hAPPenings

PIONEERING PROGRAMMERS

During this crisis, it's important to remember that plans are not always set in stone. Events and situations may happen that will postpone schedules and year-long plans that you're looking forward to, such as product launches, corporate events, and more. Therefore, in this month's newsletter, we focused on discussing what companies can do when plans fall through and where they can turn their attention to.

MSP: GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND

It's a well-known fact that Monthly Recurring Revenue (MRR) is the lifeblood of Managed Service Providers, or most service-oriented business for that matter. While it may seem profitable now to have short bursts of projects to boost the income of your company, it is not very sustainable in the long run, and it leaves you with no consistent income.

But how do you retain your customers in an industry where not hearing from you is actually a good thing? Here are some things to consider so that you can get your client's approval and confidence in your MSP.

Follow your SLA

The first one is a no-brainer: follow your agreed-upon conditions and tasks, and make sure they know about it. Letting them know that all their requirements are met and everything is in order will let them know that your team is always there at the background, monitoring and making sure any issue is fixed even before they notice it.

You can do this by having a way to report to them in a consistent schedule, be it weekly or bi-weekly. If you can also provide metrics for them to check, whether it shows that their servers are performing at peak condition, or small issues that you may have fixed without them knowing, it will appease your client, and let them know that they are getting their money's worth, if not more.

Going above and beyond

Clients will be pleased if they know that you are going the extra mile for them. Giving them a heads-up on certain updates that may affect their server's performance or informing them of possible ways of upgrading their systems to improve overall efficiency can help you gain your clients appreciation and approval, and they are more likely to keep you around if they know you have their best interests in mind.

Yes, it is extra legwork on your part, but that extra effort can land you loyal clients for years to come.

Having open communications at all times

In the end, you are a service provider. And while most of the time, the service might seem passive or reactive; it's still a good idea to have a way to communicate with your clients on a constant basis. This will also let them know that your team is always available if there are any questions or concerns about their infrastructure and is always happy to help.

Also, and this should be a given, if there are any ongoing issues or problems that may affect or halt production on your client's end, it is best to inform them immediately rather than wait for them to call you. This tells them that you are already on top of the issue and are currently working on fixing it. You should also give them constant updates on the situation, rather than waiting for a status request from them.
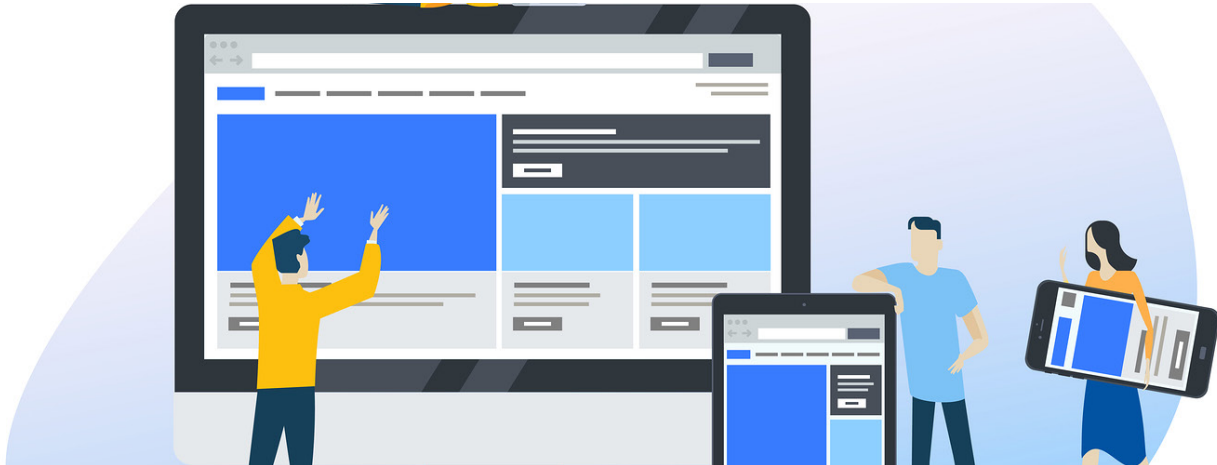
Creating a website has certainly come a long way. From having to code it from scratch to using various tools that are readily available, the focus has shifted from how to build your website, to optimizing it to entice more visitors.

And yet, some company websites still fall for some common mistakes when creating or improving upon their own websites. Here are some of the pitfalls that one would frequently encounter and see if your website is committing one of them right now.

Diving right into design

One of the most common mistakes that happen during web development is that companies want to design the pages first, and then fill it out with content afterwards. This is a big no-no, as you'll end up with a good-looking website with nothing that relates to the business or the target audience of the company. More importantly, the website might miss out on the company's main goal for the website, which would have been made clear if a well-laid out plan was made beforehand.

Speaking of content, it is important to have a clear idea what will go into where in the website, and not having any prepared content will hamper the website in the long run. Suppose the web designer made a great design that allows more room for images and banners than text, yet you end up needing more room for text-based content... In the end, the designer now has to redo the design, and that's just more hours of labor wasted.

You are not the audience

Another common issue that you encounter when designing company websites is that the owner often goes with what they think appeals to themselves, rather than the target audience of their website. Others might prioritize elements that they think represent their company. While some might say it is important for branding, the focus should always be on how to get the audience to visit your website. Branding is not bad per se, as long as it does not interfere with the marketability of your website.

Clunky Navigation

In the current tech age, information is easily available at the click of a link. This is why it is important that if a user visits your company website, they can easily obtain the information they need or access the services they want to use. Having to navigate through multiple pages or scroll through multiple dropdowns just to arrive to their desired destination may be off-putting to some and will cause your visitor to look somewhere else more often than not.

Planning for SEO after the fact

A lot of companies tend to have their websites built first, then contact an SEO specialist to look at the finished work. This is actually a bad practice, as search engine optimization should be part of the website planning, rather than an afterthought at the end. This will make sure that the content you create for your website is already optimized to have the key phrases and content that will help attract your target audience to the website. It also helps avoid unnecessary costs due to the changes that the SEO specialist will end up recommending for your pre-made website.

SECURING COMPANY DATA IN A WORK FROM HOME ENVIRONMENT

As most businesses are forced to shift to a work from home setup during these times, the abrupt change has caught a lot of them unprepared, and with no remote devices for their employees to use. Hence, the growing concern of companies who handle sensitive data is how to secure their data, without crippling the access of their clients and employees to their network.

If you're not sure how to handle this situation, here's a quick checklist of the things you can consider when setting up your company or clients for their home office setup.

1. **Prioritize people that require high-level access to the system -** If the company has limited number of remote devices to loan your employees, it would be best to prioritize those who come in contact with data that requires high security, i.e. sensitive client data or those that should be accessed by managerial positions or higher.

2. **Consider Remote Desktop services with Multifactor Authentication –** If you don't have any remote devices available, you can opt to use Remote Desktop services. These are software that lets you connect to a virtual desktop that is set up on your company's network. The advantage of which is that the control of information coming in and out is a lot easier to regulate, and any data downloaded to the virtual desktop is still in your network, as supposed to someone just using VPN for connecting to the company network using their unsecured personal devices.

3. **Use remote desktop access –** If your company or client do not have the time to setup and implement comprehensive remote virtual desktops, another solution would be to use remote access software for your users. This will allow them to access their office machines, like the traditional remote access most people are familiar with. The downside of which is that you are essentially using two devices at the same time, and that someone has to manually turn on the office devices in order for you to connect to them.

4. **Convert the personal device to a temporary work device –** Ideally, this would be a last ditch effort for the company, as it can prove to be a large hassle to the individual that has to convert their device to a work-secured one, and there's still a high security risk of doing so. But if they're adamant on connecting directly to the network using their personal devices, this process is a must before they even consider connecting to the network, lest they cause sensitive data to be compromised, which can lead to heavy losses in the long run.

Of course, the best solution is still to prepare ample amounts of remote devices, so that your company will not have to scramble for resources if emergency scenarios ever happen again. Or better yet, you can start converting static office machines to a more mobile setup, so your clients or employees can just pick up where they left off and continue their work at home any time.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR BUSINESS GO VIRAL

The dream of every business is to have thousands if not millions of people clamoring for their products or services. And in the current business landscape, you hear this marketing selling point all the time: you need to go viral to get followers, which in turn can turn into customers. But how exactly do you go viral?

Know your audience

First thing you must know – there are no fixed formulas on how something or someone goes viral. Regardless of how amazing the content is, it is not a guarantee that it will be a hit. This is mostly because a key factor in becoming viral lies in the ever-shifting consensus of the public. It means if you want to get the word out quickly, you need to know your audience, and tailor your content to pique their interests.

One way of doing so is by creating content that helps develop an emotional connection with your audience. Rather than seeing a corporate body trying to sell them things, it should be like they are conversing with their peers and sharing things that can be beneficial to them as well. This can also help you assess what kind of content to publish and how you can promote stuff on your platform in the future.

Content first, Ads later

While it may sound counterproductive from a business standpoint, it is best to focus on building the brand on select platforms first before charging ahead with outright advertising your products or services in a more pronounced manner. Relying on a brief surge of followers an initial content that have gone viral and diving straight to advertising-related content might cause your hard-earned followers to not share the ad-related content, or eventually leave due to lack of engaging content.

This is not to say that you can't advertise, but the focus of earlier content should be in drawing your target audience in with high-quality content first, so that they have something to share to other people, which in turn can draw more of their network into your space.

Make it visually appealing

In the fast-paced Internet Age, people want their information in quick, easily digestible packages. And what better way to do so than to include it in visually-appealing content. Rather than a long line of text for them to read, create a visual that can put the most essential information across, and use the captions to expound on them if need be.

It doesn't have to be limited to static infographics or a quirky poster; you can make short videos using your content as the script to guide it along. This will make it more visually engaging, and feel like you are talking directly to your audience.

Sharing your audience

Sometimes, other brands or businesses will see your content, and might share it on their page. This is a great help for your business, especially if that brand or business has a lot of followers too. If it does happen, you should reciprocate. Share some of their content that you think might be interesting, or something that might also be related to your line of business. It wouldn't hurt to share audiences, especially if your business does not directly compete with theirs.