

You Are Not Your Clients... The Most Powerful Tool in a Web Marketer/Designer's Arsenal

I had the opportunity of attending a seminar recently on Social Web Design, and creating websites that cater to the social lives of users. The 2 hour seminar was very helpful and, among other things, helped me figure out why MySpace is so successful... for those not in the web design community, web designers HATE MySpace, as it is a poorly coded, ugly site with lots of errors and constant problems:

<http://www.myspace.com/soybudha>

Anyway, the seminar host, renowned Social Design guru, Joshua Porter was asked many questions during the length of the presentation. One came to mind as most important: An attendee asked about some statistics and metrics Josh had used in one of his conclusions asking "what tools are used to gather this data?" I, along with most of the audience, expected some kind of software to be named, but instead Josh responded with "interviews." That's right, much of the data he had gathered on social networking sites and the behavior of users was gathered in two ways, physical observation and INTERVIEWS!

As business owners and site designers we often take for granted our breadth of knowledge in our respective business. Many of us use the lingo particular to our industry. I for example sometimes throw around "SEO" forgetting that not everyone knows it means search engine optimization. Likewise visitors to your site and clients of yours may not yet be familiar with your industry terms, so find out. Create some kind of questionnaire or survey and send to your clients, e-mail, physically mail, or better yet drive to their business and ask them to help you answer your important questions.

You are not your audience; you are not your clients. The next time you want to do something on your website, tweak the layout, adjust the site for some keywords or create a pay per click account ask your clients:

What do your clients do online?

What keywords did they use to find your business or a business similar to yours?

Do they find a particular component of your site helpful or distracting?

Is there a particular tool that executives in their industry would find helpful that you could create on your site?

Do you want a better websites, better keywords, creative marketing ideas?

Just ask your visitors and your clients.