The Ultimate Guide to
Redesigning Your Website

by **adventure web** interactive

Web Solutions
That Produce Results!

Wrestling with Whether You Should
Redesign Your Website?

You know that having a compelling website is integral to your company's success. It's your calling card, and you want it to wow potential customers.

The challenge for company owners is that web design, like everything technology-based, is changing at a very rapid pace. A website that provided a nice introduction to your company five years ago may actually be costing you prospective customers today.

This eBook explores the problems common to older websites and discusses possible options, short of a total website redesign, to fix them. Should you decide that you do need to bite the bullet and redesign your website, the eBook helps you think through important strategic considerations and questions you should ask as you pick a web design company for your redesign project.

And since it is always fun to learn from other's company's experiences, the eBook concludes with a case study of a web redesign project that dramatically increased sales for one of our clients in the Baltimore area.

We hope you find the information in this eBook helpful, and would love to talk with you about your website and online marketing needs!

April 6, 2015

Craig, Charlie, Gina, Ryan, Mike and the entire team at Adventure Web Interactive.

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Common Problems
with Older Websites

If you haven't updated your website recently, you may be experiencing one or more of the following problems:

1 Your website looks awful on a phone or tablet

Most websites built before 2013 were built primarily for viewing on a desktop or laptop computer. However, ever-increasing numbers of website viewers are now using their smart phone, iPad, or other tablet to browse the Internet. Unfortunately, older websites are typically almost unreadable on a small screen. Can you imagine trying to determine if **this company** offers the services you're looking for?

The use of smartphones and tablets to access the Internet has grown exponentially in recent years. *In April 2014, 35% of all website visits initiated through search were by smartphone or tablet.*

Making this even worse, viewers have no patience for websites that are hard to read. Google's research shows that *if visitors can't find what they're looking for right away, 61% will click away.* Google is so convinced of the importance of mobile-optimized sites that they are penalizing sites that don't look good on smartphones by pushing them lower in the search rankings than they would otherwise deserve.

An additional problem many older sites have is that they used Flash to display rotating images, maps, videos, or animations. Since Apple products, such as the iPhone and iPad, don't run Flash, key components of these websites are missing.

2 The website looks outdated.

Older websites were built for smaller screen sizes and slower internet speeds. Images tended to be smaller and the web designs clunkier, as you can see by comparing the website for Cossentino and Sons Remodeling & Design from 2005 to that of 2012:
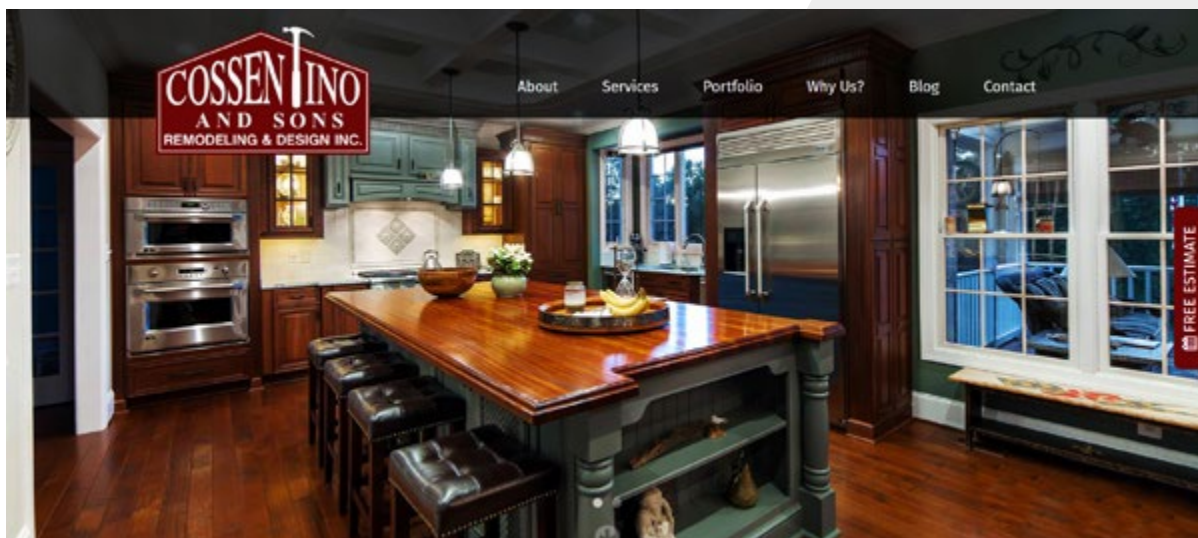

Cossentino Website in 2005

Cossentino Website in 2012

As people have upgraded to larger monitors, banner images covering the entire width of the screen have became extremely popular. Here's the current Cossentino website:

Cossentino Website in 2015

If your website is more than a few years old, it won't cover the full width of the screen on a larger monitor and, thus, will look somewhat puny to a good percentage of your audience.

3   Your website isn't attracting today's buyers or converting them into customers

Twenty years ago, customers in the market for a new product or service would pick up the Yellow Pages, search for nearby service providers, and then call them for information or a quote. As people started moving to the Internet, they originally applied this same search technique by typing "accountant Baltimore" into the Google search bar and then picking up the phone.

Today, **_81% of potential buyers start learning about a new product or service by searching online._** And while some of them will search by type of service provider, many more will ask specific questions such as "how much does it cost to have an accountant do my taxes?" or "how do I apply for a tax extension in Maryland?" Research shows that **_the majority of buyers will be more than half-way through their decision-making process before they will agree to speak to any sales people._**

If your website is basically an online brochure that lists the industries you serve and brags about how great your products are, these viewers are not going to find your website. And even if they did, unless you show them that you understand and care about their questions and concerns, it is unlikely your company is going to be on their short list of companies to contact when they're finally ready to purchase.

The world has changed, and savvy marketers are creating content-rich, SEO-optimized web pages and blog posts that answer the commonly-asked questions of their ideal buyers. They're also creating premium content such as eBooks, white papers, and case studies that prospective clients value and that allow you to start building an ongoing relationship with them.

4   You aren't able to easily update the information on your website or add new pages or blog posts yourself

Google rewards companies who are regularly adding high-quality content to their website. Fortunately, most websites built today include a Content Management System (CMS) that makes it as easy to add or update a web page, shopping cart product, or blog post as it is to fill out an online form.

Should You Invest in a
Website Redesign Project?

If your company's website has one or more of these common problems, you should fix the site or find a work-around as soon as possible. Depending upon the issues you're wrestling with, this may or may not require a full redesign of your website.

Here are options to consider:

◢ ***Implementing Responsive Design:*** Responsive design is a website design technique that modifies how your website is displayed depending upon the size of the screen it is being viewed on. Unlike some earlier techniques that required the maintenance of two different websites, responsive design automatically adjusts the size of images, text, and navigational elements to fit the viewer's screen.

   If your existing website was built with Wordpress, Drupal, or Joomla, it may be possible to implement responsive design on your site without redesigning the entire website. However, if your site is more than a few years old, moving to responsive design may require rebuilding the entire site. If it does, it is probably going to cost you almost as much to add the responsive design functionality as it would to do a total redesign of the website.

◢ ***Your Website Looks Outdated:*** Because we tend to look at our own company's website a lot more frequently than anyone else does, it may be that you're being overly critical. However, if several people, whose opinions you trust, tell you that your website looks old or if you're embarrassed to give out your website's URL address, it is time to invest in a redesign. You certainly don't want to give potential customers the idea that you're not keeping up with the latest technological trends!

◢ ***Your Website Isn't Attracting Enough Traffic:*** If the problem is that your website doesn't contain enough customer-centered content on subjects your potential customers are searching for, you may not need to redesign your website. Instead, recruit members of your team to start writing thoughtful web pages or blog posts answering questions your customers often ask or, if this isn't an option, hire a content writing firm to do this for you. If your website has an easy-to-use Content Management System, it won't cost you anything to add the content to your website once it is created.

   If, however, you think the problem is deeper than just the lack of content, you'll probably see the most benefit from incorporating the new content you're creating into an entirely new website design. And if you need help determining what subjects would attract prospective customers to your website, it would make sense to work with a search engine optimization (SEO) expert to develop a compelling strategy and appropriate keywords for each page as part of the website redesign process.

■ *Your Website Isn't Converting Visitors To Your Website Into Leads You Can Cultivate:* Less than 3% of visitors to a typical website will fill out a form allowing them to be contacted in the future. If you want to maximize the return on your online marketing, your "Contact Us," "Sign Up for Our Blog," and other forms should be very short and easy to fill out.

If you'd like to generate even more leads, you should consider creating downloadable eBooks, white papers, and case studies on topics your ideal customer would be really interested in. Once they've given you their email address to download one of these pieces, you can start building a relationship with them by emailing them articles or blog posts about the product or service they've expressed interest in.

■ *Adding More Functionality To Your Website:* As your business grows, you may need to integrate other tools into your website such as an eCommerce shopping cart, a product database, or a Customer Relationship Management program such as Salesforce. In any of these situations, you should probably create an entirely new website design that takes full advantage of these additional features.

Strategic Questions
to Think Through

OK. Now that you've decided your website needs to be redesigned, you'd like it done tomorrow. But rather than rushing through the planning stage, you'll be happiest with the end result if you spend some time thinking through exactly what you want your new site to accomplish and how you want it to look. A professional web designer will want to know:

- Which of these **goals** is most important for your new website to accomplish?

    - Selling more products
    - Delivering more leads to your sales team
    - Establishing you as a thought leader in your industry
    - Something else entirely

- Who is the most important **target audience** to attract to your website? A website designed to appeal to female homeowners is going to look completely different from one created to convince young hackers that your security system is state-of-the-art.

- What **design styles** speak to you? Yes, you probably want a clean design with bright images and simple navigation, but if you can be even more specific by showing your designers a few existing websites you particularly like, you're more likely to end up with a final design you absolutely love.

- What **special functionality** does the website need to have? Do you need a database to provide services to your members or for event registrations? If you are creating an eCommerce site, do you want to use PayPal or connect to a traditional merchant account? How do you want to collect leads from your website?

The following actions will help you think through your options:

- Study your competitor's sites, both locally and in other parts of the country, to get ideas for creative new approaches.

- Develop a list of websites that you really like the appearance of and which you'd be happy to have serve as models for your new website.

- Activate Google Analytics, if it isn't already, to learn what's working and what's not on your current website. Use this free tool to discover how many people are visiting your website, what pages they're visiting, and how long they are spending on each of the key pages.

While you're doing this research, you should also start investigating who you'd like to redesign your website for you.

Choosing The Right Web Design Company

You have an almost unlimited range of options for redesigning your website, ranging from building your own site from a template to hiring a world-renowned agency that will charge you many tens of thousands of dollars. Unless you have built attractive, highly-functional websites before and have solid experience optimizing sites to maximize search engine traffic, building your own site is undoubtedly a mistake.

Assuming you are going to hire a web design company to build the site for you, here are some important factors you should take into account as you choose the best company:

1 Will your design be a **totally custom design** or is the designer planning to start from a template? The later reduces the flexibility the designer has in incorporating unique elements.

2 Does your web designer or company have **significant experience in your industry?** Each industry is different, and someone who has designed a dozen other sites in the home improvement industry is more likely to know the most important features to build into the design.

3 If your site requires any **advanced functionality**, does your design team include someone who has done this before? Expecting a graphic designer to be able to create a sophisticated database, for example, is asking for trouble.

4 Are you going to be shown a **choice of designs** by different designers? It is rare that you'll love every element of the first design you're shown, and being able to look at a second, quite different design will almost always give you ideas for improvement.

5 Who's going to be **writing the copy** for the important pages on your site? If your design company is, do they have a copywriter who is gifted at writing compelling page content using the keywords your target audience is searching on? If you are going to write the copy, will someone who is knowledgeable about search optimization be tweaking what you write for SEO purposes?

6 Does the project team include an **SEO expert** who will do the following?

a. **Choose keywords and long-tail keyword phrases** that your customers are searching for and for which your site has a realistic ability to rank on the front page of Google. For example, as much as a local law firm might like to be ranked #1 when someone searches for "medical malpractice attorney," the goal is unrealistic. It may be possible, however, to rank for "cerebral palsy malpractice attorney," particularly if the location "Baltimore" is included in the keyword phrase.

    b. Benefit from the keywords you already rank for and backlinks you've earned on your old site by **conducting an SEO audit** and redirecting all important pages to appropriate pages on your new site.

    c. Write page titles, headings, and meta descriptions to **drive traffic** to each page of your new site.

7 Is the site being built on a popular platform such as Wordpress, Drupal, or Joomla that provides an easy-to-use **Content Management System** and built-in **responsive design** functionality? If not, you either will not receive these important functionalities or you will have to pay your developer extra to integrate them for you. Also, if your site is built on a less-common platform, you may find it difficult to find a developer able to update the site for you down the road.

8 Are the designers, copywriters, SEO experts, and others **full-time employees** of the company, or is the company employing freelancers promising to complete the work in their free time? Reliance on freelancers adds additional risk to the schedule and may, depending upon where the freelancers are located, add language challenges.

9 Do you know exactly **how much it is going to cost** to build your site? You could end up being charged far more than expected if you are being quoted on a per-hour basis instead of receiving a firm quote for completing the job to your satisfaction.

10 **What happens at the conclusion** of the project? Does the company offer hosting services and some level of ongoing support? Do you own the website, allowing you to host it anywhere and have no further relationship with the web design company if you so choose?
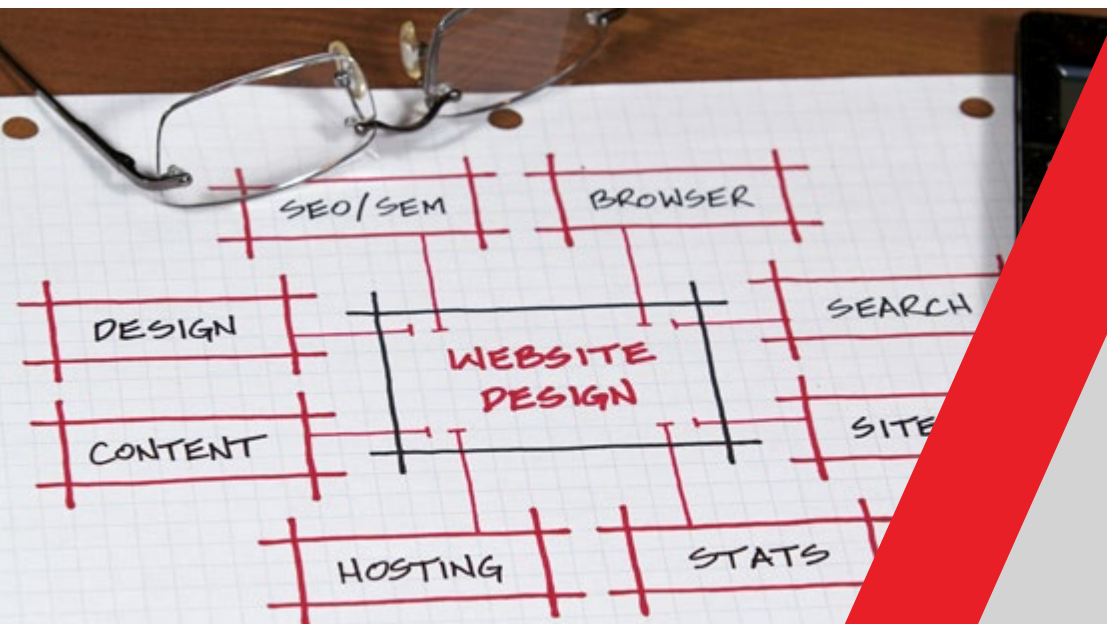
Why You Should Consider

Adventure Web Interactive has designed thousands of company websites since it was founded in 1997. It specializes in building affordable, state-of-the-art websites for small- to mid-sized companies in the Baltimore area. Every website is totally customized and incorporates responsive design and easy-to-use content management systems. Clients know exactly how much the entire project will cost them before the project is approved.

A team of experienced Adventure Web employees will be assigned to your project which, depending upon the scope of your project, may include a creative director, graphic designers, copywriters, SEO experts, and database developers. To avoid any communication issues, your primary contact throughout the web design project will be your sales representative.

At the start of the project, you will be asked to fill out a short questionnaire about your web design preferences and requirements. Following a meeting with your creative team, two graphic designers will each design a home page for your site. You can pick the design you prefer and then request modifications until you are thrilled with the design of your home page.

As the rest of the site is being built, Adventure Web brings in copywriters and an SEO expert as needed.

You can expect a simple 5- to 10-page site without any unusual functionality to go live within about six weeks. More complex sites, of course, will take longer.

Adventure Web can host your new site for you, including two hours per month of personalized support. However, you own the completed site and can host it elsewhere if you prefer.

If you are interested in driving additional traffic to your website at the conclusion of the redesign project, Adventure Web offers several ongoing services to its clients. Hundreds of clients use Adventure Web to write weekly blog posts for them, including promoting the posts via social media. Adventure Web also manages cost-effective pay-per-click campaigns for many of its clients.

Website Redesign Case Study:
Advantage Book Binding

Advantage Book Binding first contacted Adventure Web in mid-2013. They had had a self-made website for many years, but it wasn't bringing them much business.
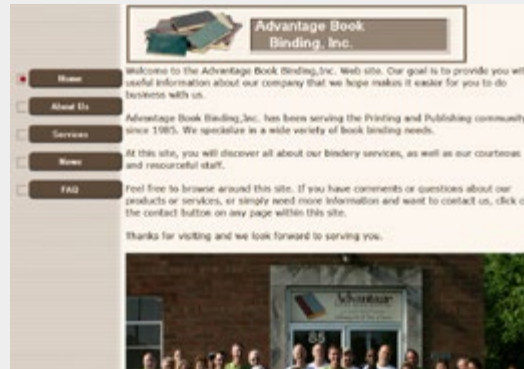
Original Website

The company recognized that their website looked outdated. As a small business, however, they couldn't afford to spend a fortune redesigning it and, after considering a number of other web design companies, they hired Adventure Web.

From the very first designs they were shown, Advantage Book Binding was thrilled with the look of their new website. After developing SEO-optimized content for each of their product lines, the new site went live in October, 2013.

Redesigned Website

The response was immediate. While the previous website had received few visitors, traffic on the new site climbed to 896 visits per month within the first three months and has kept climbing steadily since. 3,154 people visited the Advantage web site in January 2015, 88% of whom were new visitors to the site.

Monthly Traffic to Advantage Book Binding Website
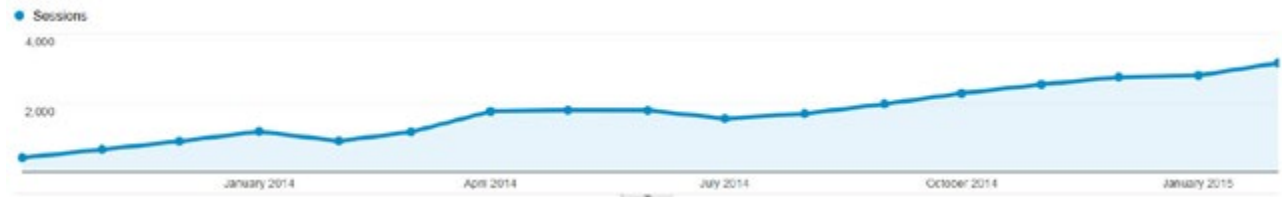
The continuing growth Advantage Book Binding is enjoying is due to both the clean and compelling design of the site and the weekly blog posts Adventure Web has been writing for them since the site launched.

Advantage Book Binding now appears on the first page of Google when potential customers search for one of 109 keyword phrases related to book binding. The company has earned the coveted #1 Google search spot for 16 different keyword phrases, including these crucial to the book binding industry:

- Custom book binding
- Leather book binding
- Custom leather bound books
- Soft cover book binding
- Bible binding

> " Now that we're #1 on Google, we've seen a dramatic increase in traffic to our website. From almost none before, we now receive 3 to 10 emails a week asking about potential book binding projects. Adventure Web did a great job! "

Christine Webbert,
Director of Advantage Book Binding, Inc.

Sound Interesting?
Let's Talk!

Request a Free Phone Consultation
or call **(410) 358-9892**