

A Business Owners Guide to a Profitable Website.

Andrew Clayton
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Who do we think we are?

We are Visible Thoughts and we are a small Business owner, just like you! We have spent many years both running our own businesses and helping others to run theirs by building them financial systems and websites that make them more profitable. During that time, we have been fortunate to experience enough challenges with our clients, and our own businesses, that we are now able to share some of those experiences.

We have worked extensively with small and large businesses, but our interest has always been working with the small guys where things move faster, and small changes make the biggest impact. Out of all our experiences we have come to one simple conclusion and that is that we need to understand our client's business almost as well as they do, and sometimes even better. The business is the core and the website and marketing media are just platforms.

This stuff isn't rocket science so let's start looking at how we can help your business....

The first hurdle.

This book is aimed at helping Business Owners, like yourself. Business Owners that are looking to attract more paying clients and the kind of client you want to engage with. After all, if you are investing time and yes money building your website, you will want it to do more than just bring visitors to the site and nothing more. Here we will explain in plain English not just how you can do this but more besides. Strangely we are not going to focus so much on your website but on your Business itself and first of all your mind set.

The first hurdle to most business owners when they start to think about purchasing or building a website for their Business is their mind set. We often get asked by potential clients, "How much will a website cost me?". We all need to know how much things cost before we purchase them, but if it is the first thing on your mind you may be misunderstanding why you are looking to buy a website.

Let's start by going back to that question again - "How much will a website cost me?". Almost immediately we are looking at things from a negative point of view, so I'm going to reply in the same vain with "A lot, an awful lot!". OK, I think I have challenged you enough now so maybe we should look at your need for a new website in more depth. Notice I use the word need and not want. That is the first thing you should be thinking about – do you need a website?

Do you really need a website?

Well that is a question that you won't hear very often, unfortunately. But unsurprisingly it is one of the first questions that we ask. Some people are surprised to hear that, as depending on what they sell/promote, there may be alternatives to a website which fit their business type, budget and style much better. And that is a discussion that you should be having with your chosen Agency. It should also be one that they are happy to have with you. It may be that you need a single page website for contact details etc. but it may be more appropriate to have solid well-designed Facebook page. That is perfectly OK and should be done if it is the right option for you. What I'm trying to emphasise is that it is about finding and building the right tool for the job. If you are a Decorator, is there any benefit from buying a £100 paint roller and tray when you specialise in hanging wallpaper - no. It is the same principle when you look at the benefits you will gain from having a website designed for you and that is the key word, "Benefits". Once you start to look at the benefits to your business of having a well design website it moves from being a cost to being a business profitability tool. So how do I make my website profitable? Simply make it do the things you want, but what are those things?

What do you want your website to achieve?

OK, the simple answer is that you want it to make you money, or at least to contribute toward doing so. This is a great starting point which will keep you from being distracted by other things, so we will focus on this for a while.

We started by asking the question “How can something that costs me money be profitable to my business?” The simple answer is that we use it to influence people’s actions by explaining to them the benefits of our products/services (not just what we do) and also to provide them with an easy path to making a buying decision and then to enable them to buy. For this to work we need to understand our visitors well enough to be able to design our site to meet their needs, explain how we can relieve their pain and problems, and build a relationship with them that will help them to become brand advocates. We will talk about understanding your visitors later.

Your website can do a number of things for your business that will raise profitability, sometimes indirectly:

- Give your visitors the chance to buy your product directly from you using an eCommerce website. This is probably the most obvious.
- Explain the benefits of your products so that you create a desire to buy from you. This may lead to them buying online or by visiting you, but it is about creating interest.
- Introduce them to a new product or service that they may not be aware of which they will then go on to purchase.
- Inform them of add-on purchases for a product or service that they have previously purchased through your site or shop.
- Provide them with a community where they can learn more about your product and services as well as making them feel supported which leads to them making more purchases and creating brand loyalty.
- Boost your SEO rankings

Looking at that short list there is only the first point that is a direct sale, but it does not detract from the fact that all of them raise profitability and potentially by quite a large amount depending on the ticket price of the goods or services that you are offering.

Whatever actions are taken by your site visitors it is important that both of you achieve something. That may be that they gain a better understanding of you, your products and services and that you nudge them further along the path to buying. Whatever it is does not matter as long as every visit by your visitor ends in a gain for both parties. If that does not happen then it’s time to review your site, what it should do, what it does do and whether a website is the thing for you.

Who is reading your pages?

This is the question. But it is not the only one, in fact here are a number of questions that you should consider for your existing website:

1. Can you tell who is looking at your website.? – No, ask your web developer.
2. Can your web developer tell who is looking at your website? – No, fire your web developer!
3. Who are the right people that should be visiting your website? – have a look at your existing best buying customers and build a profile for them – these should be the right kind of people and if not, they are a pretty good starting point.
4. Are the right people visiting your website? – No, it's another reason to review your website content and what you are offering online.
5. When people visit your page, do they buy or just look around? – If they are just visiting and not buying or following the call to action then again you need to review your content.
6. Are you getting repeat visits and if so, which pages are repeat visitors interacting with? Again, this relates to the first two questions.

That is just the tip of the iceberg but I'm sure that you can see that by starting to ask these questions and reacting to the answers you can turn your website into a selling tool. The profitability does not come from your website, but from your customers. If you are not talking to the right people and getting them to buy the right goods and services you will never have a website that is profitable.

What do you want your visitors to do?

Let's assume, just for the purpose of this book because there is no room for assumptions in real world business, that you are getting the right people to visit your site – what next?

In a nutshell your website can be used to provide the following for your visitors:

- Opportunity to raise their awareness of your brand, business, product and services.
- Give them in-depth information about your products and services which they are specifically interested in.
- Give them the opportunity to buy (online)
- Give them instructions of how/where to buy (off line)
- Provide them with information about appropriate addon products/services.
- Encourage them to contact you.
- Provide you with information. (Their contact details for a mailing list)
- Provide supporting information for your products (FAQ/Support Articles)

All these points will not only help you to sell to your website visitors, but to do it again and again, as well as up selling and cross selling. The key thing here is that

Conclusion

You need to approach your website as a business tool, not just something you need to have because every other business has one. It is also a tool for nudging your customers along your sales process, not just getting them to buy instantly. If you can demonstrate your competence in your business sector and supply them with free information that they can implement and gain from so that they can experience your expertise.

Don't rush the process as you may create sales but not loyalty. By providing support and information both pre and post-sale you are more likely to build a long-lasting relationship which will also end in the becoming brand advocates.

I can see that I will be adding to this document as some point and sharing more ideas so we will send you an updated version when we do.

As I have said before, this is not rocket science. It is just the application of logic, patience and plenty of caffeine. Something we are more than happy to help you with or give you some guidance on. If you would like us to take a look at your site and let you know what you can do to improve things, should it need improving then get in touch in a method of your choice. Our contact details are below.

My final words – a business website should make money, not just look pretty.