

Small Business Owners Report

2009

Web Design Predictions

by: **Jim Degerstrom**



Podcast Transcript from Episode 54

Learn about my predictions for 2009 and trends in web design for small business owners. This ebook report is the transcript from episode 54 of the Small Business Website Mailbag podcast.

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Another Free Small Business Resource Center Report written by Jim Degerstrom

OTHER Small Business Owners Report Series: Do-It-Yourself Website Promotion

This series of reports includes 6 separate documents that combine for a thorough guide of free methods for promoting your website. Additional reports may be requested from my commercial site at www.jimdegerstrom.com for download as released during 2007.

The Other Series of Reports for DIY Website Promotion



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The Others in the Series (All featured on my site at www.jimdegerstrom.com/reports.html)



About the Author

Jim Degerstrom offers small business advice based on 30 years in management, sales, and marketing, including President or General Manager of small companies in 5 states. He is proficient in website and graphic art design, and runs his online Small Business Resource Center from Kissimmee, Florida USA. Besides design services, he offers free advice, tutorials, and templates on his blog at www.jimdegerstrom.com/blog/index.html.

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Introduction

This report is the transcript from episode 54 of the Small Business Website Mailbag podcast released on Dec 27, 2008, and is the text version of the audio program:

Welcome to episode 54 entitled **2009 Web Design Predictions** with a look at important web design issues for next year and beyond. As computer technology advances and internet users upgrade to better equipment and faster online service, web designers need to keep pace with the latest trends. Here's the outline for today's program:

- Search Engine Optimization Trends in Web Design
- Content Management Systems or CMS for Web Design
- Ease of Use in Do-it-Yourself Website Owner Web Design
- Web Design Content Enriched with Multimedia
- New Standards for Web Design Page Width in 2009
- Tip of the Day - Time for an Annual Web Design Checkup

First up is **Search Engine Optimization Trends in Web Design**. This first topic will be allotted the majority of time in this episode because it is truly the essence of learning what is necessary to succeed online. The transcript of this show is available in PDF for immediate download from the show notes, also.

The success of your website depends on creating a solid foundation of quality content and following my advice to add original quality content often. Providing visitors with a positive online experience, and making people your first priority, will naturally lead to more search engine traffic.

If you want your website to truly dominate in your market niche, an ongoing budget of time for do-it-yourself search engine optimization, or money to outsource seo services, needs to be part of your online plan. Launch a site and neglect to update content, and it will be very difficult to compete against more dynamic websites that do add original quality content often.

Take the advice of the search engine leader. Google openly reveals the seo strategies that provide a quality website experience, and they likewise list deceptive tactics that will backfire. Know the difference and apply the natural methods of creating a quality website and the rewards will follow.

If you choose to outsource seo services, be very careful in evaluating service providers. Those who get results using methods to exploit search engine weaknesses will fail eventually. Deception using tricks without providing quality content will be caught and eventually punished. The key word is "natural" growth of your site with a focus on quality first. SEO service providers who cannot provide references or evidence of positive results for their site as well as clients should be avoided.

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The search engine optimization methods that I teach, and document throughout this website, are strategies for long term natural growth. Skip any of the steps in creating quality content and you will diminish the value of all that effort. Begin by researching a list of real world key phrases used by people searching for your type of product or service. Know what people put in the Google search box and you are one step ahead of the competition.

Next, when writing text content to include key words and phrases, testing keyword density within that content for the proper ratio of total words to each key word is critical. The wrong mix with generic phrases instead of key words means your site will be easily outranked. Too many and your site could be blacklisted as spam. The magic number I recommend is 4%, so a key word or phrase needs to appear 4 times for every 100 words in that page content.

Finally, track site performance utilizing site visitor stats tracking, and be prepared to tweak content for the overall site as well as individual pages to make sure your content maintains a consistent theme.

Looking ahead, and once your site is optimized for search engines by providing original quality content for visitors, look at external site seo strategies. The trend in social network websites continues to grow and be recognized by search engines with increased value for higher placement in search results.

Over the years search engines continue to tweak algorithms to provide the most relevant search results to their customers. The strategy to dominate by providing what people really want recognizes the nature of the web as a social network, and by tapping into online social communities, search engines continue to provide results based on the behavior of people.

My advice is joining online communities like forums, photo sharing sites, social bookmark sites, and micro-blogging sites like Twitter. By sharing thoughts, advice, opinions, and interacting as an active member of the worldwide community that is the internet, links you create will attract search engines. The search engines do scour these sites looking for real world needs and communication, and active participation is another dynamic strategy to enhance your site with external links.

Next up is **Content Management Systems or CMS for Web Design.**

Budget is often the reason most site owners fail to follow the advice in my favorite phrase "add original quality content often". In the past, the learning curve has been steep to take control of a website with a cms, or content management system. The ability to add unlimited new pages, delete obsolete pages, or edit pages 24/7 without paying your web designer each time is the future of what website owners want. Fortunately, resources for a quality cms content management system that provides ease of use are available now compared to just a few years ago. Standard open source

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packages have evolved so owners can create quality code for a web design in plain text that converts automatically to perfect xhtml. In addition, having a designer with advanced skills to customize the basic package gives owners a truly unique look. An added plus in the custom cms that I offer is advanced programming to automate seo input for search engine META and page file names.

Let's discuss the **Ease of Use in Do-it-yourself Website Owner Web Design** in more detail.

With over 12 years experience in web design, I have witnessed the evolution of web design content from simple text to advanced multimedia with audio, video, interactive sites, and other advanced features. For the average new website owner, the web design techniques to create high end content would take months or perhaps years to master.

This has worked well for many site owners who choose to learn web design, and find the time. For the majority of new web design projects site owners have been forced to hire outside web developers to get up and running. Because of the newer cms systems available today that will only improve in the near future, the ease of use in do-it-yourself web design does allow site owners to take over with minimal cost. With ease of use and a short learning curve, there is more incentive to do just that and save money for site changes with do-it-yourself skills.

The next topic is Web **Design Content Enriched with Multimedia**.

The trends mentioned in the opening comments referred to people upgrading their computer systems and accessing faster online services. The number of people on dialup just 1-2 years ago is quickly shrinking as high speed service providers drop their pricing under competitive pressure.

My advice from 1-2 years ago was avoiding flash, video, audio, or other large file size content on websites. That advice has changed. In the past, the problem of losing as many as 50% of site visitors because of slow load times is no longer a valid concern. People are upgrading computer equipment and high speed services are becoming more affordable, so providing a richer multimedia experience needs to be part of each site owner's future web design strategy.

Next up is New **Standards for Web Design Page Width in 2009**.

Looking to next year and beyond to predict website visitor experience, the standard web design page width for 2009 and into the future that I recommend is still 960 pixels wide. The reasons I prefer a 960 pixel wide web design page standard were explained earlier in 2008, yet a fixed width beyond 960 for a background image can provide some interesting effects for persons viewing your site on a wide screen.

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Knowing the system used to visit your site can help determine the optimum web design based on your visitor's screen resolution and page width. 800 pixel wide computer monitors are practically obsolete.

This fact is known because I use StatCounter to track visitor behavior. You can see where they came from, if from a search engine what did they search, how many pages visited, plus how long they stayed on the site. In addition, I check visitor system and browser stats every 1-2 months. The statistics gather each visitor's browser preference and screen resolution or computer monitor size. The majority are 1024 x 768 so the majority will see all your content without having a bottom horizontal scroll bar.

Adding an enlarged background image fills what would otherwise be blank on wide screen monitors, so the effect is quite dramatic compared to a 960 wide site centered on a very large monitor. A visitor with a 1600 pixel wide screen or larger could very well be the standard in a few years as people upgrade or buy new computers. When 1024 x 768 becomes the older standard, those enhanced sites using the 960 pixel page width will continue to display well for a positive first impression.

Going into 2009 and beyond will be exciting times for adjusting web design strategies for search engine optimization, content management systems, ease of use, and multimedia content. The investment in a web design to forward looking standards where you add original quality content often is still the essence of online success.

The website Tip of the Day is entitled **Time for an Annual Web Design Checkup**.

Each year in January, my advice is taking the time for a critical look at your website and the web design strategies you have used. Besides a visit to a Whois website to make sure your contact information is up to date like the domain registrant and administrative contact, reflect on site content and how well it represents your overall business.

Have you added a new product or service that is not shown on your website? If yes, then it is time to plan adding new content. Has the importance of an existing product or service changed so that it generates more profit than expected? If so, it is time to consider placing emphasis on your core business for the best return on investment, and think about what else might change in the coming years.

Finally, take a critical look of what is there. If you knew nothing about the business niche you promote, as a new visitor to your site would you be impressed and likely to stay and learn more? The essence of success is a quality site that attracts search engine traffic, and then once a visitor arrives you have 5 seconds to convince them to stay. Most will not buy on a first visit, so does your content provide a rich experience that will convince visitors to bookmark your site for a return visit, and eventually buy?

Answer the tough questions about your site as if you were doing a review for a friend, and your plans for website growth and web design enhancements will help keep you ahead of the competition for years to come.