

MARKETING TIP

Extra Mile Marketing | Best Practice

December 2019

9 Questions to Ask Your Website Developer



By Abbie Vancil, Account Supervisor, Extra Mile Marketing

Have you looked under the hood of your website lately?

A recent client of ours asked us to do just that. Their website wasn't getting any traffic, despite having all the cosmetic touches that help keep visitors around for longer: well-organized content, compelling imagery, and even a few animated features. But before visitors stick around, they have to show up! So when I took a closer look, the diagnosis was clear. She had bought a lemon.



The code was sloppy: over 50 JavaScript files, 20 CSS files, and an infestation of bugs. The website sent incorrect information about the company to Google and Bing, so they weren't showing up in search. And there was no clear path for visitors to actually enlist their services.

The "low-cost" website their old agency built was actually *losing* them business.

It's a story we see all too often. And it's a shame, because we're in the second decade of the new millennium and businesses still use websites that belong in the 90s. So before you engage an agency to create or refresh your website, be sure they answer these questions about the three core competencies—storytelling, search engine optimization, and customer experience—that it takes to build a #2020ready website.

CONTACT US



RECENT POSTS

4 Lead Gen Tactics for B2B Success

The Rise of Influencer Marketing

What's New in Partner Marketing?

The Experimental Mindset: Turn Analytics into Strategy

Add Oomph to Your Office 365 Landing Page

Building Brand Loyalty: Digital Marketing or Live Events?

STATS & FACTS

80% of the US population not only owns a mobile phone, but **sleeps with one**.

60% of clicks go to the **top three websites** in search engine results.

Content marketing **costs 62% less** than traditional marketing and generates about **3 times as many leads**.

Competency #1: Storytelling

An elegant design can capture your audience's attention, but strong content will keep it. Choose a partner who understands what you do, how you do it, and why your audience should listen.

What expertise does your team have in our industry?

It takes a very special agency to be able to work in the tech industry one day, and agriculture the next. You want to be sure the people writing your content have a clear understanding of not only your product, but also the people who are likely to purchase it. If your website doesn't express expertise in your industry, then your marketing spend is actually working against you.

Can you share some examples of content you've written?

Never be afraid to ask for prior work. Even if they're familiar with your industry, they may not have a good idea of what the key decision makers you're targeting need to hear to make a purchase.

What will be your approach for creating content for our site?

Content must always be the starting point. You wouldn't design a house without knowing the materials you're working with and the number of rooms you need. Content should inform how you design the navigation and visuals, how you'll move prospects along the customer journey, and even how you're going to drive traffic through search.



Competency #2: Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

It's a buzzword you're likely sick of, but it's also what low-cost website builders are most likely to ignore. Building a website without a clear and well-executed SEO strategy is like building your headquarters without any roads or public transportation leading to it. People are searching for the products and services you offer, and they have money to spend! A proper SEO strategy places you right where you need to be to get their business.

What does your team do to stay current with SEO?

Google and Bing change their algorithms regularly, so SEO from 2018 won't help you show up first in 2020. Ensure your agency is current on how factors like load speed, mobile responsiveness, backlinking, content, clean code, and meta data affect your search ranking.

Will we be able to easily make updates to our content after the site goes live?

Industry moves at the speed of light, and you've likely updated your offerings and messaging from two years ago. Maybe you just won an award you want to showcase, or want to start up your company blog again. Can you easily go back and make these changes once your agency has delivered



your site? A good Content Management System (CMS) will enable you to do just that, reducing your reliance on expensive developers to make simple content updates every month.

How will we be able to track how our site performs for different search engine queries?

SEO is a highly dynamic marketing strategy. It's all about testing what works and what doesn't, then retesting every few months. Ask your agency if they can build in analytics tools that help you track performance of different pages, calls-to-action, and keywords. You don't want to be locked into anything that can't evolve as fast as search engines do.

Competency #3: Customer Experience

So you've brought your audience to your site with SEO and kept them there with a winning content strategy. Now it's time to convert them with a fun and intuitive customer experience. Find an agency that understands the journey your audience takes before making a purchase, and be sure they know how to build a site that guides them to take action.

What is your strategy for leading website visitors to purchase?

We see this all too often: a beautiful site, expensive animation, and zero—absolutely zero—calls to action. Whether you want to fill visitors' virtual shopping carts, prompt them to call a sales representative, or simply want them to read your latest eBook, the entire website should be designed to compel your visitors to take a desired action.

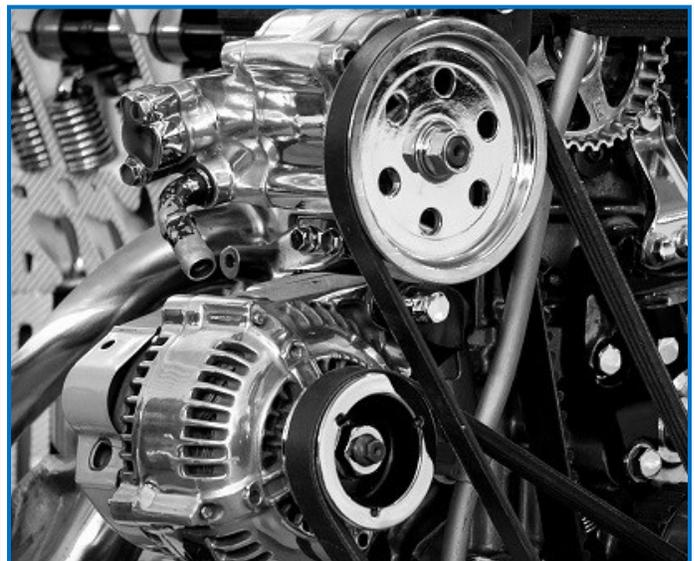
Does your team ensure that the site is optimized for mobile?

80% of the US population not only owns a mobile phone, but sleeps with one.¹ So if your website doesn't look as good on a phone as it does on a desktop, you may as well be selling dial-up internet. Customer experience is as much about leaving visitors with a positive view of your brand as it is about leading them to a desired course of action. A streamlined mobile experience will do just that.

How many different pages do you recommend we build?

You want to show off everything about your company on your website, right? Just be careful, because too many pages can end up burying your most important message and confuse visitors. We recommend following the three-click rule: if you can't reach any page on your website within three clicks from the home page, your navigation needs fixing.

So if your website isn't performing as you expected, ask our team at EMM to take a look under the hood. And next time you decide to refresh your content or completely rebuild your site, consider asking your agency these 9 questions. The true cost of building an inexpensive website is greater than you may think.



¹ Buhr Sarah. "Don't keep cell phones next to your body, California Health Department warns." Tech Crunch, 2017.

