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1517 Buckeye Court  
Pinole, CA 94564  
510/724-9507; 741-8698 (fax)  
jeff@put-it-in-writing.com  
www.put-it-in-writing.com

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# The Write Stuff

**A quarterly compendium of writing tips and other useful information**

## MAKE YOUR WEBSITE PASS THE *WHO CARES?* TEST

By Jeff Rubin

I'll get right to the point — 40 percent of my income as a newsletter publisher comes from companies that found my website.

My business has doubled in the last three years. I have eight customers outside my local area, including five in states other than my home state of California.

How have I done this? One word: VALUE.

In more than two decades of helping companies, non-profits and sole proprietors communicate with their customers, prospects and employees, I can tell you with much certainty that the only thing that matters in marketing is value. All successful marketing



JEFF RUBIN

must appeal to a customer's sense of need.

Value is, and always will be, the benchmark of successful marketing. This has never been more important than on the web.

Aside from developing personal relationships that will result in an endless stream of referrals, the web is the best and fastest way to get your message to the

masses. It's an incredibly efficient marketing tool; if you don't have a website you're missing what might be a once-in-a-business opportunity, and you're lagging behind your competitors.

The web is also one of the most abused and misused marketing showplaces. A bad website is not only a missed marketing opportunity, but can sabotage a business.

The web is strewn with sites that contain nothing but junk. Page after page promoting services, items for sale and information about the company.

Websites that draw my attention must pass the *Who cares?* test:

- Last year your company did \$1.5 million

> **Inside**



## MAKE YOUR WEBSITE PASS THE *WHO CARES?* TEST

➤ **From front page** in business. *Who cares?*

- You got your doctorate from Harvard in six months. *Who cares?*

- You will beat any published price by 10%.

*Who cares?*

Who cares? Not me. I'm looking for the person who has the solution to my problem. I don't care who your customers are, where you were educated and how much cheaper you are than your competition. I want to know if you can help me. That's your value, and your website must convince me you have it. If it doesn't pass my *Who Cares?* test, I move on.

While the web presents an exciting marketing opportunity, it also presents some formidable obstacles to conventional, face-to-face customer contact. These include:

- Developing trust
- Distance
- Reluctance to do business with vendors a customer might never meet.

How do you overcome these obstacles when your prospective customer can't look into

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your eyes? Try VALUE!

How do you find your value? Here are two suggestions.

- **ASK YOUR CUSTOMERS.**

I asked my customers this question: "I'm trying to find out why my customers do business with me, and I need your help. If you were to recommend me to one of your business friends, what would you say about me and the way I do business?"

The results were astonishing. I learned about services I

perform for my customers (like bugging them to meet their deadlines) that I had no idea they thought were valuable. These have become some of my key marketing and selling points.

I also created several additional pages on my website — one devoted to each customer who replied, with an image of their newsletter and their response. My customers are helping me sell my value!

- **SPLIT A PIECE OF PAPER IN TWO COLUMNS** and answer these questions: "What makes me special," and "Why should anyone do business with me." You'll end up with a list of services and personal characteristics that make you unique. How do these benefit your prospective customers? There's your value.

The design of your website counts, too. Don't make your web site an ad — make it a resource for information, a repository of your knowledge, a place where people come for answers. Once they're on your site, show them what you know. Educate and inform them, and they'll flock back like geese migrating south for the winter.

Make your website a place of value. Who cares? You better, because your prospective customers do!

### Put it in Writing Partners

**W**e recommend these businesses, which give discounts to our readers:

**ALPHAGRAPHICS,** Walnut Creek, 925/937-4700 (Greg or Kristin).

**CRAFTSMAN TRADE PRESS,** (printer), Concord, 925/521-0156 (Ric).

**PINOLE COPY CENTER,** Pinole, 510/223-8901 (Judy).

**SCAN ART GRAPHICS,** (pre-press), Richmond (Hilltop), 510/223-3248 (Fred or Ron). ■

## What your web site *SHOULD* do for you

### ARE YOU BEHIND THE DIGITAL TIMES?

By Colby Smith

**W**ant to know what the newest wave on the web is?

Dynamic database websites are creating powerful marketing results. Updating your web tools can give your business easy control of your site content, making your interaction with your clients more immediate, cost effective and exciting.

Early web adopters are upgrading, adding these new marketing tools. New site owners are jumping in with a full marketing arsenal.

Check to see if you're making the most of the web:

#### **BUILD RELATIONSHIPS**

With today's digital tools, relationship building takes a fraction of the time it does in the "non-digital" world.

- ♦ Change and update information regularly, making you "the source" for valuable and current information so your visitors will keep coming back.

- ♦ Look smart and responsive to your customers.

- Create brief forms so visitors can comment about information on your site. Then give them what they want.

- Identify e-mail links received from your site by subject so you can separate them



COLBY SMITH

into manageable groups, making it easier for staff members to respond.

- Set up surveys to collect demographics and information about your audience. It's useful marketing intelligence for you and makes you the expert with other business in your niche.

- ♦ Publish an easy-to-edit web newsletter.

- ♦ Automate e-mails to advise clients of updates. It not only keeps them informed, it keeps you on their minds.

#### **GET PERSONAL AND WISE ABOUT SELLING TO YOUR CUSTOMERS**

If you have products or services to sell, instant intelligence is key. Today's database driven sites facilitate quick

analysis and more immediate response to clients' needs.

Here's how:

- ♦ Generate reports to see best-selling products, weakest sellers, and which products have sold in designated time frames. Then instantaneously adapt your product presentation to encourage more sales.

- ♦ Showcase specific products to increase sales — new products, slow sellers, and close-outs.

- ♦ Send targeted e-mails to portions of your customer database.

- ♦ Automate personalized reorder reminders.

Today's web gives you more immediate interaction with your customer than any other kind of marketing. Isn't it time you stepped into the driver's seat?

– Colby Smith is the CEO of WebEdge, Inc. ([www.webedge.net](http://www.webedge.net)). She is a speaker, web developer and Internet business strategist. Since 1995, Colby has specialized in helping companies grow their businesses using cost effective Internet communications. Reach Colby by phone (310) 456-8884 or e-mail ([colby@webedge.net](mailto:colby@webedge.net)).

