

Minesh: Hi, my name is Minesh Baxi. Welcome to this edition of “Double Your Business in Twelve Steps”. Each time, we look at different ways to increase your business, in marketing, sales, and so on.

This time, we are going to discuss website design. I am so glad that we have an expert with us today, Steven Hyer of IGD Solutions, founder and President. He will be sharing some insights with us about website design.

So, welcome to the call, Steve.

Steve: Thanks, Minesh.

Minesh: I’m really excited about working with you, Steve. Can you give us a little bit more information about yourself?

Steve: Sure. I started IGD Solutions 5 years ago now. I live and work here in Clarkson, Michigan. I am also on the local Chamber board in the Clarkson Area Chamber of Commerce. And, I am on the school board here in Clarkson as well.

Minesh: Excellent. I know you are very, very active in some of the areas of fun. For example, the University of Michigan is your team.

Steve: Yeah. Every Saturday is my college football Saturday. And, if there is a home game, you can bet that I will be in Ann Arbor.

Minesh: Steve, I know you are into car racing, following that sport also.

Steve: Yes. Sunday rolls around and I am usually watching my NASCAR race. Once a year, I go down to Charlotte for the Coca Cola 600 NASCAR race as well.

Minesh: So, that gives you a perspective about a lot of different things.

Let’s go ahead and talk about a few things that are going to be important to the listeners today. I think today’s topic, you mentioned the most common mistakes made by people in website design. Isn’t that true?

Steve: What I have tried to do is compile the 5 biggest things I see people making mistakes with, when it comes to websites. And, I hope by going through these today that your listeners can really get some value from that and understand how they can avoid these mistakes.

Minesh: I agree. A few years ago, just to remind our listeners, I was in the computer programming business. It has been 4 years since I have been out of the business of helping people grow their business. What I have

found is that website has become more and more important in promoting one's business.

Isn't that true, Steve?

Steve: Absolutely. Probably the first mistake that I see people making with a website is not having one. Obviously, you can't make any other mistakes with a website if there isn't one there to begin with.

A few years ago, website were really optional when it came to being in business. In today's society, they are absolutely mandatory. And, depending on your business, it depends what needs to be up there. But, just having your contact information and a little bit about your business on a website is absolutely necessary in today's day and age. Because, really, the competitors that are out there that do have the websites are the ones that get all the business.

So, if you put 2 Yellow Pages ads in a category next to each other, the ones that have the website are the ones people are going to investigate further, and eventually do business with.

Minesh: In fact, I remember an incident, which happened not to long ago, about a week or so. I have a client in Eugene, Oregon and I was helping them and coaching this person. And, believe it or not, it was on an amateur bodybuilding contest. Don't look at me because I'm not the guy who was coaching about physically training. I was more creating the idea of how to forecast emotionally and mentally so you can bring out the best.

Just when the competition was nearing, I decided to send my client a bouquet of flowers. I don't know anybody in Eugene, so I went to Yahoo Yellow Pages, which is where I do my internet shopping, and I found a couple of flower shops very close to the area where my clients lives and works. One of them had a website. The other one did not.

And, Steve, just like you said, I went to the one which had the website. It had all the information about the flowers. It had all the information about the products. It had all the information about delivery, price, what it would look like, what the special of the day was and so on. I could easily pick what I was looking for, and getting confirmation that it would be delivered the next day.

That was just amazing. And, Steve, I don't think people realize how much business they are missing by not having a website. Isn't that true?

Steve: Absolutely. People really drive business to their competitors by not having a website. And, you can really regain that business by getting a

professional website out there and letting people know what it is that you do and why your customers might be a good fit for you. They will be educated consumers when the phone actually rings.

Minesh: Now, Steve, is there a certain kind of business which would benefit a lot by that site, or do you think it is across the board? And, give me some examples of businesses you might have helped get more business because of a website.

Steve: There are certainly some businesses that website make more sense than others. But, having said that, all businesses really do need a website, especially in a service-type business.

I will give you one example. A client of mine is a family law attorney. He handles high-end family law issues: divorce, child custody. He is not looking for your typical Yellow Pages, "How can I get a divorce the cheapest" type client. He wants the higher end type of client.

We designed a very elegant, professional-looking website that fits the character of his business. And, we are actually doing some marketing things online. He has picked up 6 clients in 3 months already, and his return on investment has just been phenomenal so far. That is something he is looking to continue.

So, obviously, in that industry, he is selling his services. It makes a lot of sense to really have his business showcased through a website, and his qualifications listed there as well, so his clients can really feel comfortable with him by the time they pick up the phone and call him. Because obviously, family law is a very difficult thing for people. They do really want to feel comfortable, when they pick up the phone, that they are talking to the right person.

On the other end of things, I have a small spa in a small town. They just wanted to get their menu of choices online, to let people know what sort of tanning packages and nail packages that they offer. So, we did a very simple one-page design that has their hours, phone numbers, instructions for appointments, and policies. It's a very simple, inexpensive site. It just benefits them to let people know how to get in touch with them and what they offer. There are some cross-selling opportunities there as well for people who, maybe, come in for tanning and didn't know they did some of the other high-end type of packages.

Minesh: Thanks for sharing that, Steve. So, what is the second biggest mistake you see people making?

Steve: Probably, the second on this list would be a poorly designed homepage, and inconsistent navigation.

When you go to a site and it either has 10-pages of information right up front, something that you don't want to read... Really, on the home page, what I tell my clients is, less is more. You want to let people know that they are in the right spot. And then, have them click on a link and get into the section and content that they really want to know about.

So, a lot of times, people really put too much information on the main page. And, other times, maybe there is not enough information on the main page, where you go to a site and there's just a logo. You have no idea what that company does.

And, in other cases, the page takes a long time to load and there is a lot of animation and other things flying around. And it takes a long time just to find a phone number.

Really, when you go through a site, you want to make sure that the links are consistent. They are on every page. You can get from any main section to any other main section. A lot of times, people have to use their back button, and that can be a frustrating experience for users as well.

Minesh: I see too commonly people think that they have to impress the visitor by having so much jazzy stuff on their website. It really detracts from actually getting business because people can't focus on what they are looking for.

Steve: Absolutely. It needs to be focused about the business. If your business is a very professional, service-oriented business, your website needs to be professional and very conservative that meets the character of your business.

I always tell my customers that their customers should be able to look at their website and know that it is the website for their business without even reading the name of the company at the top.

Minesh: What is your opinion about template types? Because that is something that I have encountered and have used before. I personally didn't like that much about it, which is why I have the website that I do, which is not like a cookie-cutter website.

Steve: Really, with template websites, the benefit of them is only cost. And, there are a lot of drawbacks in that, really, you want to differentiate your business in any advertising and promotional medium, whether it be website or traditional types of advertising methods. You want to differentiate yourself and one-up your competitors.

So, when you get into a template situation, I think a lot of web surfers recognize that it is a template and it really sends kind of a negative message to them and detracts a little bit from your business. Not to mention, if there is another business that has a website that looks almost like yours, obviously, that is not differentiating yourself from them in any way.

An example of that, one of my sales people was calling on some chiropractors in the area, and 3 of them in a very close radius had a website that looked almost exactly the same. The only thing that was different was the name on the top of the website. Obviously, it doesn't give any of them an advantage. It actually negatively impacts all of them.

Minesh: Exactly, Steve. I can totally understand what you are saying. Thanks for sharing that.

Let's look at the third biggest mistake, Steve. What is that?

Steve: Probably the third biggest mistake would be not promoting the website once you have it. And, promoting can mean kind of the traditional sense of putting your website on your business card, or putting it in your ads, or the online sense of using the search engines effectively.

Minesh: How should people do that?

Steve: First and foremost, being in the website business, I would pay a little more attention to radio ads, TV ads, print ads than the average person. When there is not a website listed, I will generally call the people and say, "Hey, have you guys thought about putting a website in your ad to make it more effective? Because, obviously, if you can have that website there, it lets people learn more about your business without taking that big step of picking up the phone, which is a big first step a lot of times if somebody is not really hot or interested at that moment, but they want to learn a little more. The website gives them an additional avenue.

But, I will call them and ask them, "Where is your website?" And, they will say, "Well, we have one. Here it is." I think what happens in those cases is, people aren't really proud of their website, so they don't promote them.

Absolutely, putting the website on your business card, in any ad, on your letterhead, on your return address, on your envelopes, everywhere you can, is going to be the first and best way to get traffic to your website. And that will be the most qualified traffic even if you run some different search engine programs.

But, definitely, taking advantage of the search engines is something makes a lot of sense to some businesses. Whereas, other businesses it doesn't. It really is an industry-specific case whether or not it makes sense to do some sort of search engine marketing program.

Minesh: Obviously, you will spend more time investigating that and Steve, I know that you and the people that you work with, can help people understand that.

But, I see, amazingly, people don't pay attention to the fact that their website is not on their business card. To me, a website is another way of getting business because my focus is to help my clients grow their business. And, I want to help them understand that anywhere and everywhere they can get some attention, it is well worth it to get people to their website, either for information or for compelling offers. We will talk a little bit more about that in the next part.

So, Steve, you have covered 3 steps so far. What is the fourth one that you think about?

Steve: Probably the fourth, I think, is that they have the wrong information on there. Obviously, if a customer comes to a website looking for some information, it needs to be there on the website.

What I would say about that is, if you've ever done any website searching, you go to a website, you are looking for a phone number and you can find the number. I know that really frustrates me when all I want to do is call the people and I can't find the phone number.

But, that goes on in other areas as well. Every website should probably have a few basic sections, whether they are called this or not, they should be on their in some form or another, and that would be "about us." Generally, you want to provide a profile of the company, a history, and some sort of information about the company.

Generally, we recommend a link section which provides a resource and some credibility to that business of saying, "We work with other organizations or other businesses." Usually, web surfers will think, "Well, if they are connected to all these other companies, they must be an okay business to deal with."

And probably, "Contact Us" would be the final one, where you can put a phone, fax, email, regular address and any other methods to get in touch with you, all in one spot. You should have that available.

A lot of times, you have to figure out what the message of your website really is. Because if you're just providing information about your business, you need to figure out what is appropriate to put there, whether an elaborate, flash introduction is driving people away, or whether it makes to sense to you.

Clearly, if you are in the entertainment industry, or you are a DJ and you're trying to showcase something that is kind of hip and cool, maybe that definitely has a place. Whereas, if you're a financial planner, maybe that doesn't add anything to your website and you need to give people some information to back up the claims that you're making and to better promote your business.

Minesh: Actually, I remember, I was looking for a digital voice recorder, and one of the places I looked at was www.1HitWonders.com. Because I searched and found that. And, I was a little reluctant to buy from them, except when I saw I saw that they were endorsed by Yahoo Shopping.

So, immediately I said, "Hm, maybe there is some credibility here. I don't have to worry about whether they will take good care of supplying the product, returns, refunds, etcetera." It gets that kind of connection.

That endorsement made a big difference. And, I think what you said just now about having other parties endorse, to go along with your website, makes a lot of difference.

So, thanks for sharing with us about that. What is the last point you want to talk about?

Steve: Finally, I would say that there is no way to capture information about the visitors looking at the website. One of the things we always recommend doing is, once you set a website up, you want to know how many people are looking at it, what pages they are looking at, and where they are coming from.

For instances, if you are paying the Chamber of Commerce for a link to your website, you want to know if people are clicking on that link. And, that is a worthwhile thing to keep going.

By the same token, if you are telling people, "Come to my website," you want to capture some information about them so you can add them to your prospecting list. I know, Minesh, you do a very good job of advertising free CDs and other promotions, and asking people, "Fill out this form. Give me your contact information, and we will send you a free CD or free research."

I've had customers giving away White Papers, different things on their websites, in some cases, a free tee shirt. But, in the end, the result is all the same. You get to add people to your prospect list by getting them to fill out a form and capturing that information through your website.

Minesh: I talk in another section about compelling offers. We won't be covering that in detail today. But, there needs to be a compelling offer which makes people say, "I want it now." And that is the secret to building a good pipeline of prospects and clients. The simplest word to use is "free". If you can give away something for free, people are more like to say, "This makes sense. Let me try it." There's nothing wrong with that, and that is a way to capture the information. I totally agree with that.

Do you have any other ideas on that last step?

Steve: Really, you don't want there to be any barriers on the website for people to get in touch with you. Even if it's a free consultation, a free initial meeting or a free estimate or anything like that, make it as easy as possible on that website for somebody to get in touch with you.

Minesh: My website is www.MBaxi.com. You can take a look. Now, I haven't invested a lot of money in my website, Steve. You know that. But, the idea is to get as much leverage from my website as I can.

We won't be covering auto responders today, but that is another place where you can capture the information and put people on an email marketing campaign so they receive the pertinent information.

I read a book called, "Permission Marketing", which some of you might be familiar with, by Seth Godwin. And, he talks about how we get bombarded with so many messages which are not pertinent to what we are looking for.

From what you just mentioned, Steve, if there is something compelling for us, and we say, "Hey, this is what I want," and we give the vendor the opportunity and permission to market to us on an ongoing basis, the person knows exactly what we need on an ongoing basis. For example, there are hotels which capture the information about what kind of food you like, what kind of places you like to visit. One restaurant, where I only ate at once in Las Vegas, just sent me a birthday card with a gift coupon. I couldn't believe it.

But, that is the information you can capture from the website and become more pertinent to what your customer is looking for.

So, thanks for sharing that.

We want to wrap with a summary of what we have discussed so far. Any other ideas, Steve?

Steve: Sure. I think we'll just run through the points and sum up.

The first one was not having a website really puts you at a disadvantage to those competitors that are out there and do have websites.

Secondly, we talked about having a poorly designed home page and inconsistent navigation, where you might have to use the "Back" button. And, there is too much or too little information on the home page. I generally recommend, keep it simple in that regard.

Number three on the list was not promoting your website, not printing it on your business cards, not printing it on your letterhead, not including it in ads. It's generally not a good idea. You want to use search engines, if they are appropriate. You want to print your website on the different materials that you have as much as possible.

Fourth, having the wrong information on your website is probably just as detrimental as not having one in that, if somebody comes to your website looking for a piece of information, you need to make it so that it is easily accessible and people can get to it and find what they are looking for.

Minesh: I totally agree with that. Do you want to add something to that?

Steve: I was going to say that our final point that we just talked about is that there is no way to capture information for the people looking at your website. You definitely do not want to have any barriers for people to give you their contact information so you can follow up with them.

Minesh: Steve, I know you provide a free website evaluation. Can you tell our listeners a little bit more about that?

Steve: Sure. Generally, for anybody listening to this CD today, we will be happy to look at your website and make some recommendations of some things you can do to improve it, and tell you some things you are doing well, and see how we can leverage that website to really accomplish the goals that you set out for, whether that is targeting some new customers or maybe targeting some existing clients to better serve them.

Minesh: The website evaluation is one part of it, and I know you give a lot of statistics where you tell me exactly where the clients are coming from, etcetera. Some of the information that you provide, does help me

understand how my website is being accessed at any given time. So, I appreciate that.

Steve, how can people get a hold of you?

Steve: My phone number is (248) 625-0817, and my email address is SJH@IGDSolutions.com.

Minesh: Thanks, Steve. If you want to contact me as well, my number is (877) 968-2500. My website is www.Mbaxi.com, and my email address is Minesh@Mbaxi.com. I can also get you in touch with Steve Hyer.

Steve, I really appreciate you taking the time today to educate our listeners, and I am looking forward to getting to know more about your business, more about how you promote your business, and more about how you can add value to our clients on an ongoing basis.

So, thanks for taking time, Steve. Have a great day.

Steve: Thank you, Minesh. Have a good day.