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Sometimes We Need to Think Inside the Box


Contributed by Peter Pelland, Owner, Pelland Advertising

I hate to run the risk of sounding like Andy Rooney at the end of 60 Minutes, but I think that it is sometimes necessary for all of us who get caught up in technology to take a step backward and take an objective look at our creations. In an attempt to compete in a rapidly evolving marketplace, we are almost compelled to embrace the latest and greatest trends. The challenge, when either time or budgets impose limitations, is to try to distinguish between true technological advances that are likely to possess some staying power and supernova-style trends that are nothing more than bells and whistles that are destined to crash and burn just as quickly as they appear on the scene. In the early days of social networking, for example, the place to be in the very beginning (1997) was a site called SixDegrees.com, followed by Friendster (in 2002), LinkedIn, MySpace, Bebo, and Tribe.net (in 2003), a startup initially known as TheFacebook.com (and limited to students at Harvard University, in 2004), YouTube (in 2005), and Twitter (in 2006). TheFacebook became Facebook, opened access to everybody (in 2006), and has surpassed Google in usage. Where would you be if you had put all of your time and energy into Bebo or Friendster and had ignored Facebook?

Just as we have witnessed a rapid evolution in social networking, we must continually strive to separate the wheat from the chaff with everything else that comes down the pike. Sometimes it is best to concentrate on the basics, resisting the allure of things that sound too good to be true. Anybody can build a website using "do it yourself" tools and

content management systems, but the end products are often atrocities that will scare away even the most unsophisticated potential customers. There is much more involved in creating an effective marketing campaign than clicking a "Publish" button. Your base of potential new campers is far more sophisticated than you may realize, and the graphic design and copywriting qualities that will attract them simply do not come out of a box. Resist the urge to be your own marketing guru, remembering that an attorney who represents himself in court has a fool for a client, and a surgeon who operates on himself has a fool for a patient.

Have you viewed your website on more than one monitor, more than one operating system, and more than one browser? You may be in for a surprise to see how badly it may appear, in some instances to the majority of visitors. Has your copy been edited and proofread or are you relying upon that B- that you received in grammar and spelling back in the 5th grade? If you have a foreign language version of your site are you using a professional translator (who understands the terminology of camping) or simply online translation software? Does all of your marketing embrace a common theme and does every tool contain a "call to action"... in this business, a reservation request?

The bottom line is that, sometimes it may be nice to know that you could do something yourself, but it is better to possess the business savvy to rely upon professionals who will help your business to look its best. 

Peter Pelland is the owner of Pelland Advertising and the founder of the Campground Success website, with nearly 30 years of marketing experience in the family camping industry.

Pelland Advertising provides website development, social networking assistance, and collateral advertising production services to nearly 200 of the industry's highest-rated campgrounds. You may contact Peter at plpelland@pelland.com or 800 848-0501.

