

Website woes

 By [Grant Bushby](#)

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Having recently returned to South Africa from a 15 year tenure in London, I am constantly amazed at the number of small, local businesses that don't have their own websites.

I have spent a lot of time on the internet recently, looking for various marketing, PR and eventing companies, to find that the only thing that often exists is a link to a Facebook page or, at the very best, LinkedIn.



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Simpler is better

Now if I want to get hold of someone to request a service or a product, I don't want to have to "friend" them first or go through the rigmarole of linking in with them to get their contact details. I want a website, no matter how simple, that has a contact page with a cell number and email address. What I don't want is a box telling me to provide my details and a message with the promise that someone will get back to me. Often, I've waited days for a reply to my email by which stage the deadline for what I am looking for has long passed.

I have no vested interests in creating websites and I am certainly no expert in this medium, but during my years in the UK, websites became increasingly important to companies large, medium and small, to the point where even individuals, sole ownership businesses and freelancers have now developed their own sites.

It's the window display to your business, where people searching for a service can find out more about what you do, how you do it, your list of clients, testimonials and your contact details. Any business that does not have a website is missing out on one of the most powerful marketing tools available to them. A simple, effective website can also give the impression that a company is bigger and more successful than it may actually be, which is why it is even more important for smaller businesses to have one as it levels the playing field.

Must be perfect

And just like your CV, you have to ensure your website is perfect. No spelling errors, grammatical mistakes, out-of-date information and low resolution images whatsoever. I am gobsmacked by the small, but glaring errors I have come across in the last couple of days. One PR company that has some key clients has as one of their services "Content Distirbution" (sic). The copy under the headline goes on to say that the customer's requirements "will be carfeted (sic) to ensure it meets media standards...." Even I had to read that one twice to understand the correct word.

Another PR agency that prides itself on having been in the business for 15 years, has this to say about their service on their home page, "We pride ourselves in going the extra mile for our clients and our personal commitment is once (sic) of excellence".

Would you trust a PR company to send out press releases on your behalf if they can't even get the spelling on their own website right? Does any of the staff in either of these companies ever look at their own website?

So why do so many small companies not have websites? Are they just not bothered and instead rely on established contacts and word-of-mouth? Just not interested in attracting new business (hard to believe), or is it because they believe websites are the domain of techno nerds and too costly?

Learning yourself

In truth a website can be built for very little money and with a little bit of self-help. One of my freelance jobs in London was to update and revamp a small company's website. They didn't have the budget to hire a large outfit, and I was desperate for the cash, so told them I could do it for a tenth of the fee, even though I had no experience in website design and build whatsoever.

Armed with an Idiots Guide to Websites and a lot of Googling, I not only did the job for them to their satisfaction, but actually found out that I rather enjoyed doing it.

And remember, you don't need a huge website with multiple pages and masses of information, just a simple one that tells people about your company and your products and how to get in touch with you will suffice.

ABOUT GRANT BUSHBY

Grant Bushby has been in the marketing and PR business for over 25 years. After graduating from Rhodes University, Grahamstown, with a Bachelor of Journalism degree, he worked at the SABC for a number of years, starting off as a news writer for (then) Radio 5 and Radio Highveld. Grant recently returned to South Africa and is in the throes of setting up his own Marketing & PR venture in partnership with an award-winning journalist.

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