



EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW
ABOUT RESTAURANT WEBSITES

At the risk of dating myself, when I owned and operated my restaurant, websites were not the “thing” they are now. I mean, don’t get me wrong, we did HAVE a website that was sort of cool but it was more of a “set it and forget it” type thing and we had no idea how many people, or if anyone, saw it.

But we live in a very, very different world now where websites, in many cases, are truly everything for a business and I would add especially for a restaurant. It is your front door, first impression, best handshake, welcome mat, whatever you want to call it - it is that important. I don’t know anybody who doesn’t check out a restaurant’s webpage prior to even consider going to that restaurant even if they were highly referred.

So, there’s that.

But wait, there’s more...

I had the wonderful opportunity to speak with Susan Battista, Senior Partner at Visual Dialogue, a Brand Strategy and Design Firm located in Boston. I asked Susan for her input regarding the extreme importance of a restaurant’s website design and why it often seems to get overlooked by restaurateurs. Here’s what Susan had to say... “The care you give to your web design and branding, as well as the restaurant itself, is the care you will give your service and ambience. Guests remember and take in the entire experience a restaurant offers, not just one piece of it...”

After scouring the internet and looking at lots of great and not-so-great restaurant websites, I have come up with 7 tips for you to make your restaurant website out of this world!

1. Contact Information on every page.

Whether it’s just a clickable phone number, online reservations or ordering, or a link to Google



Maps for directions, don’t make your potential Guest search your entire site for it! Make it easy, accessible, and right in front of their face so that they can easily and quickly reach out.

2. Your Menu, of course!

I know, I know, this is a no-brainer but here’s the thing... do NOT keep an old menu up on your website. Disappointment is not the first emotion you want your new Guest to have by not offering whatever they may have fallen in love with on your online menu. Keep it updated and fresh! AND PICTURES!!! Lots and lots of high-quality pictures that truly showcase your food (no stock photos) so guests know what to expect and look forward too. Local web designer, Andy Pyman of Truly Good Design, tells us that while PDF’s are still the easiest route to go to upload

to a website, they can be tricky for a phone user to navigate. If a restaurateur wants to improve that experience for a user, Andy offers all his clients a back-end option where the owner can update the menu, item by item, and that can be easily scrolled through by the user.

3. Interior & Ambiance.

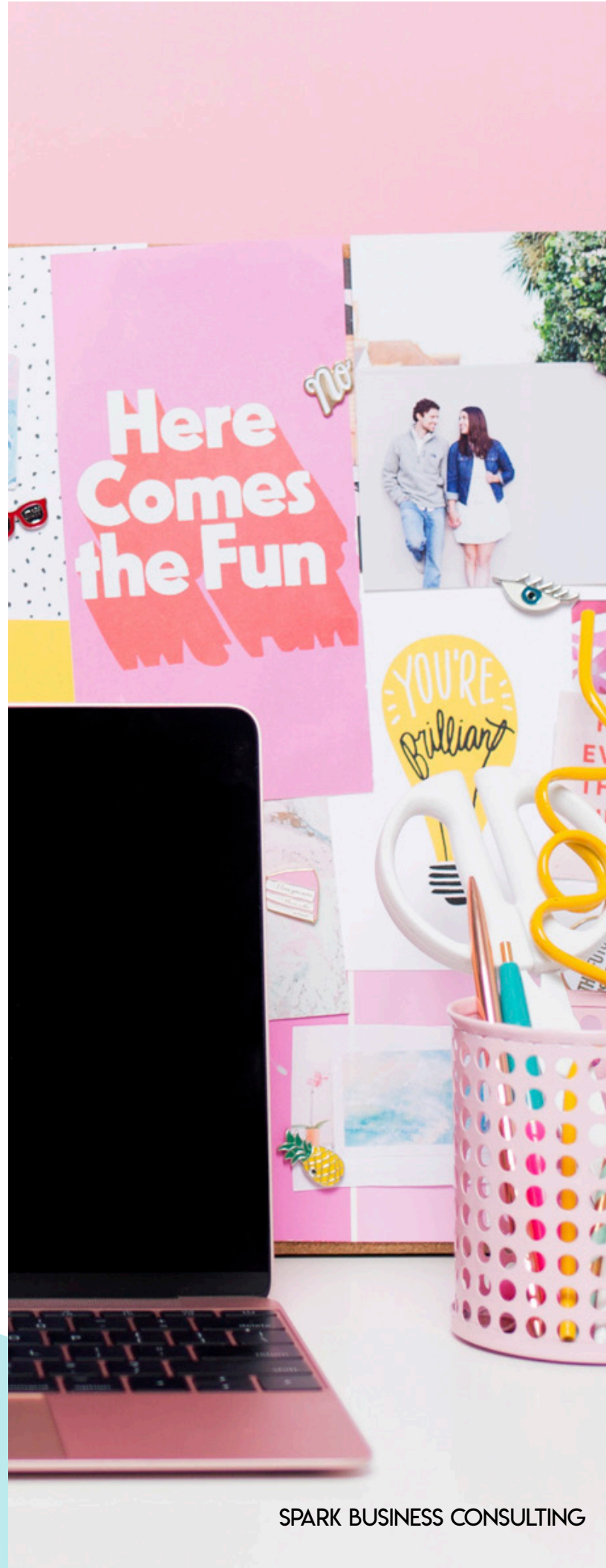
More great pictures here!! It shocks me to visit a restaurant website that has no interior shots of their establishment. Potential Guests need to know if they can bring their kids, if this is a great first date place, or lends itself to an awesome girl's night out...We need visuals people! And really, really good ones. Spend some money here, it'll be worth it.

4. About Us.

Believe it or not, this is important! While the "About" page on a typical website may not get a lot of attention, on a restaurant's website - you bet it does! There are a gazillion different restaurants out there to choose from... many have great food, many have great atmospheres, or location, or service or whatever you might be in to, but the one thing that other restaurants DON'T have is YOUR STORY. It is your story that will help to set you apart and it is your story that becomes your "Why". As the great Simon Sinek says, "People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it". Boom.

5. Videos.

Short, vibrant videos create the sticky eyeballs on the web so these are a must. Whether it's a video of the chef describing the night's special, a video of the Staff Pre-Service meeting, or a video of an excited Guest happy to discuss their experience, videos are where it's at! But don't fret! No need to hire a production company to come in and set up shop. Facebook Live or Instagram Stories are a fun, free, quick and easy way to create a video that then leads to all your fantastic social media content (right?).





6. All the Other Important Stuff.

Your Event Calendar, Catering Menus, Private Party Menus and information and social media... all of this needs a home on your website. Period. AND PLEASE KEEP THIS INFO UPDATED AT ALL TIMES. No one wants to learn about a wine dinner you had 6 months ago... keep it fresh! And the social media content also must be fresh and constantly evolving. Our contributing expert, Andy Pyman, has some suggestions on getting this done for those very busy restaurateurs... Andy offers "Commit to start small.". Whether it's a short weekly blog or 3 social media postings each week, commit to do something on a regular, weekly, basis and then have the patience to see it through and let the results happen.

7. B.O.H.

Yup, there is a Back of House to a restaurant's website as well often called or referred to as "Analytics" and "Responsive Layout". Not to get too technical (we leave that to the website experts) but your website Analytics can be very telling about your clientele, potential clientele, who and where they are, what they like to look at, what they skip over, etc. and Responsive Layout is just a fancy way to say that depending on what kind of device the User is using, i.e. Smart phone, tablet, giant desktop monitor, that your website should automatically conform to that platform and always look great.

And there you have it! A few great tips but more importantly, do yourself a favor and don't cheap out on your restaurant's website. It truly is THAT important as all first impressions are!

Thank you to our contributing Experts, Susan Battista and Andy Pyman!
You can learn more about their amazing work below.

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