

Websites 101

By Kathleen Krucoff © 2010, All Rights Reserved Krucoff Studios, LLC.

Let's face it; a website is a necessary tool in any business' marketing plan. It is your virtual storefront on the web. It conveys your public image. It's open 24/7 so anyone can see it at any time.

Wait a minute, that's pretty powerful! You mean my website represents my public image? Yes, it does and that is why you have to be as deliberate and careful with attention to detail on your website as you are with the products or services you offer.

So what do you want your website to convey about you as an individual or artist, as a company, as a gallery, whatever your modus operandi?

The importance of one's website cannot be underestimated. Take the time to really **think** about what you want your website to do for you.

- How do you plan on using it?
- What do you think a website is going to do for you?
- What are your expectations from your website?
 - Do you expect more business from sales off the website?
 - Do you expect more traffic to come into your physical storefront because they have visited your website?
 - Is it a place where people can find out more about your business or the classes you offer?
 - It is very important to consider what you want your website to do for you.
- Is your website your online storefront where people can come to buy things?
- Or is it an expanded version of your business card and you just want to convey the services/products you provide?
- Do you want to use it as a portfolio to showcase your work when potential clients or galleries express an interest?
- If you are a gallery, do you want to use it as a way to show the variety of art work you have available? Do you want the public to know the artists you represent?
- The **BIG** thing here is **think** about what you want your website to do for you.....

Unlike the movie "Field of Dreams", just because you build it or hire someone to build and maintain it for you, doesn't mean "they" (the customers) will come. As with all aspects of marketing, it requires time and effort on **your** part to inform people that, "I/We have a website". You cannot solely rely on search engines to find you. I'm going to cover some of the things that will help people find you and your website throughout this document.

First, letting people know you have a website can be done in many forms. Print the website address (url) on your business cards. Make sure you include your url in your advertising. Ask other people who have websites to add your site as one of their favorite links on their site. Treat it just like a phone number; it is a way for people to reach you.

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If they like your work or store in person, it's almost a sure thing that they will want to look at your website too. First impressions count; perception becomes reality and it is imperative that your website represents you. Make sure it looks professional. Make sure it conveys what you want about you, your business, and your work. It must have a consistent look and feel.

Ah, but if you give them a business card with your website address, the chances are even better that they will look at your website to see what you have published. That's right, let me state this again, "published" for the world to see. Why do you think it is called the **world** wide web (www)? That is why it is so critical that your website conveys a professional look and feel. Literally, the world can see your website!

Content

Think about the content you want on your site. This is another critical area because your site will only be as good as the information you provide to your web person for publication. Any pictures/images on your website need to be of the highest quality. Great image quality leads to that "wow" factor; poor image quality leads to pixilation and a bad impression. If you don't care about how things look on your site, people will think you don't care about the quality of your work. Again, *perception becomes reality* in people's minds.

Let's talk about roles and responsibilities. Your role is to provide your web designer, or the person who maintains your site, with the information (descriptions, events, dates, images, anything you want on the site). The web designer's/maintainer's role is to come up with the best way to display this content in a pleasing fashion to the visitors that come to your site.

Communication is key here. It's a two way street, in order to keep the content on your website fresh and up to date, you need to supply that information to your web person. As the client, you have to provide updates for publication so the site doesn't become stale. Change out pictures and information every couple of months at a minimum. Your web person cannot make changes unless information is supplied or direction is given to them.

Remember it is *your website* and one of your roles is providing the information you want published on the web to your web designer. They cannot make changes unless you provide the information to them on a regular basis. Please don't assume that the web person has insights into what you are thinking. The two of you share a partnership in creating and maintaining the website.

Keep the content on your website relevant to you, your company, and your work.

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Links (also referred to Hyperlinks)

Links are great things. Their technical name is 'hyperlink'. A link is the address (url) to a website. For example, <http://www.krucoffstudios.com>

Reciprocal links are one of those things that help improve your website's ranking with search engines like Google, Yahoo, Bing, and others. The greater the number of cross links you have between your site and others, the higher your website's popularity ranking among the search engines. The higher your popularity with the search engines as a result of these cross links, the more likely your website will place high in the search results returned when people search for you or the type of work you do.

When you link to someone's website, ask them if they will link back to yours. It's a win win in most cases for both parties. Some people are unwilling to link back to your site. Depending on who they are, you may or may not want to continue your link to their site.

I like to link to other artists and clients websites and most have linked back to mine. I also like to link to some of my favorite supplier's sites however; I cannot reasonably expect them to link back to mine. Some businesses will find that the city where their business resides will be happy to exchange links. Again it is mutually beneficial for a municipality to link to the businesses within their town and vice versa. If you are a member of the Better Business Bureau or the Chamber of Commerce, an exchange of links is a common practice.

If you have a presence in social media sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter or others, link to your website from those sites.

The same holds true if you write a blog, link back to your main website from your blog and make sure your website links to your blog.

Another thing to consider if you have a blog, is that it provides a great opportunity to link to some of your favorite blogs. Contact the authors of your favorite blogs and ask if they will consider linking back to your blog. We call that a link exchange or reciprocal links; it's another mutually beneficial situation for both parties.

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Meta tags and Your Rankings with Search Engines

First, let me state there is no silver bullet or magic elixir that will cause your website to sky rocket to the top of the search engines rankings. However, meta tags, using key words and descriptions can help.

Here's a code snippet that shows what these things are and how I use them on my site:

```
<meta name="Keywords" content="Krucoff Studios, Kathleen Krucoff,
Art Jewelry, Art Glass, Sterling Silver Jewelry, Artist,
Refelections of a Glass Artist, Blogging, Blog, Metalsmith, Web
Design, Web Designer, Fused Glass, Silversmithing, Metalwork,
Stained Glass" />

<meta name="description" content="Kathleen Krucoff creates
uncommon and unique art jewelry and art glass pieces" />
```

One of the things you can do to help your web designer is to supply a list of “Keywords” that *succinctly* describe you and your work. After that, another concise “description” of your company, product, or you is needed because this will be displayed as a description of your website in search engines results.

The keywords help search engines categorize your website so that people can find your site more quickly. The description is the synopsis of what is displayed to people when the search engines return your site from a search. That's why is important to have a brief description that accurately describes who you are or what you do. People are more likely to click on your link from the search results, if it matches what they have searched for.

Conclusion

I would recommend that you periodically consider how you want your website to work for you. Keeping content relevant and up to date is key.