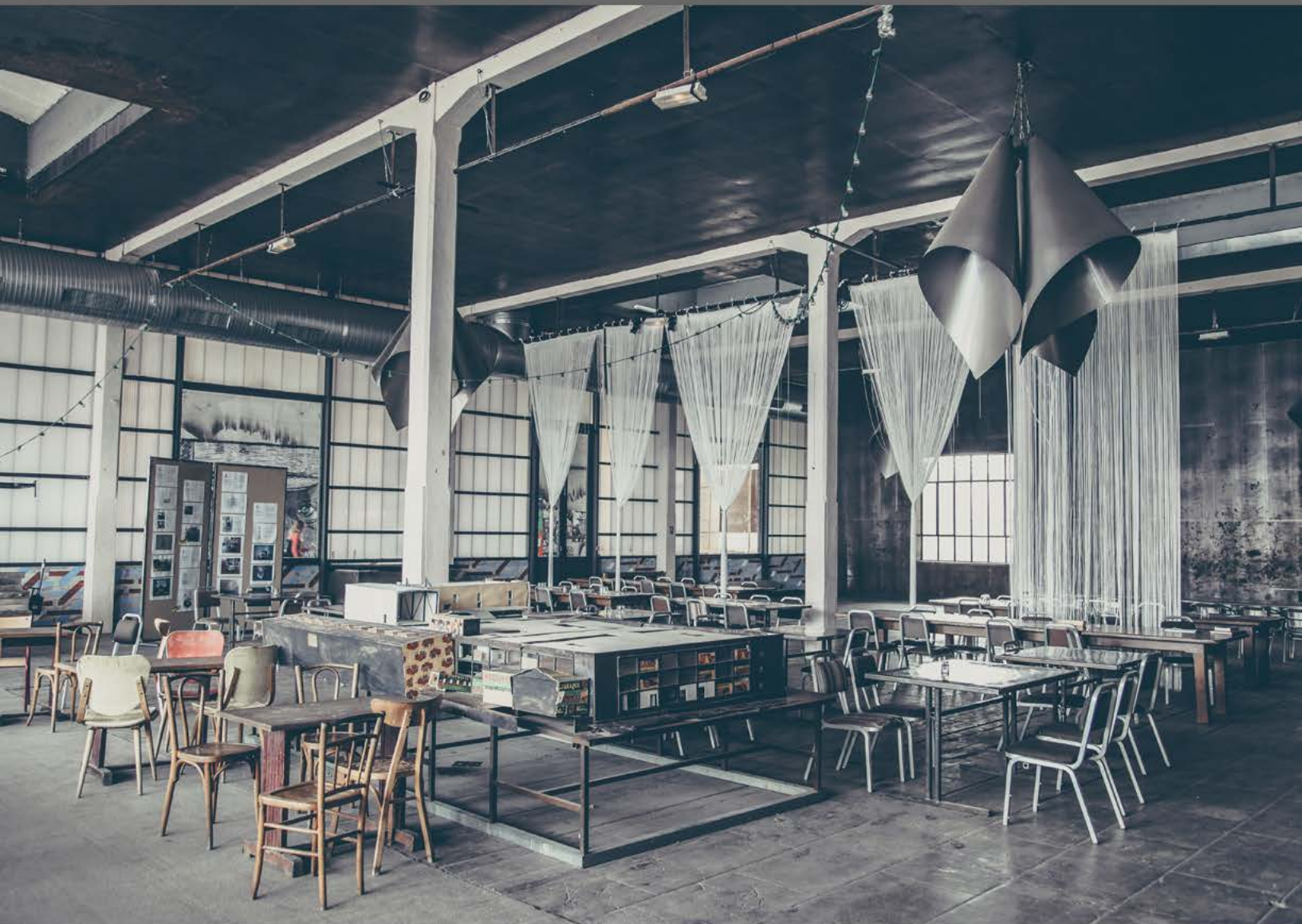


IS YOUR

# WEBSITE

DRIVING AWAY CUSTOMERS?



— A GUIDE FOR RESTAURANTS —

2017 EDITION

## THE **RECIPE** FOR **SUCCESS**

When it comes to restaurant websites, the landscape is chaotic. There's plenty of gorgeous, well-branded, mobile-friendly sites. There are generic, templated "mobile-only" sites with hideous colors and ugly gradient buttons. There's some straight-up crazy, outdated, white-hot garbage. There are restaurants that just use Facebook and call it a day.



So who's right? Is a strong website important? Are you getting enough local business that you really don't care? Can you use Facebook, and Facebook alone, to communicate with your customers?

### **Here's another question: Is your website actually so bad that it's driving people away?**

A couple times a month, I come across a website that's so bad, I'm sure it was made in the late '90s. The shocker comes when I drive past and see that it's actually a gorgeous space I'm now dying to check out – one I'd utterly written off because the website looked like a joke.

Generic, templated sites and social media pages predominantly branded with some other company's logo don't do a lot to stir customer curiosity. Outdated designs actually damage your brand. Sites that work poorly or load slowly may never even get a shot. The short answer is – yes, your website matters. Not to your most loyal regulars, maybe. But to everyone else, it's kind of a big deal.

### **Your website should be a workhorse.**

The reality is that a strong website can also do a lot of heavy lifting for your restaurant, if you let it.

- ✓ It allows customers to experience your restaurant without ever stepping foot in the door.
- ✓ It's a functioning member of your team. It can take orders, book reservations, hand out menus and more.
- ✓ It gathers contact info from your biggest fans and helps you nurture an ongoing relationship.
- ✓ It talks to Google and makes you easier to find in search.

### **Is your site making the grade?**

Go ahead – check out our list of 2017's biggest dos and don'ts, and find out!



# DO

- ✓ **Create a mobile-first website design.**

Considering the high percentage of mobile users for restaurants, this is the right time for a design that focuses most heavily on the mobile experience. Many mobile sites are stripped down, washed out versions of the desktop site. Make sure your mobile experience is both gorgeous *and* usable. Pinching, zooming and trying to hit tiny tap targets make for a horrible experience – especially for users making a decision on the go.
- ✓ **Hire a professional photographer.**

Show potential customers what your dining experience is like at a glance. Make sure your site design captures your brand, and prominently feature photos of your interior or your most visually stunning dishes. This is not the time for stock photography or generic cityscapes – hiring a professional photographer is a must. Nothing drags a site design down faster than bad cell phone snapshots. Your interior will look shabbier than it is and your food will look unappetizing.
- ✓ **Build your email list.**

If you're not capturing email addresses from your customers, you're losing out on a marketing opportunity that 68% of your competitors aren't using! Customers actually *want* to hear from you – provided you're sending them something worthwhile. Offer coupons and other deal-sweeteners that will help build loyalty and bring in repeat business.
- ✓ **Make your site lightning fast.**

A slow-loading site can cost you customers – and ding your search ranking with Google. Images should be optimized so that they're nice and small, and pages should all load in 1-2 seconds, tops. Skip the crazy technology, as well – things like animation and video have a tendency to perform inconsistently across the spectrum of mobile devices.
- ✓ **Use SSL encryption.**

As of January 2017, Google will penalize sites that require login or take payments online without using SSL encryption. Insecure sites will trigger a warning, which is obviously not ideal for building trust with your customers. This penalty applies to every site built on a content management system, like Wordpress, since CMS sites require login for admin access. Fortunately, SSL is inexpensive and easy for your web developer to set up.
- ✓ **Make sure people can find you.**

Now that you've wowed your new customers with your amazing website, make sure they can actually find you. Your phone number and address should be easy to find on the homepage of your site. (If you have a one-page site with four different menus to scroll through, that means you shouldn't put your contact info all the way at the bottom.) Your phone number should ring out with a simple tap, and your address should open a map.

# DON'T

-  **Use a homepage "carousel" to convey important information.**

Hotels and restaurants are on the shortlist of industries that can get away with using carousels, or "sliders" – provided they're sheerly photographic. Don't use a slider as a quick and dirty way to jam a lot of information onto your homepage. Any important info served up in a slider will be skipped over – count on it. Users have developed "banner blindness" when it comes to sliders.
-  **Use intrusive popups.**

Many, many restaurants use auto-loading homepage popups to spotlight upcoming events and promotions. In January 2017, Google will start penalizing sites that use "intrusive interstitials" (that means popups, as well as other "ad" types that cover content or push it below the fold) because they create a poor user experience. Alternatives: Design proper announcement space into your homepage, or consider using a small notice box at the top of your site that doesn't push your content off-screen and that users can close with a simple "X."
-  **Use PDF menus.**

Many restaurants like to use PDFs online because they've already created them for their printed menus, and they eliminate the need for a dedicated "web person" to update their site. While Google *can* read PDFs, it doesn't like to. And more often than not, the type on PDF menus is unreadably small on mobile. If you absolutely *must* use a PDF menu on your site, it should have large type so that it's readable on a tiny screen without pinching and zooming. Best practice: Offer both an HTML menu *and* a PDF version for users who like to save favorite menus to their devices. Just keep in mind that you may have outdated menus floating around out in the world.
-  **Forego online ordering and reservations.**

A lot of restaurants skip these services due to cost – and yes, there is an investment involved, either up front or as a percentage of sales. But by turning your back on online ordering and reservations, you're likely walking away from cold, hard cash. GrubHub, a popular online ordering and delivery service, says its partner restaurants experience a 30% uptick in takeout orders and 6x growth in annual revenue. Beyond that, your competitors probably *are* using these services, whether you are or not – which means that users who stick to their favorite apps may not ever find you. There are other benefits, as well. OpenTable, the most popular reservation service for restaurants, offers the ability to book a table directly from both iPhone and Android's native map app. Managers say it also helps with managing customer flow and identifying repeat customers.
-  **Use a generic "mobile app" service.**

Many restaurants work around the fact that their website isn't optimized for mobile by using a service that creates an "app-like" experience. These tend to be ugly, outdated looking and incredibly bland. Congratulations! Your restaurant now looks exactly like every other restaurant in town that bought this service. Do yourself a favor and build a responsive website that showcases your brand and gives potential customers a taste of your unique in-house experience.





# SERVE IT UP HOT

Ready to get serious about turning your website into a workhorse? Just hit the button below and we'll help you get more dollars coming through your door!

**BOOK YOUR FREE AUDIT**

Or give us a call at (314) 440-2233.

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