



## Episode 10: **Websites**

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### TRANSCRIPT

**This part is very lightly edited for readability and is designed only to help those that have trouble listening to the podcast or would like some kind of reference. We know the grammar is terrible, but the information is still good!**

Welcome to custom apparels startups podcast; your best source for information, news, tips and tricks to get you off the ground running and earn success with your custom apparel decorating business. So get ready to soak up some knowledge, now here are your hosts Mark and Mark

**Mark S:** Hey, welcome everybody to another episode of the Custom Apparels Startups Podcasts. My name is Mark Stephenson.

**Marc V:** And I am Marc Vila and today, we're here to talk about websites.

**Mark S:** We have done eight or nine of these podcasts so far and everything kind of bumps up against the website topic but we really never just focused on it because it's a big question on whether or not if you should have a website or not?

**Marc V:** Well actually this is our 10th episode.

**Mark S:** Okay, good thanks for counting. That's why I'm in marketing I can't count to 10.

**Marc V:** Yeah, we're in a double digit number now and that's a big deal for us. And websites are a big deal to our customers.

**Mark S:** Right.

**Marc V:** And we get asked a lot. A lot of folks are curious if they should have one or not, why they should have one, how they should do it, what they are doing wrong or right, and there is all these questions that come up so, we'll take this opportunity to talk about that.

**Mark S:** And there is no right answer by the way, I just want to get that out there in advance because we got customers that have come back and bought 2-3-5 different kinds of apparel decorating equipment

from ColDesi that have never been online and they've never had a website and then we've have other brand new startups that have created a website and gotten nuts!

**Marc V:** And I actually know two people specifically that are like the complete opposite end of the spectrum,

**Mark S:** Okay.

**Marc V:** One guy has never sold a shirt in person he has never seen a customer and we've got this older gentlemen that comes into Colman and company a lot and he asking the other day he was askin me " So what is Facebook, should I be on it?" and I kind of said, "You're doing fine, you don't have to worry about it".

**Mark S:** Let me ask you Marc Villa, what's the answer to the question 'Do you need a website?'

**Marc V:** Well, if, do you need one isn't an easy answer for sure because as we said the success of your business is not gonna depend on one, but what I say the reason that you're gonna need one is that now a days it is a trust building type of thing at minimum, so that minimum if you've just got some sort of an info website and it's on your business card or something that you tell people that you go to, it builds some legitimate scene to your business it's a modern day storefront, so you can be in your garage running a business with a plotter or a DTG printer or a embroidery machine literally taking up 25% of your garage on a old table that you built, you got scrap materials but you've got that website that you put together and you'll look legitimate. So when you visit a business and say hey! Here I am and they look at it and they are impressed.

**Mark S:** So I think you answered like a marketing guy, the operative word there is 'need'. Do you need a website and I think the short answer is as far as need goes is "NO". There are people that do a 100% of business just word of mouth and just referral and they're doing fine but it hurts our feelings as marketing people when you don't have one because it's a huge advantage in the market place and so I think do you need one? I mean you could potentially make plenty of money to keep yourself going in the local community just by walking around with business cards and brochures then everything that we put in our last podcast which was offline marketing essentials plug plug, but you don't need one but it's a great idea to have one.

**Marc V:** And the other answer id give to that is on why the answer might be yes you need one because no matter what if you have an extremely simple website that has frequently asked question a place where customers fill out some information and sent it over to you, a place where they can find your address, find your phone number all these things that are easily found in one place that you control all of that content, that's gonna be a nice thing.

**Mark S:** It is a big deal, yeah.

**Marc V:** Its gonna be nice for them to say "go here it has everything" all the FAQs hardware requirements, minimum orders, pictures of all the things I've done before, whatever you want to put on their it's just a nice place for your customers to be able to go to.

**Mark S:** And I will say it adds a little gravitism permanence to your business, so you're not the teen mom that just bought brush and bake machine or a rhinestone machine cams and started doing T-shirts for her friends anymore, you're not a embroidery hobbyist that bought a embroidery machine so that she can do nicer stuff for her grand kids. Once you have a professional website now you'll look like an actual business to the outside world, you'll look like you're there to make money and you are professional to deal with.

**Marc V:** Yeah and kind of like modern day store front no matter what it is when you got a website, so I think we've answered that if we need to have one or not. I kind of say "YES" you could do something.

**Mark S:** I'm gonna throw and its crazy I actually designed websites for a living and I manage probably as many as you do Marc, I probably manage 15 to 17 different websites and blogs and things like that, so this is integrated into my lifestyle but you could also have a Facebook business page, you could also do a lot with a free Facebook business page where you can send customers there, you can have pictures uploaded of your content, could have some other information there if you are between stages, if you're just getting started you're not ready to do a website, you could just do a business page.

**Marc V:** Because it has all that information.

**Mark S:** It does, it does.

**Marc V:** your address, phone number, pictures you can add frequently asked questions on there, it's a place where customers can go and fill out some information and contact you.

**Mark S:** So, that's a good point you could just think about that as a free website, now there are some big disadvantages to that as well, you cant move things around, you cant lay it out differently than it already is, it is difficult to keep information at the top, there are a few tricks to that but it is an alternative, but once you've deicded that you do want to have a webpage to represent you and your business, what's the next step.

**Marc V:** So the type of website that you want to have.

**Mark S:** okay

**Marc V:** And I've written down an info page or an E-commerce page.

**Mark S:** Right and for the lay person out there, that is a page just about you and your business or an E-commerce page as a shopping cart and that is where someone can click on something online and purchase.

**Marc V:** Yeah they click on it, put in their credit card number, click buy and now their order is placed and then there is almost little bit of an in-between nod I think we can mention that in a few, but why would you need one or the other?

**Mark S:** I would say that if and I recently talked to one of our success stories, Shawn Benson of Benson designs, you know we had the conversation and he does a lot of business but its 100% local, it's in his rather small town in West Virginia, so you're talking about all of his customers are within 50 miles of his house, and he does great business so all of the people that order from him and will be ordering from him he knows them, he picks up the phone and calls them, does he expects to have a random business in his community want to be able to go online and order a shirt, probably not. So he's got a 100% local business he's not looking to expand into a fulfillment house kind of arrangement and an informational site is fine because it tells them how to get in touch, how to order and respond.

**Marc V:** Yeah and everyone that he's gonna meet, he's gonna get a check from or he'll get a credit card from or he'll physically get the cash, so that's one differences is that are you gonna see all of your customers.

**Mark S:** Right, how local is your business and how local do you want it to be.

**Marc V:** And then the other is gonna be do you have static products or is it constantly changing, is everything custom?

**Mark S:** I think we should start it with that one because that is an important point.

**Marc V:** So if you got specific designs that you constantly make and you sell those all the time, if you're in the Rhinestone business and you've got 40 different Rhinestone designs because you deal specifically with surfing, you know when you do surfing rhinestone tanks for beach goers in California and that's kind of your business, well you might be in California and you might sell to mostly small community and say hunting to beach or something like that but you've got a static set of products that aren't always changing you can put those online where even your local customers can buy them and that gives you the opportunity to grow to possible pick up business from people who just found you online or just referred to you because they saw a shirt.

**Mark S:** That is a great point but it's also a kind of a differentiator there because if you're just doing an informational site or let's say it's a blog, WordPress or something along those lines or whatever Go-daddy offers you as a free website when you get hosting, if you're just gonna have an informational website then that is pretty static content, you can update it all the time but your address is gonna be the same, your policies is gonna be the same all of your contact information, about us is gonna be the same, you can do that once and check back once in a while, you know to make changes with it.

If you have a shopping cart, it is a commitment to keep things updated because you're gonna change designs you are going to not have this size T-shirt, you're going to pick up a new product line, you're gonna do something different, so it's rare and you can tell just by what's on Amazon.com, it's rare that

you go on Amazon or Etsy and you see the same thing on the front-Page, so an E-commerce site is a commitment to the website more than just an informational site.

**Marc V:** You'll be visiting it; you'll be on the site everyday on the backend of it

**Mark S:** Checking orders.

**Marc V:** Checking orders, updating things because E-commerce also can become stale and your customers are not gonna want to go back to see what's new if nothing is ever new.

**Mark S:** Right.

**Marc V:** so that's a huge thing to think about, it's the commitment that you're willing to put into the website if you're gonna go E-commerce. And I mentioned kind of in-between.

**Mark S:** Yeah what is that?

**Marc V:** And I've seen this on some customers where they've got order forms online, so they've created forums online where customers can input a lot of the information as if they are creating an order, so it would have feels that they would have to fill out so- say what am I ordering, T-shirts or caps?, how many do I need, what text is gonna be on there, what sizes do I need, they have a lot of things to fill out, they are not actually completing a transaction out there, but they are submitting an order to be reviewed and possibly be quoted.

**Mark S:** Right.

**Marc V:** So that's a place where you are encouraging customers to ask for what they want online to be contacted on the phone or via E-mail for a Quote and further information.

**Mark S:** I like that option a lot, I'm also gonna split the difference in another way, and that's like I was just looking up on while we were talking one of our bigger direct garment printer is the nesting project and they do some really interesting stuff with printing wedding invitations on Wood and doing custom T-shirts, they got their start by having a very nice informational website that linked out to Etsy page. So they have an Etsy page and you'll still have to do similar maintenance to if you're running your own E-commerce page but you could have an Etsy page or an eBay store and just link to it from an informational website.

**Marc V:** Yeah actually the other one I was gonna say was linking to the E-bay store as well.

**Mark S:** Right.

**Marc V:** So, those are some good in-betweens.

**Mark S:** Although I just want to go on record to say that I hate EBay I hate the interface and I hate everything about it.

**Marc V:** I'm not gonna go on record to say anything about eBay, and if there is an eBay executive

**Mark S:** Oh wait Google owns them i take it back i'm sorry i love eBay...

**Marc V:** But no matter which way you decide to go, which platform you like that is a great little in-between way to go, especially coz some folks already have the EBay store already have the Etsy store but don't have any type of informational website, which I think if you're already online then the answer is "Yes".

**Mark S:** You have to fill that presence out with information about your company.

**Marc V:** So that somebody can see a place where you control everything.

**Mark S:** And that's a good point because if you send somebody to EBay or to Etsy or to Amazon for example, you have no control over the products that they're gonna see, they are gonna look at your store but there'll be all of their tempting ads on the bottom or the side (I'm waving my hand up and down trying to indicate that it's on the side by the way.) So you're gonna have all these other opportunities for your customers to leave your website, where that's one of the things about having your own store with your own informational website is once they're there they are there, they are yours.

**Marc V:** I think that's great, so hopefully by now you've kind of decided which one you need or you need something in-between and the great thing about it is generally speaking unless you're investing in something particularly expensive, it's not permanent, it's not forever.

**Mark S:** And that's a really good point because this is not a life time decision, if you create an informational website to start off with you can easily add the E-commerce part to any website platform, there is none that does not allow you at some point or some way to add a shopping cart.

**Marc V:** So, since I've been working on my transitions lately, I did that on purpose, because how much money do you need to spend, do you need to do it yourself do you need to pay somebody, when is it a mistake to do it yourself, when is it a mistake to pay somebody is all the same question but DIY or not?

**Mark S:** That is a question that even, like I said before I build website and I still make that decision every time I Go to make my next one, and I make it because, you have to check a few things and the first one is, is do you have any idea what you're doing?

**Marc V:** Yeah, okay (laughs).

**Mark S:** Okay, so if you have no idea if it was difficult for you to use Google or Bing or AOL to find the product that you're selling, if you don't use a computer everyday anyway for more than just Facebook then you may want to outsource the first one.

**Marc V:** and especially if you conversation would start with "well I am not that great at computers".

**Mark S:** Right then it's a no.

**Marc V:** and that's fine. Because you can learn over time.

**Mark S:** This isn't a judgement, I can't Digitize, I am terrible at tweaking artwork for a DTG print. But if you're excellent at one of those things but you're not comfortable on a computer then the DIY thing is not gonna be for you.

**Marc V:** And with all the website stuff that I do and in building sites and working on sites when I am on the Colman and company site even then there are certain things where I just say I am not gonna try to do that, it's too much for me it's too complicated it involves too many moving parts on a live site, it's a bad idea for me to do it, however if it's something else in that realm if its adjusting q part of a page or adding a new product or coming up with a new design for one specific page I might want to do that myself so you can have both.

**Mark S:** It's the same combination of things that we were talking about before, you can have somebody else build the site for you and then you do the edits, you learn how to adjust the page content and things like that.

**Marc V:** So in regards to if you do think you're a DIYer because a lot of our customers are, they literally are they are doing it themselves creating an apparel, they already know how to do things themselves, they probably enjoy doing things themselves, they might want to do their own website, there is a lot of ways to go about it, so I think we could talk about a few of those options.

**Mark S:** But first I have something that I want to make sure that everybody knows, that if you're a DIYer and you do create your own website, you got to have some kind of built in facility to be honest with yourself or know someone that will be honest with you about whether or not your website is terrible. Because I do, I talk to a lot of people, let's say I've talked to several people so far this year who are very proud of the website that they build and they'll send me a link to the website that they've built and ill look and literally cringe, because it looks great if it was designed 10 years ago but it's not, and it may be like what's familiar what you're used to seeing but you got to have some kind of a facility for someone to tell you if your website is ugly and not to hurt your feelings, and Marc and I would do that for you by the way, ill just say that right now especially Mark he's got a reputation of being a little bit mean...

**Marc V:** No...Well... no.

**Mark S:** That's me... you can send me a link to your website and I'll do an evaluation for you and I'll let you know what looks good or not, what happens most of the time is that DIYers when they do their own website they are using you know maybe whatever their domain registration software package was and they use a template that's a little outdated and they don't change any of the colors and the font is too big and there are a list of things that you can do there. Now the biggest advantage that most of our customers have is being able to do graphics which I cannot do... physically I have no creative talent whatsoever... so I look at some of the sites that our customers do like I am on the site for the nesting project right now and the graphics are beautiful and that makes up 90% of a good website if you have good images, so we were talking about the outsourcing VS not.

**Marc V:** So there is maybe some terminology that we should talk about so we can know, you know what, so we are talking about E-commerce... is one word that we want to talk about, that's what's gonna be used what you're gonna see, the word E-commerce and the word shopping cart, those mean the place where you can buy online and something else is CMS or Content Management System.

**Mark S:** God! That's a fancy word.

**Marc V:** That's a fancy word and what that means is that's the software that your website is working on, when you're building a website now a day's even people who are programmers aren't often staring at a screen of code and typing out all of the...

**Mark S:** they're almost never, they're almost never doing that.

**Marc V:** There is a content management system that visually brings in, if you're a coder it would be code and visual if you're not a coder it's just the visual.

**Mark S:** So let's say it this way, a CMS is a website Software; it's software that you use to create a website, so you don't have to program it.

**Marc V:** Exactly and a lot of them are Template-based.

**Mark S:** And Easy. I am just gonna mention my favorite one which is Word Press, it is very common it's incredibly simple and there is a lot of variety to it.

**Marc V:** So, I would say... I put kind of... and my thought is..., I put word press kind of at..., word press for me is like level 2, okay? Because it can get weird.

**Mark S:** Give me a level one before you describe what weird is.

**Marc V:** So level one might be a Shopify.

**Mark S:** Really? Okay.



**Marc V:** What's... there is another one that I've been hearing a lot about lately... Let me see if I can figure it out.

**Mark S:** I'll fill in for a second ill say that there is a package called strikingly that I just used recently, its brand new and it takes a profile from LinkedIn which is a social media website for professions that you can sign up for free, and what strikingly will do is it will turn your LinkedIn profile into a website and if you want to see that you can go to MarkJStephenson.com and see what that website looks like and it's gorgeous, you don't have to do anything but upload images and do a little text editing and you're done.

**Marc V:** So I was thinking of three different ones.

**Mark S:** Okay.

**Marc V:** Okay, lets back up for a second when I mentioned Shopify that's gonna be an E-commerce site. And for a info. Site your Wix is extremely easy "WIX"

**Marc V:** Web .com and they're kind of gonna build it for you and you're gonna pay more of premium fee but you got a designer behind it. And then square space is a new one that has been growing a lot lately.

**Mark S:** okay I haven't looked at this.

**Marc V:** Yeah and that's, that one again is really easy... no nothing, there is no programming involved there is no, you're not gonna be uploading a Zip file and waiting for it to install, you know you run into a little bit of that stuff in Word Press and where you gotta download a theme and is your theme compatible with this, then you've gotta...

**Mark S:** Yeah agreed it's a little messy.

**Marc V:** There is a little mess to it, it requires some thought, sometimes it can break and you've gotta figure out how to fix it or you gotta contact support or whoever makes it but it's because of the freedom that's allowed in it, the more freedom you have to build something that is more..

**Mark S:** True for Example in Strikingly that you have 2 or 3 themes, there is no shopping cart abilities at all and you just pick one and you're done, you don't have a lot of editing.

**Marc V:** Yeah, I've been on square space and when I've been on there, and I've noticed that they do have commerce pages and not but there is a lot of really cool themes and you can drag and drop and more things around and there is limitations and this is the one that we get a lot now a days, I want to be able to make a website where my customers can go on design their own shirt and then order it..

**Mark S:** WHICH we are not talking about yet, I mean that is the advanced class...

**Marc V:** Yeah, so that's why I wanted to mention that because this is where we start going into the DIY or not, you know some of these things that you're asking for are really specific or complex things you start going further and further into that realm of..

**Mark S:** And you'll be surprised at how quickly the price or the difficulty of doing it yourself goes up, it's an exponential growth, it's like somebody coming if you got a DTG printer or a screen print shop.. And hey! here is a black Anvil T-shirt I would like you to print white letters on VS someone bringing in a live puppy and saying I want you to screen print my name around its back... and there is a little bit of a difference there.

Both laugh

**Marc V:** and really does grow...

**Mark S:** Actually I really that example.

**Marc V:** I am gonna use that again in real life.

**Mark S:** Here Marc and I mentioned sites like wax .com which really is simple and is great to do, I really want to jump ahead to one of my pet peeves though an that is with both WordPress and Wix, initially what they'll try to do is have you have your own domain name and then it will be dot Wix .com or Dot word press .com and I think if you have a even a moderately sophisticated customer base that kind of turns people off, there is a little bit of oh... you know what I mean.

**Marc V:** We've discussed this in E-mail marketing as well you know at @Gmail.com is fine it works but if its @myembroiderybusiness.com or whatever your website might be...

**Mark S:** Now you're looking like a pro... It's a dollar a shirt I think that's worth at least a dollar a shirt; oh Gmail you probably work in your house that kind of thing.

**Marc V:** and I still want to go back to the E-mail thing for a second because... if you use say Gmail or Yahoo you can still use that exact same platform and pay for a professional version that has your website name and address and nothing changes...

**Mark S:** Yes, you can... you can.

**Marc V:** and nothing changes literally nothing changes...

**Mark S:** Yes its two different ideas.

**Marc V:** So, anyways I just want to say that again because I see it every day and I talk about it and let's just it'll make you look good people will appreciate it but that's true on the website, you want to have your domain your website address as the whole thing across the top.

**Mark S:** So we've talked a little bit about the platforms maybe and we talked about making sure that if you are a DIYer then you have someone that feels comfortable telling you that its ugly and so can you be objective. And that's another thing that's not like E-commerce and Non-Ecommerce, it's not a permanent decision, it's not a 100% decision, you can split the difference, you can split the difference on creating a website too, so you could do some of the DIY, you know you could have somebody do 80% of it get it up and running and you just do the images or you just do the editing or the pricing or something along those lines.

**Marc V:** Yeah and you could have somebody setup the store for you and you add all the products in.

**Mark S:** so my next little tick mark here is to talk about time VS cost, and I get to say it first so I don't have to answer the question, so Marc how much is it to get my website created.

**Marc V:** I was actually just thinking of the same question, how much do you actually have to spend, so you can start with free, okay? or almost free that basically means you've gone to one of these Square Space or WIX or Shopify and you're talking about getting their basic platform, something like just a 100\$ a year, you know it's very minimalistic, it doesn't come with very much at all but you get your website name up there and you have to do everything yourself and usually that doesn't include E-commerce or shopping carts or anything like that, so that's kind of your minimum is maybe a 100\$ or less to get started and then up to 50,00,000 dollars and that's where you want to really start to justify is this worth, do I have enough customers and enough potential in there that I need to have this custom designed artwork creation platform on my website that is custom programmed for me with all my dreams and thoughts, which are probably awesome ideas, I'm not gonna discount that those ideas are not awesome because I've heard someone sound like "that would be cool" "that would cost 75,000\$"

**Mark S:** I want a picture, I want my customers to be able to see themselves in a shirt from all sides and spin around and be able to change the colors, "no problem, it will be a million dollars".

**Marc V:** and I've heard so many cool ideas and it all comes back to how many shirts do you have to sell to justify that.

**Mark S:** That is a great one, I also kind of want to put a cap on that, let's be a little bit realistic, I will say in my professional carrier I've never spent more on a small website than 1500\$ and on the biggest website I've ever worked on I think I've probably spent 11,000 dollars, so in most sites that I've created its around five or six hundred bucks for an informational site or a very basic E-commerce site, does sound about right Marc?

**Marc V:** Yeah, it really depends who you're working with it really depends because I have some friends who are web designers and programmers that would listen to you say that and they'll laugh at you and say I would never even think of doing of doing a website for only a thousand dollars.

**Mark S:** Right.

**Marc V:** You know it really depends on who you work with and what they specialize in and maybe the person that if you are talking to somebody or if your brother owns a web design company and he is like I won't do anything for under five grand, maybe he is or isn't the person for you, so it's a tricky line.. but really my honest stance here is if I wanted an informational website for my new T-shirt business and I wanted to pay somebody to do it I know for sure I can get something amazing done for under a grand.

**Mark S:** Yes.

**Marc V:** Amazing not good, like it would look so cool under a grand, when you're getting into the E-commerce stuff and customization I've seen some 10,000\$ websites that I can see why it was, and if it's worth it, but then again how many shirts do you have to sell to make that money back and if that's your goal right now, and do you have that money right now? And are you going to go into debt 10 grand and you have that true plan for that website to take off.

**Mark S:** And you gotta do that time VS money calculations, so that... let's say you need a 3,000\$ for some reason and you may be able to do it yourself so you gotta do that time VS expense calculation yourself, you've gotta say okay, I can learn how to do that website stuff because I am great at computers, and then I'm gonna do the site and its gonna take me 60 days of two hours a night. Okay well, could you be doing something else to make more than 3000\$ with that time, that's really a calculation like how much is your time worth that goes into deciding whether or not you want to follow up with that...

**Marc V:** Yeah actually I think about it every day with what I do here, I thought about that that's a good podcast topic too on just talking about that and making that decision. but this is a perfect one and that is the DIY is not gonna be good for you, if you've decided that's gonna cost you a thousand dollars to do this, how quick can you have it up and running could you really be focusing your time on something else that you're better at. So it is still going to that DIY or not question it's not gonna be easy so one way or another make the decision, make the decision and jump on it.

**Mark S:** Let me put in here that because you mentioned the brother in law, brother that has a web business, it is so rarely a good idea to have your nephew who is good with computers to do your website, you what I mean using relying on those family connections or friend of a friend that'll do it for free, I mean you're going to get what you pay for in the end, because if its someone that you care about that's doing the website for you like I said earlier just like with you and what you should do is you're not going to tell them it's ugly and I'm not gonna use it, you're gonna end up with something that you're not happy with just because hey the guy is doing it for free, he is doing me a favor I don't want to tell him that I don't want 72 point text all over my website, I would feel bad if I did that, and you don't want somebody cutting your teeth on their website unless you're willing to tell them that it's not good enough to put up.

**Marc V:** And I think that that is one of those things that where it's a decision to make, don't just say automatically my nephew just graduated from school, so he's gonna make my website for me because just think about it, it might be a great idea.

**Mark S:** Imagine the consequences though, so what if it's a terrible website and you hate it, and then what are you going to do?

**Marc V:** And do they have full time job already, are they the type of person that is a workaholic that after their full time job they're gonna work on it already, you have to think about all those things, so this not only is you're gonna do it yourself then who is gonna do it for you and then remember when choosing that I would talk to multiple people. Because I have quoted on websites before in the past over many years where I've got multiple quotes and for the same website where I have same conversation I have been quoted from one thousand to ten thousand. So don't rely on one quote.

**Mark S:** I've been doing the same thing.

**Marc V:** get seven, get as many as you want but the first person that tell you "oh no you cannot do that unless you spend 5000 dollars" might be right or they might be wrong. So talk about it, so they've decided they want a website and maybe they are still trying to figure out if they want to do it themselves or not and I think part of that decision is what has to be on a website.

**Mark S:** Before we do that I just want to mention whether or not if you're gonna build it yourself or not and it kind of tails into the checklist and we're gonna go through next, whether or not you're gonna build it yourself or not, you should start one with several websites that you like. So the first thing that a website designer is gonna ask you what you should design is "okay what should my website look like?" "well I don't know" Let's find some websites that you really love in your space if you've got an embroidery business or screen printing or rhinestones or whatever find somebody's website that you really love and what are the parts about it that you really like, is it the pictures, is it the layout is it the color scheme and then when you go to do your checklist or talk to a designer you got a list of things that says okay well, I like these colors they match my logo, I like the menu down the left hand side, I like to have a slider with different pictures, I like to have big color photos of one product on the front page or ten products on the front page and you have all those things mapped out and that way when you get started it will be faster and when you hand that to a designer, you'll just see them visibly relaxed.

**Marc V:** Yeah that is really gonna help get a particularly good quote and make sure you get what you want and if you can't find the websites within your realm find something slightly out of it and if you're in embroidery business you can look at fishing equipment websites, you can look at purse website you can look at websites that sell other things but if you like the design of it, that is all that's important a web design of it, it could be a bake and taco website and you are selling a big website but you could say this is what I like about this.

**Mark S:** What you'll probably end up doing is just you know you'll end up with Colman and Company .com and I just want to do that I just want to be like Colman and Company, that's probably what's gonna happen on the shopping cart sites and on the informational sites you're go to ColDesi .com and you're gonna decide that's what you want,

**Marc V:** Yeah just makes me that; as a matter of fact you'll change your company name.

**Mark S:** Lets make a checklist about what exactly what needs to be on any website not just on informational website

**Marc V:** Okay, so the first it's just create a checklist I think is what actually what people need to do, get on a notepad and write, these are all the things that I want to have, so you want to have a way for people to contact you and then you get into, do you want to publish a phone number or not.

**Mark S:** so we're talking about two things, if there is a way for people to contact you then there is a contact us page and down at the bottom of the website what Google likes is they like contact us information in what is called the footer, the bottom of the website, so if you have a business that you're willing to publish the address then you're gonna want that at the bottom of the website and if not you're gonna want your phone number, E-mail address.

**Marc V:** Yeah the more information that you're willing to share what I mentioned about in the beginning as far as it being legitimizing you and building trust and coz that's to me is most of what a website is about building trust for people, so if they are thinking about buying from and they can easily call you E-mail you or fill out a contact form or whatever the easier you make that for people the more likely they are. How many times have you given up on a website...?

**Mark S:** Listen how many times have you gone to a cable television website, trying to figure out how to get your Verizon or Century link or Roadrunner cable connection fixed or to talk to somebody about it and it takes you a week to ... okay "Contact Us" Where is just a phone number where I can call somebody.

**Marc V:** Okay yeah and there is an argument about not having a number and we can go into that another, so the bottom line is have a way for people to contact you and even if it's just a phone, that apprehends about people reaching out to you, I would make an argument against that but at least have that, make it easy for people, and it doesn't need to be a big cumbersome thing.

**Mark S:** Yeah, name, address, phone number what do you want?

**Marc V:** And its like do I need to have a name, the first name, last name, phone number, address, do you need all of those things, maybe...maybe but if you don't then get rid of it. Make it easy for people to fill out so that they can ask you whatever questions they want, if you're willing to put a live chat type of thing on your website,

**Mark S:** Shouldn't even get started on that, that's awesome; yeah that's a great tool.

**Marc V:** You can make that go to your mobile phone, have a conversation with that, with the person that's gonna design the site for you or the company that you're gonna do it through but you'll see that...

**Mark S:** But the bare minimum is that you want contact information and a contact us forum that people can fill out and that you'll actually look at and respond.

**Marc V:** So then the next, not the next, not the next of this is an order of importance but the other thing that you're gonna need next is what you do, a nice clear explanation of the things you do and slash do not do and the products you offer and have other people read it for you that maybe don't know what you do..

**Mark S:** And that you be right on the home page, it could be part of an about us section that we'll talk about but people have to know what you do, if your name is Benson Designs... what do you design? Are you an architect? But if you'll go to the front page you'll see okay well it's a custom T-shirt business, then you click on the about us to find out about the people who own it, how they started, where they are. Things along those lines are very important.

**Marc V:** Yeah then there the about us page, that's a common one, this specific page that says 'about us' to me that is a part, that's another part of the trust and the relationship thing that you're building with people, that's an opportunity for if you meet somebody at a ball game and.. What would you do? And you give them your elevator pitch which we talked about in another episode that was in the sales episode, no... no that one was in the Social marketing not Social media... we talked about that, but in that, you have that opportunity to say that in real life "Yeah in 2009 I decided I wanted to do this, I've been doing it for six years and I love it bla bla..." Well the about us page... or whatever you want to call it- about us, about me, our company, our history, our story, you know there is a lot of ways to say it is an opportunity for the people who are curious about you for you to just tell them literally...

**Mark S:** Yeah it's a great opportunity to connect, I mean honestly we have a huge number of customers that are Veterans, you know that have gone into the apparel decorating business after they retired from service. So put your unit in there, put how long you served put where you were, put who you are and why you started this business and that is a great way to connect with people, if you shoed horses in your teams and loved this, you still wanted to stay around and loved this business and you started a horse blanket embroidery business then put that in there, it's a great way to connect.

**Marc V:** Yeah, and another thing also is to help if you're talking about a niche market that you've got a lot of knowledge about say for example you were a dancer from when you were five years old till you were thirty years old and then you started doing a business doing dance wear, you could talk about that 25 years of dancing that you did and you could say that "I did this and I did that.. And I remember getting this uniform that was terrible" you could tell these little stories and then when people are going to choose you, they're going to your website to figure you out they would be like "yeah, I would love to work with her coz she knows me and whatever."

**Mark S:** Yeah, I like that and I'm gonna talk about that in a second when we talk about whether or not you want to do a blog as well, well the next page that I really think is vitally important is 'how to order'. How do you place that content it has to be on your website somewhere, it's how you're gonna play click here to order my products on Etsy or EBay or is it fill out that information on the contact forum like Marc mentioned earlier.. That here is another forum that you go to, how many hats do you want? How big is your logo, what's the situation and what do you want to order.

**Marc V:** Yeah get a free estimate and get a quote.

**Mark S:** and you could also put in there the kind of parameters for your order, like hey if your ordering more than a million T-shirts its gonna take me more than a week, our average turnaround time is 10 days. What you don't want to put (which I have actually seen on websites before) is a list of things that you're not interested in, so what I see is 'hey, I'm not gonna accept a single order, if you have crappy artwork then i'm not going to do your shirt, please don't call me if you need a Polo' like this whole list of things that you're not interested in.

**Marc V:** No rush orders and on caps, I just have that... I'm gonna say it, I've said it and I am continue to say it, you don't have to be abrasive with your customers and I always try to fix that and I've seen some of that stuff when I started on other companies that I've worked for and even Colman and Company website and I've find a page and I'm like "why does it say that, it feels so mean" you know ?

**Mark S:** Right!, I'm gonna interject and be a little bit defensive with some of our customers here which is very uncharacteristic of me, what I'm gonna say is that most of the people that get into this business, they don't have any retail or customer service experience. So when they are thinking about business they are thinking about the way they talk to other people they used to work with, about the same stuff. So if you worked for a big plumbing company and you're doing a screen printing internally for the plumbing company and somebody says "hey can you do one 4XL in blue" your gonna tell them NO, get the hell out of my office, don't do that to your customers if it's your business, you've gotta learn how to write & speak a little bit more like a sales guy.

**Marc V:** Yeah and I think that that is perfectly worded. So your instructions don't have to be on what not to do on your contact me or about page, let people reach out to you first and.

**Mark S:** And then tell them! To go pound sand!

**Marc V:** And also, coz sometimes, this is another little sales thing, somebody who think that they want something- in the end might not actually go and buy them, so they came on to your website coz they thought they wanted two 4XL shirts and then they talk to you and then you're like why do you want two "oh i'm just buying a couple of replacements for me and another guy"; "oh is it a new design?"; "Do you want another design?"; "Do you want all your guys to match?"; "I guess I do you know..."

**Mark S:** It's an opportunity to talk to somebody.

**Marc V:** It's an opportunity to talk to somebody;" I guess I actually do want that", so it's an opportunity to talk to somebody. So we've got how to order, we've got the about us, about me...

**Mark S:** Contact us.

**Marc V:** Contact, do you want your location or not, what you do and then you had mentioned about a Blog.



**Mark S:** Yeah, and that's kind of a tough choice too because if you don't know a Blog does not have to be a separate website it can be a separate set of pages on an existing website and it's easy to add and what that is just a.. It's one or a series of articles that you write about your experiences, about your business, about your product or something related to them.

**Marc V:** And so do you need one? The short answer is 'NO' you don't need one, the purpose of one is to provide your customers information that'll be beneficial to them usually and then in turn search engines will realize that you're an authority on this information and you know a lot about it, and they can figure it out through all of their algorithms and mathematical going through your website that you know enough about this topic and then when people are searching online they will find you.

**Mark S:** Like the lady that Marc supposed a few minutes ago, she spent 25 years in dance before she opened up her apparel business, well, she can write about teaching kids how to dance and she can write about running a dance business, she can write about all of these things related to it and you can even do a review of the last dance competition and then when someone is searching online in your area for any of those things how valuable would it be if you sell dance apparel for someone to be looking for dance classes for kids and find you, that's pretty valuable.

**Marc V:** Yeah, Exactly and so that's what it comes to and then what do you're gonna say if you have a Blog what's the big caviar, what's the thing that you have to do.

**Mark S:** You have to actually write in it, you have to actually add articles to the blog, we talked about this before we started, I have 17 blogs and Marc has blogs and ideally you should be posting on your Blog at least once a week, and that's what all the books say and we're lucky if we can squeeze in times to do one or two posts a month.

**Marc V:** Yeah, it takes time-writing content takes time and writing good content takes time...

**Mark S:** Even more time.

**Marc V:** So, that's a choice so I would say – here is the answer to the Blog question okay?, if you really want search engine optimization, if you want to approve on search engines that you're an authority on the topic then because searching for you without having to pay for it is important for you, the answer is: YES. If you don't like to write but that first answer is still yes, the answer is still yes but now you have to pay somebody to do it. Okay so then the second is that do you need that... maybe not necessarily because you can use some of your other techniques which I think we should talk about in a podcast in regards to getting setup online and be found locally.

**Mark S:** Right, Right!

**Marc V:** And there is a lot of other things you can do, you don't need a blog to have that happen.

**Mark S:** No, I have blogs all over the place for that specific reason as to help people find our businesses online. But it's also a thing where you have to actually be writing in it on a pretty regular basis, the worst thing that you can do is you can have a blog and the date on the blog post is 2011, which I see all the time and it drives me nuts.

**Marc V:** because then if somebody sees it and oh...

**Mark S:** I'm done.

**Marc V:** So if you have a website and you're listening to this and you have a blog and your last blog post is 2011, go uncheck the box that says...

**Mark S:** 'Show the date'. No, no just delete where the date is so that no one knows.

**Marc V:** So I think that's kind of the minimum info. On the website in my opinion now. Somebody who is a web designer they might come back from that check list and tell you nine other things that they think you have to have which all of these things are debatable, what we're talking about is if you don't have at least those things, why do you have the website...?

**Mark S:** And the first icing I'm gonna put on that cake is some social links. If you're going to go through the trouble of having a content website, you should at least have somewhere where it links to your Facebook profile and if you have Google+ or Twitter any of those fancy things you can have them as well but should atleast make it easy for people to share your content on Facebook.

**Marc V:** Yeah, very good, very good.

**Mark S:** I think were on pet peeves now... I always love this section because we get to say what we really mean.

**Marc V:** Okay so, The first I've spoke about a pet peeve and I'm gonna talk about it again and I'm gonna talk about another podcast but you don't need all these abrasive giant letter redbolt caps things that you don't want your customers to do, we all have and it's frustrating when we consistently if a customer sends you a screenshot of their logo and says "oh print this for me" you know that's a frustrating thing, however it's not their fault, don't be mad at them.

**Mark S:** They don't know, don't be angry in advance anyways.

**Marc V:** Don't be angry in advance anyways, so any of those, you have an FAQ page so you know which could be a minimum but have a FAQ page and in that FAQ page go there, send people to the FAQ page even in nice big texts say "Hey! Want to make sure you're ordering right? Please read my FAQs" and there you can have all of those disclaimers but don't punch them in the face on your front page in the header. So that's one of my big ones.

**Mark S:** Okay I've got a very big one and it drives me crazy all the time and that is 'Bad Photos and Bad Graphics'. So modern cell phones and smart phones have fantastic cameras if you need to take a picture of something use one of those, do not use any camera that you bought before the year 2000. I don't care what it looks like just use your phone and turn the lights on and just make sure that its reasonably well lit and take a picture of it.

**Marc V:** I think I wrote a blog post on this I am looking for it right now.

**Mark S:** But you don't remember because you write so many blog posts.

**Marc V:** It is very true that a bad picture, especially a bad picture of your product. I know when we add Rhinestones to the Colman and Company site for example, its a particularly difficult product to photograph. So you search the internet for rhinestone photos and you'll see a lot of terrible artwork and we have excellent ones by the way, and excellent illustrations about it that give you the right idea, that's one of those places where you really gotta have somebody that you can trust to tell you that its ugly, take a photo put it on your website and have someone look on it and say what do you think and have them give an honest answer.

**Marc V:** And another thing is the aspect ratio. If the picture is supposed to be a certain amount width-tall but the template that you have needs to be a square, but your images are rectangle... you can't do that.

**Mark S:** Don't let it auto reconfigure is that what you're saying?

**Marc V:** Yeah...you have to.

**Mark S:** Don't really like to tall people with skinny heads...

**Marc V:** Yeah and it doesn't looks good, nobody's gonna like it, nobody is gonna go to your website "like man I wish I had a picture of their embroidery Oh! That picture is all stretched out but I get the point..."

**Mark S:** Yeah exactly (laughs) nobody says that!

**Marc V:** they're gonna judge, true or not unfair or not, if you decide to put a photo on your website which you have to do, websites have to have pictures then people are gonna judge the quality of you, your business and your work by the quality of that picture, so keep in mind every time you do that and we'll put a link to Marc's Blog post.

**Marc V:** I did... found it, I wrote this in 2014. So the content is now out of date.

**Mark S:** Yeah it is completely. Pictures are different now.

**Marc V:** I Wrote about get more likes, steady, don't have a dirty lens and use something decent, it's a really short post and kind of nails some of the little things that we run into.

**Mark S:** Okay!

**Marc V:** So then what else? What do you have?

**Mark S:** Other pet peeves, you had mentioned broken links and I love those, so go ahead and describe why you don't like them.

**Marc V:** Broken link means it says click here and click there, it doesn't literally says the word click there, there's something you can click and when you click it, it does nothing, it goes nowhere.

**Mark S:** Worse than going nowhere it goes to one of those pages that says "404 page redirect" and it looks like you made some kind of internet mistake and they are about to knock on your door and come get you.

**Marc V:** Or worse it goes to one of those like fake search engines type of things and... Yeah you're sending your customer to like a spam haven so, so frequently Colman and Company, I don't know how many links we have on your site, and I don't remember the number...

**Mark S:** There's a million...

**Marc V:** I don't remember the number but it's got five zeroes, so you're not gonna have that many and it's a nice thing that frequently that once every so often you go on there and you do a little evaluation on your site every once in a while, click on your links make sure it works and check the pictures.

**Mark S:** I'll give you a hint where stuff like that usually occurs on apparel decorating website, that's if you've done a show or there is a show coming up or if there is an event that you're participating in and you're excited and you have a link out to that event and when it's over they pull down the page or now the event was two years ago, so those are all examples of broken links..

**Marc V:** And that's a good time, anytime those events are over its perfectly fine to go on there and remove those links as well, that doesn't hurt.

**Mark S:** Okay the last pet peeve that we have written down in advance is about outdated messages, so just like your Christmas lights at your house by February they should be down, it's a same thing with holiday messages, vacation messages anything that you put on your website as a personal or timely message to your customers then you should monitor those very closely and do not leave them up.

**Marc V:** Laughs well I...

**Mark S:** Just like Honnica lights as well, you don't want to... I want to be inclusive.

**Marc V:** I like that you're that type of person. There is something that I saw the other day that was funny I wasn't quite the other day it was maybe March or April but there is a Gym down the road from here a few miles and it said "Lose those pounds before the holidays" and I'm just like its March...

**Mark S:** 4rth of July is that the holiday that you want to lose weight for?

**Marc V:** It's like April what holiday am I waiting to lose the pounds for...

**Mark S:** April fool's day?

**Marc V:** I know what they meant but whoever had that put that up there, and another one that I drive by and I see every single day is the lightning were in the playoffs in the Stanley's cup and there is still this morning I saw it Go bolts go get that cup!

**Mark S:** No, there are miles long signs hanging from hotels and downtown tamp which still have that sign on, which I support a 100% so that doesn't apply, but if you're in another city that had something similar than that would be bad.

**Marc V:** Yeah so it's the same for your website, if you had a special for your summer then take it down, it's not summer anymore, if there's a holiday coming up, and if you're advertising that you're selling Halloween shirts, then that's a great time to do it in October and September.

**Mark S:** Yes, if you're closed new years day and it's not almost new years day then take that down.

**Marc V:** Yeah, that rule applies to a lot of other things, voicemail messages, E-mail automatic E-mail replies.

**Mark S:** Just the little stuff...

**Marc V:** All those thing but keep your messages up to day and make sure that, just frequently check the content on your website Period to make sure that things make sense, and the things that you are referencing and talking about are still relevant, so this can circle all the way back to beginning do you need one, we've talked about a lot of things that you have to do with your website and you can envision how much time you would spend on it, do you need one, do you have that time, you know all of those things come into play.

**Mark S:** Right coz we've been talking about whether or not you need a website for at least half an hour, so if you don't have the time to invest in a conversation then you probably don't have enough to invest in doing a website.

**Marc V:** But my final answer is still gonna be yes, get one, keep it simple follow the rules that we talked about and try not to make the little mistakes and pet peeves and it can sound overwhelming and a lot; but a lot of times our customers have these nice info websites an hour or two to a month on, just keep em up to date.

**Mark S:** And in my conclusion I'm also gonna say yes, that you should have some kind of website even if it's just a one page informational site with all the information that we discussed and I think that's a necessary part of being in business today.

**Marc V:** Yeah, that sounds great!

**Mark S:** I think we've talked enough about this, we could as usual on any topic in the podcast talk for an unlimited amount of time, about all the variations and things that you could do, both Marc and I are happy to answer questions if you E-mail us at [host@CASpodcast.Com](mailto:host@CASpodcast.Com) and we just like to do a couple of things now. Now that you've suffered through the whole thing with us, we'd like you to do a few things is that if you're listening to us through iTunes, please rate us on iTunes and the next thing is we'd love for you to share the podcast, share it on Facebook on Twitter, on Google+ and if you don't know what any of those things are or do, go get them and then share it, it's important to us, so do that and then we've got a Facebook group.

**Marc V:** Yeah the custom apparels startups Facebook group and the membership on that literally grows every single day, it's becoming a really big community an active community, if you're in the apparel decorating industry, if you're thinking about getting into it, it's a place just to see what people do- ask questions, answer questions, Coz Mark is the one who clicks those buttons on Facebook and he came to me and was like 'I made this' and I was like cool! and I thought it was a good idea but I wasn't like it was a groundbreaking idea...

**Mark S:** Fine Fine!

**Marc V:** But what i really mean about it is that what you did in starting that is you started the footwork of this community that is now like really excited.

**Mark S:** There is about 800.... Imagine being able to sit down if you're about to start a business or just in business with 850 people that are in your shoes or were in your shoes recently and talk about stuff, it's that valuable. So that's custom apparels startups inside Facebook, join the group I'll be happy to hit the approve button when you apply, rate, share and then listen...

**Marc V:** Yeah and both of us are on there so we'll answer questions on there about anything or any comments that you might have so thanks a lot for listening today!

**Mark S:** Yep, thanks very much and we will catch you next time!

**Marc V:** Yeah, see you on Facebook!

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