

**BOOK REVIEW:
SMALL WEBSITES, GREAT RESULTS,**

By Doug Addison, Paraglyph Press, pp 279, \$29.99 ISBN 1-932111-90-5, www.paraglyphpress.com

Reviewed by Veronica C. Valero, ©2005

If you're considering creating a website, but have anxieties and are not sure where to begin, start with this excellent, readable book. What I like about this volume is that it DOES NOT focus on the technology of web design: you don't need to know HTML to read this book! Rather, the primary focus is to introducing readers to the basic concepts in web design and layout that any layperson can understand. The secondary focus is how to create an effective small website. "Small" in this case ranges between 5-20 web pages.

THE DO'S: On the back book cover, the author states: "simplicity is the key to success, and quality is much more important than quantity." Think *google.com* (simple and elegant) versus *amazon.com* (where do I click?). In the first chapter, Addison expands, "Small sites are resource friendly. They respect your time and budget. And more importantly, small sites respect your visitor's time." Small sites also focus on what really matters: good design and navigation, well-written text, and high-impact graphics.

THE DON'TS: Does your website suffer from "bloat"? Here are some possible "bloat" causes listed in the first chapter: Slow loading home page, inscrutable or inappropriate graphics, cumbersome navigation, emphasis on the amount of content instead of its accuracy or relevance, lack of focus, search time hogs, the "Where should I click?" syndrome, and a design based on an organizational chart.

THE HOW'S: Chapter 2 and following chapters cover the basic components of designing an effective, small website. The website "should be easy to understand, functional without being overwhelming, and well organized." This sounds like common sense... But, to successfully accomplish that task, you must create a focus to the site. This is a critical first step. A focused website makes its purpose immediately clear and easily directs the viewer to accessible information about the business, service and/or the product. A focused website includes elements that demonstrate credibility and trust in the product or service. It invites the visitor to act by requesting more information, calling the company, joining a e-list, visiting the "brick & mortar" location, and, of course, purchasing a product or service.

DESIGN OVERVIEW: Once a focus is found, you are ready to address your design approach. This includes the site layout, color scheme, navigation issues, photography and illustrations, typeface selections (fonts), titles and headlines, links, searches within the website, and other tools that can effectively market your business. The chapters that cover this area give plenty of real website examples, both the do's and don'ts.

HOW TO HIRE: So you need a website, but aren't a graphic designer, a techie, an HTML guru, and/or you just don't want the responsibility and headaches that come with designing it. Well, the "Getting What You Need from Your Web Designer" chapter gives you vital information on

how to hire someone else to do the job. It covers how to choose a designer, how to keep costs down and ensure that your designer builds the site **you** want, etc. It also includes pit falls to avoid when working with a designer, including valuable tips on preventing your website from being held **hostage**. **Finally, it** answers the bottom-line question, “How much will it cost ?!”

BUSINESS EXAMPLES TO LEARN BY: Because one website design does not fit the needs of all types of businesses, the last five chapters in the book address important elements to include in five different types of businesses: professional services, trade services, specialty products, restaurants, and sites for artists, writers and performers. Each chapter gives an overview of what to focus on for that specific industry. It includes visual examples and a checklist of do’s and don’ts to keep on track.

ONE DRAW BACK: The book has plenty of visual black & white website examples. Unfortunately illustrations often are too small to read the details. If you are able to read small print or have a magnifying glass handy, then you can actually read the web addresses and visit the websites in real time and in full color.

When it comes to creating small websites with great results, Addison, states: “the most difficult decisions may be how to decide what to leave out.” This book helps in that decision process.

4 Stars

Star Rating: 1 = poor, 2 = OK, 3 = good, 4 = Great

Reviewed for the Golden Gate Computer Society: www.ggcs.org