Why Small Businesses Need Websites

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Adam Kalsey has a good article on why small businesses need websites. I've never really paid close attention to the 'local' market until here recently as I'm traditionally a national advertising sales person, but my new job has forced me into focusing on the local market, and one of the objections I'm hearing to 'local online advertising' is 'well, my company doesn't even have a website.'

Kalsey talks about a pipe company that makes custom pipes and gets the majority of its business through referrals. I've heard the argument before that company owners (especially industrial manufacturing types) don't think their customers will look for real solutions on the internet and I think those are the worst arguments I've ever heard.

My wife is an engineer, and she searches for information on the internet all the time. Granted she's younger than the majority of people in her field, but I'd argue that her impression of a company is just as important, if not more so, than her superiors, because she's the one putting specs in the plans. If she really likes a product, she'll fight to get it specified in the plans. Now this won't happen just because of a webiste, but it would happen because of plentiful information behind a product that she was looking at.

For example, on Friday she was worried that dinner was going to be too expensive at a restaurant I was taking her too, until she downloaded the menu and read the history of the local restaurant, after which she was extremely excited to go. That could have been a product or vendor she was researching for a project she was designing... who knows.

Or take for example the fact that I'm unhappy with my dry-cleaner. I'd love to know where to take my clothes other than the current sham artists I take them too, but I don't pass any other establishments on the way to work, and when I do see them, I'm usually too busy to stop in and get to know the folks running the competitors... It'd be helpful to be able to research things like when they run their specials, and what the normal prices are, and if they can do alterations in-house.

Local businesses need websites, and if I were them, I'd start looking at investing in them while prices are depressed. A simple on shouldn't cost you more than $1000 to set up and $50/month to maintain. A more robust solution can run into the tens of thousands sure, but I'm thinking that the old 'rules' of internet development pricing are pretty much gone, because they just didn't stand up in the 'cold winter' of the past few months of dot-com bust reality.