

Why Websites in the Age of Social Media?

Are websites really necessary in this age of social media? Given the explosion in social media's popularity, reach and the ability to show a measurable ROI, this is a question that is often raised. Social media platforms such as Facebook offer businesses the ability to establish a presence on the web and generate traffic without the expense and technical expertise required to have a website built. Facebook boasts a user base of 750 million and climbing with the added benefit that users can use it for not only socializing, but finding information, helping with shopping and a variety of other daily activities.

Like many tools, websites and social media should be looked at from the standpoint of "both/and" rather than "either/or". Each has its own strengths and weaknesses, but they can work very effectively in combination.

Websites offer the following benefits:

They serve as a hub where visitors from social media and other sources can be directed for additional information. They are ideal for branding your business with your own distinctive look and message. You can maximize the power of search engine optimization (SEO) to drive traffic to your business by hosting your blog on your website, optimizing your website for SEO, and providing valuable content. Users can make purchases through your website. You can sell on your website whereas this is usually frowned upon in social media circles. You can capture contact information for visitors so you can market to them directly. Websites do not have the restrictions of social media sites in terms of what type of material you can post which offers you a great deal more flexibility.

Social media offers these benefits:

Ease of set-up. You can have a Facebook page up in 5 minutes.

They do not require any technical skills to maintain.

Social media sites provide you with a way to listen to the conversations about your market and gain insights into what issues are most important for your audience.

Endorsements of your business in social media forums tend to carry more credibility than information on your website because they are usually unsolicited.

You can reach targeted audiences based on interests and other criteria.

Here are some ways that your website can work in tandem with your social media presence.

Host your blog on your website.

Include a link to your website in your social media profiles

Include social media buttons on your web pages so visitors can easily share information from your site with others.

Include a link to your website on your social media profiles.

Use social media to get feedback about what types of problems you may be able to help solve for your customers.

For businesses with a customer service component, you can add Twitter to the phone and e-mail as a means of responding quickly to customer issues.

Use social media as a means of demonstrating thought leadership and expertise in your area by contributing useful comments to discussions online. By contributing without selling, you raise your business profile in the online community which increases the likelihood that others will use you when they do have a need your business can fill. Social media is another way to start and build relationships which can later turn into business, either directly or through referrals.

As we mentioned earlier, the question about social media versus websites should not be framed as an either/or

proposition, but rather as a question of how these tools can be used together strategically. Working in tandem your website and social media can greatly add to the leverage you have to help grow your business.

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