

ORGANIC WEB SITES ARE THE FUTURE

GATESHEAD-BASED WEB-ENTREPRENEUR **LING VALENTINE**, "A CHINESE, FEMALE, ONLINE CAR-SALES WHIRLWIND" CRASHES THE STUFFY BUSINESS WEBSITE MODEL – AND WALKS AWAY UNSCATHED

I'M Ling and I work from the Internet, I even live inside my website. Most business websites are terrible. Boring and useless.

I say that a website should be constantly organic – be alive, fluid, evolving and most of all, have a personality. If not, then it's dead.

Building a website is one of the easiest skills in the world to learn. You can copy source code from any website. It's free! Simply add content and stir.

I maintain my website myself, minute-by-minute. Certainly in my own industry, my website is head and shoulders above any other car sales website. That's because I feed it all the time, like a pet spider. It is never finished, and never perfect – but everything works and I never upload bland rubbish. Every day it changes.

The best way to create a successful website is to make it entertaining, useful and accurate. And the best way to do that is to work from it, yourself because if you can use it, then your customers can.

If your stock or data database is supplying your website with information (it should be), then work from your website. Make your website your business access point, for everyone. Your staff should find prices or availability from your website and use it for communication with customers. A website is simply a useless and boring sales brochure unless you can do something with it. And websites are SO cheap!

For example; my customers can browse live car deals on my website and get a live RSS feed, (that's where I check my own figures and work from) so it's always 100% accurate and up to date. 99 out of 100 of other websites in the world contain old static information. Plus, they are boring.

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My website LINGsCARS.com gets around 50,000 unique visitors every single month, and many of those interact with me by text chatting as they browse. I monitor the website, constantly. Customers ask questions and it's a wonderful feeling to be chatting as they browse my website. Using this technology I can also "push" them to pages they might otherwise not see, and close them by answering queries.

You want website ideas? Well, stop patronising. I treat customers like adults, not idiots – but that doesn't mean we can't have fun while they look at my car deals! There's a series of "Chop Gear" spoof movies, road-testing new cars and freely

available. I offer free lunch to 10 visitors every day and send them noodle with chopsticks, Chinese Nescafé and a small pudding. They apply online, and this is very popular; even with high-rollers and company directors. As is my "Free Money" promotion – I post out Chinese Yuan banknotes and Chinese Polo mints to applicants... where else can you get those?

If website visitors enjoy playing my quiz and reading my blog (a blog is SO important for Google to index), then they can send me poetry. I publish it online and send them a genuine 1960s Mao's Little Red Book as a reward. Many businesses would kill to get this much customer participation. My visitors spend up to one hour browsing my website, and still they can't "do" it all. Eventually, they may even have a car from me!

A great idea is to publish every customer letter you get. Visitors can browse over 370 customer letters on my website as well as 55 press articles. Wow! I often wonder why every business does not allow this kind of access to information?

So go ahead; kill your old static website, grab a lively student, give them £500 and tell them to get on with it. Stop using these flashy corporate web firms. You'll be extremely happy with your customer's opinions of the results! They don't want perfection; they want a useful and entertaining time.

All this web activity takes time but it's fun and it pays off. I rent more than £1.5m worth of new cars every month.

