

**WholeFoods Magazine  
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**WHAT'S A WEBSITE FOR?**

**By Jay Jacobowitz**

Independent natural products retailers seem to intuitively know the daily work they do to help others get and stay well is more important than having a website. Yet a website is a necessary piece of advertising—like the Yellow Pages in years past. What sort of website makes the most sense, and what sort should you avoid?

**THE WILD INTERWEB**

Companies have invested trillions of dollars in “information technology,” including computers, smart phones, household, and wearable devices, websites, social media platforms, and the “apps,” or applications, they use to attract users.

Your website page is one of billions vying for consumer eyeballs. Here’s a cold fact: your website has virtually zero chance of appearing ahead of the thousands of companies that pay to appear every time shoppers search the internet for “health,” “wellness,” “vitamins,” “supplements,” “natural,” “organic,” or similar key words.

Paying lots of money to have a fancy “natural” website, with many pages relating to health conditions, nutrients, products, and recipes, will not get you any higher in the search results. What it may do is devalue your store by burying your identity behind a slick, impersonal presentation that any natural foods store could have. Isn’t this the opposite of what you believe about yourself?

**TAKE A WEBSITE IDENTITY TEST**

Here’s a test for those of you using a third-party website platform. Count the number of images, and the number of pages, that are specific to you and your store. Then, count the number of images and pages that are not. If your identity is in the minority, chances are visitors to your website are not getting a clear picture of your singular goodness.

**EMPTY SPACES, PILFERED PAGES**

More signs your website may not be working hard enough for you are the number of unused pages, such as templated events or calendar pages with nothing filled out—like empty shelves—or tabs and links to wellness tools or recipes that don’t feature your store name or brand at all, but substitute an entirely different third-party brand name and identity—one that any other store can also use.

**HAVE FAITH, BE AUTHENTIC**

Just as you and your store are unique, so should your website be. As we saw above, a slick, expensive, multi-page website does nothing to improve your visibility on the internet, and will likely detract from and obscure your true identity. Today, you can take advantage of many simple, attractive website design templates from companies geared to helping all small businesses. You can get a basic site up and running fairly quickly and easily, at low cost.

Be faithful to yourself and your store. Declutter your website, present only images and content that are exclusive to you. Visitors to your site will quickly see who you really are, and your authenticity, dedication, and passion will shine through, making them much more likely to contact you immediately. Go for it! You’ll be glad you did. **JJ**