Pencil Bugs™

Business Tip #4
Websites

A website is great when you have a business. It's an easy way for people anywhere in the world to find your products or services. I've shipped Pencil Bugs all over the U.S. and Canada. One order even went to Egypt and another was sent to Lesotho, Africa (a small kingdom in the middle of South Africa).

As easy as it is for people to find your business, it's also very hard. That might sound weird but it actually makes sense. There are millions of websites on Internet so unless the public has some way to know about your business first, finding a specific website is, as my mom says, "like looking for a needle in a haystack." Don't assume that just because you have a website, you'll become a millionaire.

If you haven't already bought your domain name, make sure you look at all the options for hosting at the same time. Some companies have package deals that will give you your domain name free with their hosting plans.

The next thing to do is decide is if you're going to design it yourself or hire someone else to do it. I was lucky because my mom has designed websites for years so we didn't have to hire someone. If you can't do it yourself, just make sure you find someone that understands what you want. The cheapest design company isn't always the best option either.

Once you know who will design it, make sure the look "fits" your business image. It doesn't have to be all flashy and animated either. Most people like a website that's easy to navigate without having to wait through intro movies or listen to annoying music in the background that won't shut off. Make sure you at least have the basic 4-5 pages of information. Then if you're selling a product, you'll need some kind of shopping cart but you can get those for free also through various services like PayPal.

Entering the right keywords for your business is really important. That's how people start to find you among all the other similar sites and products. After the website in finished and online, it needs to be submitted to search engines. There are many companies that will charge you a fee and say that they'll list your website with hundreds of search engines but that's not really necessary. Most people use Yahoo or Google and both of those are free to submit your site to.

Just because your website is online, don't assume it's good forever. Sometimes weird computer glitches happen and things get messed up, so you should check it frequently to make sure all the links work and nothing got corrupted. It's important to keep making changes to your content even if you don't have new products to sell. New sites are popping up all the time so if yours gets old, it gets pushed farther down the list when someone does a search. So try to add new information or change things around at least every 3-4 months.

One last thing. Check your e-mail often and respond ASAP because customer service and general correspondence is critical to keeping customers happy and having a good business.