

# Foundations—a Pedestal Group Publication

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FOUNDATIONS

## The Pedestal Group

### What To Do On The Web

#### Special points of interest:

- *Ways to get customers talking*
- *Elements of a good contract*
- *Online Security*
- *United We Work*
- *AND MORE!*

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In a recent poll done by Ruder Finn (<http://www.ruderfinn.com/about/news/rf-s-new-study-of.html>), respondents listed how they spend their time on the web. Everyone (100%) said they use the internet to “pass time” but what is surprising is how the rest of the categories broke out.

96% educate self  
92% connect with others  
89% research  
82% be entertained  
79% keep informed  
69% work  
33% make a purchase

But, if we do a survey of websites, the majority are still focused on making a purchase, and then going up the list practically in reverse order! What’s wrong with this picture?

When reviewing your website, you want to ensure visitors find what they need. But do you honestly know what that is? The best way to find this out is to have conversations with your customers. Ask THEM what information they need and what they find on your site. Let them tell you what would be helpful, inter-

esting and what would cause them to come back.

If talking to your customers about this is out of the question, get with your front line customer service people. When customers call, what comments do they make? Are there some things that are asked routinely that should be on the website? For example; companies got smart about putting their hours and address on their call tree when you call, because they realized that was a large portion of their phone volume. Now customers can press 2 and hear the store opens at 10:00. But does your website do that? Any website should let someone know how and when to get in touch with the company. And while it is more fun to be creative, at some level “contact us” is a solid standby that everyone knows will include a phone number.

There are web developers out there who will tell you an About Us page is no longer necessary—people don’t read them. But, that is just not the case. The About Us is vital to an effective site and people will use it for all sorts of purposes. If you have made a



#### Education, Connection, Research and Entertainment top reasons people use the web

pitch to a client, they will often read the About Us to see if you are the right person for the job. Often, when your client has to take your proposal higher, they will pull information from your About Us page to supplement the information you provided. It is also useful if you are speaking or attending a meeting so others can learn about you.

If the majority of people on the web are truly there to educate themselves, what information can you provide as education? Most industries have customers who are new to it. There is nothing more intimidating than being the new kid on the block.

## What To Do On The Web (con't)

Whether your company has years of history with a client or is just getting in the door, if you are the person who educated the “newbie” on how your industry works and the services provided, you are the one that will always be the expert. But



**If you were a customer, would you read your website?**

not every new employee will give you the opportunity to discuss it in person / on the phone. They will want a reference point to go to and read about it so they don't have to ask the embarrassing questions. Or, maybe they don't even know what questions to ask! A good, solid section on your website educating people as to what you do, how you do it and why can go a long way to keeping clients.

The second largest category on the list is connecting with others. There are many, many, many sites where people

can connect. So adding another one doesn't make sense for most companies. But, if you can be seen as a connector, you can help others find those they need. Having a page on your website explaining your LinkedIn network, your use of other social media tools, or statements about people you can introduce them to can help build your credibility as a networker.

Your website has to appeal to the audience to make it effective. Look at your website today as a customer. Would you read it?

## Ways To Get Customers Talking

**OTHER SURVEYS SBT HAVE DONE INCLUDE TWITTER TIPS, SOCIAL MEDIA AND COST CUTTING**

Small Business Trends often posts surveys of their readers to create lists of useful information. On October 7th they released their latest called, 51 Tips for Saving

Money on Technology. Now this particular list didn't help me or give me things to recommend to my cli-

ents. This isn't their first list and others have been great. But, what a great way to get customers involved in what you are doing! If you surveyed customers either by email or at the end of calls to gather something specific, you could then publish the list to all your clients. It is a HUGE marketing piece, great for your website, puts your customers in the spotlight so they will send it out as well and could generate new business!

When you survey your customers, keep it short, sweet and to the point.

On the phone, just ask, “Joe, we're putting together a list of our customer's best tips on using X. What is yours?” Then, be sure to attribute any that you print. Send a note before it goes out to Joe to let him know his tip was included. In fact, sometimes SBT offers to enter you in a drawing for participation. Even more good will!

Putting together a document like this doesn't take much time but can bring back new business from new customers, from existing customers and lots of good will. Go get tips!

## Elements of a Good Contract

Linda Lopeke, owner of SMART-START recently did an interview on the nine things that must be in any consulting contract. These principles carry over to almost any kind of contract and are worth considering.

1. A Statement of Work—obviously you and your client must agree on what is to be done. The “how” may be included in this as well.

2. Conditions to be met to consider the work complete—spell this out up front and in writing. Saves you from a lot of problems later.

3. Milestones, due dates, and timeline—if this isn't spelled out for both parties, it can cause lots of problems. And this is just as important for the client to know so they complete those things they

need to do.

4. Payment terms and schedule—Obviously this is important, but it should include how to handle expenses, invoice routing, payment forms, what they have to have from #2 to pay an invoice, and penalties.

5. Communication, Accountability, Responsibility—What will the

## On Line Security—how good are your passwords?

You get to a new website and right away they want a password. Great. Another one. Only this one has a whole new set of rules and your standard password doesn't work. How do you keep your information secure but manageable?

Passwords are the easiest way for hackers to get into your information. And now with sites like Facebook, it is even easier. Chatting about your pet to a friend? Anyone who can see the information now knows your pet's name. And guess what is one of the most common words used as a password? Instead, use one of these methods to create your password:

Choose a phrase or song that comes to mind when you get to a website and then enter the first letter of each word as the password. To make it even more secure, change some of the letters to numbers. For example, if you are singing the Black Eyed Pea's I Got a Feeling (and who isn't, right?), the first line would give you: IGAFTTGTBAGN. I would cut that down and add a number so IGAFT2G. This gets around the issue of being a "real" word which dictionary programs can find while also being memorable. And now if I do have to

write it down, I write down, "I've got a feeling tonight's going to be a good night" and it is hard to figure out how that fits in a password. Of course the file I keep the information in isn't called "My password" but something like "Song Lyrics".

Don't use one password for all sites. If someone hacks that one password, they can get into everything. Ideally you would have a different password for each site but again, that can be extremely difficult to manage. If you do want to have several passwords, group sites together by importance. Your financial sites should have unique passwords while newsletter subscriptions can share. Be smart about where you use the same password.

The next level of security sites use are security questions. Choose the questions that are the most difficult for others to find—your mother's maiden name is probably on the web somewhere at this point. If you don't have the option, when it asks for your mother's maiden name use another relative in your family's maiden name. That way you will know who you used and be consistent, but others can't look it up. (NOTE: some sites want

both your mother's and your maternal grandmother's maiden name so be sure to have a couple choices.)

Another option is to actually use a password management software. While I have no experience with them, Life-hacker.com

(<http://lifelhacker.com/5042616/five-best-password-managers>) did a survey of their readers and found the following five to be effective:

Sxipper (All platforms)  
KeePass (All platforms)  
1Password (Mac OS X)  
RoboForm (Windows)  
Firefox's Password Manager (All platforms)

NOTE: if you forget the password to your password manager, you are in trouble!

Security can be annoying, but if your information was taken it would be awful to resolve. Take steps now to prevent problems later!



**Take steps now to prevent problems later!**

## Good contract (con't)

communication look like, with whom, and when is vital to the success of the project. Also, if there is a problem, how will it be handled.

6. Disclaimers—this is the legal language you already have in your agreement but should include provisions for errors and omissions.

7. Cancellation—what terms are required if one party wants to terminate the agreement. This should have options for BOTH parties.

8. Date of contract—this seems pretty obvious, but many conversations start about a contract and don't close for a long time. Be sure all parties understand the

date the contract begins.

Contracts are clearly one of the most important things you need to get right. But once you've got this in place, a project is set up to succeed!

**Contracts allow expectations to be set up front and in writing**

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Putting our clients where they belong.

The Pedestal Group was founded to answer a need we saw in small businesses to have a source for help. That could be how to find and integrate the right technology, how to better hire and manage people, how to set goals and create a strategic plan, or really attack and own your marketplace.

Our team has worked in a variety of industries including staffing, recruiting and executive search, retail, technology, healthcare software / IT, higher education and franchising and the consistent theme we have found it is very hard to see the forest for the trees. In small business, that is compounded by the number of resources available.

Our approach is unique in that we don't just say it is all about the customer, it really is. The Pedestal Group puts our customers on a pedestal – right where they belong. That isn't to say the customer is always right because that is an adversarial relationship – in our case, we always come to agreement. We are always in a partnership with our clients but also remember who's the most important – YOU.

The Pedestal Group - Putting our clients where they belong.

## Have You Run Into “United We Work”?

United We Work is, according to its web site, an organization of companies who are banding together for the purpose of reducing the costs of recruitment. The idea



**This program is designed to eliminate recruitment fees**

is that each employer member would ask any candidate it doesn't hire, if the candidate wanted to be placed in the United We Work database. The database would be available for

each corporate member to use without any fees, at least for the time being.

Recruiters may not join, because “this program is designed to eliminate fees from recruitment to allow more people to get hired in this economy.”

The organization's web site lists its “principal sponsors” as Seven Eleven, ADP, Allstate, AT&T, Hewitt, Hyatt, Office Depot, Sears Holdings and Starbucks. The organizers claim that many other prominent companies have joined – Bayer, Best Buy, Oracle, Staples and Wachovia, to name a few.

While NAPS has not heard from any of its members that this organization is having any impact on their businesses, we would like to hear from you if you have run into them.

For those wishing to learn more, visit [www.unitedwework.org](http://www.unitedwework.org) or [www.alliancecq.com](http://www.alliancecq.com).

Those with questions or comments can contact NAPS counsel Bob Style at [rpstyle@sprynet.com](mailto:rpstyle@sprynet.com).

Thank you to Bob Style for writing this article and agreeing to allow The Pedestal Group to reprint it!