

The logo for ckarma, featuring the word 'ckarma' in a lowercase, white, sans-serif font. The 'c' and 'k' are connected, and the 'a' has a unique shape. The background of the entire page is a composite image: a dark blue and green aurora borealis in the sky, a network of black dots connected by thin lines (resembling a molecular or data network) overlaid on the sky, and a rugged, snow-capped mountain peak in the foreground.

MARKETING

for a better world

Is your website a brochure,
or an online power tool?

Web Design for An Online World

Four questions that tell you if your website is helping or hurting your business.

This article is written for small to medium businesses.

Everything is online.

As the world adjusts to work, shop, learn, play while staying home, the shift that was already midstream, has accelerated at a breakneck pace.

Everyone is online. Every business (almost) is online. We shop, socialize, decide what to eat, visit the doctor and attend classes online. Our family connections, news, work, games

and classes are there. Adapting to the online reality is critical for the survival of businesses and organizations.

Some will adapt well, and for others, it is going to be rough.

Adapt or Die

In his 1859 "Origin of Species," Charles Darwin makes the case that the ability to adapt and adjust is the most critical factor for survival.

This is as relevant today as it was way back when the internet crushed brick and mortar and streaming obliterated CDs and DVDs.

“

It is not the most intellectual of the species that survives; it is not the strongest that survives; but the species that survives is the one that is able to best adapt and adjust to the changing environment in which it finds itself.”

- Charles Darwin



75% of B2B buyers say that digital website content significantly impacts their buying decisions

**Source: ThinkwithGooglestats*

Is your website your company's best 24-hour salesperson?

In this new reality, we make buying decisions through online research long before we contact a company offline about products and services. We don't walk in to dine or shop the way we used to, and that is not going to change. The same is true for business to business.

Your website and online profile is now your 24-hour salesperson. If it is not responsive, looks like it was created in 2008, or hasn't been updated lately, it is working against you.

When your website doesn't match who you are, and what you are selling, there is a constant battle to unravel misconceptions and convince prospects you are better than what your website shows.

B2B sales are shifting online

Historically, B2B sales in many industries happened in person. Investing in trade shows and travel for sales meetings often took priority over spending on website design and content. Constantly on the road, sales reps relied on equipment demonstrations and visits with

engineers and project managers in the field. Enter coronavirus and sales had to shift online overnight. Webinars replaced face to face.

Training sessions and demonstrations are reduced to video. Without in person presentations and field visits, digital website content is even more important in the decision making process for B2B buyers.

62% of B2B buyers say they can finalize their purchase selection criteria based on a website's digital content alone.

**Source: ThinkwithGooglestats*



Can you afford not to dedicate resources to upgrade your website to be an effective sales tool?

An effective website sets an instant perception and leaves a lasting impression about what it is like to do business with your firm. It should be a power tool that's always available, whenever and wherever your prospects are. Prospects who check out your site should be able to get their questions answered, learn why you are better and move along the sales process at their own pace.

A weak or outdated website creates negative perceptions that your sales team will have to work to overcome.

These four questions will help you determine if your website needs an upgrade.

- 01 Is your website responsive, aka mobile friendly? Does it adapt automatically to the size of the viewers' screen?
- 02 Does your website reflect an accurate, and inspirational image of your company and brand?
- 03 Does your site immediately answer the visitor's basic questions with current, easy to read content?
- 04 Are you utilizing multiple ways to engage and attract leads from your website, as in blogs, white papers or social media?

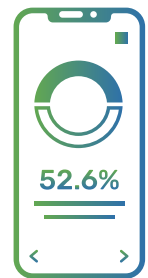
Is your website responsive, aka mobile friendly?

On a desktop, large monitor, phone, or a tablet, a responsive site automatically adjusts itself. The graphics, images and content adapt in size and interface so that users can find what they are looking for no matter what device they are using. Instead of designing multiple websites for different screen sizes, when we design a website using Squarespace, the content scales up or down automatically to match the device it's being viewed on. Images adjust from small and stacked on a phone up to the size of a large monitor.

Look at your website on your smartphone.

52.6% of all global website traffic is from a mobile phone

**Source: Statista*



A responsive site that is frequently updated is the single most way to improve your website's usability. Google is penalizing sites that aren't optimized for mobile devices, making the need for responsiveness even more crucial. If a website is not responsive, it will be kicked to a lower ranking in google searches.

Does your website reflect an accurate, inspirational image of your company and brand?

And speed matters. You have about one second. If a site has not loaded or is difficult to read on a smartphone, users will leave, according to Google's Think Insights on mobile.

If a user lands on your website using a mobile device and is frustrated or doesn't see what they are looking for, there's a 61% chance they will leave immediately and go to another website (most likely a competitor).

An effective website instantly addresses who you are, what you do, and how to make contact.

The first glance of your website is a mirror into users' instant impression of your company or organization.



Since 85% of B2B customers search the web before making a purchase decision, your website is their first impression

**Source: Pew Research*

Your website is most likely to be the "first impression" of your company and offerings.

Is there a high quality banner image or graphic and headline that rapidly communicates what you do? What does the user see in the first 2-3 seconds of looking? Are they high quality images with a consistent look and feel? Do they serve a purpose?

Does your website project an overall consistent image that makes you and your employees feel proud? Positive first impressions lead to higher satisfaction.

The initial impression that a user gets from your site can have a priming effect on how they perceive future interactions with your business. Research shows that positive priming can boost user satisfaction and, as you might expect, negative first impressions put a significant drag on user satisfaction.

The look and feel of your website are the primary drivers of first impressions.

The quality of a website leads to immediate judgements about a company and products. Outdated digital content translates to out of date products or unresponsive customer service.

User experience matters. "Maybe they just don't care enough to invest in a great website."

Ask for some honest opinions from at least a couple folks under 25 and over 55. What is the first impression they get from reviewing your website? Where do their eyes focus? Do the main images and text create an aspirational vision of what the organization does? What message does it say to visitors who don't know much about the company? Is it easy to find contact information, navigation and links from a phone or PC?

A well designed, inspirational website goes far towards instilling trust in your business.

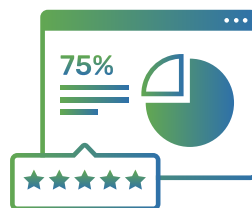
If the first impression does not clearly communicate and set an aspirational vision, can you afford the consequences of a website that leaves a lackluster, or negative perception?

Every business should have a website that is a 24 hour power sales tool.

Great design and clear communications are power tools to help you improve your triple bottom line: a positive impact for people, planet & profit.

75% of users admit to making judgments about a company's credibility based on their website design

**Source: Stanford University*



Does your site immediately answer the visitor's basic questions with current, easy to read content?

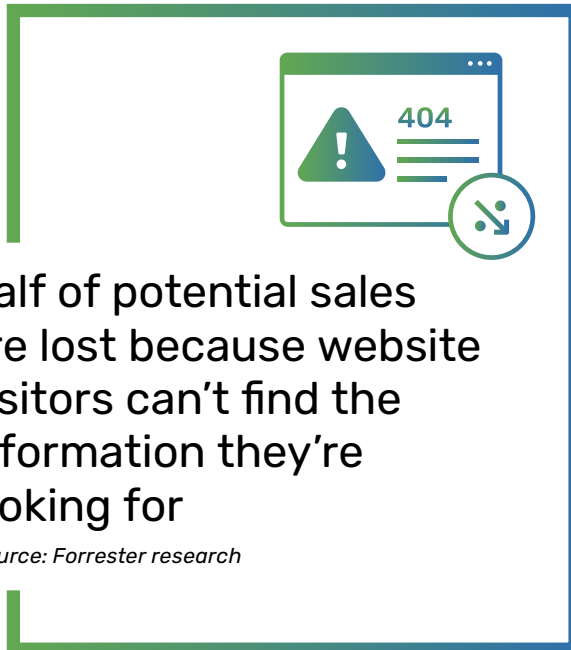
Your website can be an online power tool.

We make immediate judgments about a company and what it does based on the quality of their website. The look and feel of a website are the primary drivers of those all important first impressions.

Our expectations for websites to communicate accurate information has increased ten fold. No longer do we assume a business is operating as before. As the country gradually reopens or closes in the phases of the pandemic, I check websites and google listings before I go to see if a restaurant or shop is open for eat in or take out only. We want to see the nenu, and do they have outdoor seating? We expect informaion to be up to date and to include safety protocols. When the information online has not been updated about operating during coronavirus, Our first thought is to assume they are no longer in business.

When visitors come to your B2B website, at any time of day or night, they are looking for information to take action. Perhaps they are doing research and come to your site to learn. Or they want to get started with a quote. Maybe it's a returning customer who wants to place an order and are looking for contact information. The bottom line is:

Your website must have accurate, recently updated information that is accessible 24 hours a day.



Half of potential sales are lost because website visitors can't find the information they're looking for

**Source: Forrester research*

Visitors expect immediate gratification. You have about three seconds to answer three questions before the visitor abandons your site.

- 01 What product(s) or services do you uniquely offer?
- 02 Who are you, and are you credible?
- 03 What's the next step and contact information?

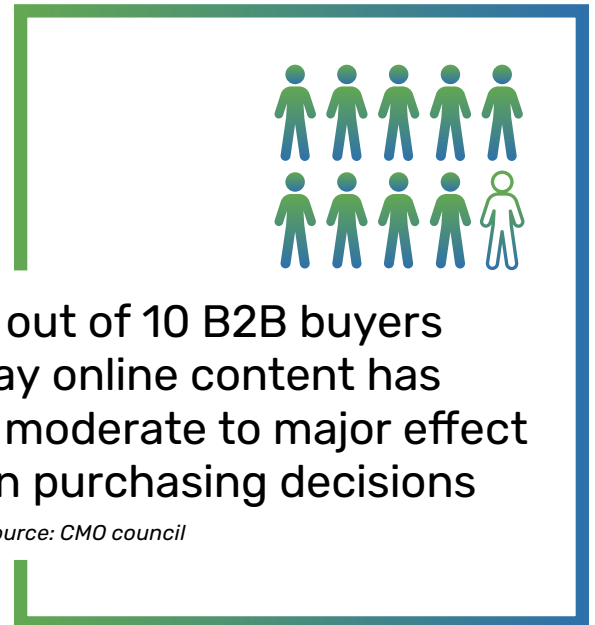
What products/services do you offer?

When a visitor sees the main headline and the banner image on the home page, it should immediately communicate your USP (unique selling point.) The USP is a statement that quickly communicates what your company does best. The banner (top) image or video

visualizes what you do best with a headline that gets right to the point. It states what you do and why you are the best choice.

Stating the products and services is not enough. The messaging throughout the site needs to be tailored to your target audience and speak to what is important to the decision maker. Depending on the business and industry, the key message should focus on the results, cost, or benefits such as peace of mind, more time or improved infrastructure. Whether the payoff is improved quality of life, environmental impact, safety or savings, it has to resonate with your specific customers.

The content of your website impacts purchasing decisions.



9 out of 10 B2B buyers say online content has a moderate to major effect on purchasing decisions

**Source: CMO council*

Great web design integrates informative content, video, and powerful images on your Homepage. This means clear visuals and content that says what you do, why they should choose you and how to take the next step.

Presentation Matters

By providing resources on your site, you can better serve your market at the beginning and the end of the sales cycle. Easy to find resources such as quote forms, user manuals and case studies allow users to take the next step without having to wait for you to answer the phone. Content and sections we recommend include:

- A short video that shows the product or service in action educates, answers questions and can move a prospect closer to a sale.
- A short video that shows the product or service in action educates, answers questions and can move a prospect closer to a sale.
- Content and infographics for complex or new technology explains How it Works and validates your expertise.
- White papers and case studies are useful for prospects who are researching your company and want to learn and share with their team members.
- Online RFQs and forms allow your prospects to get started when they want, on their time. You save time by getting the critical information you need to prepare a quote before you pick up the phone.
- After sales resources such as product specifications, drawings, operations guides, and training videos provide added value and gives customers more reasons to come back.

Who are you.. and are you credible?

The logical next step for a visitor coming to your website is to investigate the credibility of the organization and leadership. Well placed testimonials and reviews on the home page communicate that other customers have had positive experiences. Well placed customer logos add credibility and serve as a visual cue that you have partners who trust your products and services.

For visitors who want to dig deeper, an About section should have a company profile, leadership bios, photos and contacts.

We live in a sound-byte, at a glance world. People don't read websites like a book. They scan. If they find what they're looking for and it's easy to read, they will zoom in on what interests them. Some people gravitate to photos or images, and others prefer to read headlines only to decide where to focus their attention. There are standard places such as the footer and top navigation where users are accustomed to looking for links, contact and news.

Headings and subheads should chunk the information and give scanners a quick synopsis of each paragraph. If your site has a lot of content or products, consider adding a search button and resources section.

What's the next step and contact?

In place of face to face meetings and live demonstrations, your website needs to be a 24/7 sales person and guide prospects along each step of the sales process. Once a potential consumer has checked out your site, he/she needs several options to continue research and take action.

A well designed website will provide specific calls to action instead of general ones such as “Learn More”

Research shows that specific commands such as See Product in Action, Request a Quote, Download White Paper, or Get Product Specifications” receive more clicks and put the customer in control of the next step.

Specific calls to action lead the visitor to the step they want to take.

While there are sophisticated tools such as online chat, it is more important that your site has easy to find and readable phone number, email, location and contact us.

Outdated or missing content works against you.

Do you have products or services that aren't yet on the website? Perhaps you've changed or dropped some services recently. Are there any projects or new partners to brag about? Do you need to update the FAQs? Have you added key messages and precautions about operations during coronavirus?

Are there pages or links that do not exist any longer? Check all pages and links for errors.

When a website has broken links or content that hasn't been updated this year, users will wonder... 'Are they still in business?'

I clicked on another marketing agency website advertising a free “Guide to Being a Top Blogger.” When I tried to download the guide, I got a 404 error message that the page didn't exist. Their last blog was in 2017. Not exactly a top blogger.

Broken links and missing pages damage a site's credibility.

Capture leads with valuable “free” content in exchange for contact details

Once your site is set... Are you utilizing multiple ways to engage and attract leads from your web site, as in blogs, white papers or social media?

The sales process is driven by information and education. Your website is the start of the sales or engagement process; leads and prospects are already interested and are seeking information.

How do you rise above the glut of information and sales messages that buyers are exposed to daily?

By creating and sharing content designed for your target audience, you’ll attract qualified prospects and keep them engaged.

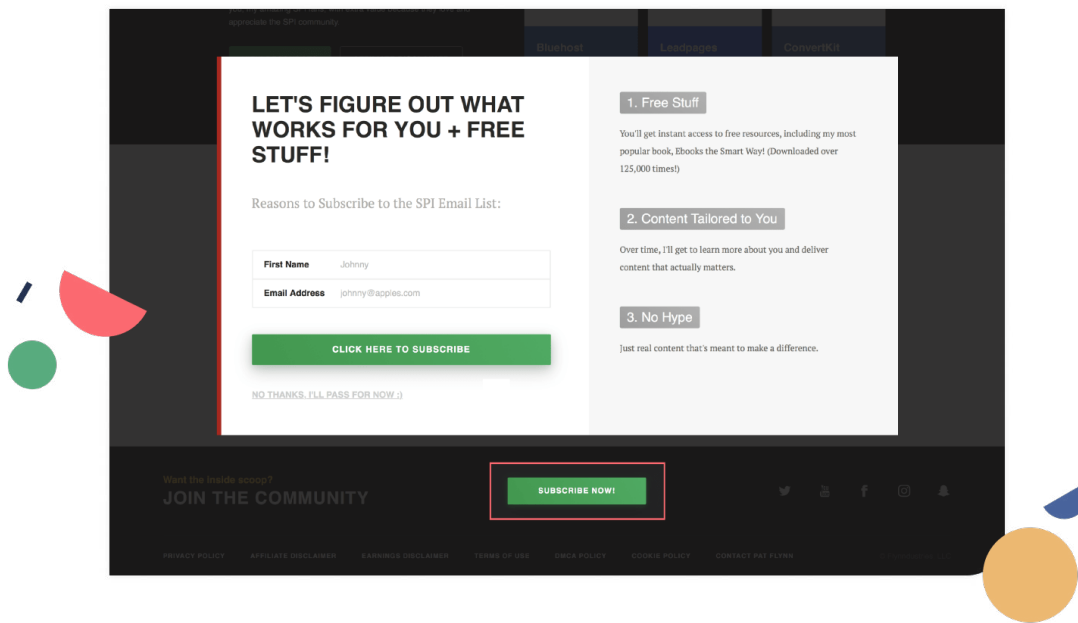
By addressing issues or industry trends, you’ll come across as an expert vs a salesperson.

Your company becomes a trusted advisor. White Papers, or Industry POVs can be very effective to make prospects smarter and help convert them to customers without overtly selling.

When a prospect has “opted in” to receiving content such as a white paper or guide, the salesperson can focus on learning about his/her needs rather than pushing a product or service.

To attract people to your website, you have to rank high on search engine results for the key words and phrases your prospects are using. Search engines rank sites higher that update content frequently. Google’s search bots look for both high quality content and its relevance to someone’s original search terms.

That includes blog posts or news. When a prospect reads your blog and clicks on your site to learn more, they will be more willing to give you their contact if they see you as a trusted resource. A blog or guide addressing industry issues or topics can cast a wider net for searches. When the visitor fills the form and gets the document, you have started a relationship. It’s important to follow up within 24 hours.



Blogs Boost Views



Businesses that blog regularly have 55% more visitors and 67% more inbound links than businesses that don't have a blog

**Source: Hubspot*

Media attention and news can be valuable to improve search engine results and gain awareness.

When a spokesperson is quoted as an expert, or a project is highlighted by an industry publication online, the story could be getting higher results than your website. Content is carefully crafted to address hot topics and embed key words and search phrases.

Media coverage done right is a powerful third party validation that can assure prospects of a company's credibility and expertise.

Social media adds power

Social media platforms are viable channels that can increase footprint and help attract leads. Facebook and Instagram are more retail and consumer focused, but it depends on your target audience. Whichever channel(s) you commit to, your website can link directly to those accounts.

For B2B, we recommend LinkedIn. It's a professional networking site, a platform for thought leadership and content sharing. It has over 610 million members and 303 million active monthly users. Company pages are a great way to publish content, news and interact with your employee's networks. We'll look closer at how to use LinkedIn in future blog posts.

In this two part series, we've outlined how a website can be a power tool to attract leads and serve as a 24 hour salesperson.

ckarma
MARKETING
for a better world

Are you looking for an affordable website partner to improve your profile and attract leads? Let us help.

Since 2004, cKarma has been delivering websites, communications and marketing support that has helped nonprofits and small businesses transform and scale. Translating complex concepts into clear and powerful communications is what we love to do. Great design and clear communications are a powerful tool to impact the triple bottom line: improving people, planet & profit.