

Randolph Community Newsletter

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 9

JUNE 2009

From the Director's Desk

Owning a business is always a challenge, whether the country is in good times or bad. And in today's technological and global environment, having a website is probably more important than ever if you own a business.

I would like to share an April, 2009 article with you from *Entrepreneur Magazine* called *6 Website Fixes to Make Now: These Simple Measures Put Your Site's Focus on the Customer* by Mike Werling. I have quoted the article below.

Entrepreneurs shouldn't have to be convinced of the importance of a good business website. Without one, consumers can't find you. That maxim holds especially true for business owners who rely on internet sales for their revenue. You know you need a website because without it you don't exist. But relatively minor issues can drag down your site's effectiveness--issues that could be costing you money.

We're not talking about issues that require a total site rebuild. We're not even talking about remedies that increase the "wow" quotient of a site;

"The days of the 'gee whiz' factor are gone," says Ben Rushlo, director of Keynote Consulting for Phoenix-based [Keynote Systems](#), a service provider that improves online business performance. "The user experience has changed. There are increased expectations." But those increased expectations are centered on the experience--not the technical wizardry--of your site.

That should be good news for entrepreneurs who have no desire to become tech geeks. Experts point to six everyday fixes entrepreneurs can make to improve a site's efficiency and build a business's bottom line.

1. Increase the speed. In an era when "Wow" has been replaced by "Wow, this is fast," entrepreneurs need to focus on speed more than ever. Your site should allow users to get in, find what they need, ask for more information or buy an item, and get on with their busy days. If that's not the case, you've got some work to do. Fortunately, increasing a site's loading speed doesn't have to be fraught with tehnogibberish and time-consuming fixes--small things can make a big difference.

Adobe Flash is out--or at least in decreased demand--say some experts.

It slows things down. "No one is even asking for Flash," says Jamie Wilke, a designer and the owner of [Mediatrunk.com](#), a web design firm in Colorado Springs, Colo. "People now view it as annoying. They'd rather read information." Quite the departure from just a few years ago when "everybody had to have Flash," Rushlo says.

Most sites need images of some sort, but make sure your image files are as small as they can be. Even large images can get by with small file sizes. Also, have a conversation with your webmaster and make sure anything non-essential is moved to the bottom of the page load, Rushlo says. This will help the important information pop up quickly.

2. Write better product descriptions. Spend some time reading your product descriptions to make sure they're succinct and filler-free. The formula here can be difficult because, as Amy Schade says, you need to "convince [users] the product meets their needs," but the verbiage "has to be short and descriptive." There's no salesperson available on a website, so shoppers "should be able to see a product and know what it does," says Schade, a director at the Nielsen Norman Group in New

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"I GAIN STRENGTH, COURAGE AND CONFIDENCE BY EVERY EXPERIENCE IN WHICH I MUST STOP AND LOOK FEAR IN THE FACE... I SAY TO MYSELF, I'VE LIVED THROUGH THIS AND CAN TAKE THE NEXT THING THAT COMES ALONG."

~ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

From the Director's Desk

York City and co-author of the second edition of the "E-Commerce User Experience" report. Writing new and better product descriptions, Schade says, "is time consuming but

3. Delete tech used for the sake of tech. This harkens back to the need for speed. Implementing the latest technology may lend to the perception that an entrepreneur is hip to the latest software and other gadgets, but does it make the site stronger? If

"[Site owners] need to evaluate if things like music, video and 360-degree views are necessary," Rushlo says. A real estate agent is going to want 360-degree views of houses' interiors. A promotional products distributor may just be wasting his time trying to offer full-circle views of logoed pens, flash drives and water bottles.

Schade subscribes to Rushlo's view. She says to beware the trendy and new. Anything business owners jump on because it is the latest and greatest has the potential to backfire, especially if entrepreneurs don't have the resources to keep up with all of the moving parts of their sites. Things like Facebook pages and video are fun; and social networking is quickly becoming an integral part

of many businesses' marketing platforms, but business owners need to weigh a technology's popularity against their ability to utilize it fully.

4. Improve shopping cart and payment options. It can be tempting to think that once customers have made up their minds to buy something, there's nothing to stop them, but a counter-intuitive electronic shopping cart or a third-party payment window can torpedo the sale. "If you have a shopping cart, make it easy to use," Wilke says. "Make sure it's easy to add items and purchase them." She adds that it has to look professional, and one sure-fire way to achieve that is to use third-party vendors who specialize in internet purchases. Even that, however, needs to be handled with care, Schade says, to instill the highest

"If you're using a third party for payments," she says, "make it seamless. It has to look like you." Don't have the payment information form open in a different window that takes customers to another website. That plants a seed of doubt in their minds, which

5. Use unique page titles on every page. We're talking about those words that appear in the bar

those words that appear in the bar across the very top of the browser window. Boring, maybe, but they're important. Even if users don't notice them, search engines do--and they're sticklers. "If you have 10 pages on your site and they all say ABC Business," Wilke says, "search engines are not going to see them as different." That affects your search ranking. And make sure the title at the top matches the content on the page--it matters, even if it doesn't seem like it should. You don't need to hire a great writer to help with this project. The about page title should look something like this: ABC Business - About Us. The media page: ABC Business

6. Shorten forms. If you have a contact form on your site, only ask for the information you really need. "If you are going to call everyone who fills out a form," Wilke says, "don't ask for their physical address." Likewise, if you're planning to send e-mails. And be careful with required registration, Schade warns. "One-time purchasers don't want to have to become members," she says.

Online consumers don't need to see the fanciest websites with all the latest bells and whistles. They're looking for the exact product or service that meets their needs, and they want to find it quickly.

Business Highlight— Patent Electric

This month Patent Electric is my business highlight.

In February of 1962, Ray Patent resigned his position as Superintendent of the Randolph Power Plant. It was then that he and his wife, Gladys, started Patent Electric. They began by using their garage as their warehouse. This worked until they outgrew it. They purchased their first building from Peter Milander in 1964. It was located be-

side Broer's Blacksmith Shop. Being by the blacksmith shop gave them the opportunity to watch an original country blacksmith at work. They were at this location for 15 enjoyable years.

"Some people succeed because they are destined to, but most people succeed because they are determined to."
~Henry Ford

In 1979 they decided to erect a new building. The building is located where the VFW hall used to be or where Abts Harness Shop used to be. As time went by, they expanded to air conditioning, heating and appliance sales and service. They feature Whirlpool Appliances. Kevin and Alice Patent are now associate business partners.

Ideas For Expanding or Starting a Business

I would like to share an article from the January 25, 2009 issue of the Omaha World Herald by Stephanie Monge.

“Thinking of launching a business or growing an existing business?”

“Here are some tips from Anne York, director of Creighton University’s Entrepreneurship Program and associate professor of entrepreneurship and strategy, and Ami Kassar, chief innovation officer at Advanta.

- **Combine passion and expertise.** Choose something that you have a passion for and, ideally, something in which you have experience or expertise.
- **Do your homework.** Research competitors, industry trends, potential markets and distribution channels.
- **Get experience.** Try to gain experience working in a similar business before launching your own company.
- **Build awareness.** Start to build awareness about your product or service before launching the business. Social media tools such as a blog can help to get the word out.
- **Refine your ideas.** Develop an “elevator pitch.” What is the essence of what you do and why should people care?
- **Build a support network.** Look to other entrepreneurs and experienced mentors for help and guidance.
- **Don’t go it alone.** Realize that you probably can’t do it alone and choose partners who com-

“The tragedy in life doesn’t lie in not reaching your goal, The tragedy lies in having no goal to reach.”
~Benjamin Mays

plement you. Few people have all of the skills, know-how and personality needed to start a business.






- **Talk about your business.** Be willing to talk to anyone and everyone about your business. That includes customers, suppliers, other business owners, etc.
- **Be efficient and cost-effective.** Find ways to get things done for a fraction of the price. Barter services or utilize free resources, including consulting, through organizations such as local offices of the U.S. Small Business Administration, Service Corps of Retired Executives and economic development agencies.
- **Look for inexpensive funding.** Look for the least expensive capital. Consider using angel investors or friends and family members to back your idea.
 - **Cash is king.** Understand cash budgeting and tracking, as opposed to accounting. Before you start, make sure that you have enough cash to get through the ramp-up period. Use your cash wisely. Carefully monitor inventory, receivables and expenditures.
- **Prioritize.** Keep your priorities in order; don’t get lost in the details and lose sight of the “big” or fundamentally important things.
- **Lose control.** If you want to really grow your business, be willing to give up at least some control and ownership.
- **Be in sync.** Make sure that you

and your partners or investors share the same business goals and ethical ideas.

- **Make sacrifices.** Be willing to sacrifice short-term comfort for long-term goals, and be sure that your family is prepared to do that too.
- **Build your business credit.** Right now, this is essential. Establishing business accounts with service providers you might not have thought of—UPS and Staples, for example—can help to build credit.
- **Develop realistic financial forecasts.** Be conservative with revenue forecasts because if the slow economy; it could become more difficult to find new customers.
- **Focus on existing customers.** Identify the most profitable customers and focus new products and services toward this group.
- **Create opportunities for growth.** Consider working with competitors and complementary businesses in order to expand products or services. Businesses that diversify now will be at an advantage when the economy improves.
- **Persevere.** Some of the most established companies in American history started during bad economic times including General Electric in the early 1870s, Walt Disney in the early 1920s, Hewlett-Packard in the ‘30s, and Microsoft in the ‘70s.”



June 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<p>1 7:30 pm Economic Development Meeting</p> <p>YMCA BBB (incoming grades 9-12)</p>	<p>2. Heartland PT Program for Girls 7:30-8:30 am (grades 9-12) 8:30-9:30 am (grades 6-8)</p>	<p>3 6:30 pm City Council Meeting</p>	<p>4 Heartland PT Program for Girls 7:30-8:30 am (grades 9-12) 8:30-9:30 am (grades 6-8)</p>	<p>5 10:00 am Community Coffee @ ????????</p> 	<p>6 Boy's BB Team Camp in Vermillion (incoming grades 9-12)</p>
7	<p>8 YMCA BBB (incoming grades 9-12)</p> <p>9:00am-4:30 pm Volleyball Camp (incoming grades 5-8)</p>	<p>9 9:00-4:30 pm Volleyball Camp (incoming grades 9-12)</p> <p>Heartland PT Program for Girls 7:30-8:30 am (Grades 9-12) 8:30-9:30 am (Grades 6-8)</p>	<p>10 9:00am-4:30 pm Volleyball Camp (incoming grades 9-12)</p> <p>3:00 pm-6:00 pm Computer & TV Recycling @ Parking Lot Across From Audi- torium</p>	<p>11 Heartland PT Program for Girls 7:30-8:30 am (grades 9-12) 8:30-9:30 am (grades 6-8)</p>	12	13
14	<p>15 YMCA BBB (incoming grades 9-12)</p>  <p>Flag Day</p>	<p>16 Heartland PT Program for Girls 7:30-8:30 am (grades 9-12) 8:30-9:30 am (grades 6-8)</p>	17	<p>18 Heartland PT Program for Girls 7:30-8:30 am (grades 9-12) 8:30-930 am (grades 6-8)</p>	<p>19 10:00 am Community Coffee @ ????????????</p> 	20
21	<p>22 YMCA BBB (incoming grades 9-12)</p>  <p>Happy Father's Day</p>  <p>First Day of Summer</p>	<p>23 Heartland PT Program for Girls 7:30-8:30 am (grades 9-12) 8:30-9:30 am (grades 6-8)</p>	24	<p>25 Heartland PT Program for Girls 7:30-8:30 am (grades 9-12) 8:30-9:30 am (grades 6-8)</p>	26	27
28	<p>29 8:00am-1:30 pm Driver's Education</p>	<p>30 8:00am-1:30 pm Driver's Education</p> <p>Heartland PT Program for Girls 7:30-8:30 am (grades 9-12) 8:30-9:30 am (grades 6-8)</p>				

June 2009

What's Happening

@ the Lied Randolph Public Library by Peggy Leiting



Schools out

for the summer and we invite you to come to our Instrument Petting Zoo on



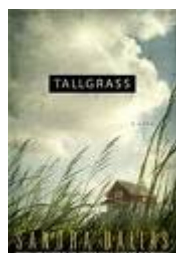
June 2nd from 10-12 to celebrate. Preschool on up will have the opportunity to see, hear and even play several different instruments.

Other activities will be going on at this time and book bags will be handed out for those registering for our Summer Reading Programs which will be held on Tuesdays starting June 9th thru July 7th.

Come Join the Fun!

Book Discussion

Wed. June 24th @ Noon or 6:00 p.m.



"Tallgrass"

by Sandra Dallas.

A family finds life turned upside down when the government operates a Japanese internment camp in their small Colorado town during World War II.



Nebraska Humanities Council speaker, Winfried Delle, will present the program **Nebraska Folklore, Folk-lies, Feklore On Thursday June 18th at 6:30**

A variety of visuals will be used to illustrate a wide range of popular Nebraska folklore and show how folklore has been utilized for people's bene-

fit and sometimes to their detriment. Included are stories and songs about weather, fertility, animals and people, as well as a 19th-century stock scandal that began as a rumor and grew to monstrous proportions.

This family night program will appeal to all ages.



Movie Day

Saturday June 27th @ 1:30

Join us at the library for the newly released movie

"Inkheart"

Rated PG run time: 106 minutes.



June Activities	
Instrument Petting Zoo	June 2nd 10-12
Summer Reading Programs	Tuesdays June 9th –July 7th
Nebraska Folklore Speaker	Thursday June 18th @ 6:30
"Tallgrass" Book discussion	Wednesday June 24th @ noon or 6
Movie Day "Inkheart"	Saturday June 27th @ 1:30

Lied Randolph Public Library
 109 N. Douglas
 Box 307
 Randolph, NE 68771
 phone: 402-337-0046
 librarian@rlibrary.org
 www.rlibrary.org



The mission of the Randolph Economic Development Group is to promote the attraction, retention, and expansion of businesses and to enhance the quality of life in Randolph and Cedar County.

REMINDER

If you have an article or calendar event that you would like to have in the newsletter, please let me know or drop it off at the City Office. This can also include a follow-up article on an event that was held. Thank you.

Phone: 402-337-0142

Email: topcity@cablone.net

We're on the Web!

www.ci.randolph.ne.us

New Park Equipment Coming Soon

When I started in this position almost a year ago, it was brought to my attention that the park was in need of new playground equipment. Although there was a nice set of equipment already there, there was also some other equipment that needed to be replaced. With this in mind, raising funds for the project was begun. A year later the funds are in place and the equipment is ordered. It is hoped that the new equipment will be in by the end of June. I will have more on this in the July newsletter. Thank you to all who donated to the fund for the park equipment. I know many children are going to be very happy.

Randolph, A Great Place to Bee!



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