

Convey Credibility Through your Website

by Charlene Rashkow (article appeared on the Creative Latitude website: <http://www.creativelatitude.com>)

Your prospects want one thing and one thing only! They want the reassurance that what you say about what you offer is legitimate. Because credibility is crucial to the success of your business, convincing potential clients that you can deliver is key. And although conveying credibility is always a challenge, conveying credibility through a website makes it even more of a challenge.

Because a great many designers, developers, web masters and business owners in today's market conduct their business primarily by way of the Internet, in all likelihood they will never come face to face with clients or business contracts. Convincing people of our integrity from a distance definitely presents a more formidable task, but it is one that can be overcome. How? By giving visitors to your website the facts!

If your goal as a business owner is primarily focused on helping your clients reach their goals, you have to do whatever it takes to gain the clients' trust. To be chosen for their next project, you have to find a way to prove yourself. After all, the more credible your site, the more likely your prospects are to contact you.

One great way you can prove your credibility and boost project inquiries is through the appropriate online presentation of your skills, experience, and professionalism. One of the best ways is through an online bio. A factual biography can alleviate the lack of connection you have with your clients and increase the integrity of your site. Moreover, a descriptive and authentic presentation of your experience can add valuable credibility to your business. A mistake that some business owners make is adding a resume rather than a bio. The truth is a resume should only be used if you're trying to gain employment. If you operate your own business and are seeking a way to win over clients, a bio is the ideal way to convey your professional experience or your company's history.

What Is a Bio?

A bio, or biography, acts as a portal into your professional experience or your company's growth and expansion. It's a condensed version of your career history designed to give potential clients insight into who you are and what you do. However, while your bio is the short story of your professional life, keep in mind that it should highlight the most important aspects of your experience in a way that successfully demonstrates your credibility. The bio is most appropriate when incorporated into a website, proposals, business plans, portfolios and press kits. Most often entrepreneurs, artists, writers, designers, web developers, business owners, professionals and consultants use a bio.

What's In A Bio?

As you prepare your bio, remember its purpose: to make a strong statement that boosts your credibility. So first, think about the types of people that visit your site. What kinds of information do you think a prospect would want to know? What will impress them? As an example, web designing and development have become such competitive fields, you must show prospects why they should choose you over your competitors. (This is true for photographers, too). Once you've identified what a prospect wants, make a list of your relevant experience. Don't be hesitant to do a bit of boasting, but don't lie about having done something you haven't achieved. There's nothing wrong with presenting yourself dynamically, but never make anything up! It can come back to haunt you.

The First Few Seconds!

The first few seconds of reading your online presentation are the most critical. Since you're attempting to convince viewers that you have what they want, convey your expertise proudly. Ideally, your presentation should be no longer than a page. Here's a list of key points your bio might contain:

1. Open with a reference to your name and business title.
2. Share your business philosophy or mission statement.
3. Illustrate your qualifications and strengths.
4. Explain how you got involved in your particular business.
5. Note how many years of experience you have.
6. Mention some of your goals and successes.
7. Outline the background of your company.
8. Mention your education or any specialized training you've had.
9. List any special associations to which you belong.
10. Include licensing if it's a necessity to your credibility.
11. Describe any awards or special recognition you've received.
12. Add quotes from satisfied clients. (Also called testimonials — it's always good to show your successes by letting others tell how it was to work with you).
13. Identify the thing that sets you apart from everyone else.

Should you Get Help?

Writing about oneself can be a daunting task, as it may appear as self-promoting or arrogant. But there is a way to express your skills honestly without appearing arrogant or conceited; tell the truth. When information is conveyed honestly, it never appears as smug. But if you find it difficult to write about yourself, consider having a professional prepare your presentation (bio). It's often much easier for an outsider to be objective about your experience, as they will probably be able to see you in the best light.