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I started building websites 24 years ago. Back then I was hard pressed to find a customer in 1996. I worked for the first internet cafe in Southern California, called "Cyber Java." I got paid $6 an hour under the table. And after making coffee and zucchini bread, I'd often go door to door up and down Abbot Kinney Boulevard in Venice, California, selling web hosting, and websites to small business owners.
Back then I had to explain what the heck was a website. I had to educate small business owners on the what and the why of a website. A website was useful because a small business owner could use it to save time and money by placing their company information on the world wide web.

Rather than hiring a receptionist to answer questions over the phone or repeating themselves, they could place all information in one place where people could log on and get the info. Despite my sparkly enthusiasm, the small business owner often can fathom or just didn't believe in this growing internet trend. Now fast forward to 2020 with billions of websites abound, I no longer have to explain what a website is. Thank goodness. Now I have to explain how a small business owner can stand out.

In order to bob above the sea of competitors, you just don't need a website that you can drum up on GoDaddy or Squarespace. You need to have an incredibly intuitive and branded website that keeps customers engaged and coming back for more.
A branded website, not only as beautifully designed, it also has mythical unseen, intangible quality. Every single, super successful and highly converting revenue building website has one thing in common. It has an intuitive, seamless user experience.
 A flawless web experience is frictionless.

The content is held magically by invisible threads, a framework that holds everything effortlessly together. To get more customers, you need to keep your visitor's attention. If they're stumbling through your site, they're just one click away from the end exit. So how do you do that? How do you keep your visitors and potential clients from clicking off your site?

Well, the first thing you need to do is to master the site map. Sitemaps are the most important information design tool used on a website. Site maps show visitors the overall structure and hierarchy of a website. There are three different types of sitemaps. The first type of site map is one that is used during the planning of a website by a user interface designer.

The second type of site map is a menu listing based on a primary, secondary and tertiary hierarchy, which are seen by your visitors. The third type of site map is a structured listing, visible to only web crawlers or robots like Google. Site maps are crucial because they're used as a first step in laying out the information architecture of a website.

Just like a home needs a solid blueprint detailing the number of bedrooms and bathrooms, a site map provides the framework upon which to start building your new site. Unlike a home, which can have just a limited number of rooms, a site can have unlimited pages, but just because you have unlimited pages, doesn't mean that you have unlimited links on your menu or site map.

Our best practice based on over 20 years of experience is to limit your main navigation to seven to nine main navigation links. For the rest of this episode, we're going to be focusing on the second type of site map that I mentioned earlier. The one that's visible to your visitors.The site map or menu are made up of primary and secondary links—sometimes tertiary links.
Primary menu links are the links that show up on the website, usually on the horizontal navigation line, secondary links or links that are necessary with, or underneath the primary links.

When these secondary links drop down, along with a tertiary link, we call that element a mega menu. Main menu navigation should always link to other web pages. You should never, for example, directly link to one of your main navigation links to a PDF or video.

Why? Well because visitors have already been taught by visiting other websites that once you click on a link, you'll be taken to a page when you don't follow the conventional rules, it would be like creating a door that leads to a brick wall. It's confusing and makes visitors uncomfortable. Another element we add in our websites is something called redundant links.

Having redundant links or content are perfectly fine to implement on your website. That's why we encourage clients to put links in the menu and also on the functional footer at the bottom of the site, visitors, don't all navigate these websites in the same way.They may jump to the bottom of your website, or they may come in from a landing page or navigate your menu literally from left to right. So having links in various places helps with the overall navigability of a site. Another site map best practice is to list the most important links from left to right.

 We also recommend having the contact link at the last link of a primary menu. The contact link is one of the most sought out links by potential clients and returning visitors. The biggest mistake I see on sites is also not having a sticky navigation bar. A fixed navigation bar on your website can help users get around much quicker and also helps your logo and branding keep front and center.

This element alone can drastically enhance the user experience, especially for websites that have a lot of scrolling. Normally visitors need to scroll all the way back to the top of a website to get back to the main navigation. So having a back to top element also helps make this journey effortless earlier.I mentioned a functional footer, so what exactly is a functional footer? The functional footer of your site is a valuable element at a website. There's a place at the bottom of your site. The functional footer can serve a valuable purpose by encouraging users to interact and browse through your most important links before exiting out.

Having an interactive and excellent footer will increase page views and help promote your site and brand. It's important to keep the footer organized so that the users can find information quickly. We recommend placing these functional footer links in columns. Each of these columns should be organized in a way that allows visitors to understand quickly how to navigate your site.

For example, you may want to have a connect column where you list out how visitors can engage with you. Under the connect column, you may want to include links such as contact, book a call or your social media links. A functional footer is a great way to add dynamism into your site while still offering those who are nearing the end of your page content to get more involved with your company. The footer is the best place to place links such as terms of service, privacy policy, and copyright. Another way to make your site intuitive is to have several calls to action. What's a call to action? A call to action or CTA refers to any link or module designed to prompt a rapid response. A CTA most often refers to the use of words or phrases that make visitors do something. It could be to download a chapter of your book.

Exchange an email address or respond to a live chat. Another incredibly useful element that we'd like to include in our sites is something that we call a sticky button. A sticky button is a simple button that floats or sticks to the side of your site as your visitor scrolls. On our Citrus Studio's website, for example, we have a sticky button that also serves as a call to action or CTA.

The work with us button on the right leads to a simple page, with a link to a form.
I could go on and on, but I'll just leave it here for now.

As a small business owner, it's important for you to utilize these best practices, so you can make your website go a long way. Your website can help catapult your company into high performance. A dynamic website gives information to your clients while you're busy doing your core work. It can also make money for you while you sleep.

Make sure that you spend the time to create a great site map, functional footer, call to actions, and watch your revenue grow. If you need help with a website audit, hit me up. I'll give you my opinion on your website for free, limited to one hour per company. And also don't forget to subscribe to our newsletter for more how- tos.

Have a great day.