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**Dustin Wheeler** • Jul. 28, 2012

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## 8 Systems for Creating Client-Focused Websites

Let's face it. Very few accountants have the technological skills and artistic gifts to create an effective website. Hexadecimal color codes, meta tags and HTML are like a foreign language in a profession with its own cryptic lingo that includes insubstance

defeasance and alternative minimum tax. Though many CPAs may breeze through

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Although web builder software makes it possible to create a robust and functional website with a minimal amount of effort, it is sad to see many firms putting virtually zero effort into personalizing their websites. Far too many CPA firms just slap their firm name and contact information on the default template as if building a firm website was an item on their to-do list that they just wanted to mark as “done” without any hint of a web marketing strategy.

In fact, Google the words used in a template and you may find hundreds of accounting firm websites that are mirror images of each other. If your firm's website is nothing more than a barely-modified template, potential clients may not realize that it is a word-for-word copy used by many other firms, but they will certainly learn virtually nothing about you except that you provide tax and accounting services like everybody else. With an “about us” page containing stock photos and generic text, the first impression that potential clients have with your firm will be anything but memorable.

I remember a speaker at a web development conference I attended a few years ago who said, “your website is like a brick wall between you and your client.” Regardless of whether the customization work is done in-house or outsourced, firms should be involved in website planning with the goal to demolish that barrier. A good start may be to add the firm's logo and choose a complementing layout and color scheme. A few more holes can be drilled into that wall by adding pictures and biographies of the firm's professionals highlighting activities and interests outside of work.

Whole bricks are knocked out when a firm goes beyond “brochureware” and adds dynamic content that is informative, interesting, and fun. Blogging is a great way for a firm to showcase its knowledge and expertise. If a firm writes and publishes blog posts regularly, website visitors will notice that the firm keeps up with law changes and local news. Additionally, blogging conveys a sense to the reader that the

accountant is passionate about a particular topic and likes his or her job. Today's

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personable and approachable. For a few good examples of CPA firms using video to promote their practices, see [“HowDoYouYouTube?”](#) from the June 2012 issue.

Not every accounting firm has the time or resources to implement all of the qualities of a world-class website. In some aspects, firms must be willing to make a commitment. For example, if a firm's most recent blog post highlights tax law changes from five years ago, it would be better for that firm to not have a blog at all.

However, many accounting firms that put forth the effort to personalize their site along with the assistance of a web builder have been rewarded. The web builder software vendors provide all the tools, and if the CPA firm lends a hand to chip away, the result can be like dynamite with a website that is a client relationship enhancer and a lead generating machine.

Firm Management

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