scam and advised the police. To his surprise, after two or three telephone calls he actually got his money back. He believes informing the police was a major reason for this.

Be sure to check all invoices before you pay them. It's easy to get caught when an invoice has the appearance of coming from a reputable source and it's for an expense you expect to have to pay.

This one was for \$1900 and the real fee was \$700.

Keep GST file open at IRD

CLIENTS frequently close their GST file at IRD too quickly. If you're giving up business, don't rush to close your GST file. When we prepare your final accounts, we're likely to produce some GST adjustments. You'll need to close your GST file when your last business transaction goes through. In the meantime, if there's nothing to declare or claim, send in nil returns.