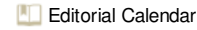




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## Is Changing Your Website Worth the Cost?

By [Tema Frank](#), President, Web Mystery Shoppers International Inc.

There is no such thing as a perfect website. Even the companies that run the best, most successful websites in the world are constantly making changes and finding new, better ways to communicate and sell through their websites. But if you've got a limited budget (and who doesn't?) you need to think long and hard about whether it is worth the time and money needed to make changes to your site.

Let's take a look at what costs are typically involved. First, you need to do some research to determine what, if anything, needs to be changed. That entails a research cost. Then there are the costs involved in making the changes. And finally, there are costs to monitoring the results and checking to see if you are getting the expected return on your investment (ROI).

### 1. What needs to be changed?

You may have a gut feel that your website is not performing as effectively as it could be. You may have had some customer feedback about frustrations with your website. Or you may simply be hoping that by improving your website you'll get more bookings. None of these give you clear, reliable direction about where and how to make changes. Which means you can end up throwing out a lot of money by changing the wrong things, or changing the right things in the wrong way.

Instead, if you invest up front in some user testing, you'll be able to focus your efforts on changing what really needs to be changed. And with the right kind of testing, you'll know how to change it for maximum impact.

There are many ways to do user-testing, and they range in cost from a low of about \$1,500 to upwards of \$40,000. At the upper end, you will get a lot of usability expertise to help you design the right kinds of tests, an expert who will pore through tens of thousands of words of qualitative comments and possibly hours of video footage, interpret the results and make recommendations. The lower end will be much more basic, typically leaving it up to you to figure out what to test and to interpret the results. Depending on your levels of expertise and situation, either approach may work at certain stages of your website's life cycle.

Although there is a cost to testing, don't ignore the cost of not testing. There is the foregone income that results from making no changes to an under-performing website. If your website could increase the proportion of site visitors actually making a booking by even 5%, how much extra profit would that mean to you?

Alternatively, if you decide to make changes without testing, there may be money wasted in programming unnecessary or ineffective changes. These costs can range from hundreds to many thousands of dollars.

### 2. How to change it

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## Feature Focus

Discussions on Emerging Growth Markets

**MAY: The Hotel Spa High Value Marketing**



## Hotel Wi-Fi: Balancing Budget & Bandwidth

By [Craig Ziegler](#), President, SuiteLinq, Inc.

Ten to fifteen years ago, the need for Wi-Fi connectivity in a hotel was based on the guests' needs for basic data and voice transfer. Today, multiple technologies are converging thus creating a major stress point on bandwidth allocation. Bandwidth that was once more than sufficient is no longer efficient. With the ever-increasing demand for bandwidth via guests' personal devices and desire for video transmission, hotels must analyze the metrics between costs and ROI. The debate now becomes... does the hotel offer it free of charge, thus "eating the cost for the increased demand", or do hotels create incremental revenue through various streams to help cover the cost increase in bandwidth to deliver this content? And, if the hotel wants to increase its revenue streams, in what unique ways can it be supplemented? [READ MORE](#)



## Wi-Fi's New Revenue Opportunity and Operating Liabilities

By [Colby Goff](#), Senior Vice President of Strategy and Business Development, Boingo Wireless

Odds are that your testing will propose more changes than you'll have the staff or budget to implement immediately. So you have to look at each proposed change and cost it out.

If you do not have in-house web design staff and programmers, get quotes from more than one. The tricky part here is that the lowest quote may not be the best bet. Often people who bid low in the web design business are people with little experience and/or technical expertise.

Be sure you see samples of other work they have done that is similar to what you need done, and talk to companies they've worked with. Ideally, they'll give you a large enough client portfolio that you can randomly call on some of them, rather than restricting yourself to the reference names they've chosen to give you. One site designer we had considered working with, for instance, had great-looking samples, but when we called a couple of his clients they told us that working with him had been like pulling teeth.

Some website changes can cost virtually nothing, but have a huge impact. Things like replacing industry jargon with everyday language, or putting a toll-free number on every page. (The latter will, of course, have an impact on your customer service costs, but it will likely be justified by a higher rate of sales than you would have if people who couldn't find what they needed on the site just gave up and went to a competitor.)

Other changes will cost more, but still may be worth it. For example, one comment we hear consistently when we research hotel websites is that people want photographs of the rooms and amenities. There is an up-front cost to getting such photos onto the site (and doing so in a way that doesn't slow down your page opening speeds significantly), but given consumer reluctance to book online without having seen the rooms first it may well be worth the cost.

To decide if it is worth it, you not only have to look at the costs of implementing the change, but also at how your bookings currently come in, and what sort of customer you are targeting. If most of your business is from repeat customers, room photos may be less important than if you are running a vacation destination site that people will not likely come to over and over again.

### 3. Expected ROI from the changes

Even measuring success has a cost. That's why so many companies don't evaluate the effectiveness of their marketing efforts, particularly online ones. It is faster and easier to go by "gut feel". But one of the great strengths of the Internet is that it is so much more measurable than most other media. You can easily measure your online conversions (the number of your site visitors who end up booking online) before and after having made the changes. That will tell you whether or not the money was well spent, and give you clues as to which types of changes are likely to have the biggest future impact on sales. (See sidebar: Sample ROI calculation)

When you look at your own numbers, you may be surprised at how quickly website improvements will pay you back.

Tema Frank is president of Web Mystery Shoppers International Inc. Her company's proprietary website assessment uses an ever-changing panel of some 50,000 people testing web sites from their own computers and providing detailed feedback. Her company has produced research insights that have been valued by companies such as Expedia, Sabre Holdings (Travelocity), Travelweb, OctopusTravel, and many others. She serves on the research committee of the Web Analytics Association and on the Editorial Board of User Experience magazine. Ms. Frank can be contacted at 780-444-5645 or [tema@webmysteryshoppers.com](mailto:tema@webmysteryshoppers.com) [Extended Bio...](#)

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Over the last five years, the wireless data world experienced fundamental changes that shifted the focus of Wi-Fi network operators from a niche market of laptop users to a mainstream base of smartphone users. The proliferation of devices and the explosion of data intensive apps have placed increasing pressure on Wi-Fi networks to support the digital lifestyle of a larger audience. This market growth is accompanied by a rise in security exploits and an increase in requests for information from government agencies. The newest opportunity in this landscape – 3G/4G data offload – presents a revenue opportunity that offsets increased operating costs and capital improvements required. [READ MORE](#)



## Hotel Internet Security Concerns

*By Ian Millar, Deputy Director of INTEHL, Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne*

For many months now the internet has not been one of the nicest places to exist. From the actions of anonymous, to the implementation of SOPA (Stop Online Piracy Acts) implemented by U.S representative Lamar S. Smith, the work of the movement Antisec, and even NASA admitted early this month that Hackers gained "full functional control" of key Nasa computers in 2011, which unsurprisingly came from Chinese IP addresses. Mr Martin of NASA outlined how the agency suffered "5,408 computer security incidents" between 2010 and 2011. [READ MORE](#)



## Hotel Wi-Fi: The Biggest Challenges and Recommended Solutions

*By Jeremy Rock, Principal & Founder, RockIT Group*

Wireless Internet is changing the way business gets done in the hotel industry. There's a tremendous demand for wireless access - for overnight guests and even for conferences and trade shows where video streaming, audio streaming and voice-over-IP are all competing for the same Internet pipe. It's not just for email and web surfing anymore. Wireless has also created new ways for hotels to connect with their guests to generate loyalty. Wi-Fi has become a standard amenity. It's becoming a determining factor on where guests choose to stay. But few guests would say they're happy with the current sign-up and security concerns of hotel Wi-Fi. With mobile media hitting the mainstream, hotels are eager to find affordable and non-disruptive solutions to meet guest demand for reliable, consistent in-building cellular coverage. [READ MORE](#)



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















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Bill Kotrba of JDA Software explores hotel pricing, and provides an interesting perspective on the psychology behind numbers and how hotels can maximize revenues by sticking to a numerical formula. A very interesting article indeed!

 **HotelExecutive.com - Business Review - Do Hotel Prices Really Need to End In 9?, by Bill Kotrba**  
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**Coming Up In The June Online Hotel Business Review**



*"Hotel Business Review offers weekly articles for hotel management and operation and discussion on emerging growth markets."*

**FEATURE FOCUS**  
**Hotel Sustainable Development: Principles and Best Practices**

Sustainability is now a daily topic that affects every facet of hotel development and operations. As hotelier Hervé Houdré recently noted "The goal of Sustainable Development is clearly to secure economic development, social equity, and environmental protection. As much as they could work in harmony, these goals sometimes work against each other". In the June Hotel Business Review, some of the industry's most recognized sustainable development experts come together to identify emerging trends and discuss how sustainability is currently affecting the hotel industry. Each author presents the most important aspects of sustainable development of much interest to hotel owners, operators,

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