



Why Every Business Needs A Web Site: *Not* for the Leads

By Andy Gole



This colleague has a referral-based business, a high-ticket sale (perhaps \$50,000 or more). Prospects in "search" mode for these services do not get names from a Google search (or the Yellow Pages, for that matter). They get names from people they know and trust. When this colleague generates a lead through other methods, prospects then want to see the web site.

Do not get "cause and effect" confused in your business. You have to know which comes first, the chicken or the egg.

If your business is not a fit for web site lead generation (or client services), then why do you need one?

For your sales process. You need a web site for validation, for proof, for prospect exploration.

Once you make contact with a prospect who wants to learn more about your company, you need to help them through a sales process. The value of your web site is directly proportional to the extent you engage in urgency-based selling.

Urgency-based selling is predicated on discovering and working the prospect's sense of urgency. For instance, I have a client who helps customers increase sales 20 percent per year. This makes a material difference to most people in that industry. The growth rate creates a sense of urgency.

Unfortunately, most salespeople sell on interest: "I'm interested in your product, please send me some information;" or "I'm interested in your product, let's get together some time."

This is not selling; it is marketing. And the successful outcome of marketing is a lead.

There is no problem with marketing, with generating leads. And there is no problem with salespeople gener-

If you want to add customers, you need a web site. You might think you need a web site to generate leads. In fact, you need a web site for your selling process.

Leads can be an important application for a website, depending on your business and how your prospects search for your product or service.

I know one manufacturing business that gets virtually all its leads from its web site; it is a great fit for lead generation with purchased "key words." (This means the manufacturer pays for priority listing in a Google search.)

This manufacturer makes a low-cost specialty OEM product (a \$200 com-

ponent in a \$10,000-plus system), has a virtual monopoly and sells the product nationally. The typical sale is too small to justify a direct sales force in the field. Prospects needing this product "Google" the category and the purchased "key words" point them to the manufacturer. It works. The manufacturer has a cost of customer acquisition of about \$5.00, paying for the key word.

On the other hand, I have a colleague—a graphic designer—who receives 1,000 hits per month from key word searches and 600 click-throughs (the amount of times clicked versus the amount of times viewed). Yet not a stick of business, at least not from the lead-generating end.

ating their own leads (through networking and other means.)

However, there is a big problem with salespeople thinking they are selling when they are really marketing.

The business tragedy occurs when the sales team thinks they are selling, but are really marketing. In this case—which is very common—no selling will ever take place. The company only gets the low hanging fruit—10-15 percent of the prospects, at best. Ownership wonders where are all the good leads, and where are all the good salespeople. The problem is the selling method.

Selling means you are in serious committed conversations that can close. You will never close on interest.

What does this have to do with web sites?

When you have a lead—a “maybe,” someone with interest—web sites play two critical roles in converting interest to a serious, committed con-

versation, proportional to the urgency in your message:

- 1) For a passive lead, the web site can convert the prospect to an active lead.
- 2) For an active lead, the web site can provide essential validation in moving the sales process forward.

At times, you have a passive lead. Someone you met at a trade show, a networking group. Someone who heard you talk. This person is an “almost lead.” They are willing to visit your web site, but they are not willing to self-identify; they do not want you “bothering them.” Or they are not willing to invest the effort to make a phone call to learn more.

You have one shot on your home page—maybe 15-30 seconds at most—to crank up that interest to a level of compelling urgency. Without a website you will never get these passively interested prospects, who could be half of your potential prospects.

Alternatively, you are engaged in a conversation with an active prospect, and you need to move the process forward. This prospect has to “get to know you” in order to do business. They are not yet willing to invest the time to check references.

For this prospect, your web site can be a great way station on the road to getting to know you. The case you build on the web site can help the prospect decide to engage further, meet with you again, check references, read case studies, etc.

The value of the web site is proportional to the urgency in your selling. Embrace urgency-based selling and the web site is a home run. ▲

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