

# SMALL BUSINESS B2B CALL TO ACTION STUDY



Presented By



# Contents

Executive Summary .....	3
Methodology .....	5
Results .....	6
Web Site Flaws .....	17
Web Sites – On the Right Track .....	22
Conclusion .....	28
Learn More .....	30

# Executive Summary

Many small businesses have considerable room to improve with B2B web site lead generation.

Online Marketing Coach looked at 200 U.S. small business web sites for the “Small Business B2B Call to Action Study.” They included manufacturers, law firms, accountants, architects, construction companies and a wide range of other services and products (consultants, IT consulting, web designers and more).

For our study (presented by *Small Business Trends*), we randomly selected the web sites from a ReferenceUSA database of businesses with fewer than 100 employees.

Clearly, the web sites feature basic design elements like a primary navigation, logo, text and images that refer to services and products. Most web sites lack prominent calls to action, such as text or graphics referencing incentives like guides, demos, resources, e-mail newsletters, etc. Our report includes examples of the worst and the best we found.

We have also created the “**Small Business B2B Call to Action Checklist**,” a tool you can use and adapt to size up and track your own efforts (e-mailed with this study).

Here are highlights of the study:

- 96% don't offer guides, white papers and similar reports on their home pages
- 70% don't display clear calls to action for anything on their home pages, such as such as specials, e-mail newsletters, how-to guides, demos, and interactive tools.
- 72% don't have any calls to action on their interior pages (we looked at several pages one each site)
- 56% don't use meta descriptions (that could appear with search engine results to draw searchers into the web site)
- 75% of the web sites that do use meta descriptions don't include call to action language like "contact," "learn," "find" and "get"
- 82% don't reference their social media profiles (text or images)
- 27% don't include a phone number on their home pages
- 31% of web sites with a phone number don't display it in a prominent place on the home page (they often just bury it in the footer)

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- 87% don't do anything to make their "contact us" option stand out - it's just another navigation option with the same font and size
- 90% don't use either a form on their home pages or a notable call to action graphic to direct visitors to a form
- 68% don't include an e-mail address on their home pages
- 38% of web sites with an e-mail address bury it on the home page (often in the footer)
- 66% don't feature a notable "above the fold" call to action on the home page

Other studies have looked at some of this data for all small businesses, not just B2B. Or, in some cases, the studies combined small and medium-sized businesses.

A 2013 Online Marketing Coach infographic, "[Small Businesses Keep Missing the Mark Online](#)," referenced several studies from the last couple of years. Here are a few of the highlights:

- 58% of U.S. small businesses don't have websites (2012 Google and Ipsos survey)
- 62% of small businesses don't rank for a single keyword phrase on the first page of Google (2012 Online Marketing Coach study)
- 75% of small businesses don't include an email link on their home pages (2012 vSplash SMB DigitalScape)
- 49% of small and medium-sized businesses lack a phone number on the home pages (2013 vSplash SMB DigitalScape)

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# Methodology

We randomly selected 200 small businesses with up to 100 employees based on data from ReferenceUSA. Located in different states, the small businesses offered an array of products and services, including HVAC, legal, accounting, construction, business management consulting, web site design, industrial machinery and more.

Occasionally, businesses targeted both B2B and B2C markets, but we included them as long as they clearly mentioned that they perform commercial work, including plumbing, legal and other services.

Nearly every web site had a call to action – whether that was a “Contact” reference in the navigation, an e-mail link or a phone number (sometimes all three). Calls to action like those are expected. We analyzed B2B web sites in the United States to determine what kind of effort the business owners made to connect with visitors. We looked for distinctive placement, fonts, colors, offers and more on several pages of each web site.

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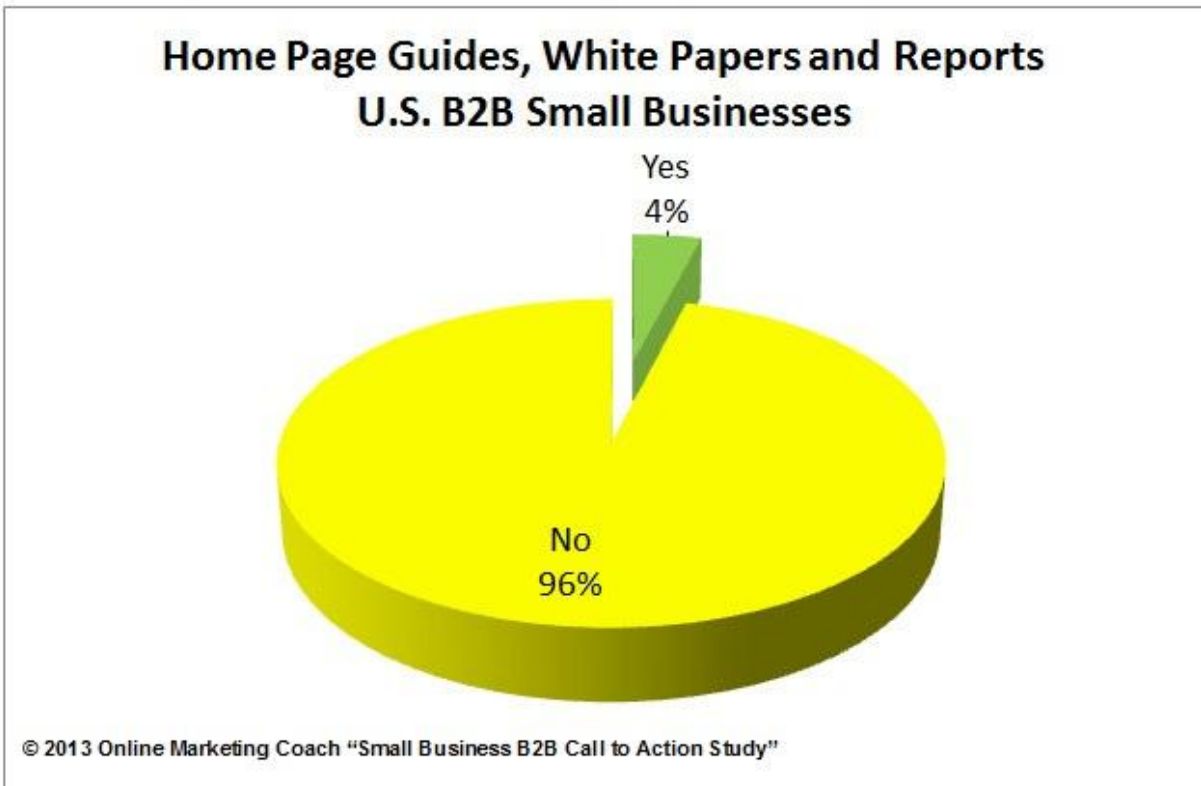
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# Results

## Home Page Guides / White Papers and Other Reports

We didn't look for a mention on the first screen (scrolling was acceptable). Whether referenced in text or in an image, we looked to see how many of the businesses offer the educational reports (PDF format, informational videos, etc.). And yet, only 4% of B2B small businesses promote this type of educational content.



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### Other Calls to Action (Home Page)

Some web sites offer a variety of calls to action besides guides and white papers. They include corporate brochures, e-commerce, demos and opportunities to sign up for newsletters. But 70% don't use any of these options to connect with visitors.



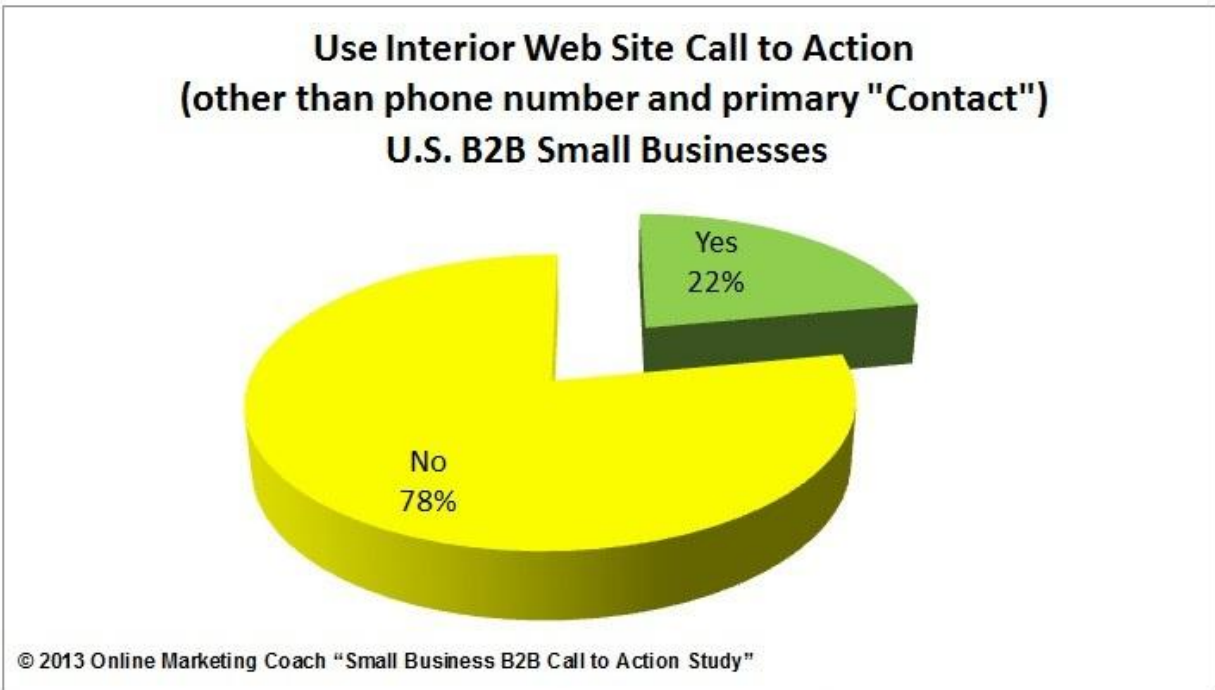
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### **Interior Page Call to Action (beyond a phone number or general "Contact")**

We recognized that some businesses don't provide a call to action on the home page. For each web site, we looked at several key pages in search of a call to action.

It is possible that some companies include a call to action on other pages we didn't explore. But we don't think we missed many given the limited number of pages in many of the web sites. Some could have stand alone pages devoted only to paid search. But we believe those would be rare. Barely 1 in 5 businesses (22%) use specific calls to action on interior pages.



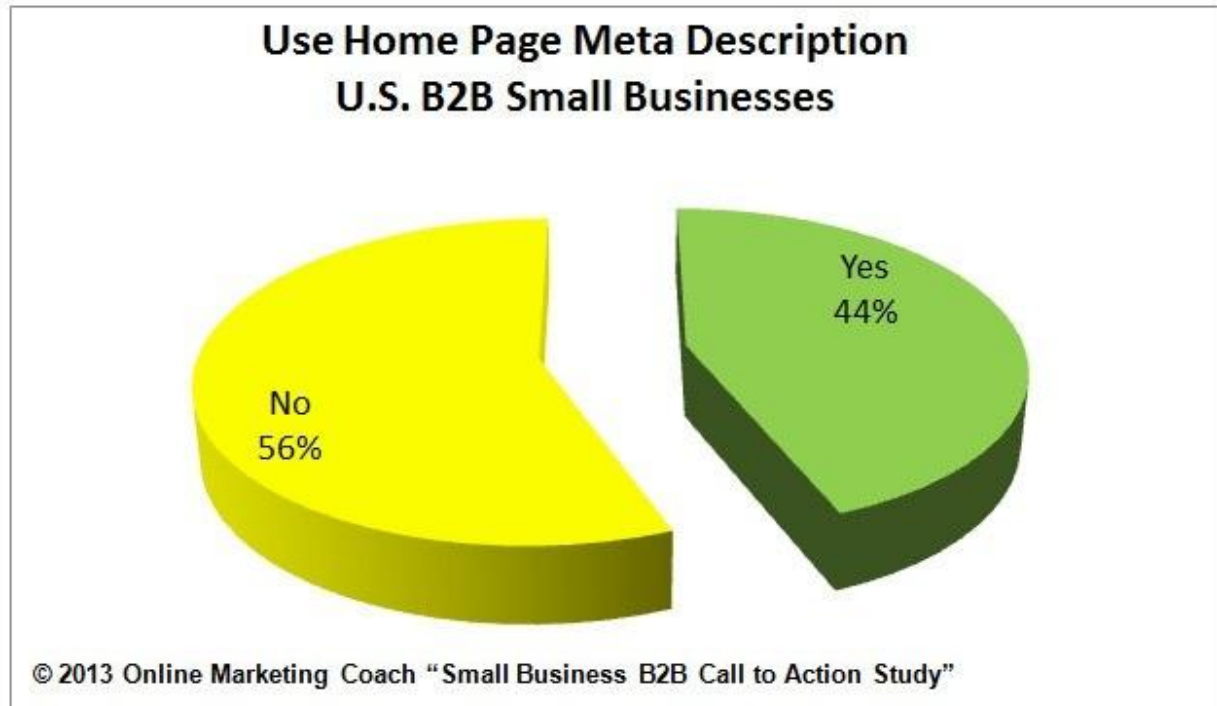
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## Home Page Meta Description

Many web sites use home meta descriptions, but typically they don't provide details about the business. They are general, vague and lack urgency. Most small businesses (56%) don't use meta descriptions on their home pages even though the information can help attract new visitors because it often appears with search engine results.



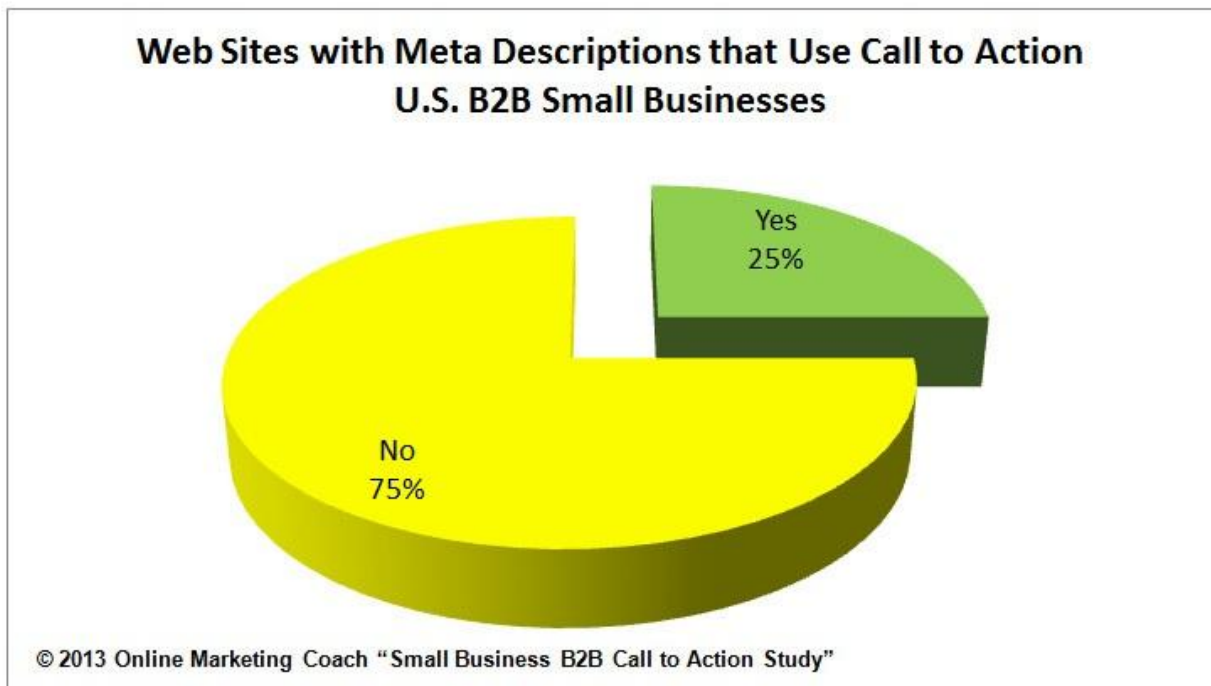
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## Home Page Meta Description Call to Action

We were looking for meta description language that included an incentive for an Internet searcher to visit the web site because of words like “buy,” “learn,” “get,” “find,” “discover,” and “contact.”

In some cases, we decided that the meta description did include a call to action if the language clearly played up a key company attribute, such as the number of years it has been in business. Facts like that could appeal to a visitor. Unfortunately, 75% of small businesses with home page meta descriptions don't use anything that suggests a call to action.



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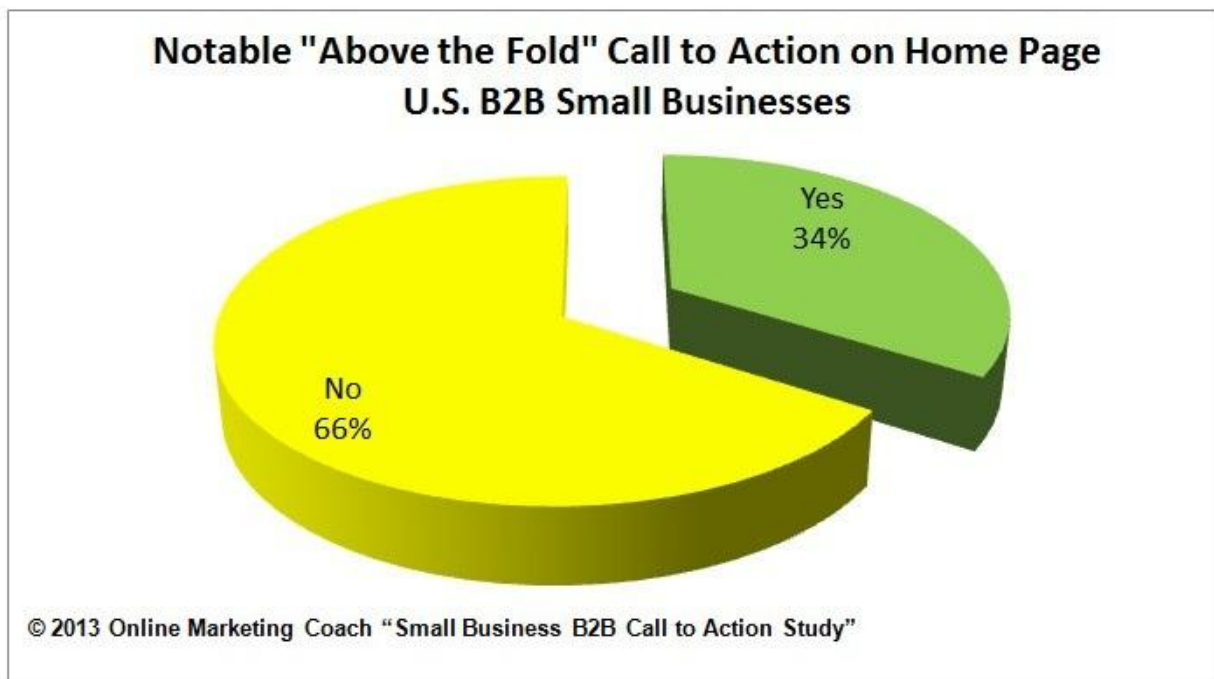
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### **Notable “Above the Fold” Call to Action (Home Page)**

As we evaluated web sites, we acknowledged when they included a graphic or text that could grab a visitor’s attention. Given the range of screen resolutions, we allowed for some calls to action that were slightly “below the fold” on our screens. We didn’t include standard phone numbers and “contact” references in the navigation.

Small businesses (66%) don’t make the effort to get a call to action on or near the first screen in many cases.

Some marketers believe “above the fold” isn’t a fair way to assess a web site given that Internet users can make their way around a web site. But we believe something should stand out when someone first calls up a web site page.

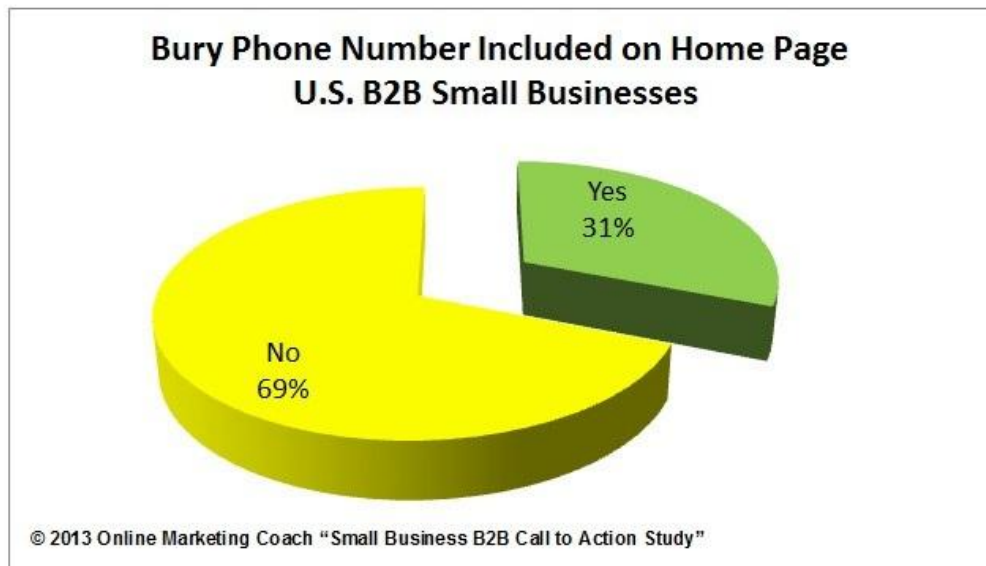
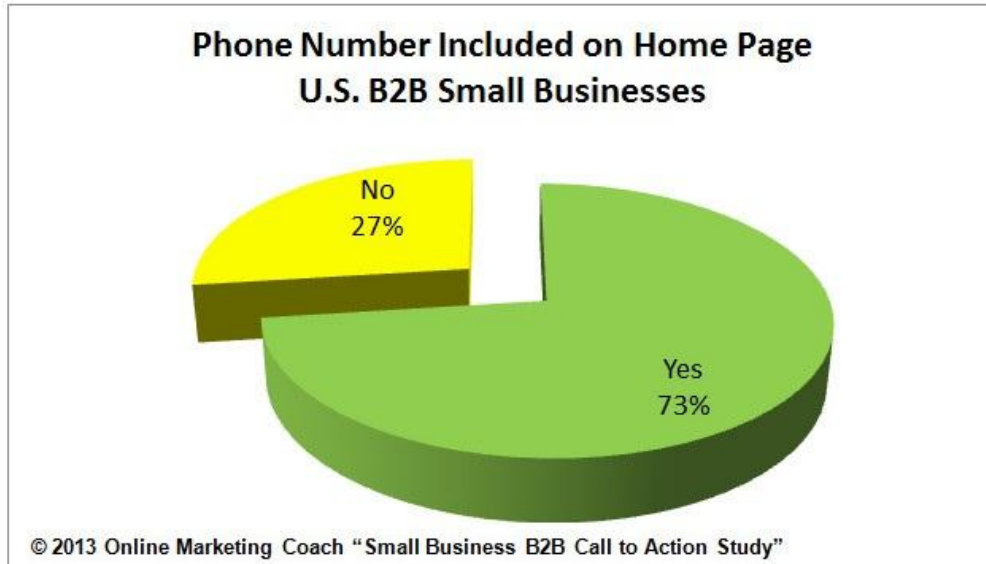


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## Home Page Phone Number

Many businesses (73%) do include a phone number in text or graphics on their home pages. However, quite a few don't make it easy to find them. In fact, we usually had to look all the way to the bottom of a page to locate the phone number – 31% bury it when they do display a phone number (often in a tiny font).

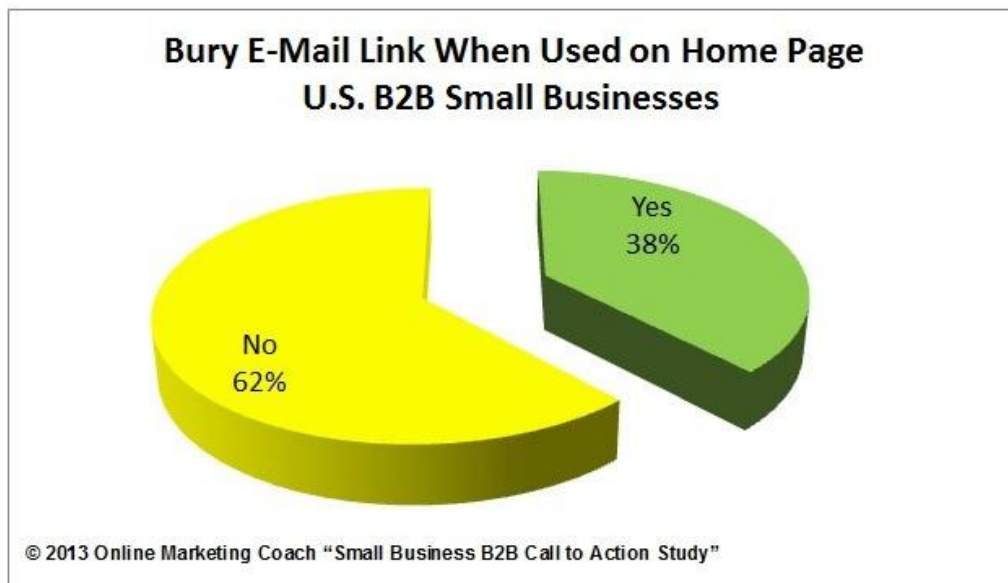
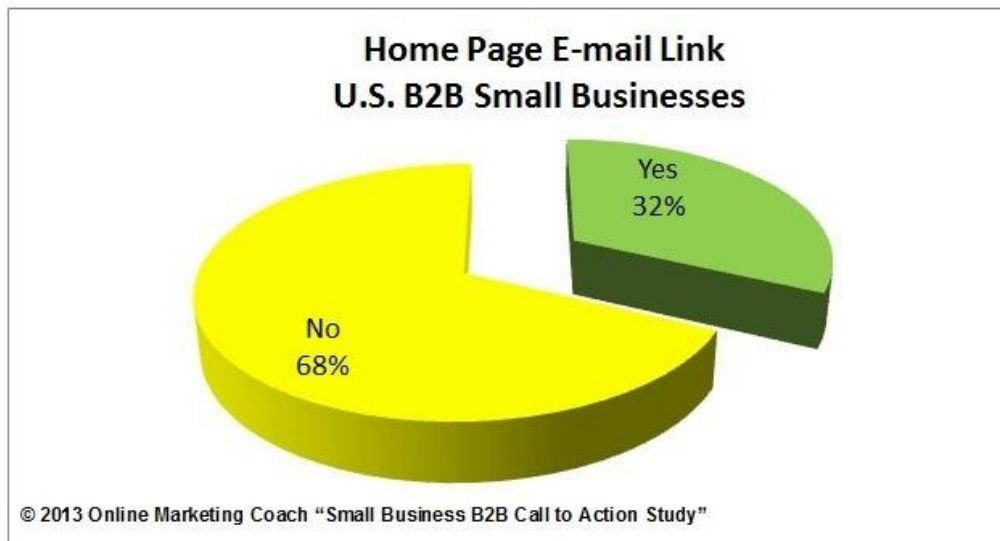


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## Home Page E-mail Address

Some businesses (32%) do reference an e-mail address on their home pages. However, of the web sites that include an e-mail address, 38% choose to bury it – at the bottom of the home page (nearly out of sight).

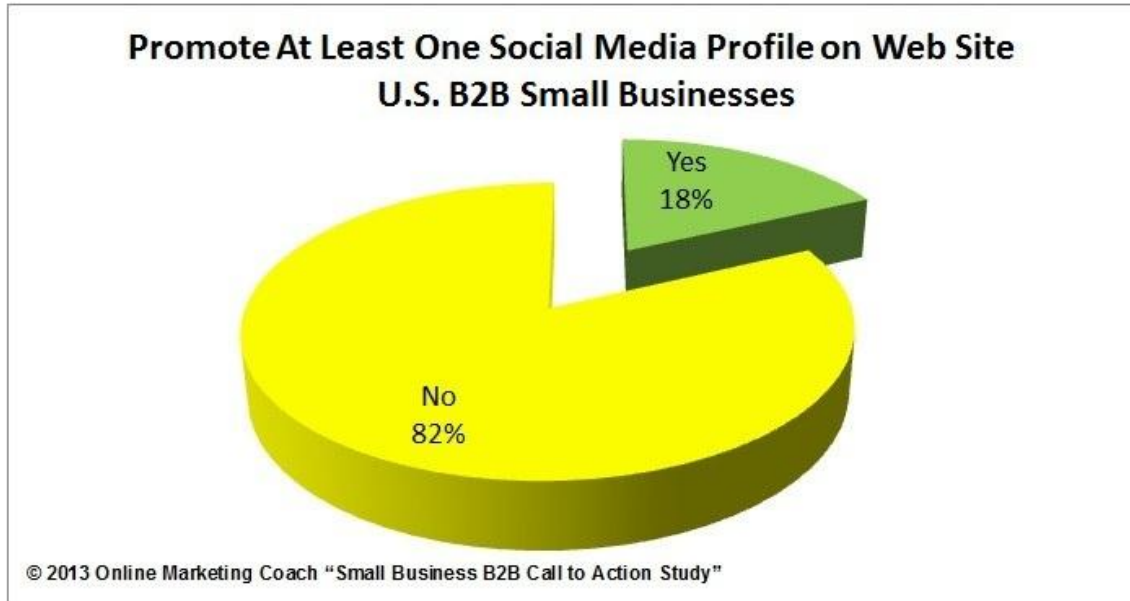


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### Social Media Profile Link

Companies usually don't reference any social media profiles on their web sites. We looked for at least one profile, but 82% either lack them or don't promote their profiles.



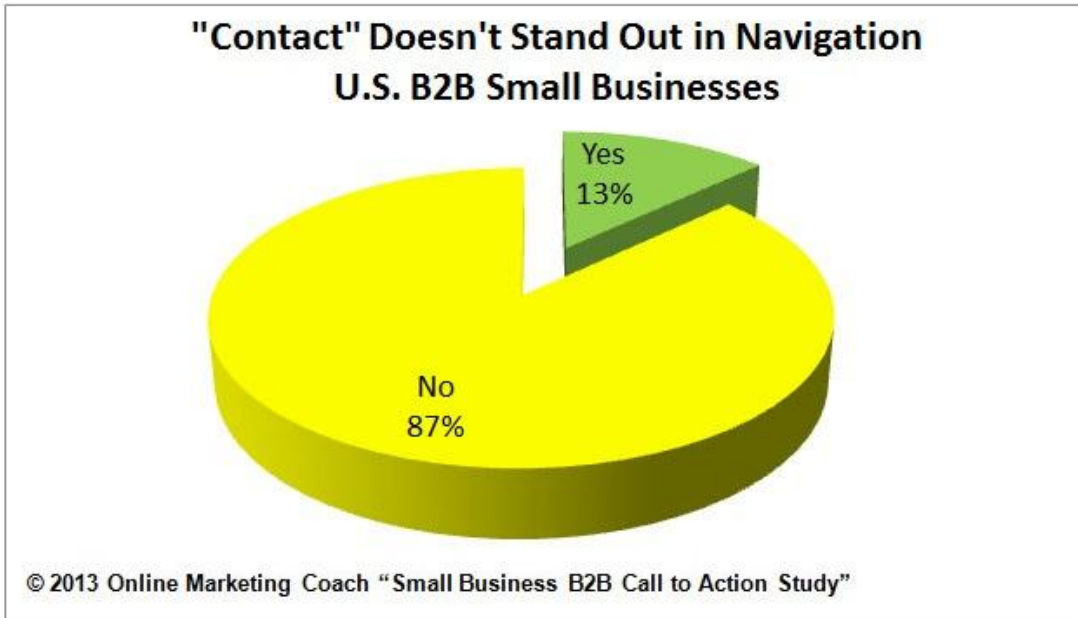
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### **“Contact” Doesn’t Stand Out**

Given that navigation sets often include a “Contact” option, we looked for instances where that reference stood out. We wanted to see distinctive text or a graphic treatment, such as a different color, larger font or special navigation tab effect. Typically, the “Contact” merely blends in with all of the other navigation options (87% of web sites).

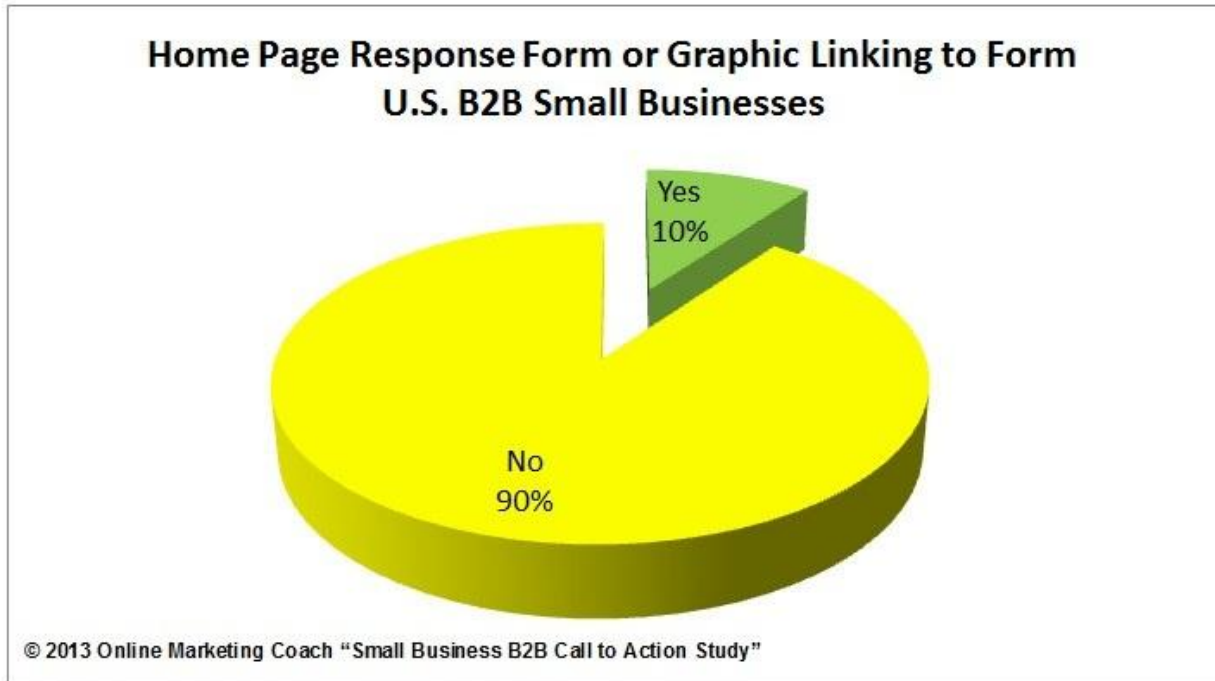


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### Home Page Form or Call to Action Pointing to Interior Form

During our analysis, we documented web sites that include a response form anywhere on the home page (or at least text or graphic that directs visitors to a specific interior page with the form). However, 90% of the web sites lack a home page form or call to action to an interior form (other than a standard “Contact” that often doesn’t stand out in the navigation).



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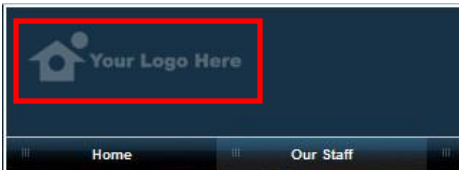
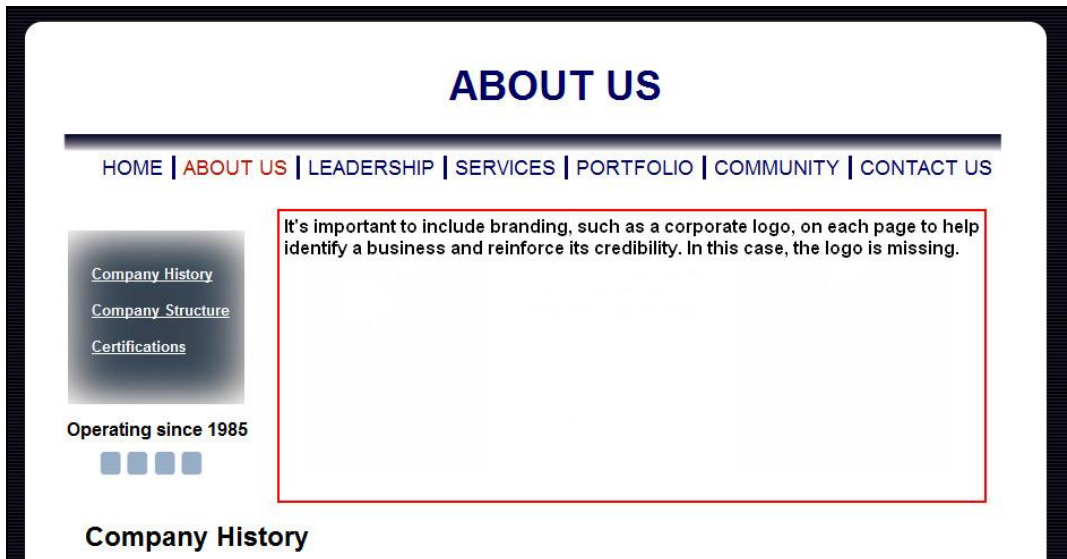
# Web Site Flaws

Here are some examples of web site design problems that plague small businesses and could confuse or annoy visitors. Many can be easily corrected. We covered up some content to avoid calling attention to the business name (and images here are sometimes smaller than what appear on the web sites we evaluated).

## 1. Poor use of space (duplicating navigation)



## 2. Missing logo



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### 3. Neglecting to keep important content updated

For example, this coupon is easy to find on the web site and it expired over 6 years ago.

**PROMOTIONS**

**COUPONS**

**OCTOBER 2006**

**\$25 OFF**

Referral Credit when a friend or neighbor purchases any of our services

... Print

In some houses it can take up to three to four minutes to get hot water to the tub or shower wasting water and your money. By installing a hot water recirculation pump you can reduce that wait time by 20 seconds, or less!

Through **November 2006**, save \$50 on a hot water recirculation pump. Now Pay only \$335 plus tax (additional parts may be more if needed.)

Call today to get yours installed before this promotion is over!

### 4. Missing phone number

*Professional Engineers*

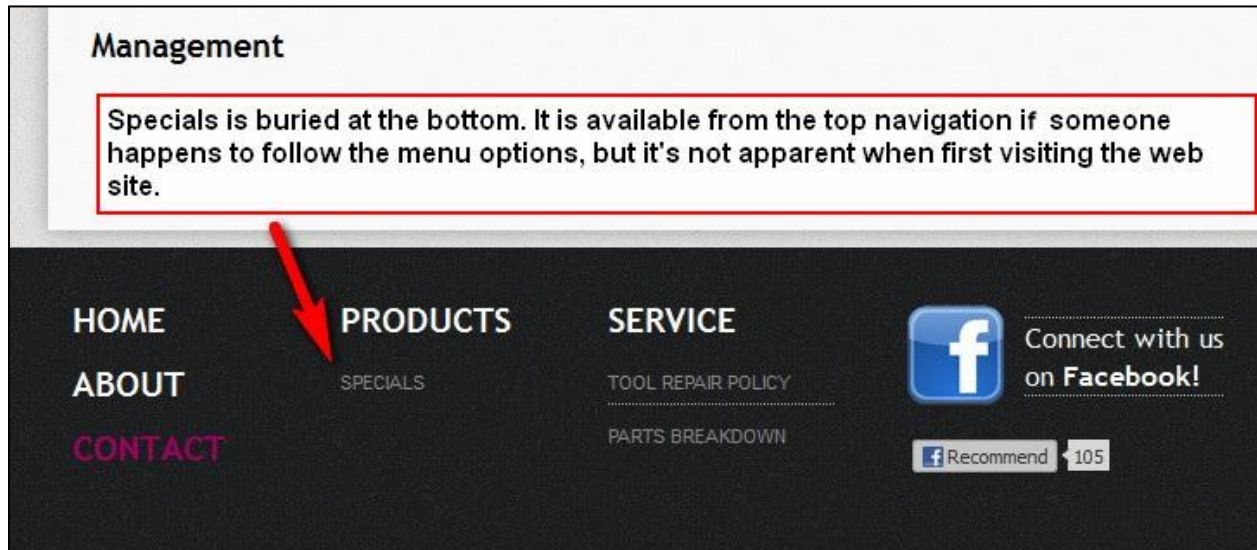
COMPANY PROFILE

The home page starts off with considerable text with no phone number in the design.

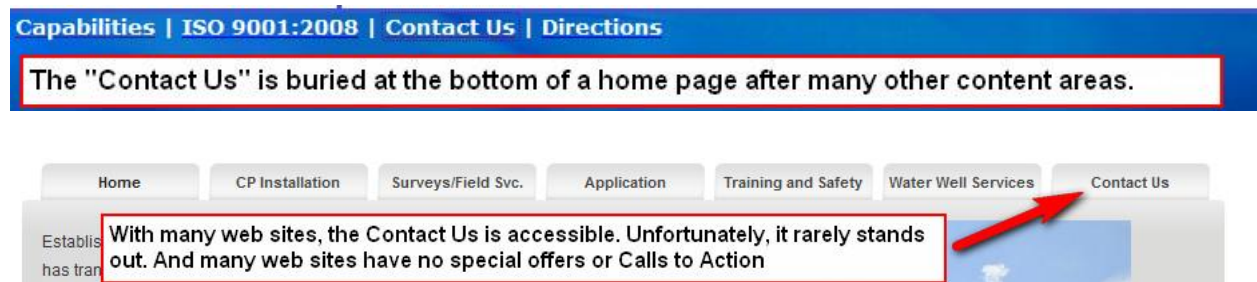
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## 5. Buried special offers (at the bottom or only available deep in navigation menus)



## 6. Placing "Contact Us" where people will have trouble finding it



## 7. Using graphics that are too large or overly busy

In this example, the choice of people make it look very dated.



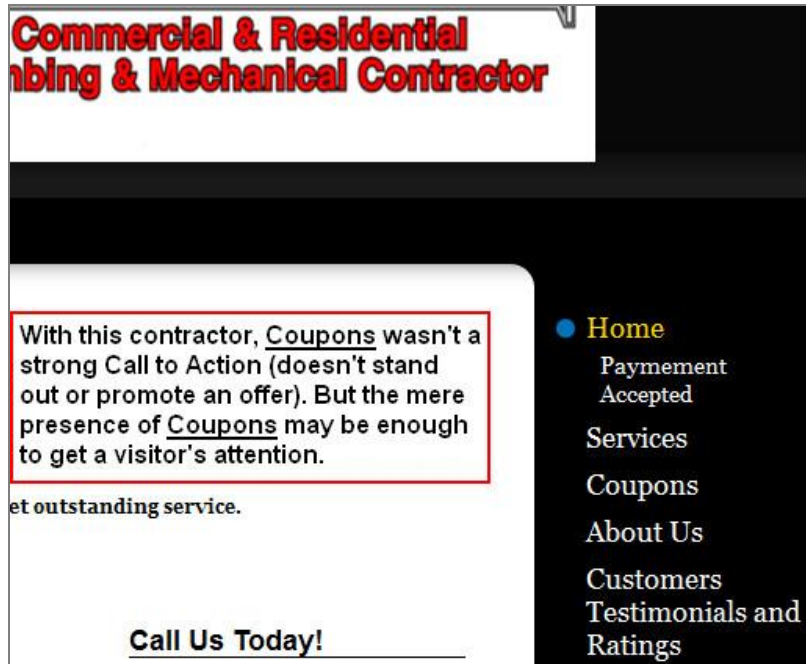
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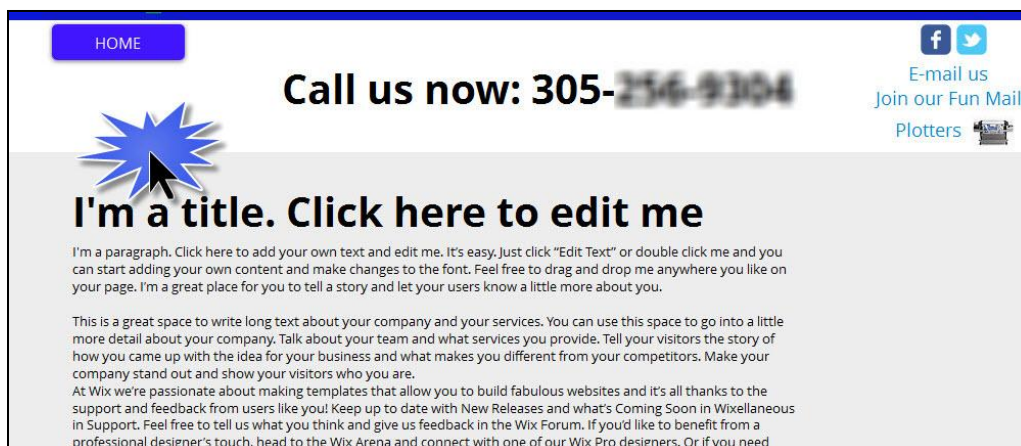
## 8. Presenting an incentive like “Coupons” like it’s just your garden variety navigation option

Coupons should stand out. With a simple top navigation, “Coupons” may be more apparent. In this example, the small business isn’t doing enough to emphasize it along the side.



## 9. Allowing a development page to go live and stay live

Mistakes happen, but it was too easy to discover (it wasn't like an overlooked page deep within the web site).



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## 10. Using a splash page

It may look good visually, but it makes a visitor work too hard to learn what the business has to offer. Many splash pages fail rather than provide value to the user (and they aren't really geared to showcase a call to action in many cases).



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# Web Sites – On the Right Track

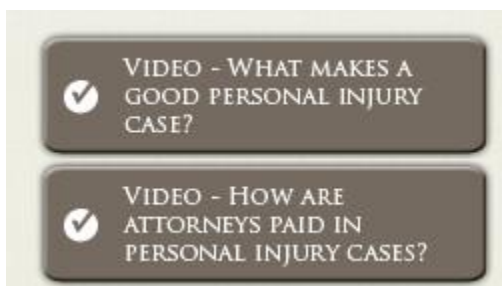
Small business B2B web sites sometimes had adequate or decent calls to actions. Here are some of the ones we found:

## 1. Educational video promotion

It may be a bit over-the-top, but the sign certainly stands out on the web site.



Other video teases can be professional without the extreme “**WARNING!**” approach.



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## 2. Simple Calls to Action

The font size and color doesn't exactly stand out, but the location (top of the web site) and white space makes it possible to spot the calls to action.



## 3. Catalog

Similar to the last example, the placement called attention to the 2012 Catalog. The color plays off the web site design.



## 4. Multiple Calls to Action

This web site displays a series of calls to action. It's somewhat busy, but the words mostly explain what to expect.



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## 5. White papers

The white papers are not tough to locate even though the navigation name blends in with other options.



## 6. Educational guide

In terms of space and presentation, it could be better. But this web site does make the effort to draw a visitor to the tax guide.



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## 7. Text references to more information

A “click here” reference is a basic call to action, but it can work based on the color and location on the page. It would be better to use text in the link to describe what a visitor will find when clicking. But many web sites don’t present the “click here” this well.

1) **Hazardous waste transport:** [Click Here](#)  
Lead, contaminated soil, mastics, solid waste and asbestos

2) **Bio waste transport:** [Click Here](#)  
Sharps, needles and medical waste

In this example, the “click here” is a little lost (more typical of web sites in the study), but the white paper name is long enough to stand out a little. Unfortunately, it’s buried on the page and not even referenced in the main navigation, which doesn’t direct visitors to “white papers” or “resources.”

Training is a process, not a one-time event. [Click here](#) to read the Training Industry blog: *What Happens When Sales Training Isn't Reinforced* on how to keep the training alive. [Click here](#) to receive the latest Delta Point white paper: *Avoid Death by Training: The 7 Critical Elements to Ensure Sales Training Sticks*.

But small businesses don’t need to settle for “click here.” It’s better to link just a few words, but an extended link can still draw in a visitor depending on the other page design elements.

where we have a successful victory record. We are approved to accept cases for just about any malpractice insurer.

[Read more about our malpractice trial results.](#)

[We have also won numerous cases on appeal.](#)

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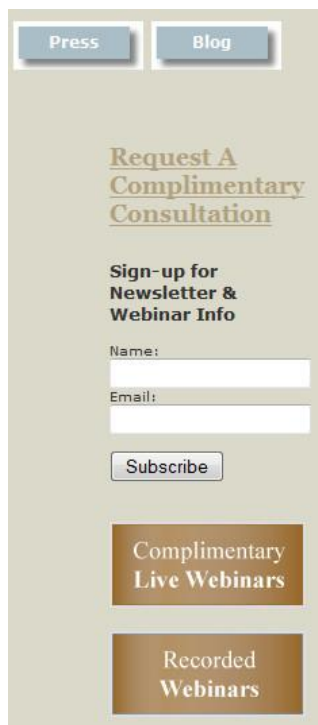
## 8. Capabilities brochure

A call to action doesn't need to lead to an immediate sale (most don't). In addition to other ways to connect with prospects, even a simple PDF brochure can help reinforce a company's expertise.



## 9. Webinar promotions (along with other calls to action)

Upcoming or past webinars are excellent opportunities to generate conversions. The colors could be improved, but at least the company promotes its resources.



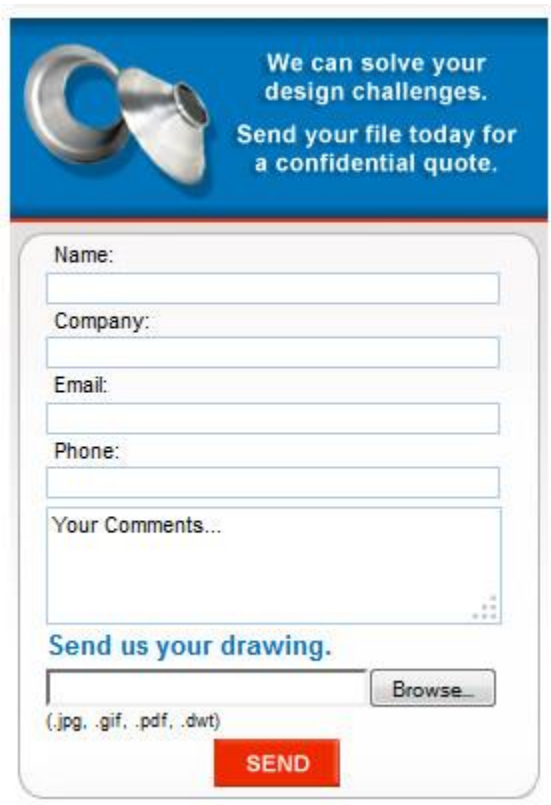
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## 10. Home page response form

Many web sites make it tough to connect with them. Phone numbers are buried along with small links to e-mail addresses. Even the “Contact Us” gets lost among many other navigation choices. But sometimes small businesses create well designed forms that request basic information without going overboard with the data collection.



We can solve your design challenges.  
Send your file today for a confidential quote.

Name:

Company:

Email:

Phone:

Your Comments...

[Send us your drawing.](#)

(.jpg, .gif, .pdf, .dwt)

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# Conclusion

Although there are many small business success stories and B2B small businesses do embrace online marketing, it appears that most aren't actively working to generate leads through content marketing strategies.

Clearly, they're using phone numbers and provide e-mail addresses (although both are shockingly buried too often). Some small businesses offer links to case studies, brochures and other pertinent information. But industry guides and white papers? Those thought leadership resources are rarely offered.

It's worth noting that these businesses seem to be succeeding despite web design and conversion issues. Many have been operating for years; older copyright dates convey their longevity.

It would be easy to suggest that they must become savvy with online marketing or risk falling way behind their competition (and become less relevant in their own industries\_. For the short-term, survival is likely because a business can always succeed despite its flaws.

However, online marketing offers many opportunities for businesses that want to remain profitable today and in the future. In the U.S. alone, people conduct 20 billion searches a month on Google, Yahoo!, Bing and other search engines. The market is ripe and it's usually not difficult to define a target market that's looking for specific B2B products and services. Effective keyword research and selection can help small businesses achieve high search engine rankings that are needed to attract more web site visitors.

If a small business gets in front of a new prospect, what kind of web site will that potential customer encounter? Will there be anything else except a phone number to win him over? What content will prompt him to provide a name, e-mail address or other basic information?

In other words, people are searching. Is your web site primed with appropriate calls to action to generate the leads you need?

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You can take stock of your efforts with our “**Small Business B2B Call to Action Checklist**,” a convenient tool that includes practical advice and insights about more than 30 call to action factors ranging informational how-to guides to coupons. The resource is e-mailed to anyone who requests this study.

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## About Online Marketing Coach



Since 1997, the seasoned pros at Cleveland, Ohio-based Online Marketing Coach have shaped online marketing strategies for hundreds of small businesses located throughout the United States.

Some of our consultants have been in the industry for more than 15 years and bring diverse experience. In his 25 year career in print and online marketing, President Mike Murray has worked with such well known companies and organizations as FedEx Custom Critical, KeyBank, Eaton Corp., Cleveland Clinic, Bissell, and MTD.

Mike and his team provide clients with strategic guidance on web site design, SEO, web site analytics, media buying, corporate identity packages, social media, e-commerce, e-mail marketing, link building, paid search and much more.

Call Mike directly at **800-490-3350 ext. 2** or visit [onlinemarketingcoach.com](http://onlinemarketingcoach.com)

## About *Small Business Trends*



in Cleveland, Ohio.

[Small Business Trends](#) is an award-winning online publication for small business owners, entrepreneurs and the people who interact with them. It was founded in 2003 by Anita Campbell,

*Small Business Trends* is the premier source of information, news and advice covering issues of key importance to the small business market. *Small Business Trends* appears on countless “Top” and “Best of” lists of small business resources.

*Small Business Trends* currently reaches over 7,000,000 readers annually. *Small Business Trends* is also the producer of the producer of the [Small Business Book Awards](#) and the [Small Business Influencer Awards](#).

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