Business Web Pages Should ALWAYS Have...

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The main Web page for a business should load in 10-15 seconds or less.

The biggest mistake made by new businesses on the net is trying to impress customers with a fancy, super-duper all-action web page that takes 10 minutes to load. Problem is, after the first 30 seconds your potential customer is gone! He or she is off surfing a competitor's page.

I cannot emphasize this too strongly. YOUR FRONT PAGE MUST LOAD QUICKLY! Then, after you have captured a customer's interest, you can get a litlle fancier on your internal pages. Customers will wait longer once you have their attention. (But not much longer. Keep internal pages to under 1 minute to fully load. Preferably, much under.) Also, remember that a page that loads to your PC from your ISP in 15 seconds will not necessarily load that fast for someone across the country that has to traverse 10-15 nodes to get to your page. Bandwidth can kill you!

Here are some points to remember:

Business web pages should NOT have:

(A). SOUND - long download, little or no benefit.

(B). ANIMATION - cute, but again, your customer is long gone before it loads (the exception is small animated GIFs. Emphasis on SMALL). You can search the web for these, or create them yourself with the appropriate software. Also, there is a usenet group that has many resources available, and can even create them for you.

(C). LARGE, BRIGHT-COLORED or MULTI-COLORED backgrounds. A solid grey, beige or tan is recommended. Graphic backgrounds can be used, provided they are small, load quickly, and do not interfere with reading the text. (DO NOT distract the customer from your message. You are trying to sell them something, not decorate their monitor.)

Also, remember that not everyone has the same browser or resolution as you. A page that looks really good on your screen can be hard to read on someone else's. WebTV is especially prone to this. --Stay away from red in the background. It bleeds into the text and can make it nearly impossible to read.

Try to view your page on different computers with different browsers at different resolution. (The library is one place to try. Also, a friend's house.) Remember, this is a business! You are trying to appeal to as many people as possible.

(D). Java or frames. These can be used with great effect on internal pages, but web robots will not index your page if they run into either on the front page. [There are ways to circumvent web robots' inabllity to index framed pages, but John is right; it would be better not to have framed pages unless necessary. -Pete]

(E). Tiny, hard to read text. I know you have a great message, and wonderful products, but the guy with a small monitor will never know if he can't read it. Keep your description economical. Too many words comes across as a 'hard sell' and turns off many potential customers.

Business web pages should ALWAYS have:

(1). Your business name, full address, telephone, email address, and contact person name and email. (EVERY page on your site should have this.) This builds trust in your customers. They know who you are and where you are. Also, your order form should be available from every page. If your customer gets an impulse to buy, LET HIM! Do not risk losing his interest while he is trying to find the order page.

(2). Simple, descriptive links from your front page that tell your potential customer where to view the products, pricing, detailed descriptions, and anything else YOU would look for if deciding on a purchase.

(3). Pictures of your products. Simply describing it doesn't work. You MUST have a picture. A GOOD picture. The better the picture, the more likely you will have a sale. Start out with a small thumbnail that can be clicked on to bring up a larger image, and say this in the link, so customers are not surprised by a 3 minute graphic download that they didn't really want. All product pics should be jpegs to load in the smallest amount of time.

(4). Reverse links ('back to home page' is always good). Yes, I know your browser has a 'BACK' button, but not everyone is a techie, and having reverse links also shows consideration for the customer on your part. People appreciate this even if they never use it.

(5). A domain. Domain names can be registered through Internic or Network Solutions and many other places online for as little as $15.00. A domain name gives your company a professional look, and is beneficial in search engine placement. Try for a domain name that refers to what you sell (greatcoffeepots.com) not your personal interest or ego (johnsmith.com). Domains that coincide with metatags and web page content get rated higher in search engine results.

(6). Appropriate METATAGS that describe content, keywords and title. These are very important in web page placement on search engines.

Here is an example of metatags optimized for the search term 'broadcast antennas':

<meta name="description" content="Manufacturer of broadcast antennas, FM Antennas, UHF Antennas, VHF Antennas, TV Antennas, waveguide, and field service">

<meta name="keywords" content="antennas,broadcast,fm antennas,uhf antennas,vhf antennas,tv antennas,broadcast antennas,waveguide,field, service,field service,BROADCAST ANTENNAS">

<title>Broadcast Antennas</title>

The careful repetition of the term will help to raise your rating on many search engines. If you domain was 'broadcast_antennas.com' it would be even better. Let me emphasize 'careful', as too much repetition can actually have an adverse effect. This is considered one form of spamming, and can even result in having your entire domain unlisted with some search engines.

Notice that the company name isn't even mentioned in the title. (Nobody will search for 'johndoe antennas' if they don't even know you exist.) I strongly recommend researching metatags before getting carried away.