



STRATEGIC PLANNING &
IMPLEMENTATION ASSOCIATES, INC.

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How to keep online visitors coming back for more

Be honest! Some things never change. A website's success is all about answering that famous question: What's in it for me?

In order to capture someone's attention (and keep it) you have to offer them something they want today!!! And they must feel enough urgency to act on it today.

How many times have you told yourself you'd come back to that website "later" and never did?

If your website doesn't have a hook that keeps the visitor on site, you're losing business - more importantly, you're losing valuable repeat business; because an effective hook will not only reel visitors in the first time around - it will also cause them to return to your website over and over and over again.

And since the average conversion ratio is only 1 to 2 percent. This means that up to 99 percent of your visitors will not purchase anything the first time they visit your website.

That's why getting visitors to return to your website is so critical.

It could mean the difference between success and failure.

So what's the best way to get visitors to return to your website?

Well, a lot of experts prescribe to the theory that you should collect your visitors names and follow up with a eZines or newsletter. Using this method, your newsletter would be your hook.

While this method is fine for most people, being a contrarian, I personally don't prescribe to that theory. I purposely go out of my way to do things differently.

Here's why: According to Paul Soltoff, the chief executive officer of SendTec, Inc., E-mail marketing is heading down the same exact path as banner ads -- but at a much faster rate. Why? Because consumers are bombarded and saturated with e-mail, particularly by every known flavor of spam. The sources range from legal but unethical to barely legal and blatantly outrageous. E-mail open rates, once as high as 50 percent, now hover between just 3 and 8 percent."

It's true. E-mail open and click-through rates have declined dramatically, according to the latest E-mail Trend Report from New York-based online ad agency DoubleClick.

Knowing these numbers, for me, the best way to get visitors to return to my website over and over again is to provide great content that's constantly refreshed. That's my hook.

Of course, providing great content is not the only way to insure that visitors return to your website.

Here are a few other effective hooks:

1. Make your website attractive. The appearance of your website is the first thing visitors notice. You know the old saying..."First impressions are everything!"

The look of your site sets the tone for potential future visits. People will immediately judge whether your site is professional or amateurish, and whether or not they want to return.

Use a design and colors that are appealing and pleasing to the eye. Also, make your site inviting, and easy to navigate. Minimizing download time is important. If possible, avoid using FLASH or other time-consuming graphics.

Remember, a declining but still important percentage of Internet users are still on dial-up, according to PCworld.

2. Keep your site's content fresh. Give your visitors a reason to return to your site. Update and rotate your content regularly to keep visitors coming back. Keep your site fresh with new information that is closely related to the overall theme of your site, and addresses the needs of your target audience.

3. Add an RSS feed to your website. With an RSS feed, our site's content will be instantly transmitted to your visitors. Your visitors will come back to your website often to find the latest news on their interests. RSS feeds will also make your pages more relevant and "sticky."

4. Supply visitors with news stories and features related to your site. People are always seeking current news on the topics they are interested in. For example, if there is hot or popular news that has garnered national or worldwide attention, be creative and figure out a way to relate it to your web site's theme.

5. Add a forum or chatroom to your site. These are very effective hooks and are great for getting conversations started and are proven commodities for enticing people to return to your site.

In closing, try to come up with your own unique hook. For example, when I went online a few months ago, one of the main features of my website were the interviews I conducted with my site's content authors.

Keep in mind that there are techniques that work – most of the time:

1. Offers with expirations have historically worked.
2. The key is offering the prospective "something" of value
3. And making that "something" so attractive that they must have it
4. Most importantly, you must limit its availability so that they must act now or lose out

Remember FOREVER "is" a timeline (smile)

I'm not saying you shouldn't copy what others are doing successfully. I'm saying, try to develop your own unique hook!