BARKAWI
Management Consultants

„Why do founders and startups need their own website?"

Carena Barkawi, entrepreneur, founder and Managing Partner of Barkawi Management Consultants, in an interview with a magazine for startups on the topic of:

„Why do founders and startups need their own website?"

A homepage demonstrates professionalism and offers information, both of which are important to customers. So a website is absolutely indispensable even for very young companies! Fortunately there are many technical solutions available for making a great internet presence, even with a small budget. So get a website!

What does the website have to achieve?
A website does many things, but most importantly it informs customers and job applicants, helps acquire new business and is a way of contacting a company.

What functions and content is required on a startup website?
Most webpages start with four navigation items/pages: 1. About us, 2. Our products/services, 3. Contact, 4. Masthead (required by law!). Then there are any number of additional options such as Career, Media, etc.

What are the no-gos?
- Private photos. Worst of all are holiday snapshots of the staff members instead of professionally taken photos
- Stock photos that have already been used ad nauseam elsewhere
- Old photos
- Unprofessional copy
- Spelling mistakes and punctuation errors
- Not being up to date (old copy, old images, copyright 2011, etc.)

Carena Barkawi,
Founder and CEO

For many years, Carena Barkawi has been CEO of the award winning consultancy Barkawi Management Consultants in Munich.

Barkawi Management Consultants is part of the Barkawi Group. Carena and Karim Barkawi are CEOs of the holding.

How important is usability?

Extremely! Users are accustomed to scroll and not click nowadays. Nobody clicks their way through huge navigation trees or menus anymore. Menus have to be self-explanatory and at best intuitive. People don't look for things proactively!

What about the presentation on mobile devices!

Very important, because many people today predominantly or even exclusively use mobile devices. Google „penalizes' webpages that are not also optimized for mobile devices with a down-ranking of the site in the page rank! So you should have both stationary and mobile, and this is free and automatic with modular site construction systems!

How important is SEO?

SEO is extremely important, because in addition to the fact that you won't get found if you are poorly ranked because nobody looks at pages 4 to 20 of the Google hits, technical errors lead to punishments and not being displayed at all, or way down at the bottom of the list. There are things that have to be accounted for here right from the first steps of designing the site – things that only professionals know about. Google has an algorithm with 200 criteria and 10,000 sub-criteria that is constantly changing! Most agencies are preoccupied with making a website with a great look, but they have no idea about SEO and end up making errors that come back to haunt them, especially on large and complex sites! Many websites waste away in their own beauty, not getting any traffic!

How important is the connection to social media?

50% of your work should be done in social networks, because that is where you can inform customers and applicants, etc., and position yourself on certain topics. The remaining 50% must go into SEO, because you can place keywords through daily posts on Facebook, LinkedIn, Xing, etc., through which you are ranked on Google! So this is an important aspect that goes far beyond merely 'socializing' with customers!

What does a startup have to keep in mind in terms of legal security?

This is a really important issue! In Germany and internationally there is an industry that lawyers and legal firms are focusing on, which involves finding errors and minor legal breaches and writing warning notices. They nearly always find something, particularly in the masthead. This can get very expensive for companies, especially small ones and startups, who need every cent they can find to grow or for marketing. Luckily there are free offers from legally unassailable masthead generators, so definitely use them!!!

Is a modular system enough for founders and startups?

Absolutely! There are outstanding modular systems for building sites; some of them with enormous photo databases for just a few euros a month, which is not to be underestimated, as image rights can be very expensive. And modular doesn't always have to mean 1&1, although even that works excellently and looks entirely professional! Drupal, Joomla, WordPress and Typo3 also offer great options, without you having to be an HTML expert.

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*WIR WISSEN, WIE
UNTERNEHMER TICKEN...*

Do you manage your website internally or do you have an external service provider?
It's a mixture of both. We design it, write the copy, post the photos and make the daily updates, but due to time restrictions we have outsourced the actual technical „programming', with very clear instructions. After all, our website is not small at about 70 pages. I myself am in the backend of our site as an administrator, always adding new, exciting content, and I am closely involved in the programming and SEO work.

Why?
Our products, and hence also the contents of our webpages, are highly complex, so that we can only delegate the actual programming. It is not possible for someone from outside the company to create truly valuable editorial content, especially not on a daily basis! In addition, our management has to give its okay for all new content before it goes online!

What helpful tips do you have for company founders with regard to their webpage?
Our top tips:
1. Social media is a matter for bosses! Never put Facebook in the hands of a student intern if you don't want to have an ill-considered statement trigger a shitstorm!
2. A website with a simple content system for no more than €20 per month is entirely sufficient initially, but it has to be professional and up to date!
3. Treat social media as an extension of the website and connect them to each other by adding links to interesting content on the homepage in your daily posts!
4. Post interesting, „selfless' content, and don't hard-sell products. Then the potential customers will come of their own accord!
5. Be patient and persistent. Search engines don't react immediately; it sometimes takes 4-6 weeks for Google Crawler to process the site and for your click values and the page rank to stabilize!

What other helpful hints do you as an entrepreneur have for company founders?
Within Barkawi Group we have launched seven new companies in recent years in widely varying fields: Barkawi Management Consultants was first, followed by a mobile phone returns system, a kind of eBay for surplus industrial goods such as fiber optic cable, track systems, etc.. Another interesting one is an RFID tag that Henkel uses, for instance, to manage and sort its factory traffic. It sounds like a bit of a jumbled mixture when you list it like that, but they are all ideas that came from consulting projects.

We were very savvy in all of those areas before getting involved in them – we knew the market and competitors – and that would be my advice to company founders: know your market, your product, your competition, your market environment. **And tip number 2:** Use that knowledge to compile a well-founded, absolutely honest and realistic business plan! No lying to yourself! Bending the truth will prove costly down the line!

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