



7 pages every business Web site must have

By [Christopher Elliott](#)

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Don't look now, but your Web site might be missing a few pages—a few *very* important pages.

You're not alone. Most small-business sites are a work in progress—constantly being revised, improved, and updated. So invariably, something is always missing. But some pages are so important that not having them could hurt your bottom line.

A 2007 Forrester Research study of business-to-business Web sites found that many of the pages it examined were difficult to navigate and use. About one-quarter of them lacked critical pages containing privacy and security policies, for example. Those are essential pages for any business site, big or small.

"Many companies get sidetracked from what is really important," Kelly Cutler, chief executive of the Chicago-based strategic interactive advisory firm Marcel Media, told me. That is, sites that are "clean, professional, and easy to navigate," she says, generally have most or all of the pages customers are looking for.

So, you can let your customers tell you about those missing pages. Or you can read this story and then add these commonly overlooked components.

Let me tell you about having customers tell you what is missing, because that's a road I've taken. When I began designing and publishing Web pages in 1996, there were, for all intents and purposes, no standards. Back then I wouldn't make a change to my site until people e-mailed me en masse to complain ("You don't have a Contact Us page? Get one!").

That was the hard way.

This is the easy way. Here are seven pages every business Web site must have, and where they need to be:

1. **Contact Us.** "Every small-business site should have a Contact Us page," says Melissa Campanelli, author of "Open an Online Business in 10 Days" (Entrepreneur Press, 2007). "It should offer visitors a complete list of ways they can contact you – from e-mail addresses to toll-free numbers to a physical address." It's easy to overlook a Contact Us page because, after all, this is your company's online presence, and why post something like your physical address. But customers don't think that way. When it comes to contacting you, they want options—or they just might take their business elsewhere.

Where it goes: There should be a link to it on the nav bar and on every page. Give your customers as many choices as you can, including a form, e-mail address, instant-messaging account, regular mail, toll-free number, and toll number for overseas callers. Leave no virtual stone unturned.

2. **Testimonials.** Many companies skip the Testimonials page because they consider it too self-serving, says Lori Quaranta, president of Consetta Web Solutions in Shelton, Conn. "Some people would argue that this is not necessary, that business owners plug their business with bogus testimonials. But again, it's a natural human instinct for people to know, 'What's so good about you? I wonder what others had to say.'" In other words, while having a page like that may seem self-promotional, people will look for it. And when they don't find it, they might begin to make assumptions. Why don't they have a testimonials page? Can't they find enough people to say nice things about them?

Where it goes: Ask long-time clients to supply a short testimonial and make sure a link to it is on your nav bar where anyone can find it. Remember, people will be looking for this one.

- 3. Privacy policy.** Web users are more conscious about safety and privacy than ever, so a good privacy policy is an absolute must, according to Corey Donovan, vice president at Vibrant Technologies, an IT reseller in Minnetonka, Minn. "If you collect user data via a Web form such as a contact form, then you really should have a privacy policy page," he says. "Linking to this page on any page where you request personal information is a trust-builder and will decrease form abandonment." Not only that, but many companies require that you have a privacy policy before they do business with you. So get one. (The Better Business Bureau has a good [sample privacy notice](#) on its site.)

Where it goes: A privacy policy doesn't have to be prominent in your design. Most people look for a link to it from the bottom of every page.

- 4. FAQ.** Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are frequently forgotten, too. At least that's the assessment of Joel Fisher, vice president and creative director at TruePresence, an Internet marketing firm in Baltimore. Why is an FAQ page so important? Mostly, they'll ensure you won't have to answer the same questions over and over. "This will save time and money by letting your clients service themselves," Fisher says. "And if you don't think your customers have questions, you're wrong." Not sure what they want to know more about? You can always solicit questions on a feedback form, and if you see repeats, turn them into an FAQ for the page.

Where it goes: You already know the most common questions. Post them—and the answers—somewhere that's easy to find. A lot of FAQ sections are linked to from the bottom of each page, along with the site's privacy policy.

- 5. A "gimme" page.** Want readers to sign up for your newsletter or regular special offers? You need what Drew Barton, president of Southern Web Group in Atlanta, calls the "gimme" page—a section where users can be persuaded to give up some of their personal information (such as their names and e-mail addresses) in exchange for ... well, something else. "Information has a price," he says. "Web site visitors withhold information about themselves and can only be persuaded to give that information up in exchange for something of value. In many cases, this is an informative report, a keychain, a chance to win tickets to a ballgame, or a cash prize. I've even seen Web site owners raffle off a kayak in order to entice site visitors to sign up and divulge invaluable information."

Where it goes: "Gimme" pages should be linked to or even integrated into the page on which you ask readers to sign up for your free newsletter or your weekly specials. Yes, they need a reason.

- 6. About Us.** Another often overlooked component: the About Us page. "The Internet offers businesses the opportunity to expand their market reach like never before," notes Thomas Harpointner, chief executive of AIS Media, a Web site design and hosting company based in Atlanta. "But just because you can do business with people you might never meet doesn't mean they don't want to know about who they're doing business with." The most effective About Us pages are succinct and use no jargon. I've seen "about" pages that scroll on for several pages and read like a doctoral thesis. Most of the experts I talked with say that's a big turn-off for potential customers.

Where it goes: Web users look for an About Us page link at the bottom of the home page or in the nav bar.

Caution: Don't get fancy and call it something else. Stick to "about" or "About Us"—that's what they're looking for.

- Confirmation.** A decent confirmation page that acknowledges an order and thanks the visitor for his or her business is essential—and often lacking, says Brian Drum, chief executive of Drum Associates, an executive search firm in New York. "If a customer is taking any action, a page that says 'Thank you for purchasing this product' or 'One of our representatives will contact you shortly' can really cut down on time answering customer phone calls," he says. That means less time spent answering queries such as "Did my subscription to your e-mail newsletter go through?" or "Did my order get processed?" The reason these pages are easy to overlook is that they aren't static. They're usually generated after a transaction takes place, and people don't spend much time worrying about what happens after a transaction.

Where it goes: If there's any kind of form on your site—e-mail us, subscribe to our newsletter, buy a product—you need a confirmation page to follow. It should reassure the customer that their information was received, thank them for it, and offer additional resources and contacts in case they have any other questions.

Already have these pages? Well done. But don't get too comfortable. Just like the Web, these must-have pages can—and almost certainly will—change with time. The only way to make sure your site doesn't become obsolete is to listen to your customers.



About the author Christopher Elliott is an Orlando, Fla., writer and independent producer who specializes in technology, travel, and mobile computing. His work has appeared in numerous newspapers, magazines and online. You can find out more about him on his [Web site](#) or sign up for his [free weekly newsletter](#).

Original page: <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/officelive/FX102279611033.aspx>

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