

# THE SEVEN MOST IMPORTANT THINGS ABOUT AN ACCOUNTING FIRM WEB SITE

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According to The CPA Technology Advisor's 2008 poll, 57 percent of accounting firms have a web site. Said another way, 43 percent of accounting firms do not have a web site. Scary in today's day and age that 43 percent of accounting firms do not have a web site.

Overall, the quality of web sites in the marketplace has improved dramatically as mid-sized firms have really gotten on board and made sizeable investments over the past two years. The following seven items highlight common mistakes accounting firm web sites make.

## **1. Your web site can not be found on the search engines.**

The success of every web site revolves around being found on the search engines. In other words, your web site needs to be towards the top of the search engines in order to generate new business for your practice. Otherwise, it's just another web site that is lost in space, which is useless. The vast majority of accounting web sites visited were not search engine optimized, which means they are brochureware with very little value.

## **2. Your phone number is not on every page.**

It is humorous when accounting firm web sites make it difficult for the prospect to find the phone number. In most cases, the phone number is either in tiny print or it is difficult to find the "contact us" page, which is where most web designers bury the phone number. For most individuals over the age of 40, it is difficult to read tiny print. Make it easy for prospects by putting the phone number on every page, make it large enough and note who to ask for (i.e. Call us at XXX-phone number and ask for Jeff).

## **3. Ensure that the content is well written and in plain English.**

The Internet is an information-driven medium. Make it easy for web site visitors to determine if the firm is perfect for them. Avoid using accounting jargon as most small business owners have no idea what reviews, compilations and write-up services entail.

## **4. The graphic design, colors and photography need to flow.**

Photography can quickly create an impression and help prospects determine if the web site is worth reading further. In addition, place pictures of firm personnel on the "about us" page so prospects know what staff looks like.

## **5. Make the content easy to scan.**

Web site content is very different than print content. On the Internet, visitors tend to scan pages rather than read them. As a result, it is important to use bulleted lists, highlighted keywords and short paragraphs. Do not take a firm brochure and expect this content will work on a web site.

## **6. Answer your prospects questions.**

Prospects using the Internet to locate an accounting firm are highly goal-oriented. They visit web sites because they are searching for a solution. Help them determine if the firm can address their needs.

## **7. Web site navigation should be dummy proof.**

Most web site visitors are impatient and very good at hitting the back button. Therefore, web site navigation must be easy and intuitive. Visitors should be able to navigate to any page on the web site in less than three clicks. Do not assume that web site traffic will enter your site from the home page; search engines drive traffic to specific pages within the web site. In other words, poor navigation on the interior pages means prospects are being sent to a dead end page.

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