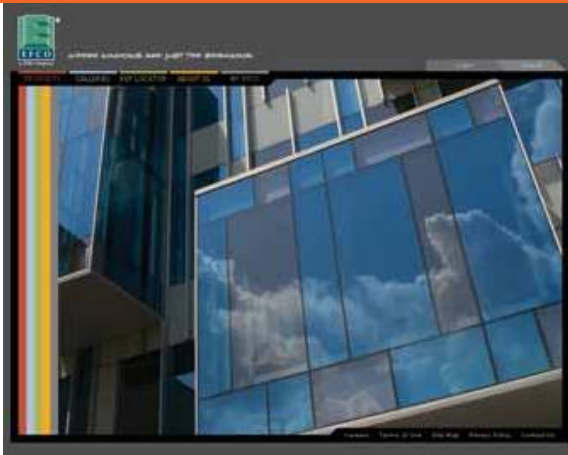


Read about Sea Breeze Glass on the next page!

Best of the Web

The Third Annual Glass Industry Website Contest

For the Third Annual Best of the Web Contest, USGlass turned to the customers who regularly visit industry websites. Readers of the USGNN.com™ daily newsletter nominated a number of websites that they felt stand out among their peers. Next, we asked our readers to vote for the sites they considered to have the most top-notch navigation, engaging visual design, functionality and interactivity and, of course, excellent content. Learn how the winner's of this year's contest came to have such first-rate sites.



www.efcocorp.com

those and sends them to the appropriate reps or departments for responses.

USG: *What do you feel is the biggest benefit of having a comprehensive website such as this?*

DH: We consider it an extension of our branding. ... Our architectural guide or our product binder look and feel like the website; the colors, the tabs and things are very similar in that regard. A lot of it is branding.

The other benefit is the amount of tools that are inside [the website] so that customers can follow up on orders very easily. Or if an architect wants to know about a particular product line ... through our project gallery you can see what projects have a specific product on it or you can go to that specific product and see which projects around the country have it and what it looks like on a building. And then, of course, you have the product details and the BIM files.

USG: *Can you offer other companies a few suggestions as to website do's and don'ts?*

DH: I don't think there's any easy way to do it—it's a long process. And I think there's a fine balance between getting consensus and input and also going forward with something. We came up with a consensus among a smaller group and then got our reps involved and some of the departments within the company internally, as well as the external ad agency to develop something. It's really hard to please everyone, and that's one of the challenges.

You have to go with your conviction of what you think is right and do it because otherwise you'd still be designing a website now.

My suggestion would be when you consider a site really go through who you're going to have develop it, and web offer it and make sure they have a full understanding of the customers and the needs. That's really where I think we tried to hit.

We wanted to make sure the reports our customers need to work on a daily basis were available, that the tools the glazing contractors need were quick and easy to get to ...

Dave Hewitt, director of marketing of EFCO Corp. in Monett, Mo., explained EFCO's approach in creating a unique website to USGlass magazine.

USG: *Did you design the site in-house or did you use a professional service?*

DH: We used a professional service, our ad agency, but it was collaborative ... Basically we had programmers internally and programmers externally.

USG: *When you set out to design the site, what was your highest priority?*

DH: We wanted to enhance the navigation so that the look and feel would set us apart in the industry. We tried to get away from looking like a brochure; we wanted to have a very unique look and feel. We used a sliding window—as you click on a category, the whole window slides to the right and you get another image and another navigation point.

We were trying to reduce the amount of steps required or page clicks to get you to where you want to go.

USG: *Do you track how many sales leads come from the site?*

DH: We use a specialized Google analytics report for a lot of the activities, and then we have reporting that comes in as far as contacts and leads. The marketing department mans

www.mkarchmtl.com

David Jackson, manager of project operations for MK Architectural Metal Inc. in North Canton, Ohio, talked to USGlass about what makes a website work well.

USG: Did you design the site in-house or did you use a professional service?

DJ: MK had an initial design concept of what we wanted, which we developed by what we liked and disliked from viewing other websites. After we had our concept put together, we called upon a professional service to make the website with our continued input during its design.

USG: When you set out to design the site, what was your highest priority?

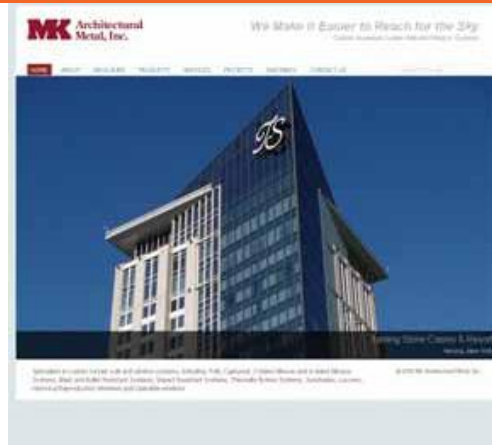
DJ: Our biggest priority in designing the website was to let our potential new clients and professionals in the curtainwall industry know what we do and that we have completed numerous high-end projects ...

USG: Do you track how many sales leads come from the site?

DJ: We track how many hits and where they are from, but we do not track actual sales leads from the site.

USG: What do you feel is the biggest benefit for a company in having a website?

DJ: It gives someone immediate access to get to know the company, what we do and the type of projects we would work on.



USG: Can you offer other companies a few suggestions as to website do's and don'ts?

DJ: Review absolutely everything twice before launching your website including opening any connections to other pages or websites to make sure everything works. First impressions are very important when someone wants to know about you.

Don't let your website become old. Update it at least four times a year. Don't just think it's running okay. Most people will not tell you something is wrong with your website.

www.seabreezeglass.net

Sarah-Beth Lafenhagen, vice president of Sea Breeze Glass & Construction Inc. in Poway, Calif., shared tips with USGlass for making an effective retail website.

USG: Did you design the site in-house or did you use a professional service?

SL: For our website "makeover," we used a local independent technology advisor, Larry Tom, who is a Microsoft small business specialist and a degreed IT professional. To achieve our objectives within budget, Larry recommended using third-party web templates and stock photos from vendors ... Drawing on commercial off-the-shelf software and products resulted in a huge savings in our graphic design and photography costs.

USG: When you set out to design the site, what was your highest priority?

SL: Communicating our company branding and business philosophy to our existing customers and potential clients; letting everyone know we are a family-owned business with the highest quality, integrity and ethics; and maximizing our search engine optimization and advertising dollar.

USG: Do you track how many sales leads come from the site?

SL: We employ third-party tracking for the sales leads that come from our website ... We are able to identify the most popular ad words, as well as the products that are most important to the customers. This knowledge also helps in decisions for which products to run specials on.

USG: What do you feel is the biggest benefit of having a comprehensive website such as this?



SL: It represents our online "business card" to our customers and prospects to learn about our services, products and manufacturers—a welcome mat to our company.

USG: Can you offer other companies a few suggestions as to website do's and don'ts?

SL: Have a clearly defined objective. Make sure your website gives out that message.

Stick with traditional, proven advertising design techniques. If you wouldn't do or say it on paper, don't do or say it online. Your website is your online billboard.

Don't get carried away with too much technology. The website is about your business, not about how flashy or "clever" the web designer can be. Keep it simple. ■