THE TOP 10 THINGS YOUR BUSINESS WEBSITE NEEDS IN 2023

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Introduction:

Your website is the online home for your business. Whether your business has a physical store front, and office , or you work out of your home, you still need to update and maintain your workspace. The same is true for a website. If you haven't touched or updated your website in several years, it may not be effective by today's standards. So we've put together this guide to help you get your website up to current standards.

Part 1: Protect Your Business & Clients

1. SSL Certificate:

SSL stands for Secure Socket Layer. The purpose of SSL is to encrypt information passed between the visitor's browser and your website. If you don't have SSL set up correctly, this information is passed via plain text. So someone who is using a packet sniffer (a program that allows the user to see network data) can see things like names, passwords, account numbers, etc… when the data is not encrypted.

The best way to fix this problem is to ensure your website has an SSL certificate and it's correctly set up – the second part is the tricky part that many people overlook. This is often done when you sign up for hosting, but some web developers can also set it up. We recommend a tool called Why No Padlock to scan your site and ensure that SSL is correctly set up.

While we recommend SSL for all sites (not having it hurts SEO rankings), it's a must have for any sites that process transactions such as taking payments or allowing users to log in. All of our hosting plans include SSL for free (and we ensure it's correctly set up), so feel free to contact us if you need assistance.

2. Firewall and Security Software

Every WordPress website should have a firewall installed to prevent against attacks. SaaS solutions like Wix or Shopify usually have this built-in but it's not always perfect. So you should reach out to an experienced web developer to look at your setup to ensure it's secure.

Malware scans are also important. WordPress has plug-ins that can regularly scan your site or your hosting company might have tools or products that perform these scans. Do some research before buying into these services to ensure that they are effective and actually work.

3. Nightly Site Backups.

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This is one of the biggest misses we see with many business websites. Businesses reach out to us all of the time with an issue that would have been a lot less painful if they had regular backups. Whether they got a virus, made a change that broke their site, or got hacked, being able to revert back to a working copy of your website is critical.

We recommend keeping at least two weeks of nightly backups. All of our hosting plans automatically keep 30 days of nightly backups.

Part 2: Usability: The Key to a Successful Visitor Experience

4. Responsive design:

Your website has to be usable on all devices. Most people use their phones to browse websites so your site can't only look on desktops. It's painfully clear when a website was designed only for computers as images fall off the page, the navigation is difficult to use, and content is moved around in a way that doesn't look right.

Most modern websites use themes or templates that are mobile friendly. But if your site hasn't been redesigned in the last decade, chances are it make look funky on phones or tablets. Take a few minutes to view your website on your phone – and try it in both landscape and portrait modes. If it doesn't look right, we can help.

5. Effective Site Navigation:

If your visitors can't find what they're looking for, they'll go elsewhere. Here are the key navigational components we recommend for all web sites:

- A navigation menu at the top of the page that's well organized and has page names that are clear.
- The ability to search your site.
- Links to key pages in your site's footer.
- Internal links within page content so site visitors can take a deeper dive on key topics.

We also have the capability to create rich menus that can have images, videos, multiple levels, and even small contact forms – right from your navigation. These features aren't appropriate for all sites, but some of them could be useful to yours. Connect with us to see whether these features can enhance your visitor's experience.

6. An Easy Way to Contact You:

This is another important item that is often overlooked. At the very least, we recommend a contact page with a form and your contact information. Some site owners are afraid to publish an email address for fear of spam, so we recommend creating an alias (such as hello@jvf.com) that forwards to your real email address that you can filter. If the email address gets too much, you can always create a new one.

If you're using a form to collect information or allow visitors to message you, make sure that it works and you know which email address it's going to. It's even better if you could send the information directly to your mailing list provider or CRM.

Some other options include chatbots, integrations with social media, and automatic call buttons. These allow your visitors to connect with you right away. For help on adding any of these items to your website, please schedule a [complimentary consultation](#).

Part 3: Pack Your Site With The Right Information

7. A clear call to action in the hero section:

The first thing your site visitors see is the section above the fold – the visible section of the website that loads in your browser before you scroll. There are typically two main parts in this section: the navigation and the hero section. Most websites use an image, video, or slider in their hero section while some, such as news sites, have a feed to blog posts or news stories. Some poorly designed sites omit a hero section all together.

The hero section of your home page is one of the most important sections of your site. Many visitors use this section to determine whether the want to view the rest of your homepage and website. So this section should draw in your visitors.

We recommend a clear call to action in your hero section. A call to action directors the visitor to take a particular action on your website. Some examples of calls to action include:

- Buy a product.
- Download an e-book or other promotional item.
- Schedule a meeting.
- Fill out a contact form.
- Donate to a cause.

8. Information about your products/services

This may seem like a no-brainer, but you'd be shocked at how many sites lack this key information. Another common mistake we see is that the product information is there, but is confusing or lacks clarity.

Clearly list out your products and services. Many business coaches encourage their clients to come up with names that have a nice ring to them, but don't accurately reflect what their clients do. If you're a weight loss coach and you want to call yourself "The Fat Blaster," it's fine. But you need to be clear about whether you're selling an exercise program, supplements, or more.

9. Answers to common questions / FAQ:

This is another missed opportunity as a FAQ is not only great for answering questions but also for SEO. A lot of sites don't have this section. We [recently put one together](#) and it's a work in progress as we're collecting data for this and will be updating it regularly.

At the very least, use your blog to answer common questions so that site visitors can find the information via search.

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10. A way to purchase your products/services

Each year, more and more people by more online. As a web design agency that mostly does B2B work, we sell enough online that we've switched payment processors three times. If you are B2C, it is critical that you create a way to purchase your products or services online. You want to capture those sales while the visitor is on your site.

We're often asked about which platform is best for e-commerce. We recommend WordPress, but also shared the pros and cons of other options in an article on our site.

Conclusion

You website is one of your most important marketing tools for your business. Go through this checklist (review weekly or monthly if you have to) and make these changes to your website. If you have questions on how to make any of these changes, schedule a complimentary consultation with us.

To your success!

- The JVF Team

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