

Websites—Looking Good or Doing Good?

*Improving your
website to improve
your business*

By Carl Davidson



About the Author

Carl Davidson is director of Sales and Management Solutions, Inc., a consulting firm

specializing in sales and management video training, recruiting and live seminars exclusively for the water equipment industry. A free demonstration video and list of products and topics is available at 800.941.0068. Send comments on this article to him at reactions@carldavidson.com; www.carldavidson.com.

LearnMore! For more information related to this article, go to www.wqpmag.com/lm.cfm/wq120709

For more information on this subject, write in 1019 on the reader service card.

Almost all water dealers have websites by now, but how many are making sales from them? The problem is that many sites are geared to look good but not to sell. In this article, we will discuss some of the things you should know about search engine optimization.

How Patient are Your Customers?

Only 30% of Americans have high-speed access to the Internet. The rest use a dial-up connection. Studies show an average surfer will only wait 12 seconds for a page to open before they move on. Web designers impress their bosses by adding flash video, sound, wallpaper and artistic renditions that can take longer to open than your visitors will wait. No design is good if your visitors won't wait to see it open. Place counters on every page of your site to see how many visitors go to a second or third page.

Self-Centered Surfers

Internet visitors only need a single click to leave your site. Your content needs to be interesting and easy to navigate, or they will leave. If you have a long story about how you began your business with three dimes and a dream, lots of family photos or other items that mean a lot to you, try to do a rewrite that only focuses on the advantages you offer your customers. Just stating your brand name may not mean anything to visitors, and telling them your WQA certification level probably means nothing outside the industry unless you explain the advantage. Tell them in terms they will understand—what benefits you are offering them.

One Topic Per Site

Search engines look for page titles with metatag key words that are repeated in titles on the pages and then on the page itself. That means your site will do far better if you focus on one topic only. If your site talks about water, plumbing, HVAC, herbal remedies and hot deals on cruises, you will be

ranked far lower than if you have a site that focuses on one product and a different site for your next product.

Free is Good

Sales on the Internet are usually commenced by offering something for free. Almost all water dealers offer a free test of your water. That is good, but we suggest you offer additional benefits for people who are not that far along the decision process. For example, you could offer a free chemical test strip that they can use to check their water for hardness. You might offer a free booklet on water or a report on water quality in their county. Instead of just allowing them to see it, ask for a name and e-mail before they get to the page, or send it to them by mail or e-mail. Think of something you need to send so you can collect their information in a database and stay in touch. Then, send them an interesting e-mail about once per month.

Is Your Site Working?

Never make decisions about your site based on looks alone. A few statistics will tell you how effective your site is:

Page visits: There are free counters you can put on each page of your site that will tell you how many people visited it. You need to know each month if this number is going up or down. If it is rising, at least you know people are finding your site.

Database additions: Of the people who visit, how many sign up for your free items? If the percentage is low, try changing your offer until a reasonable number of people ask for it.

Sales: Keep track of how much you sell each month from your site—if it is not selling, it is not working.

Websites are like all business tools: they must be held accountable for the profit they produce. Take a look at your site to see if it is another pretty face that few people visit or if it is doing the job you designed it to do. *wqp*