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Define Your Web Site's Purpose to Boost Online Success

By C S Wurzberger and Pam Foster

If your Web site isn't driving sales for your business or really doing much of anything for you, it may be time for a major update or a new site. You'll increase your profits online by **defining your Web site's purpose first**.

You can clearly outline your Web site objectives—and determine who you're trying to attract, the unique solutions you offer your prospects and customers, and the kinds of features you want on your site—by asking yourself a number of helpful questions that are critical to planning a profitable Web site.

Here's the most important question you'll consider as you develop your site:

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

To build a successful Web site or to improve your existing site, you need to clearly define its objectives, so everyone in your business and in your professional Web team will understand the Web site's specific mission. The more specific, the better. You need to know exactly:

1. What's the main purpose of your site?

Do you want your site to be an online brochure/overview of your company? Sell products and services via e-commerce? Provide an online store experience? Generate sales leads? Provide an electronic portfolio of your work? Educate customers and offer a library of information? Provide a discussion forum for like-minded people? Allow visitors to search your inventory or see product options? Offer product demonstrations, seminars, training materials?

The answers to these questions will help you focus on the number one purpose of your site and help you avoid getting distracted by activities that take away from this main objective.

2. What's your ultimate business goal related to your site?

Do you want to cultivate more customers? Focus on selling more products and services to existing customers? Cultivate referrals? Develop customer loyalty programs? Do you want to grow specific product lines? Launch a new service? How will your site tie to your other marketing efforts?

It may be easiest to answer these questions by looking at your company's sales model. Is it referral-based and/or repeat-customer based? If you're in a company with several employees, ask your sales manager, business owner or others who are on the front lines of growing the business.

3. Who's your ideal customer or prospect?

What types of people are you trying to attract for your site and your business? Are they sophisticated, knowledgeable consumers? Are they business professionals and key decision-makers? Or are they young college grads looking for the latest gadgets? Are they clueless about what you offer or do they already know what your business is all about? What do you know about their lifestyles,

interests, attitudes, hopes and needs—especially related to your business? What do they know about the “brand reputation” your business strives for?

Knowing your customer is the KEY to planning a user-friendly, successful site.

4. What’s your competition doing with their Web sites?

Have you studied competitors who do a great job online? Or those who have poorly planned sites? How can you do it better or in a way that uniquely solves a problem? What can you offer that others don’t?

If some of your competitors are highly successful, see what tricks and tips you can learn from their sites.

These are just some of the ways you can boost your success on the Internet. To learn more, you’ll want to attend the three-part Web development seminars that Score offers.

You will also want to get your hands on the new Internet Jungle Guide book, *9 Easy Steps to Planning a Profitable Web Site: Your complete guide to navigating the Web development jungle and launching a site that sells!* This mini-course and workbook will help you launch a site that truly attracts prospects and customers who are ready to make purchases!

You can order this book online at www.internetjungleguide.com. *The Internet Jungle Guide is a division of Premiere Visions, LLC.*

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The national SCORE Association is a nonprofit organization dedicated to entrepreneur education and the formation, growth and success of small business nationwide. SCORE Portland is one of 389 chapters throughout the United States, with over 11,000 volunteers nationwide. SCORE is a resource partner of the U.S. Small Business Administration.

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