

GOING BEHIND *the* CURTAIN

Making your website
more personal.

People still like to do business with people. In the cyber-world where we now live, this concept seems to be fading with each year that passes. When we need to shop for home services, we've gone from "I'll call them" to "I'll Google them", replacing talking to someone about their service to reading about it on their website. We fill out an online order form versus placing our order by telephone with a friendly voice on the other end. We can often complete the entire transaction without talking to a human. While I will agree that the shift to Internet commerce overall is a win-win for the consumer and business, when it comes to service businesses like ours, people still want to do business with people. People they know, people they trust. Your website should be the gateway to making this personal connection.

In the 1939 version of The Wizard of Oz, towards the end of the film there's a scene where Dorothy and her pals return to Oz to cash in on the Wizard's promise to help them if they can somehow rid Oz of the wicked witch. As they are trying to communicate their triumph over the wicked witch to the great and mighty Oz, with his booming voice and fiery delivery, Toto pulls back the shroud to reveal the real wizard. "Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain" booms the voice of the mighty Oz as they see an older gentleman turning knobs and speaking into a microphone to create the illusion of a supernatural being. Once uncloaked, the great and mighty Oz turned out to be just a grandfather-like man with a big heart hiding behind the façade. It turns out that

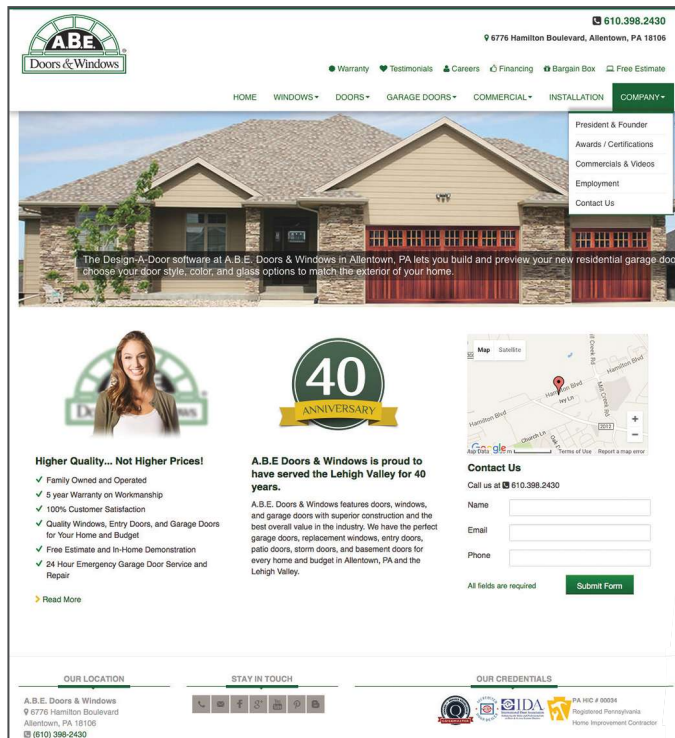
"I am amazed how many garage door dealer websites tell me about their products and services but very little about the owner and staff. If there is little or no information about the people aspect of their business, how will I know who I am dealing with?"

the real Oz is who Dorothy and her buddies needed all along, not the illusion.

Okay, Dan, what does this have to do with the garage door business? Plenty. Your company's website is a direct reflection of the people who make your business work. You, your office staff, sales people and field techs all make up the team it takes to deliver your service to the customer. It is important to not only show the world what you do, but who you are.

As I look at website after website of garage door dealers (and others) I am amazed at how many tell me about their products and services but very little about the owner and the staff. If there is little or no information about the people aspect of their business, how will I know who I am dealing with? So if I ask that as an industry consultant, don't you think customers ask the same thing? You bet they do! Assuming that is the case, why keep the human side of your company's information from a potential customer? Could it be that the company wants to keep up a wall of protection, effectively hiding behind the curtain like the Wizard of Oz? Is it possible they are intentionally creating a cyber-phantom illusion that is full of company-speak and overused clichés about their garage door service to hide behind? I will submit to you that there are a few companies that actually do this. It is often those that are revealed in news stories to be gouging customers for repair work. No, it is more likely that the dealer does not realize how important personalizing his

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company's website is, due to not getting the best advice on constructing a highly effective website - one that puts a face on the company and adds a human touch. This allows the customer to start the relationship with the people who are going to take care of their garage door needs.

My standard practice, when evaluating a client's site, is to go to the "About Us" page first. Back in the day all we had was a yellow page ad that served as a static advertising source for customers to learn of and about us. With any luck the ad would be compelling enough to get them to phone us and afford us the opportunity to tell our story. Today we can "tell" our story through an interactive medium using words, pictures and even video. It's all there when the customer lands on your website and surfs to your "About Us" page. You can tell your story 24/7, and the best part of all.... at the customer's convenience. So why would you neglect to take advantage of this powerful online tool? Maybe you overlooked it when your site was constructed. Or maybe you did not want to appear to be too boastful about how terrific your company is. Whatever the reason, I would urge you to rethink this and consider using your "About Us" page as the portal that begins the people part of the relationship, moving them from online shopper to loyal customer.

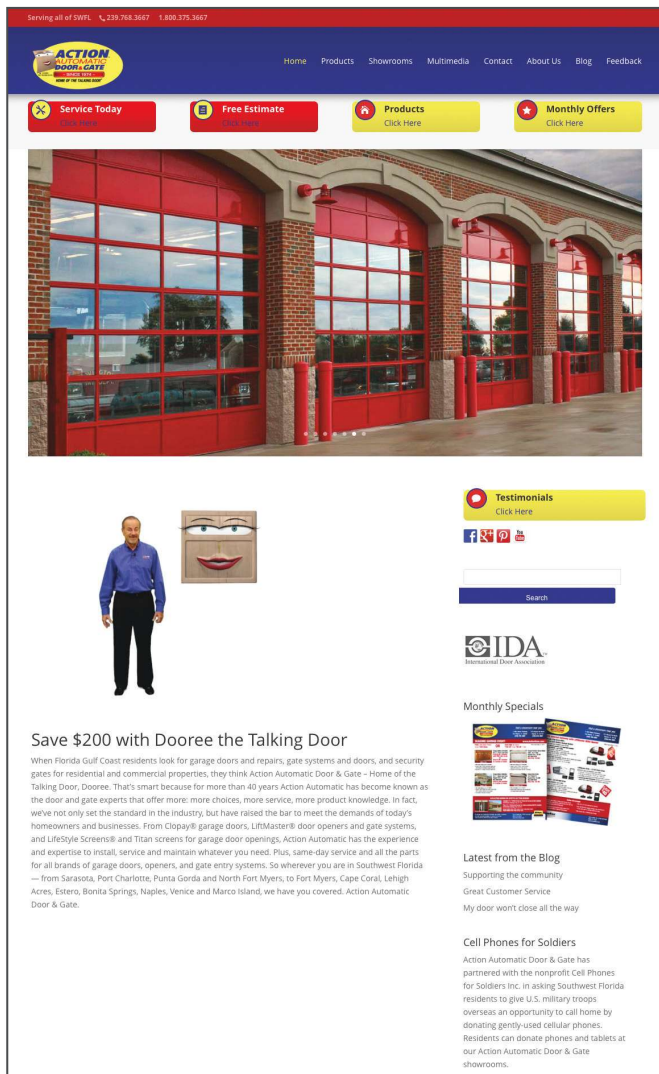
If you attended our seminar at Expo 2015 in Indianapolis, you may remember we showcased three of my garage door dealer buddies that do an excellent job with injecting a personal touch with their customers through their websites. Jim Lett, owner of ABE Doors & Windows in Allentown, PA (abedoor.com) and also past president of IDA, has done a great job of adding his personal bio to their company (about us) page. Through his many accomplishments, the customer is given the sense of professionalism and stability about ABE.

James Potts and Randy Burriss of Overhead Door of Charlotte (ohdcharlotte.com) have produced an upscale video on their home page that immediately grabs the website visitor and provides their personal introduction to their company, how it does business, the products and services they offer and why a customer should choose them.....all in less than 3 minutes! My good friend and fellow Floridian, George Ebel, owner of Action Automatic Door in Ft Myers, Florida (actiondoor.com) has designed his web page to not only bring him out from behind the curtain but to literally embed him into the homepage of the site. When you go to Action's home page you can click on a miniature George and he'll personally tell you about their company, their "talking door" and what Action can do for you. It's cleverly done and invites the customer to play. Most importantly it adds a bit of humor to what can be a rather dry subject matter. If you feel the need to make your website more personal, these are three great sites to review.

Your "About Us" page should give the right amount and type of information, and you shouldn't worry so much about giving too much away. It should answer the following questions:

- Who are we?
- Why should you choose us over someone else (WIIFM – What's In It For Me)?
- What do we do?
- When did we start?
- How do we do it?

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Who are we?

When you are speaking about who you are, it is a good idea to include photos of you and your key staff members as well as brief, biographical sketches as may be appropriate. The sketches should highlight background and industry experience. That information is of great comfort to someone who might be on the fence regarding whether to buy your products and/or services. If there are specific industry credentials, like IDEA accreditation or technical certifications, those should be highlighted as well. Consumers identify and trust credentials so if you have them, tell people about it. Tell them about your team so they can begin identifying your business with one that has what it takes to support them for the long haul.

Why choose us?

When faced with the concept of why someone should choose to work with you instead of choosing someone else, you need to build a case for what's in it for them (WIIFM). How wonderful you, your staff, and your products are is important, but you have to relate how those things help your customer. All your prospects are concerned about is what they will get out of a business relationship with you. They



need to understand what you can do to help them solve their problems.

What we do?

The "About Us" page should have a description of your business, which answers the "What do we do?" question. Do not add your mission statement here. They're often too wordy and complicated and mostly feed the ego of whoever created them. I'd rather see a succinct statement in three sentences or less of the solutions you can provide me at my home, or place of business, rather than lots of bullet points and catchy phrases.

How did we start?

Another good thing to communicate is how you came to where you are now, particularly if you have a unique and compelling story to tell. So insert a brief (very brief) history about your company. Consumers love a good success story since nearly all people would rather do business with successful people. Perhaps show how your facility has grown over the years and include a couple of photos. If you did not start the company, here's where a nice tribute to its founder would be appropriate. The bottom line is this, your customers and prospects want to know you will be around when they need you. One way to help convince them is by giving them a glimpse of your history.

How we do it?

What is your unique selling proposition (USP)? Do you have a unique way of providing garage door service? If you have a same day service policy, let them know right up front. If you do not use subs, here's where you tell them. If

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you offer 24/7 service, this is a great place to showcase it. A simple sentence like, "service when you really need it" could make all the difference. The idea is to tell the customer why they should chose you over the competition.

Summary

Your website should be a glimpse of what doing business with your company would be like. Who you are, what you do and how you do it goes a long way when attracting the interest of customers shopping for a garage door service provider. Your "About Us" page is a great place to do this. Rather than just homogenized information about your company, it should allow prospects to see there is a team of skilled professionals ready to serve them as the need arises.

A good "About Us" page invites the reader to go deeper into the website and begin the interaction with your company. If visitors are truly interested in your company, they will. Remember to include a call to action, which enables your visitors to reach you, either by phone or by Email. Make it easy for them to click to call or email from wherever they are on the site rather than having to hunt for it.

Your online presence is about relationships and interactions with people. The more you interact on a personal level, the easier it will be to build relationships with your readers and eventually, they will become your customers.



The ultimate goal is to begin a long term relationship with your customer. This can start with online communication including email, text and social media, and lead to telephone calls, onsite appointments and even their visits to your showroom. But it all begins with knowing who is behind the curtain and how they can solve customers' problems with their garage doors.



Dan Apple is president of The Apple Group LLC, a consulting firm located in Bonita Springs, Florida. His focus is assisting garage door dealers with profitability and marketing. Dan served as president of Apple Door Systems in Richmond, Virginia for 33 years which grew to a statewide dealership with eight locations. He was the first president of the Institute of Door Dealer Education and Accreditation where he was responsible for creating the industry's first national accreditation program in 1998. Dan also served as a director of the Door & Operator Dealers Association and the International Door Association from 1994-1998. Contact him at 804.640.4253 or email: danielapple@me.com or visit the website at www.AppleLLC.net.

