



## Working the Web

Ellie Becker and Bernadette Nelson | Feb-26-10, 11:55 AM |

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You have no single better opportunity to increase your business this year than by making your website an inbound marketing hub. To define terms, inbound marketing is the art and science of getting found online through the creation of valuable content. It's rapidly supplementing or replacing traditional marketing tactics as the web becomes the place people go to find information, products and services.

Your prospects are already online looking for what you're selling. Beginning with your website, your online presence can help them find you. But a simple "online brochure" no longer does the trick. It's time to add interactive and search engine-friendly elements – or maybe start over from scratch.

### Getting started

It's easy to get an idea of how your website stacks up. Try running your web address (url) through one of the free website grading tools available like <http://websitegrader.com/> or <http://seo.foregosystems.com/sec.html>.

Regardless of how well or poorly your website fares, the grader tool reports will give you a roadmap for improving it. Since there's no such thing as the perfect site, we should all adopt a continuous improvement mindset.

The first thing to consider in getting found is that search engine spiders tend to ignore static, unchanging websites. The digital crawlers search the web for relevant results to users' keyword searches. They adore dynamic content and are more likely to find websites that post new information frequently.

That's why your website needs to become a self-publishing hub. Attract search engines and visitors by offering articles, whitepapers, videos, podcasts, PowerPoint presentations and an array of other interesting and useful materials. We'll be talking much more about creating content in future columns.

### The search is on!

Another critical piece of your website update is assuring that your pages and the new content are "optimized" for search engines. This process begins with selecting the keywords that people use in searching for products and services like yours. There are good free tools available to help you pick the right keywords for your business, including <http://www.wordtracker.com> or Google ad words.

Be aware that there are many places on a web page where keywords can be incorporated – page labels, tags, titles, descriptions, the url itself and alternative text (alt text – the words that come up when you scroll over an image.) When you choose web design help make sure the vendor has a working knowledge of page optimization.

### Renew or redo?

As you update your website and your online presence, add searchable elements like blogs, optimized press releases, RSS feeds and social media posts – Linked In, Facebook, Twitter and others.

It's easier to add a blog or landing pages to your website than to completely redo the homepage and overall navigation. You can also focus on interior pages that get traffic – or should get more traffic.

Or, you could decide to do a total makeover – including a new logo and visual branding. The good news: You can use some of the budget you'll save by reducing traditional outbound marketing tactics – advertising, snail mail campaigns, trade shows and the Yellow Pages.

Once you have a website designed to attract and engage qualified visitors, you'll be racking up more sales before you know it!

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*Editor's note: We'd like our New Media section to be socially acceptable to all types of business people – from tweeters to technophobes. So, to complement our staff's news stories, we turned to the pros for tips on how businesses can use the web to max. Each month, PR pro Ellie Becker and graphics guru Bernadette Nelson will offer strategies and suggestions on all things web-related. And they want to hear from you – contact them directly at their emails below.*