

Websites: Attracting Small-Business Customers

By Karen Tunks, Director Marketing/Communications, Clarity Advantage

Bankers love to ask business owners, “What keeps you up at night?”—a shopworn question, for sure. And yet, many issues do keep business owners or want-to-be business owners from sleeping soundly.



Getting started—writing a business plan? That’s a good one. Figuring out how to generate more sales? Yup, a lot of lost winks on that. How to manage cash flow better? Yup. Price products? Yup. Minimize taxes? Yup.

And where do they turn first for information? The Web. According to Social Media Today, *online search is the leading way people discover new information*. We search for content more than 21 billion times each month in the United States alone! And where on the Web do business owners go? Maybe a bank’s website; after all, financial institutions are the experts on money and financial matters, right?

And, what percentage of banks’ small-business websites falls flat for this purpose? An alarming 84 percent, as determined by a study of bank websites recently conducted by Clarity Advantage. The reason: a lack of content.

Content is *king* in today’s marketing world. We’ve all heard that before. Content attracts, engages and educates potential customers. It establishes credibility and strengthens brand. It can even move potential customers along the buying path. According to the Custom Content Council, 61 percent of consumers say they feel better about, and are more likely to buy from, a company that delivers custom content.

Think about your bank’s website for a moment. What kind of content are you offering? Is it product focused? How many visitors is your site attracting weekly? Monthly? How many of those are repeat visitors? What pages are they visiting? What percentage of visitors converts to business?

Whatever your answers, several things are for sure: The right content can increase your search engine ranking, elevate your website traffic, drive potential customers to key pages, keep them on your site and keep them coming back in the future. In short, the right content can help your bank sell more.

Consider that there are 23 million small businesses in the United States, all with banking needs. Do you have an area of your website dedicated to the needs of small-business owners? Is your site providing them with the kinds of information and resources they are looking for online? Are you helping them build profitable businesses? Or are you merely advertising your products?

Now is the time to rethink your small-business website strategy—an effective website is about more than product features and benefits, banner ads and lead-generating forms. Through our research, we’ve determined that there are six actions you can take now to improve your bank’s small-business website content. Let’s take a look at each of them along with some real-life examples of good execution and poor execution that we discovered during our research. Here are action steps you can take.

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Action 1: Develop and offer content that captures, engages, educates and supports small-business owners.

Of the 85 percent of U.S. consumers who use the Internet for banking, 78 percent say they do so to find information about a bank product or service they are thinking about buying (Pew Internet and American Life Project). Like most consumers, small-business owners increasingly turn to the Web to find information. They search about all aspects of their businesses—from starting them, to growing them profitably, to running them efficiently. In fact, there were 800 million Google searches for small-business information just last year!

Your website should be a resource small-business owners can rely on for help in managing their businesses better. Content should focus on solving business owners' pain points at each stage of their business development—not merely promoting banking products. Content should include issues such as how to forecast cash flow, how to calculate break-even points, and how to reduce costs and drive sales, as well as pain points that bank products can address.

STARTUP TOOLBOX Connect Startup Toolbox: Business Differentiation

By Alyssa Gregory

Differentiation is a strategy that businesses can use to stand out from the competition in ways that customers value.

The Connected Startup Toolbox: Business Differentiation will help you determine the best ways for you to differentiate your small business.

View the slide presentation, download the detailed overview and complete the unique selling proposition worksheet to discover what sets your business apart from the competition.

Alyssa Gregory is a small business consultant, writer, speaker and collaborator who has been helping start and grow small businesses for 13 years. She is also the founder of the Small Business Bonfire, a free social, educational and collaborative community for small business owners.

Smallbusinessbonfire.com

Featured Content

- 10 questions to ask before naming your business
- Unique Selling Proposition Worksheet

Good execution: by offering a variety of relevant, helpful resources organized into “toolboxes,” this bank’s small business website is educational and it solves specific small business owner pain points. This toolbox helps visitors differentiate their small business from the competition.

Small & Midsize Businesses

Growing a business requires a variety of sophisticated solutions to help clients achieve their strategic goals. We provide the complete product offering through Commercial Banking and Small Business Banking in partnership with our Investment Bank, Treasury Services and Asset Management divisions.

We build long-term client relationships by understanding our clients' unique business needs and keeping their objectives our top priority.

Solutions for small and midsize businesses include:

- Cash Management Services for small business and middle market clients**: Processes payments, manages cash balances and relieves information on accounts
- Credit Products**: Supplies short-term and long-term credit, leasing options and trade finance products
- Asset-Based Lending**: Meets clients' financing needs through a broad range of asset-based solutions
- Retirement Plan Services**: Provides U.S.-based companies and their employees with services, solutions and expertise needed to achieve their individual retirement goals
- Health Savings Accounts**: Provides tools for making healthcare more affordable for businesses and their employees
- Business Banking**: Tailors accounts to meet clients' unique business needs
- Commercial Real Estate Banking**: Assists clients with advisory services and credit for projects including residential development, commercial construction and long-term mortgage lending
- International Banking**: Helps clients with their overseas financial services needs using the global capabilities of the firm
- Investment Management and Advice**: Offers strategies and advice that span the full spectrum of asset classes

Poor execution: this bank’s small business website is completely product focused, offering no tools to help small business owners manage their businesses better.

Action 2: Position your content so that it moves small-business owners along the buying path.

A great way to build awareness of and relevancy for your bank’s products is to pair them with engaging content that discusses the business issue the product addresses or solves. Include a form to capture key information about your website’s visitors. You’ll quickly build up your lead database and will have relevant information to pass on to your bank’s small-business sales team.

Financial Healthcheck
Business / Small business / Financial Healthcheck

3. Do you have enough cash reserves or forward orders to survive the next three months?

☐ No
☒ Yes
☐ Maybe
☐ Not Applicable

To survive unforeseen emergencies, every business needs a cash reserve forward orders that will cover the operating costs of the business.

If you have a three-month buffer of cash reserve, or forward orders you get your survival strategies in place before you run out of cash.

[Back](#) [Next](#) [Yes](#) [No](#) [Maybe](#) [Not Applicable](#)

Personal banking Business banking

The importance of cash reserves or forward orders

Ideally, you'd have enough funds coming into your business through sales, or enough cash reserves for at least three months. A three month buffer will give you some breathing space and time to make alternative plans when things go wrong. If sales are falling then you need sufficient cash reserves to allow you to keep trading. Many businesses go through a rough patch and lose money, but are able to remain in business by drawing on the profits of previous years that they have retained as savings.

If you don't have enough sales coming in to cover costs and you have no reserves, then you need to raise additional cash. You may need to consider using your own personal savings, borrowing more against property or selling any spare assets to generate some cash. Use the [Business Products Selector](#) to find the right product for you or speak to your Small Business Banker in more detail about possible solutions.

If you're a director of a company and continue to trade despite knowing you'll run out of cash, you could be held personally liable for the company trading while insolvent, even though you operate as a limited liability company.

[Key expense savings action plan \(33kb\)](#)

Good execution: This bank offers a financial healthcheck—an engaging, interactive tool that helps business owners plan their business growth. At the end of the healthcheck, business owners understand what steps they need to take and can click on links that lead to relevant products.

Select an Industry...

Faster Deposits.
Remote Image Deposit
is subject to contractual terms and conditions.
[Learn more >>](#)

Checking & Savings

- Find the Right Checking Account
- Find the Right Savings Account
- Visa® Business Debit Card

[VIEW MORE FEATURES >](#)

Credit Cards & Card Products

- Visa® Business Credit Card
- BankMiles® Travel Program
- Visa® Business Debit Card
- Visa® Gift Card

[VIEW MORE FEATURES >](#)

Loans & Financing

- Business Loans
- Lines of Credit
- Equipment Finance & Leasing

[VIEW MORE FEATURES >](#)

Insurance*

- Business Insurance Products
- Employee Benefits
- Life Insurance
- Get a Free Quote Today

[VIEW MORE FEATURES >](#)

Merchant & Treasury Services

- Credit Card Processing
- Collection & Payment Services
- Account Reconciliation
- Reporting & Data Management

[VIEW MORE FEATURES >](#)

Corporate & Nonprofit Services*

- Institutional Advisory Services
- Contact Our Advisory Team

[VIEW MORE FEATURES >](#)

Your Business Partner

- Bank at Work for Employers
- International Banking Services
- Specialized Business Areas

[VIEW MORE FEATURES >](#)

Business Online Banking Advantage

- See How It Works
- Find the Right Online Banking Advantage
- Training Resources
- Frequently Asked Questions

[VIEW MORE FEATURES >](#)

Poor execution: This bank's "catalog" approach doesn't help small business owners understand why they need these products and services. There is no mention of issues small business owners are facing and how these products and services relate to them.

Action 3: Have a clear editorial strategy, and offer a variety of content types organized around business-owner pain points.

Develop a content strategy and curriculum that's based on a deep understanding of small-business owners' pain points—the questions they're seeking to answer through Web search. Then, map the content you create to the curriculum, and deploy it in a variety of ways including articles, videos, business guides, e-newsletters, infographics, case studies of real businesses, diagnostic health checks and e-learning. The more variety, the more interesting your site will come across to small-business owners. The more tools you offer, the more time small-business owners will spend exploring them on your site.

Business Corporate Our Products

Starting a business
Get your business idea off the ground with our helpful Small Business Resources -

- Assessing your idea
- Writing a business plan
- Funding
- Understanding cashflow

[Find out more >](#)

Business guides

- How can social media help your business
- Understanding key financial documents
- How to write a business plan

[Find out more >](#)

Online training

- How good is your business idea?
- Accessing finance
- Cash flow management

[Find out more >](#)

Running a Business
Keep your business on the path of success with our helpful Small Business Resources - cash flow management, cost cutting, increasing profit and more...

[Find out more >](#)

Our business 'health check' is a popular diagnostics with small businesses.

- 10 questions you need to answer about your business

[Find out more >](#)

Good execution: There's a clear editorial strategy here centered on a particular small business owner pain point—starting a business. There is also a nice variety of content offered—business guides, online training, and a business healthcheck—to keep small business owners interested and on the site.

HOME PERSONAL BUSINESS PLANNING & TOOLS OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS

Retirement College Home Buying Calculators & Educators Rate Finder Balancing Worksheet

Home / Planning & Tools /

Calculators & Educators

At [Clarity Advantage](#) we believe in customers making the decisions that affect their financial matters. By providing you with educational tools, as well as financial calculators and planners, we can help to ensure that your decisions are the right ones.

Financial Planning Center

Our calculators and educators will help you to determine the best use of your money. Use the Calculators to identify impacts on your financial security and read through the Educators to learn more about financial decisions that affect your life.

Select a calculator [Go](#)

Business Resource Center

Business owners are faced with decisions that affect profitability, strategy, employees and other areas on a daily basis. Our Calculators and Educators help you to impact those areas and most importantly your bottom line, in a positive way.

Select a calculator [Go](#)

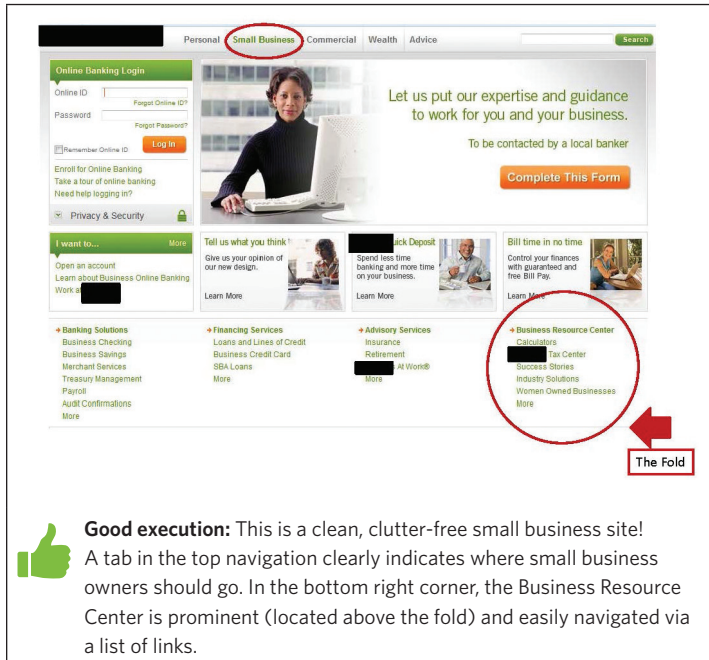
McAfee Anti-Virus 2013
ACCESS DENIED

The requested URL cannot be provided.
URL: <http://www.clarityadvantage.com/business/...>
Blocked by Virus Anti-Virus

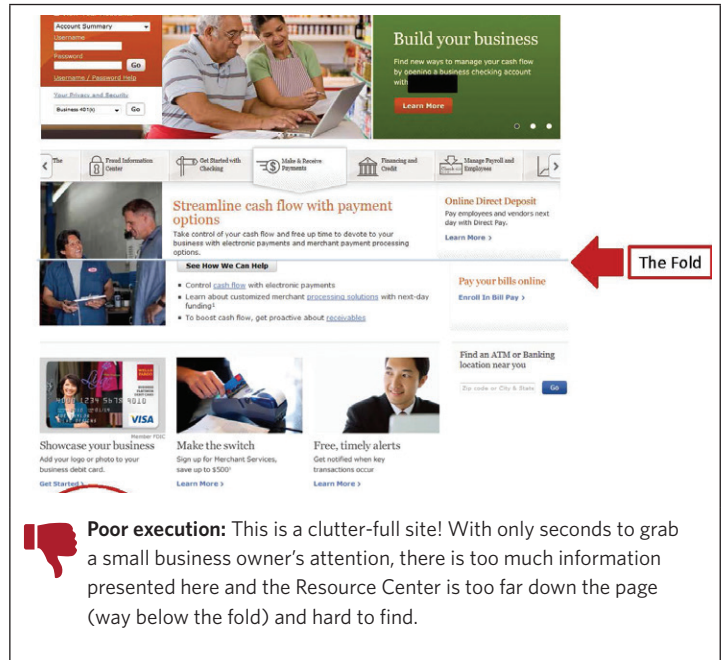
Poor execution: This site's resources aren't organized around business owner pain points and there's no clear editorial strategy. The links to the calculators take visitors off of the bank's website and aren't functional, triggering anti-virus protection.

Action 4: Make your content visible so that it's easy to find, and keep it clutter free so that it's easy to navigate.

You have mere seconds to capture small-business owners' attention once they land on your website, so don't make them hunt for what they are looking for. They have to immediately see what they need or else they are likely to click away and not return in the future. Organize your site's content so that it's easy for business owners to find what they're looking for the moment they land on your site.



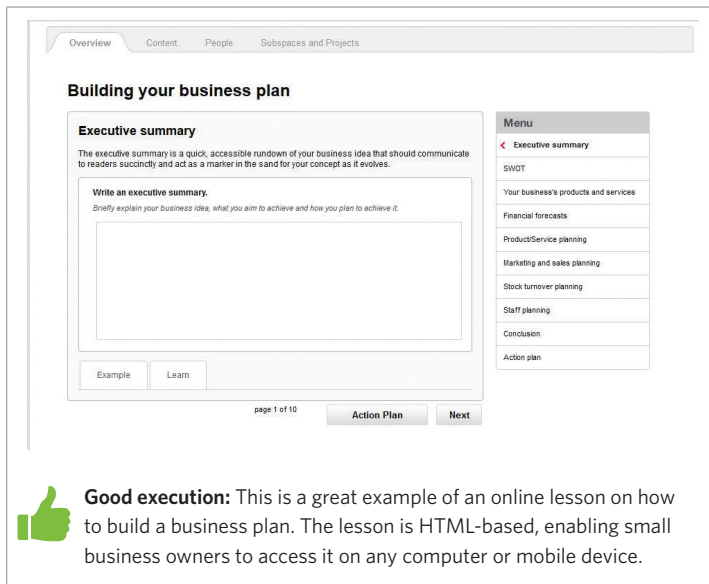
Good execution: This is a clean, clutter-free small business site! A tab in the top navigation clearly indicates where small business owners should go. In the bottom right corner, the Business Resource Center is prominent (located above the fold) and easily navigated via a list of links.



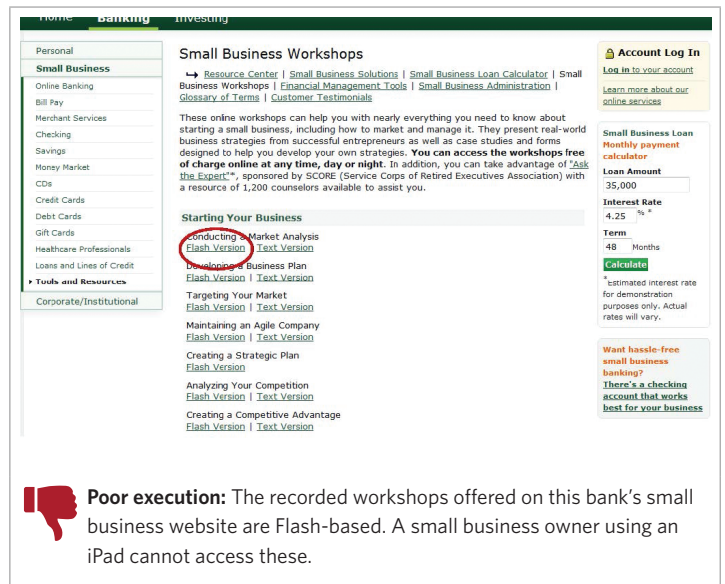
Poor execution: This is a clutter-full site! With only seconds to grab a small business owner's attention, there is too much information presented here and the Resource Center is too far down the page (way below the fold) and hard to find.

Action 5: Make it mobile friendly.

This point is important yet often overlooked by marketers and Web developers. Like most of us, small-business owners aren't always on a computer when they're searching the Web for information. They're on smart-phones, iPads and other tablets and devices. Keep this in mind as you're developing your website content. Be sure to develop HTML-based content rather than Flash-based so that it can be accessed on all devices, everywhere and anywhere.



Good execution: This is a great example of an online lesson on how to build a business plan. The lesson is HTML-based, enabling small business owners to access it on any computer or mobile device.



Poor execution: The recorded workshops offered on this bank's small business website are Flash-based. A small business owner using an iPad cannot access these.

Action 6: Make it interactive.

Small-business owners are likely to be more engaged and stay on your site longer when they are actively participating with your content. Articles, how-to guides, case studies and other static material (if written with the needs of small-business owners in mind) can be quite useful, but combining them with interactive tools such as calculators, quizzes and financial health checks where small-business owners can input their own data and participate in a unique user experience will help your website become more of an interactive destination.

Home > Action Plans > Competitor analysis

Competitor analysis

Competitor profile

Remember the old adage, "Keep your friends close and your enemies closer"? Well, it also applies to your competitors. It's not about knowing what your biggest competitor had for breakfast, but you should have a pretty good idea of who they are, what they offer and their strengths and weaknesses.

Outline your closest competitor

Detail your closest competitor with a brief description of their website, advertising, and approach to customer service.

Example Learn Action Plan Next

Menu

- Understanding your market
- Your competitors' products and services
- Your competitors' pricing
- Your competitor's sales channels
- Your competitors' advertising
- Your competitors' approach to customer service
- Your competitors' customers
- Your competitors' long-term strategy
- Compiling your research
- Acting on the information
- Action Plan



Good execution: This interactive tool for understanding a small business's competition enables a small business owner to input his own data, develop ideas, and create outcomes unique to his business.

BUSINESS BANKING > COMMERCIAL BANKING > Banking Services

Small Business Resource Center

Tools, tips and advice to help you manage and grow your business.

Filter by: Select category Learn about products and services for Small Businesses like yours

Small Business Seminar: The Business of Baseball Q&A with Red Sox COO Sam Kennedy

Red Sox COO, Sam Kennedy provides Small Business owners with insight on building a team culture, incorporating employee and customer feedback and achieving results in a unique environment.

Categories: Marketing & Sales

Your Business Today: The Risk in How We Think About Risk

Small Business Seminar featuring Jonathan Clements, Director of Financial Education, CIE Personal Wealth Management

Categories: Finance

How to blend your work and life

For entrepreneurs, work is personal—and the goal is not balance, but integration. A successful entrepreneur from TV's Shark Tank shares her tips

By Lori Greiner

Business Owners are Talking

Bayport Labs
Enoteca Maria
Nirvana Surfboards
SusieCakes
The Fencing Post

News & Events

Small Business Pulse
April 10, 2013
Online for Small Business, a new online banking platform to meet the needs of business owners who are on-the-go. Learn More.

Show More News & Events

Tools & How-Tos

Online marketing and social media tips for small business



Poor execution: This small business website offers a mix of articles and videos—static content that requires no action from small business owners. Without any interactive tools, there's little to keep a small business owner engaged on this site.

The value of small-business website content

Small-business owners crave information that can help them start their businesses as well as run and grow them more efficiently and profitably. Your bank can capitalize on their cravings and offer resources that are wanted, needed and useful. Not only will small-business owners benefit, your bank will benefit too with greater Web visibility, higher credibility and increased sales.

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