Bored With Your Website?
A Redesign Won't Necessarily Improve Your Business!

By Matthew A. Perosi

There are a lot of ugly jewelry websites out there. Some of them were set up five or more years ago with poorly chosen templates, do-it-yourself methods, and sloppy implementations of good concepts. The website design itself is not always the reason a site looks ugly; sometimes it's just poor photography, the wrong typeface, or mismatched color schemes.

Whatever the reason, these ugly websites are poor reflections of the beautiful products and services that jewelers provide. Over the last 12 months, I've watched as many retail jewelers have taken steps to upgrade their sites from those older, ugly designs, to highly polished looking sites using WordPress.com or Shopify.com templates. There are thousands of really nice looking template designs that you can purchase and install for much less than paying a website designer. WordPress and Shopify provide a lot of options for do-it-yourself methods.

In early April, I was asked to participate in a panel review of a newly launched, Shopify powered e-commerce website. The panel consisted of the jeweler's business consultant, their marketing agent, and me. The jeweler and website developer did not participate to prevent their opinions from influencing ours. We were to report back to them with our first impressions and our opinions on the implementations of the template design, usability issues, and anything found wrong with the website.

They used their previous website for eight years to attract customers to their store, but the intention of this new site was purely e-commerce, with little written about their brick-and-mortar store on their About Us and Contact Us pages.

The design was very simple with a white background and a black serif typeface. The footer had inverse colors with a black background and a white san-serif typeface. The navigation used a simple drop down menu from the top. Other than the home page that had large photographs fading from one to the other, the website had no other fancy animation or fading effects. I classified it as a minimalist design that looked very open and clean, allowing you to focus on the product photography.

The jeweler took all the photos himself. They spent more than six months to complete that task. The color, focus, and lighting of most of the photography were good, however, the photos were too small to correctly present the fine detail of the jewelry—and they didn't have a zoom feature.

After a two hour telephone review, here are a few of the other problems we found:
• There was no way to choose a ring size.
• There was no way to indicate what color gemstones to select in a grandmothers pendant.

• The description for their charm bracelet sets said you could choose from 5 different charms, but gave no way to actually select them.
• The Add to Cart button didn't always work.

Sadly, the jeweler selected this specific Shopify template based on the design and not on the functionality. Our review summary included the following three main points:

 The website would not help their local marketing because it focused too much on e-commerce.

 It would generate a lot of tech support phone calls because it lacked the necessary size, color, and charm selection features.

 People who didn't call would simply abandon their shopping carts in frustration.

In short, the website implementation would backfire on them. The eight year old website they were upgrading is considered ugly now, but not when it was created. It simply didn't age well and was outdated by current website aesthetics.

This new website was the jeweler's attempt at upgrading their online look without considering how it would impact their business. It has the potential to tie in nicely with their local billboard, but it would not work with their continuing social media and direct mail campaigns.

Before you take the leap to redesign your own website, you should first analyze if the approach you are taking will truly benefit your business, or if you are redesigning just because you feel you must. New technology advances are pushing every business to create innovative ways to build closer customer interactions, which sometimes includes e-commerce, but mostly not.

Don't simply redesign your website because you are bored with it, or because you met a convincing website company at one of the trade shows. Instead, take the time to evaluate how you operate your business and brainstorm those operations into viable, customer friendly, mobile enabled versions.

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Matthew Perosi reports the latest Internet trends and methods that are most relevant to the jewelry industry in his 5-day per week newsletter, available through jwag.biz. Tap into the more than 1,100 free newsletters to guide you towards better usage of websites, social, and mobile. Matthew invites your feedback and questions at matt@jwag.biz or 973.413.8211. Many questions from TRJ readers have turned into great newsletter topics.