

The *Representor*®

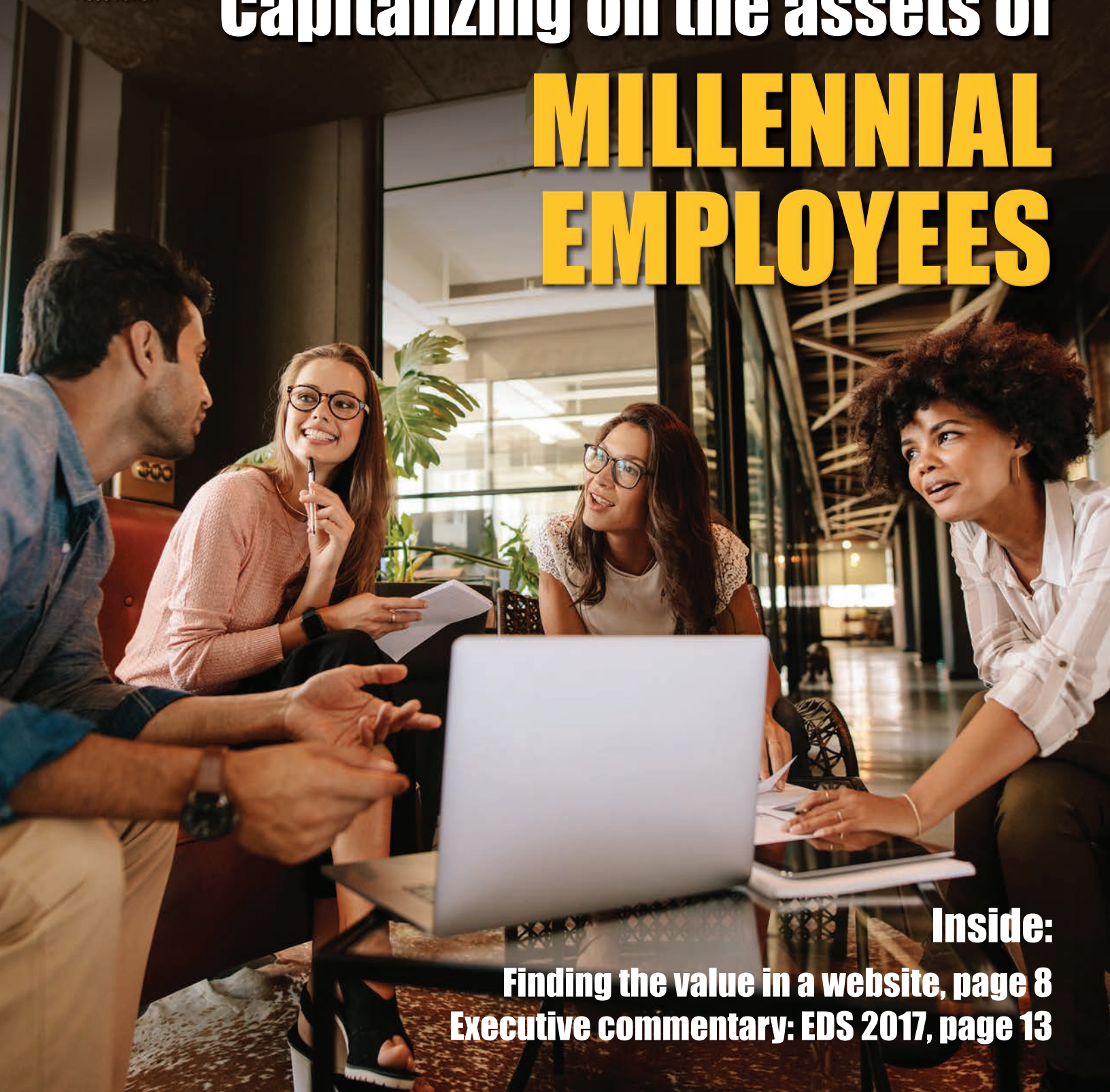
THE VOICE OF MULTIPLE-LINE SELLING IN THE ELECTRONICS INDUSTRY



Electronics
Representatives
Association

SUMMER 2017

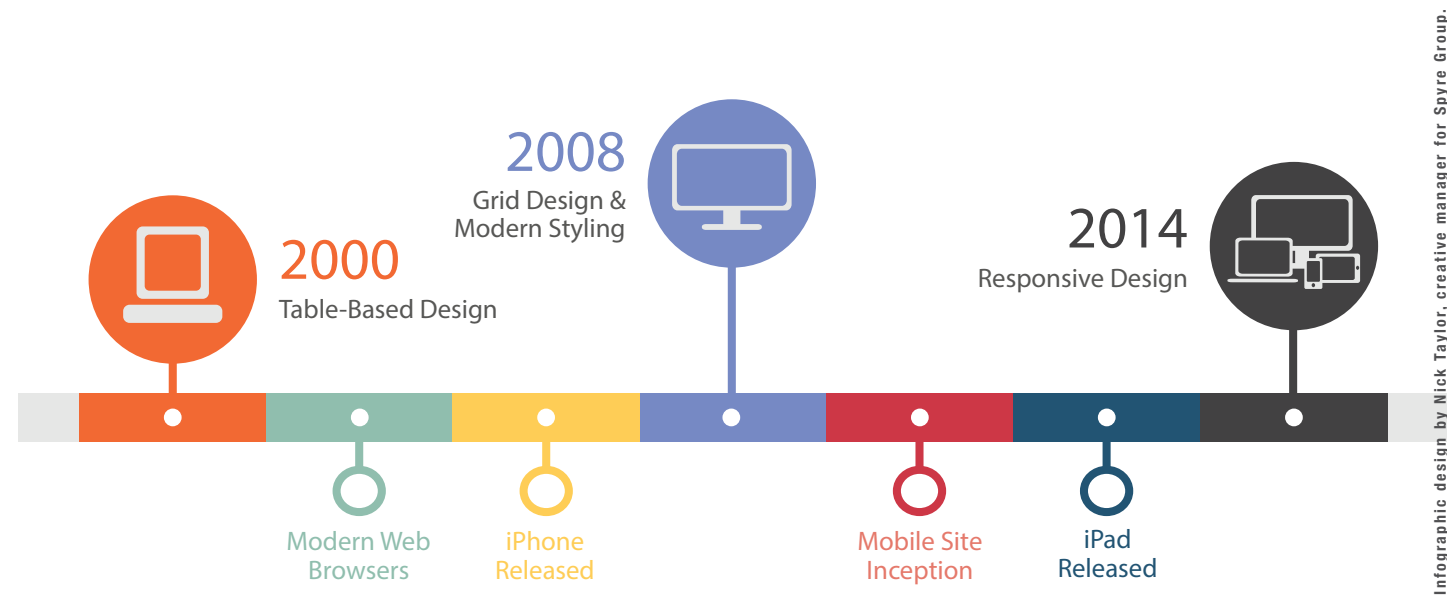
Capitalizing on the assets of **MILLENNIAL EMPLOYEES**



Inside:

**Finding the value in a website, page 8
Executive commentary: EDS 2017, page 13**

Finding the value in a website



A timeline showing show key changes in website design from 2000 to 2014.

Infographic design by Nick Taylor, creative manager for Spyre Group.

Professional sales firms presumably view websites strictly on the expense side of the ledger, as they can be a pain to keep current and they don't directly help sell product. Why would a company even want one? The struggle with justifying manufacturers' representative websites lies within finding the value of the intangible returns or opportunities the site provides. Websites for this industry are primarily used to present the brand and professional image of the company, with some information on lines, product types and company contact details. They probably aren't going to directly sell a product, but they do sell the company. The targeted audiences that have been typically seen for rep firm websites are prospective manufacturers and customers seeking contact information.

What is the value of finding the right manufacturer or product line? This question does not lend itself to a simple answer, as it could be years before it is possible to truly quantify. If the primary purpose of a website is to attract new manufacturers and product lines, the investment and design should focus on that goal — ultimately creating value that will exceed the investment.

Major Web changes since 2007

The past decade has brought two significant advancements in how browsers display websites, which has outdated those developed prior to these

changes. If looking to point fingers at why many websites have become outdated, the culprit is the iPhone. The release in 2007 was the catalyst for the creation of mobile browsers and advancement in how websites are displayed. Fortunately, technology and the flexibility of current browsers do not have a foreseeable near-term major advancement to outdate websites built with modern coding. Websites built on mobile responsive frameworks should be compatible for at least five to 10 years.

The updates in how browsers read code and the capability of the content management platforms have led to one very significant benefit to businesses — the cost for websites has decreased significantly. Site development used to range from \$4,000 to \$10,000, but it can now be available for less than \$50 per month.

Prior to the availability of mobile responsive design, companies needed to develop two versions of each website for mobile and desktop viewing. Responsive design lies within the code to resize and reorganize the content, based on the device screen size. For instance, an area that has three horizontal columns on a laptop will automatically reshape and stack those columns vertically to fit a phone.

In a recent analysis of rep firm website traffic we conducted, an average of 19 percent of viewers were accessing through a mobile device.

Going responsive

Among Web developers, it is assumed that all new sites will be created in a mobile responsive framework, but when looking to build or redevelop a website, there are a few questions to ask yourself, beyond "What's the price?"

- 1) How much time do you/your team want to dedicate to write and manage the text, find images, etc.?
- 2) How frequently will updates be needed with changes in manufacturers or team?
- 3) What is the primary audience and purpose of the site — manufacturers, distributors, OEMs and clients?

All the other "add-ons" typically offered with Web development projects will be difficult to justify the spend, including: search engine optimization, pay-per-click and content marketing. The target audience driven to a rep firm website is presumably limited. Fifty-one percent of the traffic from rep firm websites we recently analyzed was not through search engines, meaning the majority of traffic comes from someone that has been contacted previously, already has some company information, or entered the website from a link on a referring website. With nearly one-fifth of this viewership using mobile devices, the primary source may be linking to the site from a received email.

You are always advertising your website

Often overlooked, every time you send an email or display your email address on a line card, you are promoting your company website. Clients and contacts may only go to your website if they need contact information or to do a quick screening of the company, but the invitation to visit is very visible. How often do you pull up a prospective client's website for a pre-meeting screening?

Choosing a platform

Web developers are a dime a dozen, from media design agencies to family friends, and the options to host and manage are equally as extensive. Each platform has a purpose and fits certain users, but unfortunately, most are not transferrable to other platforms.

Open source | WordPress, Joomla, etc.

These are great tools to build and maintain company websites that carry only minor hosting costs. The one knock on these platforms is they periodically update to a new version, which leaves users susceptible in two areas: Updating the platform can require changes to the code to display the website, and not updating can lead to hacking vulnerability from the deprecated platform.

DIY | Wix, Squarespace

The do-it-yourself platforms have come great lengths in the past few years. They are preferred for companies looking to get started with minimal costs or to manage themselves without learning HTML code. The cons of using these platforms are they can look generic and customizations are limited.

Paid content management platforms

There are additional platforms requiring monthly fees that offer the capacity to fully customize the front-end and administration panels for websites. These often come with higher hosting costs, but websites are not susceptible to issues with the platforms like open source or limitations in customizations.

Finding the value

The value of a website is always going to be contingent upon return on investment versus price. This industry naturally poses a challenge to quantifying the return, especially because sales reps operate with very quantifiable and tangible elements such as sales, opportunities and commissions. Every organization should weigh the value of redeveloping or launching a website with the cost, considering the time and expense to maintain an up-to-date site, as there are many options to keep up with the growing use of mobile devices. Websites remain a modern necessity for all businesses. They can bring great value to every sales organization, but it is up to each company to quantify the intangible value of the opportunities it may provide.



Patrick Knoelke

Patrick Knoelke is managing director and founder of Spyre Group, a sales force focused design and technology firm. Patrick leads his team in providing rep firms and manufacturers with Web, digital, print and cloud collaboration solutions.

Spyre Group is an ERA member service provider. For more information about Spyre Group, visit spyregroup.com/rep.

Patrick can be reached at pknoelke@spyregroup.com, or at 913-499-6014.