

THE RETAIL JEWELER

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By Matthew Perosi

BE RIGHT BACK...

(Essential website tips when you can't update regularly.)

Many jewelers, large and small, have chosen to let their website go out of date because it seems like a never-ending money pit of programming costs. I'm never going to recommend reducing the continual maintenance to your website or other online marketing, but I'm also quite practical that sometimes it needs to be done.

Before you cut or suspend your website maintenance, I'd like to give you some basic strategies that will allow your website to stand on its own for a while yet still attract customers and create sales leads for you.

First of all, don't worry about what your website looks like. It really doesn't matter what your website looks like as long as it has a purpose. That probably sounds strange considering so many jewelers usually want their website to be both attractive and clean. Consider that many of the world's top sites like yahoo.com, ehow.com, and flickr.com are completely cluttered, yet they are all within the top 100 most popular sites on the Internet because they each have a specific purpose, and each page of their site has a purpose.

To preparing for long term sustainability you should read every page of your website and ask yourself if each is useful for a customer. Every page needs to provide useful information that will attract customers to your store or to click deeper into your website. They each need some long term page value; otherwise it's just taking up space and wasting someone's time. Bulking up your site with extra pages is good for search engine optimization of active sites, but real page value gives your visitors a reason to do something, or take the next step--preferably into your store, or online catalog pages.

You need to give visitors a reason to take the next step, like "click here to find out more information," or "go here to read the rest of the jewelry home cleaning instructions." You could also tell them, either by words or an icon, that they can view a larger image of that engagement ring if they click to the next page.

The contact page, with a form, is often an underutilized feature of jewelry store's websites. No matter the size of your website, you should have at least two people contact you each month through it. Provide links to the contact page wherever you could provide more information but didn't. Send those contact form emails to your main website address and make sure to reply to them quickly.



Clicking to the next page is not always the best next action. Recently I came across a jewelry website advertising rings at retail prices from when gold was still \$839/oz. If your website is guilty of old gold pricing too then the simple remedy is to replace all those prices with the phrase "call us at (212) 555-1212 for the most up to date price."

This little modification tells the visitor to take the next step with a phone call, rather than a click. So if you find you don't have the time for your website then the basics of long term sustainability need to include pages with a purpose, leading users to your contact page, and giving them real reasons to call your store. Each will help lead your visitors closer to walking into your store.



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Matthew Perosi is the Founder of the Jeweler Website Advisory Group (jWAG), a research team devoted to reporting how jewelers can use websites, mobile technology, and marketing trends to further personal and jewelry store goals. A library of articles, videos, and an archive of jWAG daily email "Nuggets" is freely available at www.jwag.biz. Matthew invites your feedback at matt@jwag.biz.