



ACRO MEDIA™

8 PRINCIPLES OF ONLINE SUCCESS

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INTRODUCTION

THE 8 PRINCIPLES REQUIRED FOR WEBSITE SUCCESS

What's the difference between a poorly performing website and a successful one?

The common misconception is that a professional image along with an abundance of website traffic is all that is required to be successful online. Need more leads, just double up on pay per click ads, right?

What few businesses realize is that they haven't maximized the full potential of their websites, **converting more of the traffic they are already getting** into business.

Think about it. Let's say you have 1,000 visitors coming to your site and you get 5 leads for a conversion rate of 0.5%. This is more than average for sites that go under the knife here at Acro Media. What if you improved conversions by another half a point to a full 1%? That would double your leads. Ask yourself, "would that be a lot in my world?" What if you increased it to 2% or even 3%?

The simple truth is that very **simple changes to your Web site can have a dramatic impact** on the results. The problem is that most businesses, and the web designers they use, don't have the fundamental logic as to how to convert traffic into business. In fact, statistics show that 7 out of 10 businesses actually consider their last Web investment a failure with virtually zero ROI.

Anyone can design a pretty website and drive traffic to it, but very few understand what it takes to build out the guts that make it work. This document outlines the top principles we



have learned and perfected since 1998, to help you build a website that works. You will learn the following:

1. A website without purpose is a wasted opportunity.
2. Less is more if you strike a nerve.
3. Not everyone learns the same way you do.
4. Give direction and they will follow.
5. In B2B business it's always about the ROI.
6. People don't like to listen to braggers.
7. Imitation is lost in the sea of mediocrity.
8. It's more than just pretty pictures.



PRINCIPLE 1

A WEBSITE WITHOUT PURPOSE IS A WASTED OPPORTUNITY



Statistics show that you have 8 seconds or less to capture a visitor to your website. If you can't connect and direct them to the next action they should take in that time period, you have lost them.

Most businesses lose sight of the true objective of what their website is for. No matter how you look at it, your website's purpose is to sell something; your products and services. That doesn't necessarily mean visitors have to be able to buy your products directly through an ecommerce system to be considered a sales site. There are many other types of transactions that can be considered a successful sales conversion, such as:

- A contact form that gets filled out and turns into a lead to be handed to a salesperson.
- A registration signup for a seminar or webinar.
- A link to a distributor that sells the product locally.
- A live chat session with a prospect.

The problem is that selling stuff is often times the last thing that is conveyed in the website. Homepages are cluttered with tons of information, links and buttons almost never related to the objective.

Almost every site is the same and looks something like this:

- Lengthy paragraphs of text about the company and their mission to improve the world.
- A smattering of product and services being offered.



- A news section filled with links to old press releases of every good deed conducted.
- It may even include a few certification logos hung like badges of honor.

We're not saying these elements aren't necessary within the site, but little to no thought is put into how they strategically serve the objective.

Think of the sites you visit most; the ones you use on regular basis. Maybe it's your favorite news site? How about Facebook? Google has become so commonplace that most people don't even consider it a website anymore. How do these sites become so popular? **They do one thing, but they do it world class.** In the case of Google, they created the best search in the world and continue to do so.

Most people complicate their Web sites. **A common error is trying to be many things to everyone.** Back in the day when search engines were plenty, they lost their market share to Google when they started competing on features outside of the search engine itself. Things got watered down when they started showcasing stock tickers, news and events, weather feeds, and every other bell and whistle you can think of on their homepages. Google kept it simple; a gigantic search box smack dab in the middle of the page with a big button that says SEARCH. Google offers so much more than Search now, but they still choose not to distract the user from their true need to perform a search and keep the rest of their offering neatly put away.

Start thinking about what would be smack dab in the middle of your page if you had no choice but to reduce your website down to one thing and one thing only. That will be your purpose for being online.



PRINCIPLE 2

LESS IS MORE IF YOU STRIKE A NERVE

It's been said that consumers buy emotionally and justify intellectually. So before someone buys something, they need to have an emotional reason to do so, then they will process and justify the decision to purchase it intellectually. The secret is connecting with the buyer on an emotional level first.



Most businesses will bombard a visitor with all the features and benefits they can think of, dropping jargon bombs like no one's business. It's the 'more is better' philosophy, a race to one-up the competitor and make their offering look and sound better. The more information and pages you have on your site, the more weight you have in being perceived as the expert. The problem with this approach is that the visitor is left to try and make sense of it all. They have to take all this info and try to process it to decide if it fits their needs. Of course, that's assuming the visitor is going to navigate to the right pages within the website in the first place.

Don't start with the solution, start with the issues they are facing. This is where you will make the connection and start to build trust with the visitor. If you understand their needs, you can start to guide them down the right path by taking them into the heart of the issue and then make the proper recommendation on how to solve it.

Does that mean you should abandon all your features and benefits and stick to the issues? Not necessarily, but there are several do's and don'ts if you need to provide a few more details of your offers. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- **Staying up to date**



The more information and detail you provide on your products and services, the more likely things will get out of date as changes are made.

- **Relate to the prospect**

You may present your products and services in the wrong light. Features and benefits may distract or even push away prospects if presented from a point of view they don't relate to.

- **Short and concise**

Presenting a lot of detail will certainly be welcomed by your competitor, but may overwhelm your prospect.

- **Dangle the carrot**

Instead of just giving it all away, think of ways you can use the details as a carrot to get the prospect to give up their contact details or get in touch.

- **The prospects agenda, not yours**

Feature and benefit writing should always keep the prospects issues at heart, not yours.

Buyers justify their emotional decisions intellectually and the facts you provide will be the ammo they use. **Provide only the details required to get the prospect to contact you.** Everything else is a distraction. Your site will be considerably smaller, but more effective as a sales tool.

Stick to the issues.



PRINCIPLE 3

NOT EVERYONE LEARNS THE WAY YOU DO

When you build a website, do you consider who you are communicating with? Most people build websites with structure and content that fits their needs, instead of their prospects. It's so difficult to separate yourself from all the experience and knowledge you have of your own products and services. How do you get inside of the heads of your target market to view your business with the same perspective they have?



The first thing you need to do is to figure out who you are marketing to:

- Do you know their personality type?
- Have you sat down and talked with them?
- Do you know their interests?
- How do they like to learn?
- Do you know how they make decisions?
- Are they super analytical and like tons of facts?
- Do they make quick decisions based on straight to the point information?
- Is it all about the relationship, experience and collaboration?

Bonding and rapport is where a sale is made and if you are presenting your information for a learning style and personality type that is completely different than that of your target market then you've completely abandoned them. The connection is lost. For example, someone in a leadership position like a



president or CEO is typically a big picture thinker, who has little time for detail and scans content quickly for bullet points, headlines and bold text that relates to their needs. On the opposite end of the spectrum, someone in IT who works on computers all day thinks micro and once they find what they are looking for they will want tons of specifications and details.

In most cases, you will likely have to consider multiple personality types and learning styles for the same website. Presenting content that meets all the different styles sounds complicated, but is not difficult if you break it down. There are essentially 4 types of personalities:

- Methodical, detailed and fact driven.
- Spontaneous and emotional.
- Competitive, quick and decisive.
- Emotional, slow and deliberate.

Who are you marketing to and how can you start delivering content to meet their needs?



PRINCIPLE 4

GIVE DIRECTION AND THEY WILL FOLLOW

We've looked at who we are trying to market to. Now, how do we get them to take action?

It's criminal that most businesses leave this part to chance. They write up their brilliant content, breaking it down into tidy categories, then drop it behind their carefully named navigation bar, believing that what they've done is logical and self explanatory for anyone to figure out. This is a fine approach if you've taken the time to build the proper doorways into your content using your homepage and other landing pages, but rarely done correctly, if at all.

The Web has become the cornerstone of the world. In no time in the history of man has information been so abundant and flowed so freely. News travels the world in an instant. Anything we ever want to know is available with the click of button. We simply don't need to spend time on anything that doesn't gratify a need in that instant. If we don't find what we're looking for in a matter of seconds, we abandon the source and are onto the next option.

Now, take an honest look at your website. If someone that has never seen your site before landed on your homepage, could they figure out what you do, and if interested, know what they should do next within a few seconds?

Of course, we recognize that we can't control the actions people take in our virtual world, but we should certainly do everything in our power to make the suggestion of what they should do next. Let's assume that they're interested in what you provide.



You have to light the path you want them to follow, giving them reasons to want to continue onward hopefully to the ultimate goal, the conversion.

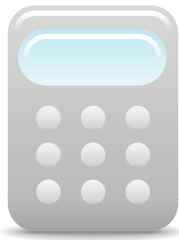
Think about it. In this day in age of 'too much' choice, do you think people want to figure out puzzles? They want the path of least resistance. Set your website up like a road map with signs that point to the next logical destination point. No matter what detour they take, the final destination will always be the same, your goal.



PRINCIPLE 5

IN B2B BUSINESS IT'S ALWAYS ABOUT THE ROI

Purchasing in B2B business always has a catch; what is the impact or Return on Investment? A return can be a lot of things to many people, but almost always is directly or indirectly related to money.



ROI is the benefit of an investment divided by the cost, expressed in percentage terms, over a period of time.

The surprising fact is that **most businesses can't demonstrate the ROI of their product or service.** No matter what you sell, you better be able to paint a picture for your prospect as to how your product or service clearly makes or saves them money.

This is the perfect time to differentiate yourself from your competitor. Capitalize on the advantages you bring to the table. Use their weaknesses to your advantage and work those into your calculations as threats.

The secret is to set your competitor up for failure and your prospect up for success by going with you.

Most people struggle with coming up with their ROI. The easiest way to get started is to talk to your customers. Ask them what value they received in purchasing from you. In some cases, you might be surprised with what you hear. Here are a few questions you might be able to use depending on your industry and what you sell. These are examples only:

- Did you provide them a quality product that lasted longer than the competitor?



- Did you get something done faster than anyone else could?
- Did you replace a costly process with something more simplified and effective?
- Did you improve an aspect of their business that allows them to capitalize on opportunities?

Whatever it is, you must have quantifiable results, not just fluffy testimonials. That means providing examples of time savings, dollar savings, increased income, etc. You must demonstrate the ROI in such a way that the prospect viewing it can put themselves in position to see the impact your products and services will have on their business.

The few businesses that do know their ROI for their customers keep this information to themselves until the sales call. But why not empower your prospect in the website and give them a reason to pick up the phone and call?



PRINCIPLE 6

PEOPLE DON'T LIKE TO LISTEN TO BRAGGERS

We have all met at least one. You know, the guy you bump into at a networking event that introduces himself and you politely start a conversation with? He asks what you do and you start to drop your elevator pitch which he rudely interrupts after 1 sentence and starts in on what he does. 20 minutes later you're still standing there with glazed over eyes desperately scanning the room, seeking any opportunity to escape.

What is it about that guy that bugs you more, the fact that he won't shut up or the fact that all he is doing is talking about himself. It's likely to be the latter. **There's nothing worse than a bragger, guys that don't have an interest in anything other than themselves.** In most cases, they do it because of insecurities, because they think by doing it, they will be liked. We all know, the opposite is true.

So, how does this relate to websites? Think about your content. We're just taking a guess, but you might sound a little like that guy you met at the networking event. Let's do a little test.

In your website, would a visitor see any of the following statements or something similar?

- We are the best in class
- We are the biggest
- We are the leading edge
- We've been in business for umpteen years
- We have won these awards
- Here's what people are saying about us





- We are the most experienced

Don't worry, we all do it.

Now, let's think about some of the most engaging conversations you've had. It will likely be difficult to remember, because it's quite rare. In most cases, the conversation was revolving around you, not that you were bragging, but you were probably being asked a lot of great questions. The other party was showing a genuine interest in who you were and actually cared about what you were saying. They were most likely following your answers up with great insight that related to what you were saying, maybe words of advice and similar experiences they had related to yours. You may have even divulged some of your deepest and darkest secrets.

Now, you're probably thinking, how can a website have a conversation like this? It's simpler than you think; you **make the website all about them**. Apply the same principles that made that conversation great with your content. What questions do you need to ask and what information should you present to build on those answers?



PRINCIPLE 7

IMITATION IS LOST IN THE SEA OF MEDIOCRITY

In our experience working with hundreds of Web sites, we have found that less than 3% stand out on their own as the leaders in their industry. This is true for virtually every industry we've looked at. The standard request for services when clients first speak to us is for us to build a website just like the competition. In most cases it's, "can you build a website just like this one?"

There is only a small handful of sites that do the unexpected. What is the unexpected? It's probably best to use an analogy to explain. Pretend you're driving down a busy street of small shops, a street you've driven a hundred times or more. Do you know every store on that street? Which ones are the most memorable and stand out in your head? Is it that store with the crazy florescent sign, or the one with the unique architecture? Is it the one with the crazy guy out on the sidewalk dressed up like a gorilla and dancing like a lunatic?

With your website, you need to be the one with the crazy dancing gorilla. There is only one exception to the rule and that is if everyone else has the gorilla. Whenever there is an opportunity, and it makes sense in regards to serving the site's objective, be different. Okay, maybe skip the gorilla.

NOTE: It's important to realize you're not being different just to be different. You're being different to be better.

How can you break the mold and stand out in the crowd? Ask yourself these questions and you will have the basis for the answers:

- What is the standard approach to selling your product?



- What is the common structure used for a website in your industry?
- What do you find yourself competing on?
- What are the things that have become 'normal' or 'standard'?

You need to dig deep and take a different approach to the same old same old. By doing so, you now become the company that leads, instead of follows.

Here's an easy one to get you started. Businesses take themselves far too seriously in this world. Most sites are so corporate that they have completely disconnected themselves from real people. They want to be safe and not offend anyone. **Safe is boring, mediocre and fake.** Lighten up your content and drop in some humor. Humor, in good taste, breaks down barriers. There is a huge opportunity to become a real business in this sea of corporate vanilla. Don't be afraid of different.



PRINCIPLE 8

IT'S MORE THAN JUST PRETTY PICTURES

Have you ever come across a stunningly beautiful person you think you would fall in love with, only to find out after a short time being around them that they are shallow or outright annoying? You realize that you wouldn't last more than a week in a relationship together. The same is true in websites, only instead of a week you have only a few seconds.

A professional image will only get you so far: one blink.

The inner workings of the site, as talked about in the rest of the principles described in this document, are absolutely essential for traction with your market. In fact, in most cases you're likely to get away with an amateur design as long as the rest of the rules are followed. But, your site stands virtually no chance with a beautiful design that has bad content and poor architecture.

When it comes to clever functionality, don't just do it for the sake of looking cool. The functionality needs to serve the purpose. You're much better off avoiding the interactive elements all together if you can't find a way to bring them in. You don't want to distract your user from your site's purpose. **Bells and whistles that don't serve the objective will only increase abandonment.**

Professional image only makes a difference if everything else is the same. Think about a nice restaurant experience vs. eating at home. The food is identical in ingredients and cooking methods, but the restaurant version always tastes better. Why? Because it's not just about the food, it's about the experience; everything from the beautiful place settings to the way the food



is arranged on the plate.

Everyone knows first impressions count and in the Web game, you need every advantage you can get, so make sure there is substance and personality behind that shell.



DID THIS HELP?

We hope so.

If you received value from this information and want more detailed instructions on how to implement some of these strategies, feel free to checkout www.acromediainc.com.

Acro Media is dedicated to empowering those that want to maximize their online conversion rates on their own.

Our mission is to stop businesses from wasting their money on horrific marketing solutions and providers. We are passionate about this industry. It infuriates us to see businesses being taken advantage of by those that lack the knowledge required to be successful online.

Should you decide to work with our firm directly, we'll make this guarantee: if we are uncertain as to whether or not we can return a positive and measurable ROI on your investment, we will not take your money and instead recommend a more appropriate vendor.

We realize we are not everything to everyone and we'll be the first to let you know.

We hope that this document starts you down the path for online success whatever your next step.

Feel free to forward this to anyone you think it might help.

Thank you from the team,

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