

Article

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Web Tip: Why Do I Need a Web Site?

My Dad is somewhat of a self proclaimed master carpenter. He has been at it for 30 years and has done everything from building houses to building furniture. He has pretty much worked for the same contractor for most of his career, except for the last few years. He finally decided to step out on his own and work for himself, and he loves it. He loves being his own boss and making the decisions. He loves estimating jobs and meeting people. He loves working by himself and not relying on anyone else. But not everything is bliss. He dislikes paperwork and keeping track of time. And with all the jobs he has done it is becoming increasingly difficult to keep up with his portfolio. He takes pictures of all his projects when completed to show off to potential clients. It is a cumbersome job to make copies of this information and to distribute it every time someone wants it. I have said to him numerous times, "Dad, you need a web site". To which he responds, "What do I need a web site for?" Well, for starters he could have all of his project pictures where someone can easily see them anytime they want. He could have a form that potential clients could fill out and email to him for a quotation instead of playing his favorite game for days – phone tag. In a nutshell, he could save a ton of time. And I can guarantee you, if he were to do a search on the internet for a carpenter in his area he would find some of his competition have web sites, and that could mean lost business.

I guess the point I am trying to make is anybody who has a business, no matter how small, can benefit from having a web site. If you think about the redundant tasks we perform everyday, such as frequently asked questions, directions to your office, or a brochure – any of these features can be made available on a web site with little difficulty. It's like having a 24/7 receptionist to take care of customer inquiries.

And it doesn't need to be elaborate or expensive, as long as it has the information your customer needs. In fact, to demonstrate how cheaply we can have a site, you probably have free space available to you right now through your Internet Service Provider, or ISP. Usually, when you sign up for an internet account, your ISP will give you 5 or 10 megabytes of free web space to use on their server. You can even find places on the internet that give away free web site templates - all you need to do is add the content. Just go to your favorite search engine (I like www.google.com) and type in " free web site templates". This is a great place to start if you want to get your feet wet, or you can spend about \$20.00 per month and get a full blown site with your own domain name, e-commerce, and all the tools to build a professional web site with no programming knowledge at all. And if you really don't have the time to put into building a web site you can always hire a programmer to do it for you. But to be completely honest, you really need to learn how to do this yourself. You aren't going to want to hire a programmer every time you make a change, or add something to your site. You will go broke.

OK so I've made my case, but Dad still doesn't have a web site. And you know he probably won't until he either gets tired of copying his portfolio or until he surfs in www.google.com and finds his competition.