

# Customers use web for basic reconnaissance

■ *Editor's Note: Christine Chubenko's website advice is a new monthly feature in Building Your Business. E-mail questions to christine@whatwebsweweave.com.*



WEB COACH  
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Most business owners know the web holds answers for just about every conceivable question they may have regarding owning and maintaining a website. The question that isn't as easily answered: How does one know what they don't know?

The holes left after reading an article summarizing web tips and information are the holes into which many business owners fall because they weren't aware that preliminary steps had to be taken before implementing the information.

Further, as a web developer, it is easy for me to forget that areas of web development that may be routine to me are foreign to a client. It is my hope that I can become a resource for website owners who have questions but are not sure

where to get the answers.

To facilitate this, I feel a question and answer format will be most useful for those interested in owning and maintaining a website.

For my maiden voyage, I've asked Stella Woitulewicz of Info-to-Action Coaching ([www.info-to-action.com](http://www.info-to-action.com)) to supply me with questions she has about developing and maintaining a website.

**Why should I invest time and money in developing a website? I get all my business from word of mouth.**

**A.** The most important reason for

having a web presence is that it allows you to play on the same global field. These days, having a URL (web address) is as commonplace as having a business phone number.

Most people use the web to do their reconnaissance before they make contact with a business. Even if they have every intention of entering your brick-and-mortar store, they want to scope you out first.

A URL also is a validation tool; your customers expect you to be on the web. Someone may first hear of you by "word of mouth" and, next, they are most likely checking out your website. Not having a website can change their perception of your company.

**I'm thinking of hiring a web designer. What qualities and experiences should I look for?**

**A.** One of the very first things I would do is go to their website, look at their portfolio and ask yourself these questions: Do you like what you see? Are testimo-

nials posted for you to read? Can you contact previous clients to get their feedback? (Very valuable!) Is there a company history or bio that gives you important information about their experience in web development?

If all the above points have passed your inspection, make sure you feel you have clear communication with your developer.

I would not get hung up on whether they've worked with a business similar to yours; that shouldn't matter because you are supplying them with the content. Instead, focus on the ease of communication because in any project, communication is key.

If you encounter a web developer who does not post a portfolio, you should wonder why. You also should be careful of those who "build websites on the side" or "as a hobby." They may not be able to make your business their focus; they also may not have the experience and training under their belt to bring your ideas to fruition.