

DON'T WAIT UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE!

Critical website updates for propane marketers going into the busy season

BY JENNIFER LECLERC



When was the last time your company redesigned your website? Do you know if it's been updated since? Getting a new website can be a big undertaking for business owners in our industry, which means it's vital to keep that shiny new website from losing its luster.

Check out these important tips to make sure your website is up to internet standards, offers excellent customer experience and is protected from breakdowns and cyberattacks.

IMMEDIATE CONCERNS FOR AN OLDER WEBSITE

If your website is on the older side, you should be most concerned about cybersecurity, software compatibility and core programming. Cyberattacks are more common than ever and can target all types of industries.

It is particularly important to make sure your company's website is up to date with current cybersecurity standards in order to protect not only your business

data, but your customers' private information, too.

If your website is built in WordPress or a similar platform, various plug-ins and development software can play a huge part in how your website works for you and your customers.

These third-party features are always improving and being updated, which means your website needs to be kept up to stay compatible. Leaving your company's website untouched for years can result in a loss of core functions based on incompatibility with new updates and software.

Last but certainly not least, core programming is the basic structure of your website and how it functions. If core programming isn't updated every few years, it can become obsolete and cause your website to break down. Also, don't forget that an older, outdated website is significantly harder for your customers to use and will look outdated compared to current standards.

WHAT NOT TO SKIP FOR RELATIVELY CURRENT WEBSITES

Older websites are often the ones that require immediate attention, but what about websites that are on the spectrum between not quite old and not quite new? Thinking ahead is the best policy; you should always be thinking about your website's functionality and security.

Customer experience is always at the top of the list. In the digital age, the way consumers search for services and purchase products is ever-changing. Regularly updating your website to make sure it is intuitive and easy to use is always a good idea.

Whether that means adding an online ordering feature, switching your print forms to a simple, easy-to-use digital version or building a customer resource center to answer frequently asked questions and help with troubleshooting, there are so many ways to enhance your website to give new visitors and existing customers the best possible experience.

Quarterly or monthly website updates are helpful for companies in the propane business to suit the fluctuating needs of their customers.

After all, your website is essentially your online storefront; use it as an opportunity to keep your most important services front & center.

Speaking of new website visitors, do you know how online users are finding your company's website? Keeping your website on track with up-to-date search engine optimization (SEO) standards is another critical piece of your company's longterm success online and helps ensure you are one of the first options available when potential new customers search for relevant terms.

Using the right keywords in your web copy, making sure your website's metadata follows current trends and internal linking between pages are some of the SEO basics every website should maintain.

And there are even more advanced SEO tools you can research that will help your company show up in search results in your service area.

Another significant factor that affects customer experience and SEO is compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). The act requires that businesses in certain industries provide necessary accommodations to people with disabilities.

Making sure your website content is accessible to people who are blind or deaf and need to navigate by voice, screen readers or other assistive technologies is critical to provide an inclusive experience and will help enhance your company's SEO strategy.

Plus, not being ADA compliant can put your company at risk and damage your brand's overall reputation. ADA compliance has become an industry standard in web design and

development, so it should be easy to find someone to work with you to make sure your website meets the requirements and fits all customer needs.

UPDATES FOR WEBSITES OF ALL AGES & STAGES

Website updates and redesigns are essential when your website needs an overhaul or refresh, but what about maintaining your website on a more frequent basis?

Quarterly or monthly website updates are helpful for companies in the propane business to suit the fluctuating needs of their customers. After all, your website is essentially your online storefront; you should use it as an opportunity to keep your most important services front and center, such as budget plans, automatic delivery or tank installations.

Regular updates can also be used to make sure what you're offering online matches up with other marketing, like postcards, letters, social media advertising or direct conversations with customers. That way, you're always presenting a consistent and current brand message every time someone gets in contact with your company.

Connect with your website designer or developer to run a comprehensive report on your website and give you a snapshot of where your site stands, along with what types of security, programming or creative updates you (and your customers) could benefit from. Now's the perfect time to get started before the busy season really sets in.

FIND OUT MORE

Use the following links to learn more about how you can improve your website and create a better overall experience for both your team and your customers.

- **Americans With Disabilities Act website** — ada.gov
- **Search Engine Journal's SEO Guide** — searchenginejournal.com/seo-guide/
- **Kaspersky Cybersecurity Resource Center** — kaspersky.com/resource-center/
- **Neil Patel's "58 Resources to Help You Learn and Master SEO"** — neilpatel.com/blog/58-seo-resources/
- **HubSpot's "The Who, What and Why of Digital Marketing"** — blog.hubspot.com/marketing/what-is-digital-marketing

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