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**INTRODUCING...**

*Niagara's Educational Assets -- the Foundation for Growth* video showcasing the pathways available to students from secondary to post secondary school, apprenticeship and directly to work



The Business Education Council of Niagara is pleased to present *Niagara's Educational Assets -- the Foundation for Growth*, a locally produced video showcasing Niagara's "educational assets". Introduced at the BEC's Annual Partners Breakfast in February, this video highlights our local education systems and how their common and unique vision of supporting the growth of business sectors will be the economic drivers in Niagara.

Whether graduating from secondary school, college, apprenticeship, or university, Niagara students are well equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in the workplace thanks to the ongoing collaboration of our educational systems.

VIEW IT ONLINE at [www.becon.org/Online-Videos.html](http://www.becon.org/Online-Videos.html)  
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## SIX CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL WEBSITES

With proper planning, professional design and consistent follow-up, your website *will create positive results for your business.*



BY MARK KAWABE

In December 2009, an Ad-ology survey revealed only 54 percent of small businesses have websites. This is scary. After all, websites these days are like business cards: everyone has one. Here are six tips on how to create a website that will benefit your business.

**Define Your Website Goals:** What do you want your website to accomplish? Will it promote products or share ideas and build an online community? Create measurable goals so you'll be able to focus on its primary purpose.

**Register a Domain Name:** This is your online identity so put some thought into your choice. Grassroots.ca is the domain name for Grassroots®, The Inspection Specialists. That makes sense for them. The domain name "getmoredone.com" is for a Toronto time management company. You want a domain name that is simple, memorable, easy to spell and related to your business purpose.

**Buy Hosting:** Don't be put off by the terminology. There are many local hosting providers who will walk you through the process. Make sure your hosting plan allows you to set up email addresses like you@yourdomain.com. An email address with your domain is much more professional than a Hotmail or Yahoo address.

**Create Your Content:** Fundamentally your website needs to give potential customers information about your business. At a minimum you need a Home Page, an About Us page, a Contact Page and pages for Products or Services. For retailers a Map page is a must. Get your content together

before starting the website design. This helps you and/or your designer know how the website will be structured.

**Design and Build the Site:** If you don't want to use one of the hundreds of DIY online website building services then hire someone to help. This doesn't have to be expensive. The cost will depend on your needs. Having your goals and content ready will give the designer a good idea how much work it will take to build your website. If you're really on a budget, there are hundreds of talented high school, college and university students who need work experience and pizza money. Just remember: You don't need fancy—you need professional.

**Market, Market, Market:** A website without marketing is like a book without a publisher. It could be superb, but nobody's going to read it. If you invest the time and effort there are dozens of ways to get attention for your website yourself. On the other hand, hiring a professional may get you more results faster. Your approach will depend on the goals you set out for your website and your budget.

In this era where phone books are the new doorstops, having a website is a necessity. As with anything, "doing it right" means investing some time and effort. With proper planning, professional design and consistent follow-up, your website will create positive results for your business. **BL**

*Mark Kawabe is a Niagara internet marketing specialist at The Web For Business.com. For more tips and advice visit [TheWebForBusiness.com](http://TheWebForBusiness.com).*