20 TIPS FOR A KICK ASS WEBSITE

1. ADD A PROMINENT EMAIL OPT-IN.

Make certain that you have an email opt-in which is visible on your home page. Be careful not to bury it at the bottom of your site or make the opt-in appear so insignificant that it's easily overlooked. Ideally, your email opt-in should appear "above the fold." Also, if possible, include a checkbox at checkout so that customers can hop on your mailing list with a single click.

2. ALWAYS, ALWAYS LOOK PROFESSIONAL.

Perpetually be on the prowl for:
   a) broken links
   b) outdated information
   c) spelling + grammar errors

3. SIMPLIFY YOUR NAVIGATION.

Site navigation should be simple, intuitive + crystal clear. Never sacrifice clarity for cleverness! Also, limit the user's options to avoid overwhelm + elegantly lead users through your site. Make certain to include a "wholesale" tab in your main site navigation.

4. INCLUDE AN "ABOUT" PAGE.

...and make it damn good. Succinctly share your brand story and include a photo of you + the creation process. This is typically the second-most visited page of any website. Make it count! Include an email opt-in + other calls to action on this page.

5. MAKE YOURSELF AVAILABLE.

Add a link to your contact information to every page of your website. Include multiple contact methods.

6. CAREFULLY SIZE PRODUCT IMAGES.

Nothing drives customers away quite like slowly loading pages. Ensure that your images are sized small enough to enable quick page loading. Also, beware of built-in photo editors which automatically resize images. Those images aren't resized until the full size picture arrives in the visitor's browser, slowing down load times. Edit images to the size you'll ultimately need before uploading.

7. CONSCIENTIOUSLY BRAND YOUR WEBSITE.

The branding of your site should mirror the branding of your product offerings. Choose two primary fonts and a maximum of three primary colors, then stick with them. Your site should never look like a scrapbook of favorite fonts, colors + patterns you've collected throughout the years! Select easy-to-read fonts with a high contrast to your background color. Allow lots of "white space" to declutter the site + allow the reader to rest.

8. BE SMART ABOUT OUTBOUND LINKS.

When embedding hyperlinks, make certain that they open in new windows, eliminating the need for users to crawl backwards in order to revisit your site.

9. ALWAYS UPSELL.

Enable automatic product recommendations. Link together entry-level + upsell products or products within the same family.

10. INCLUDE SOCIAL PROOF.

Enable product reviews. If your e-commerce platform doesn't offer this feature, then be certain to sprinkle in testimonials. Along those same lines, press mentions are powerful social proof. Gather "media chatter" about your brand + feature it on a single, prominent webpage.

11. SIMPLIFY THE CHECKOUT PROCESS.

a) If you can't keep the entire process on a single screen, add a "progress" bar so that users can understand where they are in the process.

b) Avoid sending customers off-site to complete their payment.

c) Avoid requiring customers to create an account in order to complete checkout.

d) Give users an option to copy the information from their "billing address" to the "shipping address" fields.

e) Provide multiple payment options.

f) Remove links + distractions during checkout.

12. REMOVE ANNOYANCES.

Skip the "auto-play upon entry" feature for music + videos. Avoid Flash, as none of it's compatible with Apple devices.

13. REMOVE DISTRACTIONS.

Minimize outbound links on your homepage. You worked hard to get people here- don't send them away! The latest thinking may seem counterintuitive, but hear me out: the trend now is to omit outbound links to/ icons for your social media platforms. The only marketing platforms you truly own and control are your website + email list. Adding prominent email opt-ins while removing

the opportunity to connect socially (at least from your website) leads those who want to connect straight to your email list, which is the most powerful marketing tool in your arsenal. If you choose to include social media icons- place them in the footer of your website.

14. LINK INTERNALLY.

Link internally as much as possible to increase SEO. When linking, don't use the words "click here." Instead, write text that explains where the user is going + hyperlink it.

15. AVOID STOCK PHOTOGRAPHY LIKE THE PLAGUE.

If you must use it, try to find images at "off the beaten path" stock photography sites or high dollar photo sites to discover images which aren't over-saturated. Never try to Photoshop stock images to make them appear unique to your brand.

16. BLOG REGULARLY.

Attempt to carve out a blog entry at least once per week. Posts don't have to be terribly long! Google loves fresh content (and so do your readers/customers!) and fresh content gives your customers a reason to keep coming back, while automatically boosting your search engine rankings. Bonus points: Have new blog posts automatically feed onto your home page to further boost SEO.

17. CHOOSE SMART IMAGE NAMES.

Name your images appropriately. Always include your brand name + product name to increase SEO.

18. MAKE CERTAIN THAT YOUR SITE IS RESPONSIVE AND/OR THAT YOU HAVE A MOBILE VERSION.

According to a Morgan Stanley report, mobile internet usage will eclipse desktop usage sometime in 2014(!). "Responsive" design means that you have just one site design which automatically adapts to all screen sizes, no matter what device is being used. You can certainly go that route or build a separate version of the site which is automatically displayed for mobile users. Failing to implement either a responsive design or a mobile version will cost you customers while simultaneously crippling your search engine ranking. Yee-ouch- no thanks!

19. INCLUDE SOCIAL MEDIA SHARE ICONS.

Add "share" buttons to both product pages + blog posts to facilitate easy sharing. Include one-click share capabilities for Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Google +.

20. ADD GOOGLE ANALYTICS TO YOUR SITE.

The program is absolutely free and provides key insights into customer behavior, traffic patterns + site referrals. Learn more + put Google Analytics into action.