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Content + Design + Usability = Because your business needs more than "design"

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## Website audit: uncover hidden problems

Most small businesses struggle when it comes to marketing dollars. They know it's important to have a business card and a website, but many try to reduce costs by building their own website or getting help from someone who is "good with computers."

Early on, we all cut corners and make do. Unfortunately, many businesses never get out of that "make do" mindset when it comes to their website. Would you "make do" when hiring a sales rep? Your website is part of your sales team. Would you "make do" with a messy, unorganized store front? Your website is an extension of your store front.

People often "make do" because they don't realize how much their website "can do." Recently, a chiropractor friend of mine remarked that his website was "doing what he needed it to do" and in the same breath complained about his inability to attract new patients. He didn't realize that he was "making do" until our audit uncovered several problems that plague most websites.

**Poor SEO.** You can invest a little or a lot in Search Engine Optimization, but no investment means it's highly unlikely that anyone will find you unless they already know where to look.

**Who doesn't love avocado green?** Those outdated appliances might still work, but consider how your house will be perceived by potential buyers. If it's been three or more years since your website was created, you might want to think about a fresh coat of paint. If your website seems out of touch, so will your business. Remember that perception is reality.

**If it ain't broke.** Just because your website seems to work fine doesn't mean it's working well. Has it been optimized for more than one browser? Can people with disabilities access your site? Is it slow to download? Does the underlying code make it harder for search engine spiders to index it? Just because it looks okay doesn't mean it is.

**Paint's chipping, plants are dead.** When you visit a website that has dead links, missing images, and content that's out of date, it looks like an abandoned building. Potential customers will assume you take the same care in your business as you do with your facility and your website.

**Don't make me read.** On the web, we're all skimmers and writing "scannable" content is a specialized skill. Unlike the printed word, web content is part information and part navigation. In the case of my chiropractor friend, his website reads like a term paper. Rather than generate excitement about his practice, it's more likely to induce sleep! Remember that content is the entire reason for having a website which means content may very well be your most important website investment.

**Lost in space.** Far too many websites suffer from bad information design. They may even look nice at first glance, but you soon discover that it's hard to find your way around. Like bad customer service, frustrating websites make customers want to take their business elsewhere.

Chances are that you're "making do" without even realizing it. An audit of your existing website can give you important insights into ways you can improve your online presence.

**LB Brumage**  
President, [CDUdotcom](http://CDUdotcom.com)  
[www.CDUdotcom.com](http://www.CDUdotcom.com)

## Notes on ... effective sites

### But he's good with computers

Knowing someone good with computers is like knowing someone who works in a lumber yard: they may know a lot about the wood, but that doesn't necessarily mean they know how to build a house (or website!). Your website is content, design, and usability. These are three distinct and critical elements. Even design firms aren't created equal when it comes to these elements and someone "good with computers" may have the hammer and nails, but not the breadth of knowledge necessary to build a professional website.

### Understand why they came

When you send out a direct mail piece, it's all about what you want someone to do. When you build a website, it's first and foremost about your customer. Don't make them read all about you before they can find a link to your office hours. If someone called your office and the receptionist spent five minutes talking about your products and services before saying, "How can I help you?" then chances are pretty good they'd hang up. You want to include a "call to action" just as you would on a direct mail piece, but first understand their purpose in visiting and make sure your website is designed for that purpose. Remember: great customer service is the best word-of-mouth for your business.

### So what makes good content?

Customers come for content, whether that's store hours, product descriptions, or helpful tips. Content should be useful, easy to use, and easy to find. Useful content is relevant, complete, and accurate. Easy-to-use content is clear, concise, and designed to be scanned. Easy-to-find content is organized from the customer's point of view, effectively linked and integrated with other content on the site, and clearly/concisely structured.

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For information on how **CDUdotcom** can help you plan, create, refresh, or optimize your website, [contact us](#) for a free consultation.