ANN VOORHEES BAKER

10 THINGS TO MAKE YOUR WEBSITE GREAT

(OR SUCK-Y)

A book on how to get SMARTER about your website BEFORE you hire a pro to fix it.

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by Ann Voorhees Baker

Contents

First, A Website Metaphor

You have a beehive. That's a metaphor for your business.

You want your beehive to make honey. The honey is a metaphor for your revenue.

You plant flowers to attract the bees. The flowers are a metaphor for your website.

The flowers have to bloom. They have to be pretty and highly visible. They have to smell good. They have to contain the pollen that the bees want. Those are all metaphors for your website's appearance, its ease of navigability, its quality content.

The bees need to be able to *find* your flowers. That's a metaphor for the online visibility, or findability, if you will, of your website.

The garden has to still be there, in bloom and in good shape, whenever the bees arrive, which means you must constantly weed and fertilize and monitor and fence your garden to protect it from animals and insects. That's a metaphor for the maintenance you must perform on your site to keep it in good repair and looking good, and the security you must have on your site to protect it from hackers and technical glitches - or from disappearing altogether.

There you have it - the complete metaphor for a website that looks good, is easy to use, delivers great content, is quickly found on the web, and is protected from hackers, loss, or technical glitches.

So let's begin.

1. What's Most Important? Nope, Not Site Design

Websites are fun and exciting and really a thrill when they first go up: So pretty! So sleek! So cool! But many entrepreneurs get caught up in the creative burst that goes into having a website created. What color palette to use? What images? What font? What kind of page layout?

Don't get me wrong. All these factors are important. But often, business owners use up a huge amount of time and energy focusing on the look of their website. Then, when it's launched, they consider it "done" and wait for the orders or the clients to come rolling in.

Uh uh. That's now how it works. Yes, your website should look good. But believe me, it doesn't look like anything if no one is standing there looking at it. "If a tree falls in the woods..." and all that.

The first and foremost thing, the most important thing, is to make sure that people can and will find and look at your website. So how do you do that?

a) Keywords

You've probably heard about keywords. But it's not good enough to just say, "My site is about dog food, so I'm going to use 'dog food' a lot in my website copy." What if most people on the web use the word "kibbles" when searching for dog food? None of those people will find you if you don't have "kibbles" on your pages. What you need to do is start with a list of keywords that you think are perfect for your website, then run them through a keyword analyzer tool to get more ideas, then curate that bigger list, create a "phase two" list, and then compare data on popularity versus competition of each keyword in your list to determine - and then use - the very best keywords to attract visitors.

These include long-tail keywords, which is techno-speak for phrases, such as "vegan wheat-free certified organic kibbles shaped like tiny bunnies." OK, that's a bit much, but you get the picture. And you need to use those keywords strategically – in headlines, in boldface type, in metadata – and frequently, but not so much that Google thinks you're trying to game the system – and naturally, so your pages don't sound "keyword-stuffed." More on keywords later.

b) Social Media

Keywords alone won't get people to your site. Sure, if someone searches on Google using a keyword you've used on your pages, your website will always be listed on the Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs). Great, right? Not if it's listed somewhere at position #650,378. That's not gonna be seen, because SERPs show about 10 sites per screen, and most people don't scroll past the first screen they see, much less past 65,037 screens.

That's why you need to have a great social media presence on the platforms where your potential buyers or clients are likely to hang out - be it Facebook or Instagram or LinkedIn or Twitter or YouTube or any number of other platforms. The more you're out there being seen and informing or entertaining people, promoting your website, and attracting followers, the more they'll come to your site. And interestingly, the more people are coming to your site, the more Google considers your site a "good" one that people are going to like, and the higher they'll place you on the SERP. Your goal is to be so active out there on the internet that you attract followers, and then to keep inviting those visitors to your site and then provide them with high-quality and lively content so that they come back. In other words, you need to not only attract visitors to your site through social media, but show Google what a lively, well-liked site you have so that Google keeps moving you up on the SERPs.

c) Paid Advertising

You can spend as little as $2 a day on Facebook or Google AdWords to run ads and promote your site. There's a whole world of learning around how to run effective advertising and get conversions when people come to your site (worthy of another book, for sure), but the good news is that advertising is available and it can be done full bore or on only a few dollars a day.

d) Backlinks

Backlinks are links to you site that appear on pages of other websites. Having other places on the web mention your site and link to it is a great way to attract visitors, and – again – show Google that you're a quality, popular site. Google monitors how many other sites link to yours, and it factors in the quality of those other sites (called referring sites) to adjust your position on the SERPs even further.

How Well Does Your Website Rank?

Want to know a quick and dirty way to find out how good or bad your website is ranked on the web? Go to this website:

https://www.alexa.com/

Now, scroll down almost to the bottom of the screen and type your website's domain into "Browse Top Sites."

You'll be taken to a page with all kinds of info about your website's traffic, keywords, and more. Scroll way down on that page until you see a box titled "Alexa Traffic Rank." Now, it's important to understand that Alexa Traffic Rank is similar to seeding in sports; in other words, of your rank is 1, you're "number one" and you have the "best website in the world." (That's Google, of course.) For most solo entrepreneurs, a rank of 2.5 million or less is respectable. If your

website's rank is up in the 6 to 8 million range, don't despair; you just need some improvement. And if you have "no rank data," what that means is your rank number is so high that there are tens of millions of websites doing better than yours and it's not meaningful to give you a score. If that's the case, don't give up hope. You simply have more work to do to attract visitors than if your score was at least low enough to show up as a number.

If you're able to get your rank as low as 300,000 globally and 85,000 within your own country, you're doing pretty darned well – kudos to you. You should know that there are over 10 billion websites on the web. If your rank is 2 million, you're in the top one-tenth of one percent of all websites on earth.

But don't take it so, so seriously. Think of your Alexa score as a call to action, not a call to freak out.

You'd be surprised how quickly your rank can shrink (i.e. get better) when you start taking the actions recommended in this chapter.

2. Appearance – Yep, Number 2

Now it's time to talk about the fun stuff - the design of the page, the font library, the color palette, the images - woo hoo!

Ok, tone down the fist pump. I don't mean to insult you, but fun as it may seem, this is not the place to get creative. Leave that to the pros.

Do I mean hire a web designer for $20,000 to custom-code your website for you? No, not at all. I mean, well, one of two things.

Maybe You Can Do It on Your Own

First, if you know how to use a website-building platform such as WordPress or Weebly, then by all means, go ahead and create your own website. But here's the thing: There are tons and tons of website designs, aka templates, out there in the universe ready-made and beautifully designed, there for the taking. Just use one. Sure, change the colors to the ones you want to use, choose between having a sidebar on every page or full-width content with no sidebar, upload your logo (if you have one) and your photos. Fine. But my best advice to you is to leave it there. Don't go adding extra fonts because you think they're more fun, or adding shapes and colors as decorative accents. Seriously, the people who've designed these templates are pros. They went to graphic design school. They have an eye. They know the ins and outs of font pairings, block design, readability, and so on. If those things are not part of your training, don't try to take over. Choose a design that appeals to you and stick with it.

Or Maybe You Should Hire a Web Designer

If you were paying attention up above, you noticed I said, "First, if you know how to use a website-building platform…" Do you? If so, great, follow the advice I just gave you.

But if you don't really, *really* know the ins and outs of WordPress or Weebly or whatever, don't kid yourself. Despite the ads and video tutorials, learning how to properly design and configure and protect and maintain a website using one of these platforms is not at all a one-day, one-off effort. It takes a *lot* of training and a *lot* of experience. It also takes knowing more than just the platform functions; you also must know at least some html and CSS in order to properly configure your website to incorporate the special tweaks and subtle alterations you will inevitably want to make on your site. And honestly, you need to know your way around a hosting platform which includes file management via cPanel or FTP file transfers, domain management using DNS Zone Files, and other odds and ends like PHP versions and SSL certificates.

Which is why web designers charge money for web design, configuration, and maintenance. I mean, if everybody could do it after a day of watching how-to videos, why *would* anyone pay a web developer? Here's where my advice to you is yes, please do consider hiring a web developer to create and customize your site for you.

What should you pay? Well, rates are all over the map. For a solopreneur, here's my quick and dirty advice: Less than $1,000 is most likely going to get you a site that does not have the safety, backup, SEO, or social media integration features that are truly necessary for a properly built site. Nor will you see any wiggle room for your own customizations. And on the other end of the spectrum, more than $12,000 is probably more than a small-business entrepreneur should

have to pay, unless you have a very large e-commerce store or a very complex e-learning site.

3. Navigability

There's clarity, and then there's redundancy. And both are good to have on your website to tell visitors where to find what they're looking for.

Clarity

First, clarity. For most sites, and most visitors, a single line in the navigation menu is best. In other words, you should list maybe 5 to 8 main sections of your website up in the top strip where people look to find topic areas on your site. If you list so many items that the navigation menu occupies two lines, one on top of the other, that's probably too much.

If you've started with a large number of menu items, consider them all together and figure out which of them might fit together under a main area or category. Let's say you have 3 topics that make good sense when grouped together under one heading. Make that heading the item in the navigation menu, and then add your three original menu items as subcategories of the main heading.

Subcategories or subtopics can appear as drop-down submenus that come into view when someone hovers over the main menu item. Again, two to maybe eight items in the dropdown are as many as you should have in most cases. If you have only one subtopic, skip adding it into the menu; it doesn't look logical there. When someone visits the area that the main menu item leads to, they'll see your subtopic too.

When you have a really large number of subtopics that you want to include under your main menu item, consider skipping the dropdown menu entirely, and make the main menu item link to a page that lists the submenu there, with links to the associated pages.

The point is to have a menu that gives the visitor a clear and comprehensive, big-picture view of what's on your website, and a logical pathway to follow in order to reach the more detailed areas of your site that contain what your visitor's looking for.

Redundancy

It may seem counterintuitive to add redundancy in your site's navigation when you've just been advised to go for simplicity.

Well, consider this. We've all heard of learning styles, right? There are the verbal learners, the visual learners, the tactile learners, and so on. This applies to website visitors too. Some will naturally look at the navigation menu on the top and will expect a table-of-contents style approach in the site's organization and flow.

Others will want to look all over the home page and will tend to see and respond to big blocks of topic areas with links to pages inside the site, or to buttons that they can click.

So what do you do? How do you decide whether to have a clean navigation menu or lots of other bits of information on the home page with individual "invitations" (clickable text or buttons or images) to visit various areas of the website?

The answer is, you don't. In other words, have both. You will rarely annoy your site visitor with "too many" ways to navigate around your site. Why? Because the Table-of-Contents people will naturally follow your navigation menu and submenus. They are not likely to click on the other blocks or buttons on your home page, so they'll never know that you are offering duplicate ways to get around the site. And those who tend to scan a home page and then click on what they've "found" in an image or button or explanatory block of text will rarely click on your navigation menu too.

Something for everybody. That's the ticket.

4. Aliveness

Sorry, I know that's not a word. But it's the best description of what I'm trying to tell you in this chapter, which is that your website should "feel" alive when a visitor lands on your home page.

This means that your page design and images will be up to snuff in today's online world, not dated or lower quality than what people have come to expect. If your site looks dated, it looks dead. Honestly, the shelf life of a website's design is usually between 2 and 4 years. After that, unless you're an enormous name brand that can afford to have the same look year after year, you should expect to "redo" your website with a new template and perhaps some refreshed images every 2 to 3 years. It's like fashion; it's always evolving, and you never want to look out of style.

You also should make sure that your home page changes and refreshes every once in a while, even though you're not necessarily changing the overall design. Think of your repeat visitor. She's come to your site in the past and bookmarked it. Now three months later, she's back. She should see something new on the page to indicate that it's alive and well. It might be something as simple to update as a popup message that appears after 10 seconds on the site. Maybe every 6 weeks or so, you change that message to a new giveaway offer, or an announcement of a webinar, or an invitation to join your email list. This "difference" from the last visit tells your visitor, "Hello! I'm still alive and well. Check out my content, which I'm keeping up-to-date for you!"

If you feature your latest blog posts on your home page, you should make sure not to allow long stretches of time to go by between new posts, articles, recipes, or commentary – or whatever it is that you're publishing on your site. You don't want someone to come to your beautiful blog with an already piqued interest, only to find that the latest post was published over six months ago. That reeks of "abandoned site"

and may drive your first-time visitor away right from the get-go. [Hint: If you know that you don't publish new blog posts very often but you still want to feature some of them on your home page, configure your settings so that the date of publication does not appear on your posts. Sometimes you can do this in your theme's settings; sometimes you have to install a plugin to control what's shown in the way of author, date, categories, and tags above or below your post.]

So remember, just as you don't want to show up to meet potential clients or customers in out-of-fashion, old clothes with pulled threads and fade spots, you don't want to show a new visitor a website that looks old, out of fashion, or stale. Keep it alive and fresh and cast a critical eye on it from time to time; how does it look compared to other similar sites? How much new and relevant information is being offered? Be honest with yourself and spruce up the look of your site or its content as needed.

5. Non-Glitchiness

Think of your website visitor as a spoiled brat. A spoiled brat will pick up a toy, start to play with it, and if something doesn't work, throw it to the ground, usually with some exclamation of disgust.

That's your first-time web visitor. If a space for a video is occupied by a gray "oops" box, that's annoying. If a link leads to a "page not found" announcement, it's frustrating. If an image is missing and instead there's a tiny "image icon" in the corner of a big white space, that looks terrible.

Your visitor will bail and will go looking for your type of service or product elsewhere.

Not good.

So it's more than worth it to check your site regularly to make sure that everything's in good working order. You don't want your visiting "spoiled brat" throwing your site away and running after another toy. Start at your home page and navigate through all the pages and posts, or at least the top-level pages and the most recent posts, and make sure nothing is missing or broken.

[Hint: An easy way to check your site for broken links is to go to a free broken link checking website like "Dead Link Checker" (https://www.deadlinkchecker.com/) and plug in your site's URL. If there are broken links on your site, it will produce a list of broken links and tell you where they are.]

My Personal Peeve: "Coming Soon" Pages

We've all seen this on websites: A page you land on, expecting to see the article or image or video that was promised, only to see the disappointing notice, "Coming soon."

The only thing such a page does, is tell your visitor that you're not finished with your website but you published it anyway. Don't do that. Nothing screams "amateur" louder. You're broadcasting to the world that you haven't finished your homework.

If you plan to add a page to your site, great. But don't tell your visitor "I meant to, but I haven't done it yet." Nobody cares what you plan to add to your site later. They just care what's on the site right now. Don't publish a promise to add a page sometime down the road. Just publish the page when it's ready. It's a small matter to add it to your navigation menu at that time. Let that new page be a nice surprise for your returning website visitors rather than an initial disappointment on the first visit.

6. Smart Keywords

Just about everybody's heard of keywords, and almost every entrepreneur who owns a website has made an effort to use important keywords on her site. The trouble is, the entrepreneur usually uses words that seem important to her and leaves it at that. When they're asked, "Have you researched the best keywords for your site?" their answer usually is, "I don't need to. I know what my important keywords are."

Guess what? Those keywords that you've decided are the best for your site might not be – at all – the keywords that your potential customers or clients are using to find someone like you. Sure, your keywords might be "better" than theirs, but does that matter to you, when they're using their own inferior keywords and landing on your competitor's website, where they will then spend their money?

I didn't think so. If you want to get clients or sell your goods, you need to know what keywords and keyphrases your ideal clients or customers are using when they're searching for your type of product or service, and then strategically use those keywords and phrases on your site.

Here's a good example, and you'll know it's an honest one because it makes me look like the hapless client I'm describing. When I launched [Women At Woodstock](), an online community for women and the namesake of two annual retreats for women (one a workshop retreat for women over 50 and one a writer's retreat for women of any age), I believed that my most important keyword, or keyphrase to be exact, was "boomer women." I peppered my site with that phrase.

Then *after* I put all the content on my new site (rookie mistake), I conducted an in-depth keyword research process, and lo and behold, I found that almost no one ever types in "boomer women" when looking for groups or activities or resources for women over 50. What they *do*

type is the phrase (you guessed it): "women over 50." And second most popular, "over-50 women."

So, I was trying to attract women to my page with a keyphrase that I thought was best, but that, in fact, almost no women my age ever uses. I had to go back to all the pages of my site and do a fair amount of editing. I left a few "boomer women" phrases on some pages, sure, because a few people *do* search using those words, but I replaced most of those boomer women with women over 50 and over-50 women.

That was an important change to make.

When you conduct a keyword research study, you not only learn if your own chosen keywords are popularly used, you also learn if you have a lot of competition for them – meaning that a bazillion other websites are using those exact keywords too. You also get suggestions for alternative keywords that might not have come to mind for you, as I did. And, you will find many suggestions for alternate spellings, plural and singular versions, misspelled versions (which, yes, lots of people type), and related idea keywords.

My best advice here is to find someone with experience to perform a keyword research study for you and provide you with a report of tiered keywords and keyphrases you should be using on your website to attract the highest number of highly targeted website visitors. The service should cost you only a few hundred dollars, and it's worth every penny.

If you don't have budget to pay someone to search, analyze, and curate the best keywords for your website, you can at least do some very useful research of your own by starting with your own list (which I call a seed list) and plugging those words and phrases on your list into a keyword search tool like Google AdWords. You can find the Google's keyword planner here: https://ads.google.com/home/tools/keyword-planner/. There are tons of keyword research sites out there, and many offer a free trial, but I prefer Google AdWords because their algorithms

are the actual creation of Google itself, the master and arbiter of the entire internet universe. And, their tool is indeed absolutely free. Furthermore, with their tool, you can plug in your whole list of keywords and keyphrases into a single search field rather than having to plug in just one word or phrase at a time, as is true of many of the other keyword sites.

Don't be thrown off by the AdWords designation, by the way. The best keywords to place *within* your site are also the best keywords for *ads* you might run to attract people to your site, so the research is the same. Yes, you have to set up a Google Ads account in order to use the tool, but there's no charge for doing so, and there's no requirement to actually place any ads. So search away, worry free.

7. Readability

Digital bytes really do not occupy much storage space on the server (aka computer) that's sitting in some air-conditioned warehouse somewhere hosting your site. Sure, you could have a mondo site like Amazon that probably occupies not only more servers than one warehouse could hold, but acres and acres of warehouses.

But do you?

I didn't think so.

Don't be frugal in the use of on-screen real estate on your website as if it's going to get used up. Don't use a small font, cram a lot of copy on the screen, use squinshy images so as not to "take up too much space," or do any of the other things you might do in order to use less paper and therefore minimize costs when printing a book.

You are not printing a book.

And here's another point: Typically, it's traffic and interactions on a website that will max out its capacity rather than the amount of content on the site. So if your site is mostly static, has a moderate amount of traffic (less than 50,000 visits per month), and doesn't involve complicated functions, chances are you can include many pages, lots of beautiful images, and as much white space and formatting features as you'd like without worry of overwhelming the system.

Take a look at what other websites like yours are doing. Do they tend to have larger images, or more of them? Are they typically wide-screen, single-column layouts rather than multiple columns? Do they feature larger font sizes and more space between lines of text? Keep up with trends and always keep visual appeal and readability in mind when maintaining and refreshing the look of your pages.

Remember, the digital world is a nearly boundless expanse in which you can display and convey your information and offerings. Use it like it's (almost) free!

8. Realistic Call to Action

Here is the very most important piece of information I will give you in this book, so please pay attention:

Your website is not going to get you clients or money.

You are.

"What?" you're asking?

Well, if you're strictly an online store featuring a collection of products to buy, then yes, you do build your site with the intent of making direct and nearly instant sales right there on the website. You expect your site to entice, demonstrate, persuade, and actually close sales for you. That is in fact the point of an online shop.

But if you're not selling products, and are instead seeking clients or event registrants, or you're looking to raise funds for your nonprofit organization, do not – and let me repeat this – do *not* expect your website to appear on the scene, attract visitors, and take client retainers, registrations, or donations right on the page.

It just doesn't work that way.

Registrations for an event happen only after a person has learned all about it and come to trust that it will deliver a quality experience worth not only the money but the time and possibly the travel needed to attend. Donations to a cause are hard-won after a good deal of storytelling, heartstring-pulling, and appeal-making. Client contracts are earned after some long hard work at credibility building, trust-earning, and value-demonstrating.

A website visit simply cannot do all of those things in one visitor's sitting.

So why have a website?

Here's the secret that so many website owners don't understand: In most cases, a website actually serves one primary purpose, and that's to gather email registrations.

Yep, that's it.

But that's no small item. Email registrations are hugely valuable. They are an open door, an invitation into your registrant's home. An expression of interest. An expressed intention to listen to what you have to say, repeatedly and for a long time.

The great thing is that an email registration is a pretty easy ask. It doesn't cost money. It can be revoked by the prospective client or donor at any time, so he/she can have confidence in signing up, and it offers value (information, news, or notifications in which the registrant presumably has an interest). So, an email sign-up is something you can reasonably expect your website to collect for you. It's the perfect, reasonably attainable, and valuable call-to-action for your website to encourage.

So let's say your website does in fact successfully collect email registrations for you. Fantastic.

Then, you – not your website – do your real selling – by writing thoughtful articles for your blog; by notifying your email list every time a new post has been published; by sending your list notices of upcoming events, discount offerings, incentives. By sharing news that's not even sell-y but is simply of interest to your audience (which builds trust). In short, emails are the doorway to direct communication with your prospective customer, and the avenue that makes it possible for you to have conversation after conversation with that person, until after a few weeks, or months, or even years, that customer or client retains you for your service, signs up for your event, or donates to your cause.

So – set a realistic call to action for your website: "Sign up for my email list!"

9. Social Media Integration

Here's where so much unnecessary, duplicate work takes place for so many website owners:

Time-Draining Plan

1. Write blog post.
2. Publish blog post.
3. Write a post about something else, just for Facebook. Log into Facebook. Publish your Facebook post.
4. Write a post about something else just for LinkedIn. Log into LinkedIn. Publish your LinkedIn post.
5. Write a post about another something else just for Twitter. Log into Twitter. Publish your Twitter post.
6. Find a picture that relates to some other topic or idea and write a caption for it. Log into Instagram. Post your picture and caption on Instagram.
7. Write a message about an entirely new topic. Log into your email campaign service. Send your email with your new and different message to your email list.

Why do all that work?

Because you don't want to offend your fans by repeating the same message everywhere, over and over again, right?

Wrong.

Back up here for a minute.

How many followers do you think are hopping around visiting every single site or account you have on the web, within a short span of time, checking on what you have to say on every platform where you have a presence?

I'm pretty confident in saying that the answer is zero.

Some people are coming to your website.

Some are reading your emails.

Some are seeing your update in their Facebook feed.

But no one's looking at all of it all the time.

The chance of one person seeing your same message repeated two, three or more times in different places is next to nil.

So, let's devise a much better plan for getting your word out, sharing your messaging, and keeping your online presence alive, with *much* less work.

New Plan

1. Write a blog post. Write a medium-short summary of that post, and an even shorter summary still. Publish the post.

2. Log into your email account, upload the medium-short summary, and send it out along with a link to your blog post. The goal? To get people to come to your website to read your post. And possibly share it with others.

3. Log into Facebook and post the shorter summary along with a link to your blog post.

4. Log into LinkedIn and post the same short summary along with a link to your blog post.

5. Log into Twitter and post the same short summary along with a link to your blog post.

6. Log into Instagram and post the image you used as your featured image on your blog post, along with the same short summary of your post and, in your Link in bio, a link to your blog post.

You've now done 6 instead of 7 steps, but even better, you haven't labored over writing brand new content for each of those steps.

You've essentially written one blog posts and harvested snippets from it to post everywhere else.

An Even Better Plan

Wait, let's back up again. Here's an even better way to save time: Install a plugin on your website that connects your site to all of your social media accounts (except Instagram, which usually doesn't play well with other apps or sites). If you hired a web designer to create or update your site for you, he or she should have done this as a matter of course and shown you how to use it.

1. Now, when you write your blog post, on the same editing screen where you're uploading and formatting your post, you can also open a small window in the sidebar to write your short snippet or summary as a social media post. Then, when you publish your blog post, your social media post will appear simultaneously in all your linked social media accounts like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter (except Instagram; see above). And those social media posts will automatically contain a link back to your blog post.

2. Log into your email campaign service and send out an email with your summary and link to your blog post.

Voila.

10. Security & Backups

I mean, everybody who drives a car has to have insurance, right? A car costs a lot of money and is not easy to replace. A car is essential for your day-to-day life (unless you're a true city dweller).

If your website is serving a serious purpose, like helping you build your business, or even if it's a personal thing but it houses a collection of your work which cost you a lot of time and effort to create, it stands to reason that you need the same sort of protection for your website, right?

Luckily, website "insurance" is a lot less expensive than automobile insurance.

First, you should have a security plugin or feature installed on your site. Your host provider may include it with your hosting plan. If not, you can choose among a number of plugins that will monitor your site, block unauthorized logins or hacking attempts, and keep it safe from viruses or malware. There are both free and paid plugins. Get one.

Second, it is really important to have backups made of your site on a regular basis – preferably daily. Most hosting accounts offer backups on varying schedules for varying prices. Or you can install a plugin that will back up your site on a schedule you choose. Whatever method you use, be sure that you've got that method installed properly and that it's working as it should. There is nothing so wonderful, and I mean NOTHING – as the ability to consult a list of daily backups and click a "restore" button – simple as that – if god forbid your website goes all wonky or, even worse, disappears into the "white screen of death" and you have no idea why. A backup will save your rear end in seconds, versus possibly days or weeks and potentially a lot of money having the glitch on your site ferreted out and corrected.

And There You Have It

I hope these "10 Things to Make Your Website Great" tips have taught you a thing or two or clarified a few heretofore muddy areas of understanding about your website. I especially hope that you will use what you've learned to up your game online and – ultimately – attract more clients or customers and earn more revenue!

Happy flower gardening!