

How Well-Known IS Your Business – Really?

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Would you be astonished? Probably!

You'd probably be surprised at the answers if you investigated the popularity of your business on the Internet. "I don't have a website," you say. "My website's old. I haven't done anything with it in years," you say. "I only advertise in the newspaper," you say. "I only advertise on TV," you say.

That's what we're told on a regular basis, yet many of the business owners that we come in contact with are located online. You see, the Internet is not just a bunch of Search Engines anymore. It's a vast conglomerate of directories, advertising venues, and listings of any sort that you could imagine.

For starters, there's Yahoo! Local directory listings. If any of your patrons visited your place of business and thought you delivered great service – or poor service, for that matter – and those patrons happened to be Internet savvy, they might have placed a review of your business in Yahoo! Local's directory. And the same instance could have happened with MerchantCircle.com. What about YellowPages.com? If you advertise in the Yellow Book phone directory, your chances are good for being listed on their directory as well.

So now let's examine the question again: Just how well-known is your business? Well, let's look and see.

Go to Yahoo!Local by typing in <http://local.yahoo.com/> in your Internet browser's address bar. Now, type in your business type and zipcode in the blank spaces of the form provided for searching. Now search.

Does your business show up in the search results? Now do the same thing for MerchantCircle.com (just type that in your browser's address bar) and YellowPages.com.

If you found your business listed – even in one of these directories – you're now more popular than you thought you were 5 minutes ago.

So What's the Big Deal?

So now you know your popularity has spread. What do you do with this information? Well, you could just say "That's nice!" and forget about it. But there's a reason for these online listings. Actually, there are several reasons for these online directories:

- 1.) They've been put into place for people who like to go online to shop, explore their community and compare businesses. That's right! They use it to compare you to your competition. And, make no bones about it, many people are online doing exactly these things everyday. It's the latest advertising craze!
- 2.) People traveling are not in the habit of carrying around cumbersome phone books. Most, however, have a cell phone, a hand-held PC (sometimes called a Palmtop), or the good ol', been-on-the-market-for-years, wireless laptop. With these devices, they can browse the cities or towns close to the area they're in at the moment, find a restaurant, stop for lunch or dinner, go shopping, catch a movie, find a motel to sleep in and be back on the road the next morning with their trusty technological side-kick, only to do it all over again. Remember these listings allow patrons to submit reviews about your business,

your services, products and customer relations. What they say can make – or break – you on the Internet.

- 3.) These directories give business owners, just like you, a place to advertise. Let's face it, successful business owners understand the power of advertising. No one is going to know you're there if you don't put out an advertisement or two. What does business owners' advertising do for these directories? It makes them popular, creating a win-win situation for you – the business owner, them – the directory, and those who use the directories for whatever reasons.

Now the really big deal for you in this online arena is that these directories are just that: directories. They're no different than the local phone book except for one thing: they allow you to link to your business website. And if you don't have one, that's perfectly alright. The person searching the directory – the surfer looking for somewhere to eat, a place to stay for the night, or product pricing/shopping will look for a business in your market that has a website. The surfer will browse your competition's information, view their products and services, check out their customer relations and then, if they like what they see, they'll do business with them – all because your competitor made it perfectly clear that they were there to serve their patrons by making their information available online.

To sum it up, it could be a very BIG deal! You've lost sales, revenues, operating expense money – all because your competitor has a website and you don't. Or, maybe your site is outdated and doesn't hold the interest of the surfer. What's the difference in income? How hard could you be affected?

No Problem! You'll Make Up The Difference!

Or will you? As technology grows, can you really handle the difference? How can you possibly compete when your advertisement isn't as informative, as hard-hitting, as in-your-face as your competitors'?

I read somewhere years ago that, if you didn't have a website by the year 2005, you wouldn't be able to stay in business. While that obviously didn't happen – you're still in business – the message is clear. You have to go with the most popular advertising media to stay in business. And the Internet gains popularity daily as online accessibility becomes more wide-spread.

Many decades ago, television became the more popular method for advertising. Prior to that it was magazines and newspapers. Advertising's been going on for years and the old adage “the squeaky wheel gets the oil” holds up in the market where we live and enjoy the processes and successes of commerce. So... without a website, is your wheel squeaky enough?

Resource Information:

Janet L. Warren is the Chief Web Developer for “You And Me Enterprises” !
Learn to choose the right Web Development company for your Web-projects.
To learn more about getting more from your advertising, Visit our Library!
<http://www.youandmeunlimited.com>