

Unleash Your Business Online



When I first started my web development firm in 1999, I had a dream. I dreamt of a business environment without walls. I saw a world where people could connect and conduct transactions without geographic constraints. Most importantly I saw conversations taking place without barriers of any kind. Language, location, culture were to become irrelevant in the flow of commerce. If a need existed it could be serviced with little or no effort.

Now, almost 10 years later, I see companies still hesitant to embrace the World Wide Web, or worse, businesses large and small leaping into the abyss with little or no plan – just the thought that they “need” a website. Some embrace the web not knowing what it is, but hoping it will help increase the bottom line. Many soon realize that when they fail to plan... well, you know how that goes.

The Internet has changed our lives forever. The Internet has changed how we do business, interact, make money, communicate and socialize. Gone are the days of running to 10 different stores to find that gadget we want so badly. With the click of a button and typing on a keyboard we find 400 stores that sell it and can ship it inside of 24 hours to our front door.

During the initial Internet phase (Web 1.0) our static web sites attempted to get the message out to our visitors. We “sold” our goods and services with pictures, content & layout.

We developers studied eye movement, the effects of color on moods and buying habits (blue leads to spontaneous purchases more often than any other color) with other “bio-feedback” statistics and of course the ever changing algorithms of the search engines. Very few of us managed to master all the technical intricacies that go into true web development.

The advent of Web 2.0 has led us down a path that made me realize my initial dream is closer than I suspected.

Web 2.0 with its transparent designs, bubbly

graphics, minimalist looks created the one thing that was missing from Web 1.0, conversation.

While the tools to create limited interaction between site owner and visitor existed on some scale, it was dwarfed by how conversations can now take place. Fact: **markets are conversations**. Conversations between one with a need and another with a solution, conversations between like minds, conversations between co-workers, and conversations between consumers. These conversations now take place openly, honestly and with no barriers. The sale that results from the conversation is not the result of a good “pitch” but simply the exclamation point on the end of a sentence. The sharing of information and ideas has never been more paramount to the success of business online and off than it is in this very moment in time.

“In the same way we distinguish personal attention from inattention, we can tell the difference between a commercial pitch and words that come when someone’s life animates their message. People channel from their hearts directly to their words. That’s voice. It comes of focus, attention, caring, connection, and honesty of purpose. It is not commercially motivated, isn’t talk with a vested interest. Talk is cheap. The value of our voices is beyond mere words. The human voice reaches directly into our beings and touches our spirits.” The Cluetrain Manifesto

It is this very open conversation that creates hesitancy from many businesses. The lack of control that a company has over what is said about its product or services have never been higher. This is where you need to jump off the cliff, let go and let the conversation take place. Statistically companies that release their grip and move into Social Networking have attained their highest customer loyalty ratings.

In the era of our greatest technical achievements, it is the passion and expertise of the individual(s) the consumer wants to do business with. Through a proactive approach to Social Networking, brand identification has sky rocketed for businesses both large and small. You have a message, a culture, a philosophy in the way you do business, these are the things that today’s consumer wants to know about. Gone are the days of blind searches and purchases. Now, when a desired product is found, the visitor looks up the company, its key people finds out how to talk to them and engages them in conversation. If the company itself can not be reached, consumers search for reviews, feedback and electronic “word of mouth” messages that will help educate them on whether or not that company *deserves* their business.

Your company’s image is under scrutiny already, by taking the time to deliver the message yourself, you take a huge leap into reaching out into a market that would otherwise ignore you. Are their plans to be made, specific steps to take? Of course. But you have to be willing to break out of the box, unleash your message, give your company a face and a voice that can be seen and heard and trusted.