

Intervention!



15 Things You Must Do to Save Your Website

by David Bethune



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1. Begin with a Blog

A few years ago, something happened that changed the website game forever. It was the *Rise of the Blogs*, or better yet the rise of blogging software. Let me explain.

When I started my first web design company in 1995, it took special software and skills to produce an HTML website that looked good. Over the years, the software became easier to use but the basic method remained the same: We designed the whole website and cast that design in concrete before uploading it to a public webserver. This monolithic process resulted in websites that took too long to finish and cost too much to change.

Meanwhile, off to the side, another community of internet users was beginning to write **blogs**. These were much simpler and easier to deploy than traditional websites. Blogs were designed so that the author could get in, write some text, post a picture or a link, and get out quickly. The blog stayed up to the public throughout, with content changing bit-by-bit over time. It was an **incremental** strategy, the opposite of monolithic websites built all at once. Changing a regular website might take a week or more. Changing a blog took seconds or minutes.

In time, blogging software grew to offer all the features of traditional websites: a menu and page structure, galleries for photos, videos, and

music, even shopping carts and mailing lists. Most important, blogs retained their **ease of editing**.

Today, many leading business and professional websites are built with blogging software instead of traditional tools... and no one would ever know. Blogs offer sophisticated custom design and every kind of content and interactivity you can imagine. Even Barack Obama's presidential campaign website was created with blog software.

For all but the largest and most complex websites, blogging software is the best foundation. Several blog engines have come and gone, but the undisputed king of the hill is WordPress, with its flourishing community of thousands of designers and developers and millions of users. If your website is built the old way, rebuilding from the ground-up on the WordPress platform is the **#1 thing** you must do to improve it. Many of the other things on this list will only become practical once your site is in WordPress. It's that different from the old way.

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2. Put Your House in Order

A disorganized website is of no use to anyone, yet it's the most common variety of the species.

Please take the time to go through your site from the perspective of the **visitor**. He or she knows nothing about your company. In the grand scheme of things, they're not even really *interested* yet. They're **researching**. It's kind of like looking for a bathroom at the airport. You need to go, but you're not *interested* in bathrooms.

It can be hard for a business owner to take this kind of detached view, yet it's absolutely crucial if your website is to be effective. Ask the grumpiest, most critical person that you know to honestly shred your website: go through every page and show you every problem they've encountered. Be ready to hear how the outside world sees your site and your business. It's never the way you see it.

A modern website needs to have every page accessible from a single, organized menu. Visitors should not hunt for pages or wonder which navigation bar leads to something they saw earlier. Every page must be accessible from anywhere with a maximum of two clicks: 1. To open the menu bar, and 2. To click the page you want.

If your site doesn't have this kind of menu system, rescue it by creating one. Organize everything into the most basic categories you can think of. Group things together into as few groups as possible, and make those your top-level menus. Put the most important pages first in the menu system and bury less important pages underneath them.

Pages themselves need to have an internal kind of organization. Start with the most important information **first**. Ask yourself, why did the visitor click on this page? Why did he or she come to this site? Then provide an answer for the visitor's question in the very first paragraph of the page.

To put the two ideas together, imagine that your site sells tickets for something: a tour or a show. That's very important to the visitor, so a BUY TICKETS item should appear prominently on the main menu, either at the top left or top right of the menu bar. When the visitor clicks on BUY TICKETS, he gets a page that has all of the current tickets for sale, organized in a clean and simple way. In the very first paragraph of each show is the actual button that adds a ticket to the cart. Visitors will thank you for a site where they can quickly find what they want and do what they came to do.

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3. Take Better Pictures

Pictures are everything in website design. Why? There are two reasons, and both come from our internal human design.

Scientific studies of people's eye movements have shown that when we are exposed to a new page in print or on the screen, our eyes go first to the pictures – specifically pictures of **people**. There is a biological imperative at work that makes the human eye recognize and focus first on images of other humans. It's a survival skill. To effectively attract attention and communicate with your visitors, outstanding pictures, particularly pictures of people, must take center stage in your site design.

The other reason pictures are so important is that **no one reads anymore**. We've all been over-inundated with too much to read and listen to. To protect the inner circuits, our natural, biological filters shut out most of the content that assaults us, especially written words which take extra brain power to process.

Pictures help overcome the barriers to reading. They quickly communicate what 1,000 words cannot say. (Your visitor will not read 1,000 words anyway, no matter how great we think they are.) When people do read, **picture captions** are the first thing their eyes go to, yet most sites have pictures without captions. Better use of photography as an innate part of

website design is a big lever you can use to lift your site out of the dark ages.

Of course, no one can make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Yet it's surprising how many business owners are willing to use the worst pictures of themselves and their products imaginable. The web is full of photography nightmares. iPhone pictures, "snapshots" of products taken under whatever lighting was around, pictures without any sense of cropping, design, color harmony, or organization.

You cannot make a good cake with bad ingredients. You cannot make a good website with bad photos. **Most people take bad photos**. It's worth finding someone to take great pictures for your site because those pictures are going to be the first thing that visitors see. Your photos, good or bad, will make as much of an impression as any words you can write.

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4. Make It Work Everywhere

In the early days of the web, a site designer could live in his own protected little bubble. He might have designed only on Macs. Or maybe he only used Internet Explorer. Whatever his predilections, these would be included on the home page as **requirements** for viewing the site! Visitors were simply told, "You need so-and-so to make this site work."

Those days are over. Today, a website must work correctly on every computer: PC, Mac, and Linux, as well as on all kinds of mobile devices, iPhones and iPads, Blackberrys, and Android phones and tablets. If a visitor cannot get your site to work, they simply leave.

More than just work correctly, a site needs to **look great** on all these different platforms. It's a tall order. How can the same website look good on a tiny phone screen held in a vertical orientation and also look good on a big desktop monitor in a horizontal orientation? It's a question that requires a two-part answer.

The first part is obvious: it can't. No single design is going to be ideal on such radically different screens. But the good news is that today's **blogging engines** produce output that does render correctly on all devices and platforms. In other words, even though a user might enjoy your online store more on a big screen with lots of space for pictures and

menus, he can still use every feature of the site on his mobile device. He may tap or scroll differently than a desktop user, but all of the site must work correctly.

The second part of the answer is that, by using **two** templates, a site can serve both masters. If mobile access is a big part of your business, a designer can create a mobile template for your site that is only served up when visitors arrive by phone or tablet. The mobile template will resize pictures and buttons and reflow text to make your site appear more like a native web application on the mobile device.

What about Flash animations? Because of the corporate battle between Apple and Adobe, Flash is blocked from iPhones and iPads. To cut yourself out of this crucial audience of site visitors would be a grievous error. Fortunately, HTML5 and JavaScript animations do run on Apple devices and they are easy to build into your site... if you know to ask for them.



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5. Write Content for Real People

Writing for the web today can be challenging, as you must write assuming that **no one will read it**. This seems counterintuitive. Why would you write something that no one will read? Yet this is precisely the way the web works. Your site must contain the content that visitors *would* want to read if they were going to read anything, while keeping in mind that in all likelihood, they won't.

What does such writing look like? It's short. ('Cause you don't wanna read it, see?) The shorter the text, the more likely you'll read it. Even in this ebook, every paragraph is short and every topic fills a maximum of one page. I must get to the point quickly, as there's no time for messing around. ('Cause nobody's gonna read it, see?)

The most important rule you can learn about sales writing is that **no one cares about your stuff**. Business owners are often enamored of their own goods and services, and rightfully so. But the customer is not. Sales writing on the web must focus on the immediate needs and functions that the customer is seeking, which may be very different from how the owner sees his business. There is no room for marshmallow fluff.

Often, business owners feel like they are helping visitors by heaping on information and

"resources" from the web. But unless your company is Google, you'd get better results by **trimming and removing** information from your site, not adding it. Pare down the contents to the most important things visitors want. Think in terms of "Top 5's." What are the Top 5 things your site visitor cares about? Write to that.

There was a time when marketing experts charged a lot for something called branding and identity. I don't really think it amounts to much. Today's customer is better served by focusing on product quality and service, not ethereal marketing concepts that are blatantly transparent and meaningless in practice. In other words, don't use your website to tell visitors how great your service is. **Offer a real feature** that provides better service than your competitors. If you have a car dealership, do you text message the customer when their car is done? Why not? That's better service.

As with other marketing junk, there is no room on the web anymore for high-tone, nose-in-the-air websites that make customers feel confused or intimidated. A website is not a monument to your company. It's a working, breathing animal that lives to serve the customer and his ever-changing needs. Write to that. It's the real purpose of a blog anyway.

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6. Think Differently About Search Engines

Search engines started out innocently enough. They looked at the words on a web page and counted the links from other sites in order to create an index of pages that seemed to be about certain topics.

Let's take an example. Google might look at the site **vw.com** and find that it contains lots of mentions of the words *bug* and *beetle* and also lots of incoming links – links from other sites to vw.com.

Now imagine there's a Volkswagen Beetle club called Oldbug.com that also contains many pages with those same words but **fewer links** from the outside world. Google would rank this site lower than vw.com, so that when I search for "VW bug," the official VW site is first and Oldbug is further down the list.

Then site owners started adding *meta tags* to tell the search engines which keywords were most important. This worked well for a moment until companies started **spamming** these keyword tags, even spamming the content of their own pages. They added repeated words, fake text in the same color as the background, and "keywords" that didn't really apply to their text in order to gain more attention from search engines. A whole business of Search Engine Optimization or SEO grew up around these spammy ideas.

In recent years, Google has been overrun with a new kind of spam... one it helped create and perpetuate. These days, it's easy to **buy links** to your site to make Google think it's more important than it really is. This inbound link spam is profitable to Google because the pages which contain these links also run Google ads.

The fix is the same for both kinds of spam. It involves correctly **naming and labeling** the content of your website and, more to the point, writing that content properly to begin with so that Google is able to read and index your site on its legitimate text. Ask your designer about *canonical URLs*. These are website pages that contain keywords in the page address itself, making it easy for search engines, social networks, and archives to find and index your site.

It is not enough to simply repeat the same keywords or *title tags* throughout a website. Each page must have the correct tags and names to match its real content. Links within your site must also be properly labeled so that search engines can understand them. Several SEO plugins are available for WordPress that make this modern search engine optimization easier on you and your web designer.

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7. Sell Online

Selling online was once a complicated and dangerous affair. Horrific payment gateways required all kinds of setup. Banks and merchant services wanted a full cavity search before they'd let you take credit cards online. And every web designer and hosting company was looking for ways to cash in on the very real need of many businesses to conduct business online.

Today, selling online is so easy that it should be **included** in any website you build. In fact, you should be encouraged to sell online. Think outside the box for a moment about what you sell and how customers might like to pay for it. If you're a restaurant that offers delivery, can your customers order and pay online? If you're a guesthouse, can a customer reserve a room? If you sell any kind of logo or gift merchandise, it should be on your site. If you sell any kind of service, let customers pay on your site. If you invoice customers, let them receive that invoice by email and pay online.

The simplest way to pay online today is PayPal, a company purchased by eBay a few years ago after they became the #1 way to pay on the auction site. Under eBay's control, PayPal has grown to become a full-fledged payment solution for business and personal use. Setting up a new PayPal account for business takes 5 minutes and costs nothing. No setup or contracts are required, and you can begin

accepting payments online immediately. PayPal even calculates tax and shipping. Customers **don't need** a PayPal account to pay you. They enter their card number on the PayPal site and PayPal pays you.

Once a customer makes a payment, PayPal notifies you with an email copy of the customer's receipt, including shipping and contact info. PayPal keeps receipts online for you to view anytime. All the hard parts of selling online can be eliminated by connecting a modern, blog-based website and a shopping cart to your PayPal business account.

When there's money in your account, you can use it to pay anyone with an email address. You can even pay someone from your iPhone, to share a dinner expense, for example. You can transfer your PayPal balance into your regular bank account, or PayPal can send you a check.

PayPal charges a fee on each transaction, equivalent to the merchant service fee that you would pay if you had a traditional credit card machine. In reality, the total fee is less than the old way because you don't have to buy or rent a machine or pay any monthly fees to use the service.



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8. Take Control of Editing

The most common customer complaints in the dinosaur era of website design were that designers took too long or never finished the site, or they charged more than they said they would.

While it might be fun to blame this all on the designer, much of the fault lies with the old method itself and the primitive techniques that were available to web developers. Often, changes that seemed small to the client (“*We need to add a page,*” or “*Can we see it in blue?*”) would actually require a great deal of work for the designer, resulting in long delays in getting changes up – and big invoices.

In an attempt to make everyone happy, web designers would often commit to changes without knowing how long they would actually take. Along the way, technical problems could delay the implementation of features or changes that once seemed simple. Of course, there are irresponsible web designers out there, just like in any field – but the old way of building sites was bound to create these problems for even the most well-intentioned of web design firms.

The use of **blogging software** to run a website fixes this problem two ways. First, it provides true separation between the program that runs your website and the content of that site. Like

posting a picture on Facebook, you are only responsible for the picture and the text you write. You’d be hard-pressed to break Facebook with anything you could do from your browser. The software that runs Facebook (and blog websites) is different from the site itself and largely not affected by what you and your designer do. This makes your site much more reliable and stable than the old, fully-custom sites.

The second advantage is that blogging software provides true point-and-click editing. Unlike the “web builder” programs of the past, a blog can actually be edited using word processor controls and tools, right in the same browser that’s viewing the page. There is no disconnect between *seeing* and *editing* the page. There is no uploading or transferring of files. You make posts and add pages and pictures to your blog-based website just like you would on Facebook, and it’s not much more difficult.

Even though many clients will choose to have their web guy or gal take care of changes, making sure that you have the ability to get in and change things whenever you want can be an advantage down the road. By building on an open, standard platform like WordPress, your site can later be moved to another designer or host without breaking.



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9. Use Facebook to Your Advantage

Some people want to sell seminars and books on how to use “social media” to your advantage. While everyone should do some web research about using Facebook and Twitter as marketing tools, the main ideas are pretty easy to implement.

In order to benefit from Facebook, you have to **be there**, so the first step is to create a page for your business. This is separate from your personal Facebook page for two good reasons. First, you want to be able to keep all your business content separate from your personal life. Second and most importantly, people can *Like* or join your Facebook page without permission. They don't have to ask to become friends. This means a business Facebook page can grow quickly to include people who don't know you personally.

Once you have a Facebook presence for your business, you need to put some content there that's of interest to your audience. A smart businessperson will write Facebook links back to their own website, so that every Facebook viewer becomes a potential web visitor. Here's an example:

Let's say I own a small hotel. I want to post on Facebook about an upcoming promotion. Instead of just writing about the promotion directly on Facebook, I post the promotion **on**

the hotel website, then link the promotion page on Facebook. See the difference? The best uses of Facebook drive traffic to your website for further exploration. Even news stories and facts from other sites should be repeated on your site (with links to the original stories, of course).

The second half of Facebook integration is to add Facebook to your site itself. Should you show a *facepile* with photos of your members? Perhaps your site should include the actual stream from your Facebook page – a good solution for businesses that update Facebook regularly. A *Like* button is essential so that folks can join your Facebook page directly from the site.

All blog-based websites allow **commenting**, a feature that most websites should leave turned on. Comments let customers and visitors give real feedback that can serve as testimonials for future visitors. Even customers with complaints can be sales opportunities if you respond well to the comment and do so in public. Some sites can benefit from Facebook comments, a technique which makes the customer's comment appear on his own Facebook wall, complete with an image and a link back to your website.

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10. Cross-Sell Yourself

Who hasn't been asked in a restaurant, "What can I get you to drink?" You've just been cross-sold. Smart businesses have been doing this in person forever.

Cross-selling is a technique of listening to customers and identifying additional products or services which they might be inclined to buy. The key word is **listening**. Simply brown-bagging it will not work. You cannot use your site to suggest everything in the world and expect it to be effective.

On the web where we cannot really "hear" the customer, we have to organize our content so that cross-selling takes place in a natural way. A page about your line of T-shirts should probably have a photo and link to the matching caps. But there's no reason for it to have a link to the local weather or to jet ski tickets.

To cross-sell on your website, first group your products and services into categories that naturally go together. If people buy Danish, do they also buy orange juice? If they buy tickets to one show, will they likely enjoy another? Start to think of your products and services in these cross-selling groups, just as restaurant servers are trained that each diner should order a beverage, appetizer, entrée, and dessert.

Once your groups are established, design your web pages to show these groups in their natural habitat. That page about Danish better have a picture of a glass of orange juice. (Please make it a nice one with a tall, pretty glass and a strawberry garnish.) It's **cross-selling**. It needs *sizzle!*) The web page about your latest music show should offer to sell the DVD of the last show by the same artist. Cross-selling can take place on the web when you naturally feature items together that you want customers to buy together.

The last part of effective cross-selling is to create **ads for yourself**. These appear throughout your site. There may be a fixed advertising box that rotates through a series of ads. Or you may get better performance from putting individual ads on specific pages of your site. All the top brands and websites use this cross-selling technique. Make your ads look professional and make sure they harmonize visually with the rest of your site.

Give every ad a "call to action," meaning you explicitly state the thing you want the customer to do. If you're advertising a physical item, make sure the ad has a clickable "Buy Now" button built-in so that the customer can take action immediately.

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11. Give Something Away

You know this technique works because I decided to write this ebook and give it away and you decided to read it.

A better name for the idea might be “give away something of value to your customer.” I don’t want you to think you’re going to give away pens and can cozies. It’s not about that.

Think of something you can produce that is of real value to your customer and also **shows what you sell**. In other words, choose a website giveaway that demonstrates to the customer how he can benefit from making a purchase. This book gives away many of the techniques used in my business, but it also makes it clear that I can deliver those services. While some readers will use this information to rescue their sites without my help, others will be convinced that I’m the right guy for the job.

In a product-based business like a retail store, you might offer website visitors a free logo T-shirt when they join your Facebook page. A hotel could offer a free dinner in town with a certain number of nights booked. There are many creative promotions you can think of if you sit down and imagine yourself as the customer. What would entice you to try a new _____? (Fill in the blank with the type of business you’re in.)

In a service-based business, offer some amount of the service free if a customer buys online. Think of the hassle you save over trying to close the sale later. **Get ‘em while they’re hot!** If the customer is willing to buy your service merely from browsing your website, they should be rewarded for their behavior. It’s precisely this kind of customer who can bring new referral business through social sites like Facebook.

The thing you choose to give away should be commensurate in value to the thing you expect the customer to buy. Don’t insult the customer by offering a \$5 giveaway on a \$500 purchase. Even a professional service can offer a free initial visit for a new client, especially a client with long-term potential as these are difficult and expensive to capture. Let your website sell for you!

There is some risk in a giveaway, but there’s nothing like a free sample to separate the wheat from the chaff.

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12. Create an Email List

You should get something back for your giveaway. Whether or not your giveaway requires a purchase, you should still take the opportunity to capture each interested customer's contact information, including their email address. A number of email list services integrate well with WordPress websites.

In the early days of the web, people spoke of putting their newsletter online. This idea fell apart when the business didn't actually experience any news of interest to their average customer, and few newsletters were really written or sent out.

The best use of an email list is not to harass potential customers with endless advertising. In fact, that's probably the worst use of an email list. The best use is to **gently but regularly** update your subscribers with two kinds of information they can use: information about your specific area of expertise and links to other outstanding sites in your field.

Two examples will help illustrate: A restaurant might send its subscribers a new recipe every month (that's information from their area of expertise), along with a foodie article, a blog post, or a YouTube video (that's the outside link). A dentist might write each month about a particular treatment or condition (area of

expertise) and then post a summary of an article on health or nutrition (outside link).

Give each email missive a **theme** and make the theme clear from the subject line. The best email campaigns tie together several pieces of content around the same theme. For example, instead of just sending any recipe, your restaurant might declare it Chipotle Month and offer an original recipe featuring the pepper, a link to a story about the history of chipotle peppers, and a Buy Now button to put a bottle of pepper sauce in the customer's shopping cart.

Make the subject of the message abundantly clear: "It's Chipotle Month at Sally's Grill! Inside: New recipes, sauces, and more..." The dentist might use a less enthusiastic but just as clear message: "Root Canals: How Did *That* Happen?," not "February Update from Dr. Kilgore."

Emails should contain pretty graphics (even pictures of root canals can be tastefully executed and visually informative). More sure there are several links from the email back to your website. Promotions, especially, should be linked to a website page with a **share** button so that readers can share the post with friends on Facebook or in email.



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13. Consider Advertising

Website advertising today comes in four basic flavors: Facebook ads, Google ads, banner ads on other sites, and off-website placements.

Facebook ads are potentially the most interesting for many businesses because of the low cost and easy targeting. Facebook ad campaigns can cost as little as \$1/day. Simple settings on the Facebook website make it easy to specify which geographic and demographic audience should see your ad, leaving out people who have no ability to buy your goods or services and culling-in people who have already declared an interest in your product or service category.

My Facebook ad, for example, specifically targets people who live in Key West. It's far more effective to show them my ad repeatedly than to spread myself too thin by mixing in with thousands of other ads in a larger pot. The best Facebook ad campaigns involve **multiple ad designs**, each with specific text, pictures, offers, and targeting to achieve maximum results. Facebook's excellent analytical tools make it easy to see how many people click each ad, each day.

Google AdWords is a program of paying for keywords related to your business. Ads are shown when people search Google.com, and also on independent "network" sites that agree

to show ads with your keywords. Google charges based on the amount of competition for the keywords you want. In other words, shoring up "Italian restaurant" is going to be out of budget (you're competing with The Olive Garden), but you might get "key west Italian restaurant."

Like Facebook, you can try Google AdWords for a very low daily or monthly cost, based on a budget you set. Google also has excellent tools to help you choose the best keywords and rate their performance.

Banner ads on other websites can be a hit-and-miss affair. A properly targeted banner ad on exactly the right website can generate huge spikes in traffic and many new sales, but a poorly placed or poorly designed banner is just a waste of money. A car dealer who puts a Prius ad on the website of the local green fair is smartly targeting his ad.

Don't discount the potential of advertising your site off the web: in print, in sponsorships, and on radio and TV. There's a traditional advertising venue for every budget. Look around for the good values in your town. And be sure the ad contains your web address along with a *call to action*, a reason to visit the site.

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14. Use Analytics

Google Analytics is a free tool that's easy to install on your blog-based website. It provides a good overview of how your site is doing each day. How many visitors did you have? What countries did they come from? What pages did they visit? You can visit the Analytics site anytime to see the updated stats on your site.

Facebook and Google AdWords provide similar statistics. But these pretty charts and tables are only useful if you tie them to specific promotional campaigns. This is easier than it sounds.

Let's say you notice that your site gets about 100 visitors per day. Then you design a radio ad with a campaign that sends people to your website. "Visit our website for a free piece of Key Lime pie!" The day after your ad debuts (and each day after that), you must check your Analytics report to see how your ad is performing. If you don't see an immediate increase in website visits or if you get an initial spike but then see a return to baseline, it's time to rethink the ad or offer.

Let's say your venue holds events or shows and you post videos from the shows on your website. After each event, check the stats. They'll tell you very quickly which of your artists or shows attract the most attention on the web. If you put your videos on YouTube (and post the

YouTube videos on your site), YouTube will also keep lifetime popularity numbers for your videos, which make it clear where to put your efforts in web marketing. If you were to run a video on your home page, which one should it be? Your top video from YouTube.

Beyond just a hit count, Analytics offers other interesting numbers. Two of these are the *bounce rate*, the percentage of people who visit just one page and leave, and the *pages per visit*. If the bounce rate is high, people are finding your site uninteresting or too difficult to navigate. If people aren't visiting very many pages on each visit, try adding more content that might interest them. Make one change at a time, and then check these stats again.

As you look at Analytics, keep in mind that **conversions** are more important than any other numbers. That is, how many visitors actually become customers? This is the most difficult number to measure, but be aware of how your website promotions and web traffic relate to the ebb-and-flow of your actual sales. It also never hurts to directly ask customers how they found out about you.

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15. Hire a Professional Designer

At the end of the day, you may decide that a professional web designer is the best person to assist in your website intervention. A good web designer can add real value to your site and to your business.

When choosing a designer, know that **personal styles** are not likely to change. This is not a bad thing. We would not expect Van Gogh to produce a Picasso. Just don't expect results from your web designer which are vastly different from other sites they have done. When you look at a number of sites by the same designer, a *house style* will become apparent. Only you can decide if this style suits you, just as people have different tastes in fashion and home décor.

Another thing you're not likely to budge is **working methods**. Sad but true, web designers are fairly set in their ways and won't take well to upsetting their flow. The reason is that website work is demanding, requires precision, and involves interleaving many complex tasks from different clients. Any artist worth his salt has already developed a workflow and will want to stick with it. During your initial meeting, ask the designer to explain the process by which your site will come to fruition. If you don't like what you hear, you can simply move on. When you find your Michelangelo, let him paint his Sistine Chapel.

Take advantage of the **iterative style** of blog-based website design to get involved early in the site's colors, layout, navigation, wording, and themes. You should review the site along with your designer at many points before it is released to the public. Ideally, you'll have access to a private copy of the site anytime, so you can view things at your own pace, sleep on them, and give your designer real feedback.

Don't feel obligated to point out every shortcoming on the first preview. The designer knows this is not a finished release. He wants to show you the *direction* the site is taking. You should expect it to evolve and change before you both agree to the public release. A good designer will tell that you anything is possible on the web. The only true constraints are time and money.

If you do decide to explore professional design options (especially if you're in Key West), I hope you'll contact me. It would be my pleasure to serve you.

Thanks for reading!

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About David Bethune



David is a 25-year veteran of the software industry and the founder of two internet businesses.

A former IBM mainframe programmer, David launched Trellis Corp. in 1995 at the beginning of the internet boom. For 15 years, he served as the company's Chief Software Architect. In 2011, he created Zimidi, Inc.

David is the primary named inventor on a 2010 patent application for an innovative new user interface technology.

David loves dogs and is very happy to call Key West, Florida his island home.