Image: Hal Gatewood

Small business owners may wonder if it's important to have a website today? According to The Manifest, "Nearly 40% of small businesses [did] not have a website in 2018." But, they also stated that "85% of consumers use the internet to find a local business."

This Constant Contact article offers ten reasons why small business owners should have a website today.

If you decide to create a site or have it created for you, here are seven design effectiveness tips you don't want to miss.

Why is it important to have a professional-looking website?

Search engine algorithms put weight on efficiently and effectively designed sites, including navigation format, meta tags, images, forms, and more. When a site is built to the current standards (HTML 5), the engines look more favorably on those sites versus sites that are not built using current technologies and standards.

What makes a website effective?
There are five key things an effective website must have, including

- Quick-loading site speed;
- Correctly placed and used meta tags;
- Streamlined designed using current technology;

- An SSL Certificate on the domain name; and
- Landing pages to gather leads.

How can you improve your website's design?
Working with a design company that specializes in website design is a great place to start. Also, consider adding lead generation opportunities through landing pages, inserting inbound and outbound links, writing for people versus the search engines, e.g., keyword stuffing, and leveraging alt tags on your images.

Why should businesses focus on engaging their audience?
A website that doesn't engage is like a business card dropped in a fishbowl. It's there; but, doesn't draw attention. The more your audience engages, positively, with the site – meaning visiting multiple pages, staying on the site longer than 10 seconds, and downloading/viewing/sharing media – the more successful your site will be in organic search.

What should every business website have?
There are many things a site should have, such as contact information and social sharing buttons. Here are several other considerations:

- Complete meta data (titles, descriptions, keywords, and alt tags at least);
- Engaging and well-written content that is relevant to its audience;
- Lead generation opportunities; and
- Mixed media.

Why is it important to provide easy access to contact information?
Over the past year, U.S. website analytics are showing a huge growth in mobile visits. Readily available contact information is the easiest way for someone to contact you. Also, voice search tools can more easily include your business when someone asks a directionally-based question, such as "where is the nearest…?"

How can SEO help your website?
This answer could be pages long, but the short answer is, without SEO on your site, search engines cannot efficiently index or list your site in its results. It can also provide users with a better user experience. Local SEO aids in engagement, traffic, and conversions for your business.

Additional Resources

- [Website Landing Page Activity Sheet](#)
- [SEO Keyword Activity Sheet](#)
- [SEO Checklist for the Do-It-Yourselfer](#)
- [Website 101 – What you should know.](#)