



Fall Back in Love with Your Website

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Fall Back in Love with Your Website

I have to admit, that even though we're a web development company, I've never enjoyed working with our own website as much as I have over the past few weeks. We want you to experience the same thrill of using a website that actually produces results you can see and measure. We want you to see the potential for using the web to market your own services as an advertising agency or design firm. It's time to reconcile the past, and fall back in love with your website. Toward that end, we are making a [special offer](#) to rebuild agency or design firm websites to include all the features mentioned in this month's newsletter, and more!

Newfangled has been developing websites pretty much since they've been around. We've lived through and seen the good, the bad and the very ugly. Years ago I hired a consultant who asked me to identify the best projects, or the best client relationships we'd had. At that time I struggled to think of even one project that I could say was fun, effective, and profitable. The best I could do was to identify ones that were the least painful, or had some any upside to them. This review of our history, while not producing the intended results, did set my mind to examining the reasons and roots of why this had been our experience. This lead to the book we wrote [Client vs. Developer Wars](#).

But this newsletter is not about rehashing the ugly history of past failures! It's about hope, it's about peace, it's about reconciling, and moving on to maturity. It's about the potential that exists for true love to exist between an agency and its website. I am being overly melodramatic here. But let me share a bit about what the web has become for us, and perhaps you'll be provoked to seek reconciliation yourself. And if you are ready to come back to your website, we're ready to be a counselor, and work through the specific changes and adjustments that will be necessary to rekindle the love. As such, we are now offering a website reconciliation package to partner advertising agencies and design firms. We'll describe this more at the end of this newsletter.

Permit me to brag for a moment

I will now risk the danger of boasting and take you on a behind-the-scenes tour of our new Newfangled website. Everything I describe about our site will be made available to you in the agency website offer we're making.

Before we look behind-the-scenes, let me describe a bit of the process we went through to design and develop our new site. We decided to practice what we preach and begin our new site using a [grayscreen prototype](#). If you were to compare our initial prototype to our final site, you would hardly recognize one from the other. For weeks we reworked and reworded our prototype until it began to fit our new message. The prototyping process itself causes us to think more deeply and refine more thoroughly the message and positioning of our new site. If we had built our site based on our original ideas that were represented in the original prototype we would not have nearly the refined message that we ended up establishing.

Dave Mello began building the [whitescreen](#) for our site. With the whitescreen in place, I was able to begin entering the content I'd been working on. I had already written much of the content while prototyping, and we were going to reuse much of our old site's content. Nevertheless, once I began reading my copy in the context and flow of our new site I realized it needed a lot of work. I must have written and rewritten every page on the site at least a half dozen times. The whitescreen allowed me to enter it directly into the site so I had the flexibility to refine my words as much as I needed.

After setting on a design we "skinned" the whitescreen as I continued to enter the content the site morphed itself into its final look and feel. Of course, I still had a lot of work to do writing and refining copy throughout the site. When I was done, the site went live.

Google Friendly Content Management

Behind-the-scenes

Of course if you're reading this newsletter you're seeing the results of our efforts. I hope you like it! What you can't see is what's happening behind-the-scenes. Alas, I hope I don't frighten you off by letting you know what's happening.

Before I get to the "scary" stuff I'll give you an idea of how we maintain the site using the [NewfangledCMS](#). Of course every page is managed through its simple interface. I can continue to change copy, upload new images, add newsletters, testimonials, case studies and the like. We also built our site in such a way that I can dynamically associate testimonials with any page. I can assign testimonials to each page by simply selecting which ones I want from a pop up list. They are then displayed on in the right hand column of the page. If I were to update a testimonial, it would automatically be updated everywhere it appears. I can also add miscellaneous captions or links in the right hand column by entering content into the "side bar" tab in NewfangledCMS editing screen. This gives me flexibility to call attention to examples of components, case studies, or related content throughout the site.

We went live with our new site at the end of October 2003. I've already made significant changes to content. Additionally, I've added significant features and new components. The template/database-driven approach of the NewfangledCMS makes such site wide changes quick and easy since it's much simpler to adjust a template than it is to modify lots of hard coded HTML files.

The good (scary) stuff

Let's start with the email newsletter system. If you're reading this newsletter, it's possible you got here through the email newsletter we send out once a month. The NewfangledCMS allows me to simply enter the title, introductory paragraph, and any "what's new" items and it sends out a formatted email to my list of subscribers. The NewfangledCMS email newsletter application can handle website subscriptions and unsubscribe features.

What's so scary about that? The email newsletter system itself is harmless. It's the [advanced tracking system](#) that's so cool, yet scary. If you are one of my subscribers and you clicked on the email to get here (please don't stop reading my newsletters!), I was instantly alerted that you clicked the email. I'm also, right now, tracking the pages you're looking at, if you click over to the "[How much is a website](#)" page (click it - if you dare Ah ha ha ha ha ha haâ€¦! sorry about that), I'll see it. If you come back tomorrow and read an older newsletter, I'll know about it. Those of you who spend the most time on our site and look at the most pages, you go right to the top of my most active sessions report. I can tell what you all, as a group of newsletter respondents, are most interested in, by reviewing my most viewed pages report. I told you this was risky. I entirely expect to see a drop off in next month of newsletter respondents. I sincerely hope, however, that rather than being scared off, you'll want to have this capability yourself!

This tracking system can be used for more than email newsletters. It also has an alias builder so that you can create unique URLs that can be redirected to any site page and initiate a tracking session. This is useful for banner ads or other link placement strategies. The only difference in the kind of data you can track from alias session verses email sessions, is that you will not know the identity of the users. Unless, of course, these users later identify themselves by filling out any site form like a contact us form or newsletter subscription. When that happens, all of that users past and future site usage will be associated with their email address in your session report.

Google Friendly Visitor Tracking

More good stuff (less scary)

This [tracking system](#) is also used in our new [search engine optimization tools](#). In the past we have avoided making too much of search engine optimization. There were just too many changes and too many hucksters out there to make promises concerning search engine placement. However, this too has begun to mature and we now have significant tools sets to help increase relevant search engine traffic.

First of all, we have found that if you simply utilize proper mechanisms and embed relevant keywords, that search engines are doing a much better job of filtering out irrelevant content and including relevant content. The general principle still is that the more relevant your content is to your keywords, and the less general your keywords are, the better you will in the search engines. The [NewfangledCMS](#) gives complete control over meta keywords, descriptions, and most importantly page titles. FYI, a page's title (not necessarily the title that appears on the web page, but rather the text that appears at the very top of the browser itself above the browser buttons) is one of the

most relevant keyword placements on the page. Often companies waste this important spot with general "Welcome to" phrases rather than essential keywords. For example, we've used "web design and development specialists" (try typing that into Google!) for our title rather than "Welcome to Newfangled Web Factory." Another example is the title of one of our newsletters called "Splash is Dead!" The title is meant to appeal to people, not the Google spider bot. While this might be a provocative title, it's not a good title for someone searching Google for information about splash pages. So in the knowledge base I renamed it "website splash pages" (type that into Google too).

Google tracking

There's not much magic here. It's just good clean Google friendly formatting and relevant information. We've just provided the tools to maximize these opportunities. Our tracking system however is kind of magical, in that it provides instant Google stats when you're logged into the NewfangledCMS. These stats not only show results, they also help you to refine your keywords. They might even affect the content in your site. I'll describe a few such scenarios we've already experienced in the past few weeks, after I describe how the Google reporting works.

When logged into the NewfangledCMS, the Google tracker displays a "Google stats" box on each page. This box displays the number of times Google has hit that page directly. This would mean that a link to the page appeared in a Google search result and someone clicked it to go to your page. In addition to this count of Google hits, it also tells you exactly what phrase was used in Google to get them your page. The Google status box also keeps track of when the last time Google indexed your site and specifically indexed each page. This helps you know when any changes you may have made would likely take effect in Google. The Google status box is displayed page by page when you're logged in to the NewfangledCMS. Additionally, there is a Google statistics page in the NewfangledCMS that tells you the total Google visits to-date, the most used key phrases leading to your pages, and of course, a session by session breakdown of whatever else each particular user looked at on your site after reaching it from Google. The most looked at pages from Google visitors is also reported. As with anonymous visits from alias links mentioned above, if any of these Google visitors ever fill out a site form, their identity will be associated with all past and future sessions.

A brief case study

This search engine capability not only increases site traffic, but in my estimation is even more useful in helping me further refine my keywords and my site content. For example, our email newsletter page currently shows up as top listing in Google when searching for "email newsletter tracking." We are getting lots of Google hits on this page. So I added more information about our email newsletter application. We've also gotten a bunch of hits on the phrase "web development pricing." As a result I simply added the words "web development" to a couple instances on our home page and pricing page in order to improve our position on this phrase. There are many other minor adjustments I've made as I've reviewed Google activity throughout our site.