



The Chat Room

Travis Stirewalt, Vice President • CoatingDepot.com
5001 Trailwater Drive • Nashville, TN 37013 • 615/441-7989

E-mail: travis@coatingdepot.com

Old News is Bad News

Recently, I decided to visit a familiar website to find the dates for a tradeshow that I was interested in attending. It had been some time since my last visit, but I knew this particular site always had great information. After a few minutes, I was able to locate the website address and found the button for the "Events" page and clicked right on in. To my amazement and disbelief, this page was cluttered with events that had long passed. Events from November 2000 and January 2001 were still listed as if they had not yet happened. The title on the page was actually "Current Events." After seeing this area of the site in such disarray, I decided to get my information elsewhere. Who knows how accurate the other information could be on the page.

Keep Information Accurate & Up-to-date

I have dealt with more than 100 metal finishing suppliers and jobshops in the development of their websites and their Internet strategies. Many companies get hung up on what we like to call "bells and whistles." You know, the moving graphics, the animated dancing gophers and the mind-boggling sound effects. But long after the website is developed and the excitement wears off, countless companies tend to severely slack off on their duties in keeping their website properly updated.

Although your company's website might be old news to you, your customers and, more importantly, your potential customers are visiting your website for the first time. The accuracy or inaccuracy of your Internet information can definitely influence your customers. And in this day and age of ISO and other quality systems, it is vital that your information is kept current.

Some of the most neglected areas of any website are pages that have been built to be constantly updated by someone in the office. Sure, it is a great idea to build sections of your site with time-sensitive material, but the reality is that now you have to have someone take the time to make the changes on a regular basis. That means yearly, monthly, weekly or even daily changes. It is great to have sites that change and update often, but you have to remember to make the changes or your site becomes a disaster.

Problem Areas

There are several key areas of websites that I see go without being updated on a regular basis. I would like to provide this simple checklist for you. Use this list to see if your site has the updates it needs.

1. **People/contacts**—This page on any website usually lists the names of key contacts with phone numbers and extensions. If you are a small company, this area is not likely to change often. However, large companies frequently see changes in this area. If your company ever makes changes in its phone system, this is a page that needs to be checked closely.
2. **Phone numbers**—There are two items to address here. One is the fact that anywhere a phone number is placed on your site, you need to make sure it is typed correctly. Second, with the growth of technology and the expansion of phone companies, there have been massive changes made all over our country. Area codes have been changed, moved and added. If your area code changes, just remember to change every phone

number on your site, as well.

3. **About us/corporate information**—Without thinking, many companies have provided information in these areas of their website that dates the page. An example would be when a company explains something that just happened, like an ISO audit. However, if your ISO audit was in October of 1998, and that was the last time you changed the information on those areas of your website, you desperately need to make some changes in the copy.
4. **Product information**—General information about chemicals and coatings, and the MSDS sheets and product descriptions for them, remain relatively unchanged over long periods of time. However, any changes that are not updated can lead to big hassles with your customers. If your company has chosen to place detailed product information on your website, be sure to keep this vital information updated.

The most important thing I want you to get from this article is the fact that your website needs to be maintained on a regular basis. It needs to be kept current for the sake of the visitors. Properly updated, your website becomes a valued and trusted source of information on the Internet.

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