

myweeklymarketing.

Janice Hostager: 0:04

I'm Janice Hostager. After three decades in the marketing business and many years of being an entrepreneur, I've learned a thing or two about marketing. Join me as we talk about marketing, small business and life in between. Welcome to My Weekly Marketing. Hey, hey, and welcome back to My Weekly Marketing.

Janice Hostager: 0:36

Today we're diving into one of the most important and sometimes overlooked parts of your business: your website homepage. Why? Because your homepage has a big role to play. It's sort of like your business's first date with potential customers. It's where they decide if they want to swipe right or click away. So you need to jump in fast to make sure that you sweep the right visitor off their feet. No pressure, right? But no worries, today we're breaking it all down. I'm talking about what should go on your homepage to make visitors feel seen, intrigued and ready to take action. Stick with me, because by the end of the episode, you'll know exactly how to turn your homepage into a magnetic money-making machine. All right, ready to dive in? Okay, here we go. Now...

Janice Hostager: 1:21

As a former art director, I love me a well-designed homepage, so it pains me a little bit to say that without the right messaging, your beautiful site will just take up space in the ether. Messaging needs to drive the design bus, not the other way around. Trust me on this. Design is important, but it's not a hill you want your website to die on. So today we're going to talk about what content to include on a homepage, both above the fold, at the very top, and below it, what to include in your navigation, and a couple of questions about homepages that I get asked a lot, so let's roll. Okay, there's a lot to consider when designing a homepage, but the thing I want you to remember is that the primary job of the homepage is to introduce your business and get the right customer to take the next step. Basically, you want your visitors to fish or cut bait. If they're in the right place. Your homepage is a launching pad to another part of your site. It's the front door that leads to a wonderful world of your business, and we need to make sure it not only has curb appeal, but it's very high functioning.

Janice Hostager: 2:30

So where do you start with a homepage? If you're designing your entire website? In my opinion, you actually should not start with your homepage. I like to have it be the last page of your design of the website, and here's why. Think of your homepage like a movie

trailer. It's meant to give visitors a sneak peek of what's inside. By waiting, you have a clearer understanding of your site's full navigation, the key messages from your other pages and the actions that you want your visitors to take.

Janice Hostager: 2:58

Your homepage is not the main act. It's merely the doorman ushering the visitors to where they want to go. Also, when you design your homepage first, it's tempting to either cram in too much content or too little. When you design it last, it's easier to highlight the essentials and determine which elements deserve prime real estate and how to organize that information to guide visitors where you want them to go. So before you start designing your homepage or anything on a website, it's important to keep in mind that your website is marketing and it goes without saying that before you do anything in marketing, you need to start with your ideal customer and their needs. Without a thorough understanding of that customer, your marketing can drift off the mark. You know how, when an airline pilot starts off just a few degrees off where they want to go and they end up in a completely different destination city? Marketing without understanding your ideal customer is like that too. Nobody likes to spend time and money on something that doesn't work, right? So take some time and do some digging if you don't know everything you can about your ideal customer. To make that easier, I have a free ideal customer profile that you can download at janicehostager.com/forward-slash-customer and I'll put that link in the show notes too.

Janice Hostager: 4:13

So what to include in your homepage? Even when you're inspired, the homepage can be challenging to write, but here's what I like to include. Obviously, your homepage content has a lot to do with the type of business you have, but there are some basics that you need to make sure are included on a good homepage. Let's start with the top of the page, commonly known as above the fold. That's the area of the page that's visible without scrolling further down. That part of the page is pivotal because users are inclined to scroll further down only if they like what's displayed above the fold and it captures their interest. So the content above the fold serves as the determining factor on whether users will engage on your site or not.

Janice Hostager: 4:53

So first, include who you are, what you do and who you do it for. Ensure that your logo and business name are prominently displayed, usually in the upper corner or in the upper center, but you'll need more than a logo. Many businesses fail to put information about exactly what they do. So on the top of the page you may have, for example, Smith

and Associates in your logo type, but a visitor won't be able to tell that if you're an attorney, insurance agency or an accounting firm or something else. So spell out exactly what you do in your headline tagline or in a subhead. Smith Associates, Arizona Estate Planning Attorneys. For example. If you own a cleaning company, you may specialize in commercial buildings and clean offices, or you may clean private residences, so your headline might be I clean homes for busy families in Austin.

Janice Hostager: 5:46

Some businesses like to be clever with their headline, but clever confuses customers and a confused mind to not buy. So it's best to be clear and to the point. I know it's not as much fun, but clarity always wins. Trust me on that. This can and should also be your value proposition. What you do, who you do it for and what makes you unique. Next, tell your customers what they need to do for their next steps. So I like to include a call to action button above the fold on the home page. It could be something simple like find out more or schedule an appointment, or just a link to the next step on your site that you want them to take. People like to be told what to do next, so it's extremely effective.

Janice Hostager: 6:28

Of course, you also need to include your navigation menu. For this, use a concise and intuitive menu structure that helps users find information efficiently and it's grouped in a logical way. It's easy to overload your navigation menu. Ideally, limit the main menu to five to seven items. I like what Donald Miller says put the main pages in your navigation menu and add the rest of the links to the footer what he calls the junk drawer. By now, people know to check for the footer if they can't find something, and if you have a big site, you can include a search bar so people can search for the information that they're looking for. Use descriptive labels that are easily understood by your ideal customer and that people would search for on Google.

Janice Hostager: 7:11

If you have a blog, don't call it something like words of wisdom or advice from the owner. Stick with common terms that don't allow misinterpretation and that will show up in a Google search result. There's a place for creativity in marketing, but that isn't it.

Janice Hostager: 7:32

The last thing to include above the fold is a hero image. For an image, make sure that it loads quickly, since a huge image can slow down loading time and that negatively affects your search engine optimization or your SEO. This is especially important on a mobile device, since they already are subject to the signal strength and may already

load a little slower anyway. There are some tricks that your web developer can do or help you with, such as lazy loading, but generally it's best to find a happy balance between photo quality and loading speed. If you're not sure how long it takes to load your page, Google has a free page speed checker that I'll put a link to in the show notes.

Janice Hostager: 8:06

If you're wondering what the image should be of, I like to include a photo of my ideal customer as they look when their problem is already solved. So a happy, relaxed person, right? A happy person conveys positivity, which creates an inviting atmosphere for your web visitors. Sometimes people want to put a frustrated before image on the page and, although they may catch someone's attention, that also conveys negativity or dissatisfaction. Remember, people buy on emotion, so you don't want to welcome somebody to your site with a negative image.

Janice Hostager: 8:41

Personally, I'm not a huge stock image fan. If you have the means to get some professional photos done, I highly recommend it. Or if you do need to choose a stock image, pick one that looks a little less stocky and more realistic. There are definitely a lot better options out there these days. Even using Canva. I would also avoid using AI generated image, at least until the quality improves a little bit. Also, people always ask me about background video above the fold. Although this kind of creates a cool look, it can also be really distracting for the visitor. Again, if you know your visitor well and your page loading speed is good, you can certainly consider it. But before you make that choice, go back to your industry, your brand, your ideal customer and decide if it's appropriate.

Janice Hostager: 9:31

Okay so, once you have the area above the fold worked out, it's time to tackle the rest of the page. Here are a few general recommendations. First, people don't really read online. They skim. So use short sentences, short paragraphs, bullet points and easy to read copy. Stick to a fifth grade reading level and use words that resonate with your ideal customer. So avoid like slang, jargon and in-house abbreviations if your audience doesn't know what you're talking about. Remember, a confused mind doesn't buy. But here's where design becomes important. Arrange your elements to guide your visitor's attention logically, with the most important information prominently displayed toward the top of the page. Give users a clear starting point by assigning a visual prominence to key information, that's, bigger headlines, maybe some graphics. They're going to get more attention than smaller images or smaller headlines. Also, many studies suggest

that your eyes skim a webpage from the top left to the bottom right, either in an F shape or a Z shape. That's something to keep in mind when you're placing more important things on your page.

Janice Hostager: 10:39

You also want to write benefit-oriented copy, so clearly state the benefits of your products or services, focusing on how they solve the user's problems. So don't talk about the features of a car, for example, with four-wheel drive. Talk about the benefits of how four-wheel drive will help you get through snow without getting stuck, but first remind them of what their problems are. Agitate things a little bit so they remember why they're there and so they know that you understand their issue. They don't want to hear about you. They want to hear about how you can help them get through their problem. Focus on their pain, not your product. Next, also focus on three to four easy steps to getting their problem solved. Simplify it so you make it look easy. It might be as simple as one, click here to schedule an appointment. Two, we'll come out to your home and fix your dishwasher. And three, we'll be in and out in within two hours, or something like that. So you want to make the whole process look as easy and painless as possible and you want them to be able to see the end solution before they even start doing business with you.

Janice Hostager: 11:49

Also, on the homepage, it's good to include trust indicators. These could be client testimonials, awards, certifications or maybe some national affiliations, or perhaps it's other businesses that you've worked with. They say to your visitor: I am credible and I know my stuff. Also, a little social proof can go a long way in persuading someone to do business with you, especially if that feedback is authentic or really impressive. So including reviews and quotes from happy customers can provide that. I like to include them on the homepage and throughout the rest of the website. Moving down the page.

Janice Hostager: 12:25

I also like to add a thanks for visiting freebie. Often people are not ready to buy when they first visit your site, or they just want to do a little more research. But you don't want them to go away and not come back, so I like to include a freebie download that gives them something valuable, focused on their pain points. Have them enter their email address to get it and then set up an email automation with your email service provider, such as Kit or MailChimp, so you can follow up with them with an email nurture sequence. You can learn more all about this in episode 45 too. But it could be a free download, it could be a discount coupon, it could be free shipping whatever is

appropriate for your business. Then, at the bottom of the page or even the top corner, I like to include social media links. It kind of encourages visitors to connect with you on other platforms too. They might not be ready to buy at the time they visit your website, but they might be ready for a social media follow. So that's my list of what I recommend on your homepage, but I also want to share some answers to a couple of questions I get asked quite a bit.

Janice Hostager: 13:34

Okay, question one for optimized SEO or search engine optimization, how often should I update the homepage of the website? This is always a great question. Remember, your website is a living thing. You'll want to keep updating it and improving it as you go, and Google really likes that too. So for optimized SEO, it's a good idea to update the homepage regularly, but the exact frequency really depends on your business and your industry and the purpose of your website. Regular updates tell the search engines that your site is active and relevant. It's also a good chance for you to integrate new keywords or improve existing ones, or just give a little refresh for your frequent visitors. I like to make updates quarterly at a minimum, but here's a pro tip. Use dynamic content that updates automatically with an RSS feed, so you can incorporate sections like latest news, recent blog posts or upcoming events that update automatically as you add that new content to somewhere else on your site. But if that's not an option, you can also easily refresh key messages or headlines, client testimonials or case studies, or just add promotions to your homepage. Just remember to remove expired promotions also when they expire, since outdated information can hurt your SEO.

Janice Hostager: 14:56

Okay, the next question I get a lot is what keyword is best for the homepage of the website? The best keyword for the homepage of your site depends on your business, your target audience and what you're trying to rank for. So here's how to choose the right keyword. First of all, focus on your primary business or service. So your business might be a yoga studio, and so you might wanna say yoga classes in Dallas, for example. And what terms are your ideal customers searching for when they look for your product or service? Think about pain points or specific solutions in terms of questions they might ask, such as who can diagnose a problem with my oak tree? Then use tools like Google Keyword Planner or Ubersuggest to find those keywords and make sure they're added to your headline subheads or H2s, or your H2 headlines, your second level headlines and your body copy, and behind the scenes, in your page description.

Janice Hostager: 15:51

As always is the case with keywords, the ideal keyword has a high search volume, which means lots of people are looking for it, and a low to medium competition, so it's easier to rank for. If you're in an industry that has some big players, you're not likely to be able to compete with them on their big budgets with highly searched for terms. So that would be the broader terms. So pay more attention to competition when choosing a keyword and maybe optimize your page for a more focused keyword or include a location. If you have a local business, for example, you're going to be more likely to rank highly for a term such as coffee shops in Cedar Park, Texas, which is a suburb of Austin, than to rank for coffee shops in Austin. So it's sometimes as simple as just adding a little more detail to your keywords.

Janice Hostager: 16:41

One thing that I really want to mention is that you or your web developer are likely designing your site on a desktop or laptop computer, but and this can differ by industry but most website visitors use a phone to visit their sites. So remember to check it on mobile before publishing to make sure everything flows correctly and looks like you want it to. A lot of sites are called responsive because they can go from full width to mobile width, but sometimes you get a little-- things get a little funky and they overlap and things like that happen. So just double check it before you publish it on a phone to make sure it all looks great. So that's it. By incorporating these elements, you can create a homepage that not only attracts visitors but also effectively communicates your brand's message and encourages user engagement.

Janice Hostager: 17:34

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