

The President's Hotline

What's All the Fuss About Web Sites?

COLUMN BY JIM THOMAS

Smith Auto Electric has had a Web site for 12 years and I can tell you that it wasn't an instant hit. The early days of the Web made an interesting effort out



of trying to decide what the purpose of a Web site is and what it could do for your business.

The same questions are valid today. Should your site be targeting your local market? Should you throw your hat into the World Wide Web and see what comes from that exposure? Should your site be informational or focused on trying to sell products—or both?

All of these questions are valid and can produce results given enough time and Web placement. Web placement? What is he talking about now? The formulation of a Web site is based on a composite of answers to these questions and many more. You can do it yourself if you have the time and the interest or you can find a professional to help sort out what is needed.

The Electrical Rebuilder's Association is lucky to have an answer to the problem with our own master webmaster, Wes Grueninger, to help plan and implement a site for your small electrical rebuilding business. The fact that Wes is a rebuilder is an advantage that can't be matched. His insight in the industry and his background as a computer programmer make him extremely unique.

The questions poised still need your consideration and response to guide Wes on what you are trying to accomplish with your company's site but I will offer some of my experiences as a way to help.

The Web site for my company is located at: www.smithae.com. You will notice that our site is a combination of informational and selling. We talk about problems and problem solvers. We focus on known issues that customers are having in real life and solutions to

those problems.

We try to make it easy for the customer to buy what they want by listing products in our "online store." We utilize a shopping cart program to make it easy to buy and secure enough to make customers feel safe using their credit and debit cards. We show them the cost of shipping based on their ZIP code and method of shipping. We send an automated e-mail acknowledging receipt of their order and follow up with another e-mail to tell them the item has shipped and the tracking number when valid.

The Web site loads quickly and shows good consistency throughout all the pages. The featured suppliers all have a link that takes the customers to the suppliers' own Web sites with just a single click of the mouse.

The results after this many years of consistent, high-quality Web site operation with proper coding to enhance placement by the search engines and web-bots has been rewarding—not only in sales volume—but also in the opportunity to help many people worldwide with their problems by finding solutions that work. After all, isn't that what we do?

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