



## HR Consultants Should Not Be Tangled by Web Site

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HR consultants developing a web site for the first time will likely have a myriad of questions ranging from the basic: “Where do I begin?,” to questions related to how much to pay, where/whether to find a consultant to help launch the site, what to include, and not include, and how to design a site that generates maximum interaction, leads to prospects and, ultimately, clients.

The good news is that today’s effective web sites are strong on content and light on glitz. “The pendulum has swung back in terms of all web sites having to be flashy and loaded down with technological innovations that are obvious to the end-user or viewer,” says Drew Plant, a communication consultant in Atlanta who has worked with a wide variety of professionals, including HR consultants, on their web sites. HR professionals should focus on a web site that is easily navigable, no matter what it looks like, and that hooks the user and keeps them viewing the web site, says Plant. “Users need to easily see and use information for, by and about you, not to be impressed because your site spins, explodes and screams,” he adds.

Chad Barr, president of CB Software Systems, Inc., based in Shaker Heights, Ohio, agrees. Although design is very important, the key is to first identify the objectives of the web site and the strategies a consultant needs to incorporate, he says. While HR consultants might have many reasons for deciding on what to include in a web site, the design should be focused on achieving three key objectives, he says. Those objectives are:

- Increasing revenue, clients and qualitative traffic.
- Improving image and reputation while strengthening brand.
- Increase a client’s ease for doing business with the consultant.

**Aaron Witsoe, president of the HR outsourcing firm Creative Business Resources, says that in 2007 the firm redesigned its web site to make it more user-friendly. New copy was created and the web site was updated with more industry-related news, making it a better resource for Witsoe’s clients and vendors as well as the HR community-at-large. In addition, Creative Business Resources launched a second web site in response to the Legal Arizona Worker’s Act. The new site**

**serves as a central source for concerned clients, vendors and business owners to gather information on developments related to the new law. Therefore, HR consultants need to approach the development of a web site by determining who they are trying to attract and what they want to happen once those individuals have discovered and visited the web site, he says.**

HR consultants should consider strategy carefully when developing or enhancing their web sites, and they should develop an Internet strategy and determine what components must be incorporated to increase the web site's success, Barr said. HR consultants need to determine if a "blog" is needed, if they should have a newsletter strategy, an online community that will attract clients or a Flash presentation, he said. Decisions must be made about how much text should be incorporated on the home page, if there are audio and video presentations, client testimonials, search engine optimization and pay-per-click, case studies, passive income products, the consultant's methodology, calls to action and a splash page, he adds.

### **Getting Help**

To determine what might work, HR consultants are urged to consult a professional who can help clarify the consultant's direction, save them time and money and build a solution that generates strong return on investment, Barr says.

In addition, there are some pragmatic issues to be addressed, Plant says. HR consultants should ensure that they maintain control of their web sites, and they should be able to make at least some level of changes to the site without having to turn to a web designer every time, he adds. "Work with a designer who will facilitate that for you. It's not as hard as it sounds and should not be intimidating," he says. In fact, there are software interfaces that make this process essentially as simple as using a common software program such as Microsoft Word to make updates.

**Just as HR consultants' clients are not able to keep with the nuances and intricacies of the HR world, neither can consultants themselves expect to have the knowledge and skill needed to create an effective web site if the consultant wants a web site that is more than a "brochure" type site, Witsoe says. For those consultants who want a web site that is like a brochure, it is possible for them to do it themselves, he says. There is nothing inherently wrong with taking that direction, so long as it meets the consultant's aim for the web site.**

**Those consultants looking for something more from their web sites or who are interested in overhauling an existing web site probably need outside expertise, Witsoe says. That does not mean that an HR consultant's work is done. On the contrary, consultants need to provide the web site professional with the consultancy's strategy, focus and direction as the web site is developed, he says.**

**In considering vendors, consultants need to review proposals carefully and pay attention to specifics, Witsoe says. "You want to make sure the proposal is well laid out and detailed, not 'hey, I'll build you a web site for \$8,000'". Also, check references. Talk to a former client of the vendor and ask if the web site is doing**

**what it was designed for, if it is bringing attention to the business, or bringing in new sales, he says. While the process might appear daunting, HR consultants should not be intimidated by the process because “the payoff is worth it,” he says.**