

Why Websites Matter for Pond Businesses

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To keep our website interesting and current, we review it weekly and revamp it monthly. Is your pond and water garden business out there on the World Wide Web? I'm not talking about anything as fancy as e-commerce. Do you have a simple, informational website?

For a long time, I resisted the lure of any kind of computer technology. When my wife and I bought our first computer, my brother-in-law talked us into and walked us through gathering all the necessary components and hiring someone to build a machine for us. It was an event, a splurge and the dawning of a new age for us.

Fast-forward a few years and you'll find me tethered to my Blackberry. In fact, I'm dictating this blog at 70 mph, driving to Mardi Gras, while Jeannie types on a laptop in the car. If I want something -- a book, a boat, a plane ticket, to know the population of Magnolia Springs, Alabama -- I can look it up on the web.

Websites have become as commonplace as cell phones. Every business needs a website. It does not have to be elaborate, but the website does have to be interesting.

Your website is your brochure; it is your 'shop window' on the World Wide Web. If your business does not have a Website, you are missing the boat.

We dabbled with a basic website at the beginning, and we finally got serious about it two years ago. Since then, our consumer business has shown good growth. Whether or not this is directly related to the professional website, I can't say. People are more likely to visit a website, however, than to call a phone number.

We no longer mention our store phone number in advertising. We try to direct everyone to our website so they can get a comprehensive view of what our business encompasses and offers. The website is like the novel-version of a billboard.

Here are three important lessons I learned with our website: When designing your site, make sure it is easy to access and maintain 'in house.' Keep the content current. We review our website weekly and revamp it monthly, much like we do with our store merchandising. In the store, one of our slogans is "Something different every visit... ." It needs to be the same for the website. It takes little effort to add new photos, list upcoming events and announce new products and specials. Monitor the traffic. Our website has thousands of visitors a month. We can tell which pages are the most popular, how long people spend on our website; how many add us as a 'favorite' and the times and days of the week most people spend visiting us. It's an excellent measuring tool to see the effectiveness of our advertising.

Feel free to share your tips in the comments below.