Is your website really working for you?

I am assuming your business/organization/service/product has a website. If not, well, that is another story. For the purposes of this post, you do have a website and it is functional. It may even be pretty (I mean "well designed").

But, and this is a big but, **does it have all the information that your AUDIENCE needs?**

I have been working on a project that involved getting information about documentaries from various sources, including the filmmakers' websites. The information I needed was fairly basic: synopsis of the film, year made, how long it is (running time), name of director and other people involved in production and country of origin. And guess what, even though virtually every film had a website, precious few websites had anything resembling basic information. Some listed awards or screenings. Some listed reviews. Some had blogs (not always updated) that talked about the filmmaking process. But basics—which are needed for anybody that is planning to screen a film—LACKING.

And that is not just limited to film websites. Have you ever gone to a restaurant website looking for a menu or for hours of operation and not found either? Have you tried to find a phone number from a service provider's website and be forced to email or look for another provider?

It is truly astonishing how many websites lack basic, useful and needed information. Many sites get so caught up in bells and whistles (don't get me started on websites with flash or self-playing video) that they forget their basic mission is to provide information. Information that their target audience (read: potential customers) wants and needs.

Your website is not working for you if your target cannot find the information it needs.

Of course, this leads to another conversation that has to do with planning and strategy. Websites are not simply pretty things to make sure you have an internet presence. They play a big part in your communications and marketing efforts.

Before you build a website (and before you do anything communications-related)**, you must be able to answer these four questions**

1. Who is your target audience?
2. Why would they visit your website?
3. What are they going to do when they are on your site?
4. What information does your target audience absolutely, positively need? (Hint: it is always the stuff that is most basic—address, hours, location (map), telephone number, contact person/people, pricing, etc.)

What do you think? And more importantly, have you checked to see if your website is working for you?