

Help! My website is a virtual ghost town

Written by Paul Russell
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"My website is useless! I spent loads of money on it, I was promised that it would expose me to the world and bring in loads of new business, and so far it has done nothing but cost me! This internet thing does not work!" This I can well imagine is the echo uttered in frustration and defeat by thousands of business owners across the globe. This may well be the very thing that crosses your mind when you think about your own website. If it is, then keep reading...

You may remember your [web designer](#) telling you things like – *"A website will give you international exposure immediately"*

or

"Your website acts as 24/7 sales rep for your company"

or

"Without a website, none of your clients will take you seriously!"

Now these claims are not so much lies as they are half truths - they never told you the whole story. Let me fill you in on what you've been missing.

Your website can be a highly effective and rewarding business tool, however, you need to understand how the tool works, and the way things work in the medium in which it exists, namely, the internet. A website is an online platform from which many different things can be accomplished:

- It can act as an electronic brochure advertising your products and services.
- It can host a [portfolio](#) or showcase samples of your work.
- It can act as an online shop front from which current clients and new clients can order and pay for your products.
- It can host a central database of information which can be updated by yourself, your employees and even clients.

These are just a couple of the many things that your website could be doing for you. The bottom line is that your website is a tool that is available 24/7 to anyone with internet access across the globe. The key to the success of this tool, is in the answer to this question: **Do the right people know about your website?**

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Your website can be the best on the web, it can have the cleanest, clearest graphics, the smoothest layouts, the most intuitive menu structures, useful and informative content and the most captivating look and feel, yet if the right people do not know of its existence, it is utterly useless, and it will be doing nothing more than costing you money month after month.

The next step is to ask yourself this: Who are the right people? This will be answered simply by asking yourself the question: What do I want my website to do? What is its function? If you have a website purely to serve as a tool to your employees for the sharing of information, then all you have to do is make sure they all know about it, but if you are, as most business owners, wanting your website to act as a marketing tool, then the 'right people' are the thousands of people/businesses out there who need your services/products, but just don't know about you yet!

Most website owners regard their website as a marketing tool, so let's consider some of the misconceptions that you may have regarding this tool and then let's compare it to other marketing tools which business owners often make use of.

Misconception 1 – The moment my website is up and running, everyone in the world can find it and so I'll instantly get new business from it.

Misconception 2 – My website will instantly be found by going to Google and typing in my company's name.

Misconception 3 – Most people will find my website by going to Google and typing in my company's name or one of the services/products I offer.

Misconception 4 – I have paid money on the design of my website, I pay monthly hosting fees, now I'm expecting it to start generating money for me.

Let me just say one thing at this point. Most of these misconceptions are not entirely inaccurate, however, they are lacking in understanding. Let's consider them.

1. This is a total misconception. The bottom line is that once your website is up and running, theoretically everyone in the world can get to your website if they have your web address, but if not, how will they find it? Google certainly does not automatically know your website has been published the day it goes live.

2. This is partly true, but as seen in No1, this does not happen immediately. Unless your website is submitted to Google for indexing, your site will not be discovered by the Google spiders for a couple of weeks or months.

3. Once Google becomes aware of your website, it will index your site and add this information to its massive database, after which your site will start appearing in search results. So at this point, should someone type in your company name, or one of your services/products, your website will appear in the search results. At this point though, you need to ask yourself this: Where does my website show up in the search results? Appearing on page 15 (should you be so lucky) of the results is realistically useless! Most people will get frustrated and give up by page 3. The problem is that if you don't do anything to change this, it certainly won't change by itself.

4. You may be lucky by the odd random person who finds your website and needs what you offer, but in most cases, your website will not generate any new business until you start

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investing in marketing it?

Hang on, you may say, isn't my website one of my marketing tools? Why must I market a marketing tool? Well let's answer this by using some of the other marketing tools businesses make use of, as a comparison. One day you suddenly decide that you are going to launch a special on one of your products and the way you're going to get the word out there is by making use of flyers! So you run off to your designer and tell him what you want. Your designer gets busy and within a day or two magically produces the most fantastic, eye catching flyer you've ever seen. After a final nod of approval the artwork is promptly sent off to the printers to have 5000 copies printed. By the time these are delivered to your doorstep, you have racked up a bill of a couple of thousand bucks on design and print costs. Now if we compare this example to your website at this point, it is the equivalent of having paid for your website to be designed, and having paid for your first year's worth of [web hosting](#). Are your flyers making you money yet? No of course not – they're still sitting on your desk. So the next step is to find a couple of young jobless students who are game to earn a couple of extra bucks by standing at the street corners, handing out your flyers to passing cars. You don't think twice about paying them for their hours of flyer distribution, because that is what it takes to get your name and product out there. Your website is no different. At the point that your website is designed and is published to a web server, it is more or less as useful as that pack of flyers sitting on your desk. What it now needs is a definite [online marketing](#) plan to get it out there, to make it popular, to get it seen!

Without this, a website will most likely never see more than a couple of straggling internet surfers every month. In plain and simple English, it will be a virtual ghost town.

How do you market your website?

The answer to this question is certainly more detailed than I would like to go into at this point in the article, so please come back soon to read my next post which will cover various ways to make your website a success! The important thing at this stage is that you should by now have realized why your website has been less effective than what you had possibly hoped or anticipated. After reading this, you may be feeling even more despondent about your website, but before you give up completely, realize that you are now one step closer to fixing the problem. Recognizing the problem is the first step to being able to fix it and in the next article I will give you **clear and practical ways** to do just this.