Keys to successful websites – Start with goals

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When building your website you'll find it easier to develop your content if you have a clear understanding of your own web goals. The content is also more likely to have the impact you want with your audience as a result.

When I ask my customers how they would approach creating a website, most of them start with the content. I listen for a while before backing them up to ask about their purpose. "What do you hope to accomplish with this website?" and "Why do you want to put this specific information on this specific page?"

The initial responses I often hear are vague. They often start with the content saying, "I need a page for this… and a page for that…" I guide them through a process to help pinpoint their goals. Once they can identify these, I can suggest the types of content to address those goals and the different ways to present that content in the website and on specific pages.

Web Goals/Content Worksheet

I developed this worksheet to jumpstart your thinking about goals and content. Circle 3 or 4 goals from the left column that resonate with the purpose of your website. Write your own if necessary. Circle the content items in the right column (or add your own) that you think would support those goals.

Now draw lines from each goal to the content item(s) that match best. This is more art than science, so don't get hung up on the "right" answer. It will change as you go through the development process anyhow.

Examples:

To retain existing customers,…

- We will offer more ways to use our products – through tips, instruction manuals, and examples of how other customers use our product. (These examples will be contributed by customers through the website.)

Customer loyalty will be rewarded…

- By alerting registered customers to special offers and giving advance notice about releases of new products.

Feedback for developing new products will be gathered…

- By allowing registered customers to test new products and complete online surveys.

To reduce complaints and product returns,…

- We will publish clearly illustrated instructions for assembly and troubleshooting steps. A live chat feature will connect customers with technical support in real-time. A label directly on the product will list the website customer service/product support page.

Web Goals	Content types and presentation formats
• Retain existing customers • Attract new customers • Reduce product support time • Reduce product returns • Get new referrals from existing customers • Build community among product users • Build trust and credibility • Get customer feedback on new products • Help customers select product that fits needs • Assure continuity after management changes • Explain our complex pricing models • Expand into other geographic areas • Give company a more personal image • Sell the benefits of our services • Overcome bad reviews or bad PR • Target a very specific audience • Show that we are responsive to needs, issues • Collect and qualify leads • Shorten sales cycle • Screen job applicants • Convert leads into sales • Sell overstocked products quickly • Test market proposed products • Sell more add-on items • Build list for email newsletter • Increase sales despite market domination by "brand-name" competitors	• Self-service tips • Troubleshooting steps • Features, benefits • Comparison tables (brands, models, or companies) • Instruction manuals • Illustrated step-by-step procedures • Customer support contact information and hours • "Share This" buttons linking to social media • Online suggestion form • Frequently Asked Questions • Self-scoring quiz • Survey or poll • Reprint positive reviews • Honest letter from management acknowledging past issues and steps taken to rectify them • Policies on satisfaction, defective products, price guarantees • Photos of products in use by actual customers • Online catalog and shopping cart • Sign up for new product announcements • List credentials, endorsements, associations • Testimonials (customers, celebrities, experts, press reviews) • Landing pages • Live chat feature • Ability to rate or review products • QR codes on shelf labels link to detailed product information pages • List of charitable organizations supported • Explain changes, reasons, impact on customers • Emphasize free shipping, toll-free number • Bios of key employees, spotlights on front-line staff • Before and after photos with descriptions
Add your own goals	Add your own ideas for content
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