CHART

IS YOUR WEBSITE HURTING YOU OR HELPING YOU?

By Paul Lavenhar

Is your website hurting you or helping you?

When you are prospecting, one of the first things a prospective new client will do is Google you and your company. It's the first step towards establishing your credibility.

Yes, social media is important, but your website is more often than not your first impression maker.

Have you looked at your website lately? When was the last time it was updated? If the prospect considers your website your "first date," are you going to get a second one?

It is so hard to get into a prospect's door – referrals, cold calls, email blasts, networking, – don't let your website blow it for you.

HERE ARE SOME BASIC TIPS TO MAKE YOUR WEBSITE HELP YOU LAND A PROSPECT VERSUS EXCLUDING YOU.

This is about first impressions. It is not about HTML code, tags, and all the very important technical aspects of developing a website. These are suggestions you can implement because you are an insurance expert, not a web designer.

**FIRST IMPRESSIONS**

What first impression does your website make? Conservative? Cutting edge? Friendly? Is the website about how great the company is? Or, is it about how great it is at helping customers? Can customers find what they need to know or answers to their questions? Does the website "think" like its target customers think? Don't be a "me-me-me-er." Make your website about the client, not about you.

PEOPLE READ DIFFERENTLY

The Internet has changed how people read. You are competing against every single thing online for attention, not just against competitor websites.

Insurance can be technical. Translate the technical into easy-to-read language that is from the prospect's point of view. How is this insurance product going to solve the prospect's problem?

Keep paragraphs short. People read at a glance – long paragraphs get glossed over. Long paragraphs are reading killers – even if the content is good. Use subheads – if they only read your subheads, they should get your overall message.
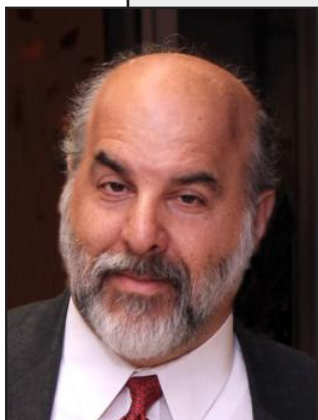
About the author: Paul Lavenhar's firm PL Communications has provided marketing communications services for 25 years to such insurance clients Rockwood Programs, Capacity Coverage, MetLife, Selective, York Risk Services, and Admiral Insurance, among others. He has written for 500+ companies in various industries. Paul also leads a band called GoodWorks that provides music and marketing services to help nonprofits raise money and awareness pro bono. Paul is the principal of the insurance marketing communications firm PL Communications.

AVOID "INSURANCESE"

Which has more impact?

"Our focused risk management approach ensures that our clients are proactively protected in the most cost-effective manner."

Or,

"Our risk management approach reduces claims and keeps premium costs down."

"Keeps costs down" gets attention – just say what you mean in plain language.

SHOW YOU ARE INVOLVED IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Many insurance agencies and carriers are active participants in their communities. If you are, highlight that on your website. If you are an agency that specializes in nonprofits, show how you support local nonprofits whether you are on a board or a volunteer.

If you are focused on a business niche and belong to an association for that niche, show your involvement.

BE PROUD OF YOUR NICHE

Some people feel if you market a niche, you exclude all other business opportunities. You can have a niche or niches within an overall practice. Emphasize your niche, but balance it by saying it is one strong part of your overall book of business.

Put that niche right on your home page. It is the first place people look

at your website. Link that introductory copy to a more detailed page about your niche expertise.

On that page consider adding testimonials, industry risk management tips, or case studies to show off your expertise. Don't just say you are an expert – prove it.

YOU MUST BE MOBILE

I started by saying this would not be technical. But, I do want to make one technical point.

Look at your website on your phone. If it doesn't work properly, have your web designer fix it. There are simple codes to make a site mobile – it often does not require redesigning your entire site.

This is a great website to see your "mobile readiness." https://ready.mobi/

SOCIAL MEDIA AND SUBSCRIPTION CONTENT

Many articles are available about social media from Facebook to LinkedIn. My advice here is that if your Facebook page or LinkedIn page has not had a new post since 2014, take it off your website. Or, read one of those articles and use it to update your social media presence.

Subscription or "canned" articles have a place in social media. Sometimes you just don't have the time or resources to generate your content on a regular basis.

> Look at your website on your phone. If it doesn't work properly, have your web designer fix it. There are simple codes to make a site mobile – it often does not require redesigning your entire site."

But, content that comes from your staff – especially niche specific content – is one of the best ways to knock off an incumbent. Show prospects what generalists miss that an expert like you deals with every day.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

SEO – is another aspect of website development that is technical and potentially expensive.

Original content is one of the most effective ways to get better search results. Google and clients love a niche.

It is much easier to get Google results when you push a niche. If a company sees you "get" its niche, it increases your chance of them wanting to do business with you.

These are the basics for getting that "second date" with your prospects. You work hard to get appointments with prospects – make sure your website helps you, not hurts you.