

Get in the Game

by Mike Jones, President, GTS

When consumers need a service, the very first place most of them look is online. So why aren't you putting effort into becoming the business they find when they search for auto glass services?

Nearly 80 percent of online consumers visit just three websites before deciding what their best option is. If you don't put effort into becoming one of those three websites, you're not going to get your customers even if you offer the best product for the lowest price. The customer simply won't know you exist.

Compete and Compete Well

You may not think you can compete with the national players who currently dominate search engines, but that's simply not the case. With a smart marketing campaign and the commitment to seeing it through, you can become the first business your customers find online.

Getting that coveted status isn't easy, and it will take time and dedication. The key to success is creating a plan that lays out your budget, goals, objectives and necessary resources.

- **Defining Your Goals:** Before you start putting your website together, you need to consider what it is you hope the website will accomplish.

Any designer you hire will need to know whether you want a site that has the ability to sell products, book jobs, hold large amounts of pictures and examples of your work, or simply explains

where to find your brick-and-mortar glass services shop.

Once you've decided what type of website you want, consider what you want it to achieve. If you're hoping to rank at the top of a Google search, you'll need to put effort into search engine optimization. If you're trying to reach out to a new market, you'll need to have graphics and text that appeal to those new customers ([Click Here for Example](#)). If you're trying to book jobs, you'll need to allow online customers to do so easily from the website ([Click Here for Example](#)).

- **Dedicating the Resources:** You have your goals, but do you have the resources you need to execute them?

You'll need to either find the resources within your own company or hire a third party to get the project done. Before you can do that, someone in your organization will need to research the best person for each job, explain the goals and parameters to them, and stay on top of the schedule so your website is up in time for you to make good use of it.

Don't underestimate the time it takes to get a website done even if you hire outside labor. Often, you won't like the first concept, will need to see multiple drafts or will run into coding and programming issues. The faster you respond to those problems, the quicker the project will get back on track. Try giving one person the task of

staying on top of the website job helps keep the turnaround time fast.

- **Establishing Your Budget:** Depending on the size and scope of your glass business, your website needs will vary quite a bit. Purchasing a website isn't as simple as paying a single provider to design the website and provide whatever necessary graphics are involved.

Budgeting

You'll also need to include budget considerations for:

- **Hosting:** Beyond the cost of the website itself, you will also have to pay for someone to host the website. Many designers will help you set up hosting and recommend a host provider who can handle the size of your website, but it's an oft-overlooked expense that can add on an extra few hundred dollars a year.
- **Content:** You may be able to do the writing for your website yourself, but consider that decision carefully before taking this item off your budget. Clear, concise writing that sells is more difficult than it looks, and customers are often turned off by an ill-written website, thinking it connotes an unprofessionalism that extends to the rest of your business.
- **Graphics:** If you already have graphics suitable for the web, that's great. But do you know which of your graphics will look good online? Many pictures that

look fine on brochures and promotional materials don't hold up online, and poor quality photos can drag down the professionalism of your website. Consider budgeting for online-ready graphics.

- **Marketing:** If you're uncertain how to reach the customers you have in mind, you may need to hire outside help to give you a hand. A good marketing professional can help you figure out where the best places to put your money are, whether it is investing in search engine optimization (SEO), email marketing, or paid advertisements directing customers to your website.

The most important thing to remember when making the leap to establish an online presence is to maintain forward momentum. Many glass services companies don't have a website today simply because the project seems so momentous that they're afraid to take that first step. By hesitating, they're robbing themselves of the online income they could be earning.

Get committed to becoming an online presence. Lay out your goals, figure out what resources you'll need to execute them, and get cracking. The Internet is here to stay – it's time to get in the game.