

Expanding Your Web Presence

Website Objective

The objective of most websites is to serve as an extension of a marketing effort. Sometimes, the website is the primary marketing effort. Other times, it is one part of a more comprehensive program that includes more traditional marketing approaches.

A working definition of marketing is:

COMMUNICATION through various **MEDIUMS** or **VENUES** of a **STORY** that **COMPELS** the **AUDIENCE** to take a **DESIRED ACTION**.

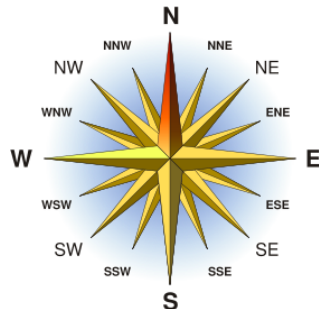
From a website perspective, **COMMUNICATION** is a one-way engagement with an existing or potential customer. The **MEDIUM** or **VENUE** is the website. The **STORY** is what is communicated within the website. A story typically includes:

- Product/service description (features and benefits)
- Price (value proposition)
- Place (availability)
- Promotion (brand loyalty or credibility)
- People (friendly/helpful customer service)

A good **STORY** can provoke (**COMPEL**) a website visitor (**AUDIENCE**) to take the next step (**DESIRED ACTION**) which is covered below in the Connect section.

Audience First Impressions

Your audience may come to your website through several marketing efforts. Whether through internet, traditional, or social marketing campaigns, a new visitor will spend between 3-5 seconds before deciding if the website is worthy of investing more of their time.



If within 3-5 seconds, a visitor cannot determine what the website is about or match it to their interests, they will exit.

If a website passes their first filter, a visitor will invest additional time to look for a navigation path that leads to information they want. If navigation is confusing or they are unable to find valued information, visitors will, again, exit.

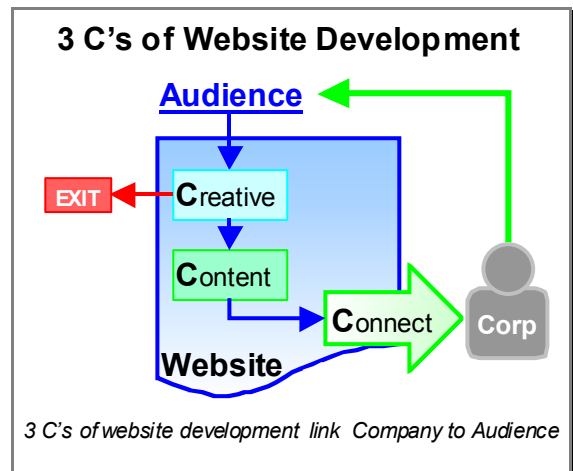
The 3 C's

There is no shortage of books written about website design and development. A simple search in

Amazon.com will yield hundreds of choices. Yet they all refer to a few basic concepts that Position Research refers to as the three C's:

- **Creative** – Making the website look and feel inviting for your audience.
- **Content** – Writing content in a style & subject matter for your audience.
- **Connect** – Giving your audience opportunity to advance their experience.

It is no surprise that your audience is the focal point of each C. As the following graphic illustrates, the 3 C's play a vital role in a visitor's website experience:



Creative

The creative aspect of a website design incorporates the look and feel as well as the website navigation. Its objective is to keep the visitor engaged with the website.

It is for this reason that all members of the website development team must understand and agree on the profile or persona of your audience. And since a website cannot be all things to all people, the number of personas should be limited to 2 (in rare cases, 3). As an example, consider these distinctly different personas:

Persona Metric	Case A	Case B
Age	35-55	17-25
Education	4yr. College+	HS graduate
Job Title	CTO or CIO	IT apprentice

Each may be interested in purchasing an iPod. But the website presentation to Case A would be entirely different from Case B. For Case A, a corporate-look written in a 3rd person boardroom style may be more appropriate. For Case B, a Generation-Y gamer-look written in 1st person conversational style would be more appealing.

Website Development 'An Introduction' (continued)

Content

When a website visitor finds the page containing the information they want, they will read the content – carefully. Now is the time to present a **STORY** that **COMPELS** the visitor to take action.

Website content typically falls into two basic types:

- **Product-Centric:** pages that describe your product/service (features, benefits, and applications)
- **Non Product-Centric:** pages that discuss needs and solutions.



Product-centric pages are typically company focused. In other words, they are all about what your company offers from a product/service point of view.

Essentially, these pages are an online catalog. There is nothing wrong with a product-focused approach. In fact, product specification/description pages are a necessary component of a company website. But in and of themselves, they are unlikely to provoke or compel visitors to take action.

Why? Because these kinds of pages typically do not answer the question “Why is your product/service a better value?” To answer this question requires more than what a simple product spec sheet can offer.

Additionally, Internet visitors want:

- Authoritative and unbiased information,
- That answers their questions,
- Quickly.

Product-centric pages, although authoritative in of themselves, are not unbiased because the market wants a complete body of information from which to make a choice. While **product-centric** pages focus on facts, they lack the more verbose reasons why a product/service offers a better value relative to other options. **Product-centric** pages do not provide a **STORY** that **COMPELS** the **AUDIENCE** to take a **DESIRED ACTION**.

Connect

At some point in time, a visitor’s website experience concludes with either satisfaction or abandonment. Those who are satisfied may desire to go to the next step.

The next step you may want a visitor to take depends on the website. An e-commerce website owner would like a sales transaction. Publisher website owners want visitors to click on ads. And corporate website owners prefer a sales lead.

Sales leads can come in several different ways. The most common are:

- A phone call.
- A form-fill that captures visitor information, from which your sales staff can follow up.
- A sign-up to a newsletter.
- An on-line chat session with your customer support personnel.

In all cases, messaging must be clearly posted and clearly understood by your audience.

“Clearly posted” implies that the **DESIRED ACTION** is easy to see and accessible. “Clearly understood” means your audience knows what will happen if they choose that course of action.

Marketers have coined the phrase **Call To Action** to represent the elements of a website covering the **DESIRED ACTION**.

Conclusion

Most website development efforts start with an inward focus on what the website should look like. This is a big mistake and commonly leads to a website ill-suited to your audience’s needs.

The correct approach starts with identifying who your audience is and what they would like to see in a website. This step is embraced in the **Creative** portion of the development process and includes website:

- Look-and-feel
- Navigation

Content is next. Consider writing style, font size, and graphics to support your message.

Finally, add elements that allow visitors to expand their web experience by allowing them to **Connect** to your company. This is your chance to advance the user experience and establish a 2-way dialogue.