

Surviving a Challenging Market

This column will answer the most pressing questions we receive from members struggling in today's challenging market.



CONSTRUCT | MARKET | PROTECT

Q: Last month we explored ideas to attract new clients, even in a down market. So what are some other ways to generate business in a tough market?

A: Right now is a great time to take a fresh look at your company website. Websites have become a part of how we shop, sell, learn and in many cases, are entertained. Several national surveys provide some revealing insights into website use. Consumers associate stability and professionalism with a business website. Consumers are also increasingly using websites to make some of their most expensive purchases—houses and cars. The advances in technology and internet connectivity with cell phones in the past year have significantly “upped” the value of a website presence.

If you don't have a website, you may have decided that a website won't add anything to your business, give you an edge or you just don't have the time, money or expertise to keep it up. All of that may still be true, but it won't hurt to take another look. You may find that the creation of a website is significantly less expensive now than just a few years ago. It's also easier to add and delete information.



If you don't want to do it yourself, consider hiring a high school, community college or vocational training student who might even be willing to do it for free.

These are Indicators you need a website:

- ◆ Callers say they can't find your company on the internet. If your customers and potential customers are looking for you on the web, then you should be there.

- ◆ Your competition has a website. While it might not be the edge you were looking for, you're giving them an advantage if you don't.

- You realize that you use the internet more now that you did just a year ago. If you do, so do others.

Once you have a website, it can be a powerful marketing tool—if it's up to date. If you haven't added anything new to your website in the last year, do it now. Show you care. Take a good look at what's on your website. It should be visual. If you need a lot of text, keep it off the front page. It should be reflective of your business, direct and simple to navigate.

- **Make sure your basics are covered:** your products and services and a picture of you.

As a small businessman your advantage is YOU—let your potential customers get to know you. Highlight the personal service you offer, include community involvement, memberships or activities, your staff and a little history of your business.

- **Testimonials are good.**

If you finished the job on time, within budget and the customer is happy, have them put it in a letter and ask if you can post it on your website. Before and after pictures provide added impact.

- **A website can be use for more than simply marketing.**

Many websites enable you to post progress pictures for clients and allow you to restrict access to certain web pages to ensure privacy. This lets clients stay involved without having to visit the jobsite every day.

Good customer service is what will give you the real edge over your competition and a great website directing potential customers to your business will give you the chance to shine. 🏠