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You know the importance of your firm's website. It is, after all, the first experience many of your clients and prospects have of your firm and staff. Whether you

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Here are ten simple steps to keeping your website effective and a valuable resource to both your firm and the website's visitors.

1. Keep Your Brand in Focus

Even if you have the best website, if the branding isn't clear then your goals for the website won't be reached. The website should have your firm's logo on all pages, along with an "About Us" page that gives insight into the factors that make your firm uniquely qualified to help potential clients. This is your chance to brag, but keep the information informative, not salesy. Also, when registering your website, try to find a name that is short, easy to remember, and ends in .com.

2. Keep Content Fresh

Your firm's website doesn't need to be a news website, but if you choose to provide content about recent events that could affect small business owners or individuals, then it needs to be fresh. If the latest information you provide is about some emerging trend called "the cloud," then it's out of date, and prospective clients will think you are, too.

If you want to provide more comprehensive content covering business and tax issues, there are automated providers: Companies that specialize in providing tax and accounting news, and how-tos, written by financial and business professionals, that can offer insight and urge readers to check with you to see how these issues affect them. Some of these libraries can be automatically added to your website, so that they are automatically updated as new content is available.

Keeping website content updated periodically can also help raise the ranking of the site in popular search engines like Google, MSN and Yahoo!

3. Keep the Website Useful

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Your clients likely know their business quite well, along with the terminology and acronyms that are common in their industry. They don't necessarily know those common among accountants and tax pros. So use the language they use, and your messaging will be much more effective.

5. Spell Check

Before you make any new content live on your website, do more than just a quick edit. If the tools you use to create your website don't include a spell checker (most do), you can still copy and paste the content into a Word document to give it a once-over. For good measure, pass it along to others in your office: The more eyes that see the content first, the better chance at avoiding grammar and spelling mistakes that can make your firm look less professional.

6. Testing, Testing ...

If your website doesn't work properly, it won't have the effect you are aiming for. Take time to make sure that links to external sites and to other pages are working. Sometimes troubles with links can arise when changing the system you use to build your website, when changing website hosts, or just because an external website (like the IRS) moved where they used to have a particular resource. So, it's a good idea to recheck the links on your website occasionally. A page with helpful links can be useful to clients, and also helps improve your website's ranking in search engines.

Your website's basic design also must be intuitive and guide users where they want to go (and where you want them to go). Start with a simple and appealing homepage, with a menu of pages that at least includes information about your firm, your services and contact information. Also, a slow website can be a turnoff, so make sure that your website hosting provider is giving you adequate speed. You may be able to

speed your website up a little by avoiding images and other graphics that are too

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“Make sure you have a office process in place on how to handle both online and phone leads,” said Lee Reams II, CEO of [ClientWhys](#). “According to [InsideSales.com](#), if you **follow up with web leads within 5 minutes**, you're 9 times more likely to convert them.”

8. Promote Your Specialties

Your website should have easy-to-find pages that list and describe the services you provide to clients. If there are particular areas that your firm specializes in, you should consider creating special landing pages for that part of the website. (Such as [www.YourCPAFirm.com/Restaurants](#); [www.YourCPAFirm.com/Payroll](#).) Some firms also choose to create a completely different website if that specialty is significant enough or is a separate entity for tax or business registration purposes ([www.YourPayrollCPAfirm.com](#)).

9. Don't Forget Your Current Clients

While your website is certainly a valuable tool for helping prospective clients find you, your current clients should find it useful, as well. Whether they are looking for similar content or calculators as mentioned above, or for more personalized service. Thanks to cloud-based systems, your website can also be made into a portal where clients can log in to access the files you make available to them, or enter data into some programs, including financial reports, past tax returns and payroll.

10. Be Findable

As opposed to that dreamy baseball movie, just because you build it doesn't mean they will come, especially if they can't find you when they look. Search Engine Optimization is pretty specialized these days, but common sense can go a long way:

Make sure you use industry keywords, tags and headers in your website's

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+1 Bonus Tip: Attract 5-Star Reviews

“Surveys tell us that 88% of consumers have read reviews to determine the quality of a local business,” said Lee Reams II, CEO of the accounting marketing firm [ClientWhys](#). Social proof is backing up what you say about yourself with third-party validation through reviews, endorsements and mentions online. With the power of the web at a client or prospect's fingertips, your online reputation is extremely transparent. Your audience can find a plethora of information about your business before ever speaking with you.”

Website Hosts and Tools

- [AccountantsWorld Website Relief](#)
- [BuildYourFirm](#)
- [ClientWhys](#)
- [CPASites.com](#)
- [CPASiteSolutions.com](#)
- [GetNetSet](#)
- [Tenenz AFSB](#)
- [Thomson Reuters Web Builder CS](#)
- [Web.com](#)
- [Wix.com](#)
- [Weebly](#)
- [Network solutions](#)
- [Godaddy](#)
- [Westhost](#)

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- Too salesy
- Overly Technical

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