



Small Towns and Fancy, High Quality Websites Don't Mix – The Death of a Myth

Many independent retailers think,

"I don't need a high quality website because my furniture store is in a small town and everyone already knows me."

Over the years, we have heard this from hundreds of different retailers. Frankly, before conducting this survey, we always *thought* there was some truth to the belief that being in a small town made having a really great website less valuable when compared with being in a big city. The results, however, could not be clearer:

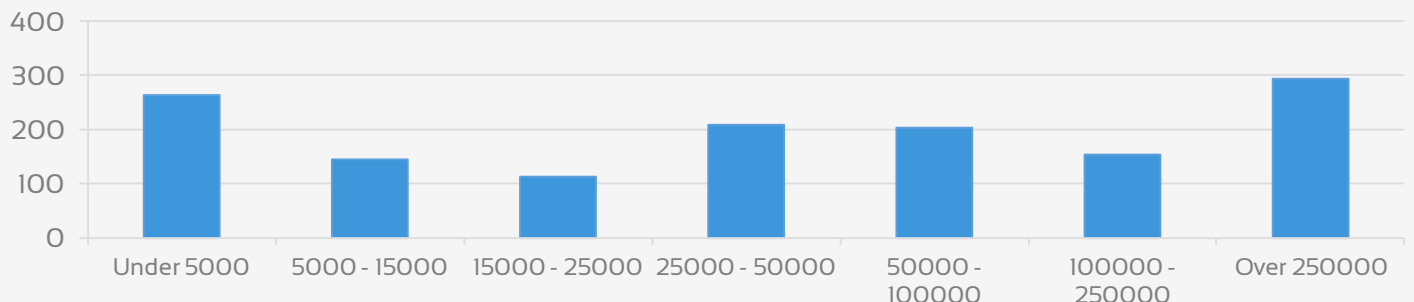
The idea that because you are in a small town you can't benefit from a high quality website is a **myth**. It is simply not true – and we can prove it!



Between June 8th and July 20th of 2014 we surveyed 1,468 consumers from all over the United States.

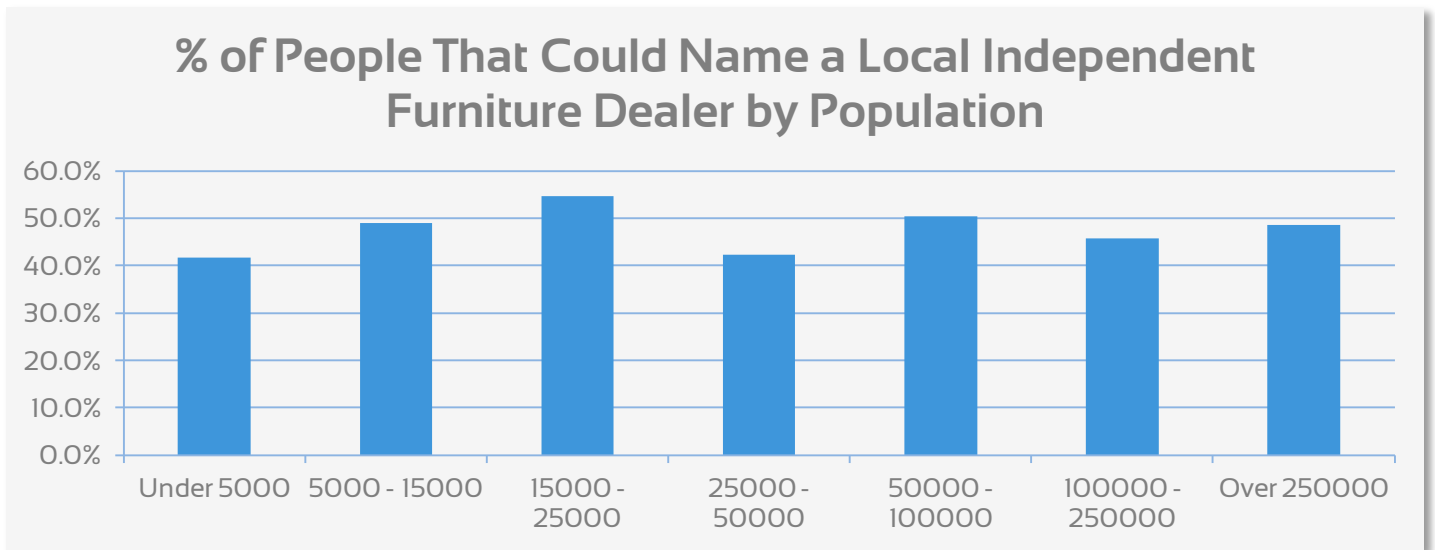
We wanted our survey to be as broad as possible, so we took special care to make sure that we talked with people not only from big cities but also from small towns. We succeeded! More than 19% of the people we surveyed were from very small towns (less than 5,000 residents).

Number of Survey Responses by Population





Our survey asked respondents to list all of the furniture stores they knew in their local area. The data shows that only 49.1% of consumers were able to name an independent furniture retailer. What is really interesting (and shown clearly in the graph below) is that the likelihood that someone knows an independent retailer (*a.k.a. you!*) is the *same* in a big city or very small town! That means that if you sell furniture, about 51% of your prospective customers *don't know you exist* – does not matter if you are in a big or small town!



Now, take a close look at the data displayed above:

- You will notice in towns with populations smaller than 5,000, 41.7% of people knew the name of an independent furniture retailer.
- Jump over to the largest sized towns (quarter million and up), 48.6% of people knew the name of an independent furniture retailer.

In a big city, *more* people knew an independent furniture retailer than in a small town!





How Can This Possibly Be? Your Survey Must be Wrong!

If you make your home in a small town, this information probably comes as a bit of a shock; It certainly surprised us! We checked (and re-checked) and re-ran, and re-surveyed, expanded our data set, and on and on. But no matter how we looked or tested the data the results were consistent.

Then we got to thinking, and when you do that for a bit, it begins to make more sense. Everyone you know also, almost by definition, knows you. People that know you, either professionally or personally are very likely to shop in your store.

This means you go through your whole life mainly seeing, talking and selling to people *who already know who you are*. But, even though your town is small, you probably *don't* know everyone in it, and they don't know you. However, because you are surrounded by people who *do* know you it's easy and logical to start believing that you don't need to advertise because everyone already knows you and your store.

What Should I Do About This?



The complete survey data referenced in this paper is on the last page and it is pretty clear – **you should build a high quality website.**

It should have great full text search, lots of product data, work amazingly well on Smartphones, show prices, and generally be every bit as good as Ikea.com, AshleyFurnitureHomeStore.com or RoomsToGo.com.

Why is a high quality website the answer? Well, because your prospective customers are telling you it is!

Check out what some of the consumers in small towns are saying:

“If it looks like the site was just thrown together, I wouldn't think that the site would be reputable and buy elsewhere.” – 25 year old female, West Mifflin, PA

“If a business maintains and keeps current their website, I will more likely shop there.” – 51 year old female, Ellensburg, WA





“If the quality of the website is not good then the quality of the store probably isn't either.” – 28 year old male, Wyandotte, OK

We asked them what their first step would be to find a retailer if they needed to decorate their new home:

- ✓ 88.7% said their first step would be to do an internet search!
- ✓ When it comes time to call your store, 96.4% said they would use either internet search or your website to find your phone number!
- ✓ When it comes time to visit your store, 98.8% **(Yikes!)** will use the internet (either on their Smartphone or desktop) to get directions to your store.

The web is where your customer is starting their shopping experience...you can get more business by having a high quality presence there; Retailer Web Services can help. Call us today!





Data Used In This Whitepaper - Breakdowns by Population

Do Prospects Already Know You?							
Question	Under 5000	5000 - 15000	15000 - 25000	25000 - 50000	50000 - 100000	100000 - 250000	Over 250000
Knows a Local Independent Appliance Dealer?	19.7%	25.0%	17.0%	19.2%	17.4%	18.8%	18.8%
Knows a Local Independent Furniture Dealer?	41.7%	48.9%	54.7%	42.4%	50.3%	45.7%	48.6%
Knows a Local Independent Electronics Dealer?	10.9%	11.1%	18.1%	9.6%	14.8%	14.9%	12.6%

How Will Prospects (Who Don't Know You) Find Out About You?							
Question	Under 5000	5000 - 15000	15000 - 25000	25000 - 50000	50000 - 100000	100000 - 250000	Over 250000
Internet Search	93.3%	90.2%	88.0%	90.4%	89.8%	91.7%	90.6%
Ask a Friend	3.3%	1.5%	3.7%	6.2%	1.7%	3.8%	2.4%
Phone Book	2.1%	3.8%	5.6%	1.7%	3.4%	2.3%	3.5%
Newspaper	0.8%	3.8%	0.9%	0.6%	4.5%	1.5%	3.1%
Seen Your Store While Driving Around	0.4%	0.8%	1.9%	1.1%	0.6%	0.8%	0.4%

If a Prospect Wants to Call You, How Will They Find Your Number?							
Question	Under 5000	5000 - 15000	15000 - 25000	25000 - 50000	50000 - 100000	100000 - 250000	Over 250000
Internet Search and/or Your Website	96.7%	94.8%	93.5%	97.8%	97.2%	96.9%	98.1%
Phone Book	3.3%	5.2%	5.6%	2.2%	1.7%	1.5%	1.6%
Newspaper	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	0.8%	0.4%
Phone a Friend	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%
They Already Know Your Number	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%

If a Prospect Wants to Visit Your Store, How Will They Get Directions To It?							
Question	Under 5000	5000 - 15000	15000 - 25000	25000 - 50000	50000 - 100000	100000 - 250000	Over 250000
Using a Smart Phone	53.2%	45.1%	50.0%	50.3%	50.6%	47.0%	52.5%
Using Google Maps (or similar)	37.1%	43.6%	39.6%	39.5%	34.3%	41.7%	37.0%
Using Directions From Your Website	7.6%	8.3%	9.4%	10.2%	14.0%	11.4%	9.3%
Ask a Friend	1.7%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.8%
Paper Map	0.4%	0.8%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%