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Turn your Web site into an optimized, profitable marketing tool

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We feel your pain. We know how hard it can be to create a dynamic, interesting Web site for your business that will reflect well on your brand, delight customers, keep your company happy and most importantly, drive sales.

We know this because we've worked with dozens and dozens of small-to-mid-size business owners and marketers like you who are struggling with their Web development journey. And we've talked with many others.

You can probably relate to the common themes we hear again and again:

- Our site looks awful.
- We need to update it.
- It's not doing anything for us.
- We put all this money and effort into our site, and it was a big waste of time.
- Our competitors have a much better site.
- Our customers can't find us.
- Nobody knows what we do.
- Our site looks nice, but it's not driving business.

If you have an underperforming site, you know you can't ignore it. The world is seeing it every day and forming an opinion of your business. The good news is, we know a lot of business owners who have found a clear path to online success and are thrilled with the sales leads and revenue generated by their sites.

So, what do those businesses know that many others don't?

You're about to find out...and this information will give you a powerful edge in your business.

There are 9 Easy Steps to Planning a Profitable Web Site:

- Step 1: Define your Web Site's Purpose
- Step 2: Choose a Domain Name
- Step 3: Plan Your Site Design
- Step 4: Plan Your Web Content
- Step 5: Find the Best Host

- Step 6: Find the Best Web Team
- Step 7: Plan for the Costs
- Step 8: Market Your Site
- Step 9: Measure the Results

Now let's dig a little deeper into each step.

Step 1: Define your Web Site's Purpose—Clearly outline your Web site objectives, who you're trying to attract, the unique solutions you offer your customer, and the kind of features you want on your site.

What do you want your Web site to DO for your business?

We're talking specifics now—not just “make money” To build a successful Web site or to improve your existing site, you need to define its objectives clearly, so everyone in your business and in your professional Web team will understand the Web site's specific mission.

Step 2: Choose a Domain Name—Strategically choose the domain name that will support your site's profitability. Your first choice is to get your business name. If that's not available, choose a name that is easy for your customers to remember.

Note: your domain name may also be referred to as your URL or Web address depending on who you're talking with. Simply put, your domain name identifies your company's address on the Internet.

Step 3: Plan Your Site Design—Understand how site design can make or break your online business success—with insights on usability, branding and the customer experience. At the very basic level, when customers arrive at your home page, they want to know immediately: What do you offer? What's in it for them? How can they contact you for your service and what will happen next?

Step 4: Plan Your Web Content—Discover how all your Web content—the actual wording on your site—plays a critical role in whether or not visitors will do business with you online. If you're expecting your Web site to generate strong sales leads or drive orders for your products and services, you'll want to plan your Web content carefully.

Step 5: Find the Best Host—Choose the right hosting company for your site so you can avoid headaches later. A Web host is a server (special computer) that holds your Web site's code and images and makes them continually viewable on the Internet.

Step 6: Find the Best Web Team—Hire a great Web team that has experience in building sites that sell. (Depending upon how Internet-savvy you are, you might want to take this action before you even tackle Steps 2-5.)

Creating a successful Web site is a job for the pros. Would you let your nephew Johnny or a high-school neighbor do your taxes or negotiate the sale of your home? “No way!” you say. Then why trust your Web site investment to a novice? To ensure your best chance at online success, you need to find the best people you can afford; people who experience in creating profit-generating Web sites.

Step 7: Plan for the Costs—Plan a realistic Web site budget for this valuable investment. A great customized business site, depending on its complexity, should cost between \$6,000 and \$15,000 on the low end, and \$20,000 to \$30,000 or more on the higher end.

Step 8: Market Your Site—Follow the proven methods for driving traffic to your site through offline and online marketing.

- Offline marketing includes print materials, direct mail, voice mail messages, signs and other traditional methods.
- Online marketing refers to tactics you'll pursue through the Internet, ranging from Search Engine Optimization on your own site to pay-per-click advertising, banner ads, Blogs, links and more.

Step 9: Measure the Results—Measure the effectiveness of your Web site and your marketing efforts; and use that information to make powerful improvements. Traffic logs are available from your hosting company.

Let's recap what you've learned as a result of reading this article.

There are 9 steps to planning a profitable Web site, and the most important place to start is with a clear understanding of: What do you want your Web site to DO for your business?

Define a clear plan and budget, and you're on the right path to Web Success!

These are just some of the ways you can boost your success on the Internet.

To learn more, you'll want to check out the ContentClear™ Marketing Method for Web Site Optimization, a clear, methodical 7-step approach to increasing Web conversions and sales.

Pam Foster, senior copywriter and online content consultant, is the founder of the ContentClear™ Marketing Method for Web Site Optimization (www.contentclear.com). Her diverse 28-year marketing communications background includes writing and consulting for many types of industries promoting B2C and B2B products and services. She has 13 years of experience in Web content writing and strategy, SEO, and information architecture, as well as direct mail – all for clients such as L.L. Bean, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Maine, the American Cancer Society, Harper College, AWAI, Downeast Energy and many others.

Pam is co-author of 9 Easy Steps to Planning a Profitable Web Site and several other books under the Internet Jungle Guide brand (www.internetjungleguide.com). She has won 100+ marketing awards including New England DMA (Direct Marketing Association), Web Marketing Association, Telly, and Catalog Age. She is an AWAI Copywriters Wall-of-Fame honoree. Pam works mainly with larger corporate clients, helping them optimize their Web sites to boost conversions and sales. She also offers personal coaching services to copywriters looking to elevate their Web content and client service skills and learn her 7-step Web site optimization method. You can contact Pam at pam@contentclear.com.

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