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## *Fusionbox* :: Denver Interactive Agency

# Is Your Website an Asset or Liability for Users & SEO?

Remember back in the good ol' days when having a website was something every company needed and wanted? Websites were the wave of the future, and the dream of transitioning to conducting business online filled our heads with visions of a revolution in the way commerce was conducted. With a website, a company could reach clients and interact with potential customers on a global scale. A website was indicative of a company's technological prowess, symbolic of the desire to innovate and evolve with developments in the industry.

Today, this mindset has changed drastically. We all know that we need a website, but many of us think that simply *having* one is enough. In fact, there is research indicating that many firms with an online presence haven't touched their websites in years. They haven't spent any time improving functionality and appearance, and they have yet to consider the basics of website usability and the inherent potential of [search engine optimization](#) (SEO). Of course, we all recognize by now that having a website is an essential business asset, *if* it's done correctly. It's easy to see that if your sight is an outdated eyesore, it becomes a liability that hurts you more than it helps you. Conversely, a well-designed site can make all the difference. It's the first place users go to research your products and services, making your site a [lead generation](#) and CRM tool, sometimes even a storefront.

We've all heard the adage about first impressions, and it's no secret that they're the most important factor in the way people remember their first encounter with you or with your website. On one hand, a well-designed, [user-friendly website](#) will showcase your business and your brand, impressing clients. On the other hand, an outdated and otherwise bad website can hurt you far more than it can help you in this case, as potential customers will eliminate you as a possible vendor after only interacting with your brand and substandard website for only a few minutes.

I'll utilize a real estate analogy here to expand upon this thought. You'll impress guests when they arrive at your home if it's clean, well-kept, landscaped, painted, and overall welcoming. But if you arrive at a home that's dilapidated and falling apart with chipped paint and an overgrown lawn, you'll think a lot of less of whoever lives there. Are they lazy slobs? Maybe. Or maybe they just haven't had time to take care of the property. Either way, your first impression is less than positive. We all try not to "judge a book by its cover," but in an online atmosphere when that's all you've got to judge a company by, their website *is* their cover, the digital face they present to the world. In the information age, you can't *not* judge the book by its cover.

So this must leave you wondering: Is my website an asset or a liability? By answering the following questions, you can find out if it's time for an overhaul or just some simple changes. Or maybe your site doesn't need any work at all. Ready to find out?

**Home Page:**

- Can visiting users tell immediately who you are and what you offer?
- Is your site organized in a clear fashion that promotes navigation?
- Did you maintain best practices of [web design](#)?
- Is your home page an information destination or just a messy landing page?
- Does your home page give a good first impression that entices users to click through your links?

**Performance Issues:**

- Do your images, videos, and pages load quickly?
- Does your site utilize clean, un-bloated code?
- Does your site have a "search" function? If so, is it fast and useful?
- Have you performed quality assurance testing to ensure your site looks the same across different browsers?

**Content Is King:**

- Is your content written clearly and persuasively? Does it speak to your target market?
- Have you included useful and relevant resources like case studies, white papers, articles, or links?
- Does your content effectively describe the your products, services, and benefits?
- Is your [content keyword focused](#) (5% - 7% density) to cater to users and search engines alike?

**Links & Navigation:**

- First and foremost: Do all your links work?
- Are your links clearly marked?
- Do your links utilize descriptive and enticing anchor text?
- Is your navigation menu or framework consistent throughout your site?
- Does your navigation menu provide access to your entire site?

**Critical Pages:**

- Is there a top-level page that describes your products and services?
- Do you have an "About Us" page to describe your company?
- Do you have a page where users can ask questions or answer their own?
- Is the "Contact Us" page clear, informative, and thorough?
- Do you have a Testimonials section?
- Do you have a blog that you update frequently?
- Do you have social bookmarking buttons to take advantage of Web 2.0 technologies?

**Usability:**

- Is your site designed and organized so that information is easy to find?
- Do you have a sitemap that wireframes this organizational structure and links to all your pages?
- Is your site "user-friendly?"
- Is your type scannable, easy to read, and written for the web?
- Do you utilize bullets, headlines, and other stylistic elements to organize and present content?
- Do you have calls to action that prompt users to take desired actions?
- Are you using Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) to control the layout of the site?

### **Search Engine Optimization (SEO):**

- Is your site search-engine-friendly in terms of code, design, and information architecture?
- Have you optimized your site for specific and relevant keywords?
- Have you acquired a network of high-quality, relevant links?
- Have you utilized online PR or [social media marketing](#) for its SEO benefits?
- Does your navigation menu provide access to your entire site?
- Have you implemented Google Webmaster Tools?
- Have you optimized your rich media assets? Think video, images, podcasts, etc.

Now that you've answered all of these questions, you need to decide what to do next. Start with some competitive analysis to see what your competitors are doing and what you need to do to catch up. Then, survey users to see what they think and act upon that feedback; don't wait, evaluate and reciprocate. So make as many changes as you can to improve your website, turning it back into a business asset instead of a liability, and watch as your web presence creates leads and ultimately sales that impact your bottom line.