An Advertising Plan for ClarityADM

A Senior Project

presented to

the Faculty of the Agricultural Education and Communication Department

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Agricultural Science, B.S.

by

Chelsey Porter

June 2015
Abstract

The purpose of this project is to develop an advertising plan for a small business based on the central coast. In this project you will find information pertaining to the aquarium keeping hobby as well as creating business website and business cards. This was designed to create a website and business cards in order to broaden the customer base for the business and increase profits.
Table of Contents

Abstract ...........................................................................................................................................1
Table of Contents ............................................................................................................................2
Chapter 1 – Introduction .................................................................................................................5
Statement of the Problem...............................................................................................................6
The Importance of the Project ........................................................................................................6
Purpose of the Project .....................................................................................................................6
Objectives of the Project .................................................................................................................6
Definitions of Importance ............................................................................................................7
Summary........................................................................................................................................7
Chapter 2 – Literature Review ......................................................................................................7
Freshwater Aquariums ..................................................................................................................8
Live Plants and Decor ...................................................................................................................8
Heat and Light ..............................................................................................................................9
Figure 1 .......................................................................................................................................10
Aeration and Filtration ................................................................................................................10
Basic Maintenance .......................................................................................................................10
Business Cards .............................................................................................................................11
Website .......................................................................................................................................12
    Decide the Purpose of the Website ......................................................................................12
    Choose a Web Host ............................................................................................................13
    Choose a Template .............................................................................................................13
    Organize the Website ........................................................................................................13
    Develop Content ................................................................................................................14
Summary.....................................................................................................................................14
Chapter 3 – Methods and Materials.............................................................................................15
Chapter 1

Introduction

To maintain a healthy aquarium you must have adequate knowledge of freshwater ecosystems. It is important to know how to maintain pH, low nitrogen and low ammonia in your water. You also must know how to care for each individual fish and how the fish coexist in their environment. From experience, it is obvious that most fish owners don’t realize the amount of work and knowledge that goes into keeping your aquarium and fish healthy and alive.

ClarityADM is a small service enterprise that I created to help hobbyists alleviate the stress of fish keeping. ClarityADM focuses on doing aquarium maintenance for its customers. This involves scrubbing, changing water, replacing fish and informing customers about proper care for the fish that they already have or are planning to get. ClarityADM will also set-up, design and stock new tanks. ClarityADM strives to bridge the gap between the work that has to go into a tank and the joy that a healthy tank can provide to its owner.

Statement of the Problem

Many people do not have time to maintain the tanks that they once appreciated. They also are unaware of the basic concepts that make an aquarium run smoothly. They are unaware of the effects of the nitrogen cycle and often unaware of the specific water parameters that each type of fish needs. People often give up on their fish tanks or let them get neglected because of their lack of knowledge or time to spend maintaining them.
Importance of the Project

The importance of this project is to increase profitability of ClarityADM and provide a service to aquarium enthusiasts. By advertising the presence of Clarity I can increase my customer base. This project will benefit me by increasing my income, providing education on the proper care of freshwater aquariums and their inhabitants.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to advertise my small business through making and distributing business cards and a website with detailed information about the services offered and price lists.

Objectives of this project are to advertise and promote my small business through:

- Outlining what services will be provided by ClarityADM
- Creating a professional looking yet simple business card
- Passing out the cards to local business, pet shops, and current customers
- Creating a website that can be easily navigated for potential customers to look at the services offered, gauge my experience and that of my partner’s
- Creating a waiver of liability for customers

Definition of Important Terms

ClarityADM- aquarium maintenance and design business located in the San Luis Obispo Area

Nitrogen Cycle- The process of breaking down nitrogen from fish waste and food into compounds in the environment
**Freshwater Aquarium** - A glass, plastic or acrylic tank where freshwater fish, invertebrates and plant species are kept

**Aquarists** - People who own and enjoy keeping aquariums

**Aquarium Maintenance** - The care involved in keeping a fish tank healthy. It involves but is not limited to water changes, algae scrubbing, filter changes, water testing, gravel vacuuming, and treating sick fish.

**Summary**

Keeping aquariums has become a very popular hobby in the United States. Many people are mesmerized with their beauty and the element of life they give to the home. Keeping an aquarium regardless of its size can be a hassle if the owner is not properly educated or does not have much time to put into the tank. ClarityADM is the perfect solution to eliminate the hassle of maintenance.

**Chapter 2**

**Literature Review**

Promotional materials are important to any business that wants to expand its customer base. With freshwater aquariums, maintenance can ruin the fun of owning fish. ClarityADM offers complete care for freshwater aquariums. Complete care includes, but is not limited to, maintenance in regards to heat, lighting, decoration, water parameters and filtration. Aside from the services themselves, advertising and developing a customer base is just as important. This chapter will cover topics relating to aquarium maintenance as well as advertising. Advertising for
this small business may include low cost options such as business cards, social networking and a website.

Freshwater Aquariums

Aquarium keeping is very popular in America. The United States is the single largest importer of fish in the world. The aquarium industry is worth over 1,000 million dollars.

“Ornamental fish is often used as a generic term to describe aquatic animals kept in the aquarium hobby, including fishes, invertebrates such as corals, crustaceans (e.g., crabs, hermit crabs, shrimps), mollusks (e.g., snails, clams, scallops), and also live rock”(Chapman,1997). In order to have a successful freshwater tropical fish tank you must apply adequate effort. Fish are pets and there is responsibility involved.

Live Plants and Décor

Decorating an aquarium is important for the fish and the owner. The fish need places to hide and to feel comfortable in their environment. People need to enjoy their decorations as much as the actual fish. An aquarium can be an art piece, a common space decoration and a conversation piece. Decorations can be natural or artificial; whichever showcases the owners’ personality and taste. A tank needs gravel, to harbor good bacteria and provide burrowing space for fish that wish to do so, and plants. It is also preferable to have logs, rocks or artificial ornaments for fish to hide and for them to create territories. To create a balanced and aesthetically pleasing aquarium, it is necessary to have tall, medium and short plants. Tall plants are placed in the background, and small and medium plants in the foreground. Not being pleased with the layout or design of a tank can cause an aquarist to give up on the hobby. Different types of fish like different amounts of cover and space. For example, black skirt tetras prefer lightly
planted aquariums with the proper amount of space for schooling. African cichlids on the other hand, do well with just rocks and light décor. It is important to create a space that the fish are comfortable with and the owners find visually appealing.

**Heat and Light**

Fish and plants need light for several reasons. Plants need light for energy and growth. Fish need light to establish a day night cycle. The aquarium owner needs light to properly view and enjoy their fish. A small amount of sunlight for a tank can be acceptable, full sunlight will cause excess algae growth. Algae can cause problems with water parameters as well as be unsightly. Sunlight can also alter the temperature of the tank. Temperature is very important for tropical fish, not keeping a proper temperature can lead to illness and stress on the fish. Tropical fish need a temperature between 78 and 82 degrees (Andrews, 2010). This is an ideal temperature for most freshwater fish besides goldfish that require a much lower temperature. It is crucial that the temperature remains at the right level and does not fluctuate drastically throughout the day. Buying improper equipment, such as a heater that is not sized properly, can cause these sorts of fluctuations. A heater that is too small will not bring the tank to the proper temperature, buying a heater that is too large will overheat the water. Aquarium heaters can be purchased at any pet store or online. They need to be strong enough to heat the amount of gallons that the aquarium is. For example, if the tank is 30 gallons, an aquarium heater that is labeled for 30-45 gallon is acceptable. Keeping a level, high temperature allows for proper growth, comfort and health of the fish.

**Aeration and Filtration**
Filtration involves removing the dissolved wastes from the aquarium water. This is accomplished by using carbon in the aquarium filter. Activated carbon can also help to reduce odors. Carbon is useful for only a short period, about a month, and then must be replaced. Biological filtration is the most important aquarium filtration type because it deals with the growing of the good bacteria in your aquarium filter. The “good bacteria” is the bacteria that converts ammonia to nitrite and then converts nitrite into nitrate. This establishment of bacteria is essential to your success with keeping tropical fish (Hovanec, 1996). Mechanical filtration removes the particles, such as fecal matter and left over food, from the aquarium water. Like the heating element, a filter must be purchased that is the proper size for the amount of gallons the aquarium is.

Filtration is necessary for almost all types of tropical fish. Filters remove unwanted odors and excess ammonia and provide circulation and fresh oxygen. Fish respiration, fish digestion and the decay of uneaten food generate three nitrogenous compounds; ammonia, nitrite and nitrate. The first two, ammonia and nitrite, are toxic to fish and extended exposure to them or introduction of fish to these compounds from non-contaminated water will result in disease or death. In a cycled and well maintained aquarium there are nitrifying bacteria present which will convert ammonia and nitrite into nitrates. Nitrates can only be removed from the aquarium by performing partial water changes. Occasionally, the filter does not provide enough oxygen to the
water for fish respiration. In this case, the owner will want to purchase a simple aerator. An aerator will usually be an air stone, tubing and a pump to add oxygen into the water. An aerator will also help circulate the water and provide moment on the surface to prevent a protein layer from building up.

**Basic Maintenance**

Every couple of weeks, there are some simple things that need to be done to an aquarium. The frequency depends on the number of fish you have, the size of the tank the quality of filter that has been purchased. First, all ornaments and artificial plants must be removed and scrubbed to rid them of algae and decaying matter. Next, you’ll need a gravel vacuum to remove debris from the gravel remove some of the water. A gravel vacuum is plastic tube with a hose and a a hand pump that is used to syphon water out of the aquarium. Removing about thirty percent of the water each time is ideal. Adding fresh water keeps nitrate and ammonia levels down. Once a month, carbon filters cartridges should be replaced and edges of tank should be scrubbed.

Adequate knowledge of all of these topics is necessary to create a successly aquarium design and maintenance business. Keeping a tank healthy and presentable can be a huge responsibility. ClarityADM offers customers the possibility of never doing maintenance and simply enjoying their aquarium. But one also needs not to underestimate the importance of advertising and networking.

**Business Cards**

A business card is an essential part of any good marketing plan. For its size and cost, it has a vast impact. What you should expect it to do is present a professional image people will remember. A business card can make or break a client's first impression of your company.
Choosing a card style that's appropriate for your business, industry and personal style is important. There are five different card styles to consider; basic cards, picture cards, tactile cards, multipurpose cards and out-of-the-box cards. For my aquarium service business I will be using a picture card. Picture business cards still have basic elements but add a splash of color and an image or picture that can help explain what your business does. An image representing my service can communicate better than just words. Though there are several different types of cards there are elements that have to be considered for each type. Font and color, contact information, and the actual cardstock quality can all help catch a customers’ eye according to the article “What does your business card say about your business?” The colors you chose also have drastic impact on the impression your card gives. As a background color, white is tradition, safe and conservative but can be the best choice if you have a color logo. Black cards can be bold and dramatic but may be intimidating (Cole, 2011). For ClarityADM, it will be best to use a white or grey background card with black and green additions. The color green, in a lighter tone, represents nature, the environment and balance. The card quality is also a factor. There are different weights and textures to be considered. The heavier the cardstock the more expensive, it is reasonable to get the best quality you can afford. There are two finishes to choose from; glossy and matte. They are similar in price and are up to personal preference. The most important idea is that the cards display the appropriate and most recent contact information for the business. Since a business card can only contain a small amount of information it is crucial that a business have website where customers can explore your services, prices and mission.

**Websites**

A website is a necessity for entrepreneurs, small businesses, home-based businesses, and anybody selling products or services. Regardless of your other marketing methods, enabling
potential customers to either find you through a Google search or learn more about you after they’ve seen your other marketing material is key to creating and developing new customers. The website can serve as an extension of your business card, with information about you, your business, and services offered (University of Michigan). Most important, your website should detail your background, experience, and other credentials to give you credibility and give potential customers more confidence when deciding where they want to take their business.

Creating a website for your small business is fairly easy. You can do it yourself using website builders. A few example of website builders are Wix and Weebly. They are all free and offer plenty of free templates for any type of business. It will be easier if you understand these steps when creating a site.

**Decide the purpose of website**

Some businesses using their webpage solely for their contact information. Some businesses use the webpages for pricing and information about their services. Websites like the ones are considered static. The first step is to decide what your website is going to do for you. It may be fairly static, meaning you rarely add new content. Or, you may want to use it for information about your company and provide articles or information you’ve written to provide useful updates and tips to clients and potential clients. You may even choose to start a blog to interest and engage potential customers as part of your overall social media strategy. You can also sell products and services directly through your site. Knowing what you plan on doing with your website is an important first step because it will guide you on how to develop it.

**Choose your web host**
There are several free web host sites that allow you to use their templates and will publish your website for free. If you don’t want a static website, or you aren’t familiar with web design you’ll want to pick a website builder that is simple and easy to use.

**Choose your template**

There are several templates to choose from depending on which web host you use. Wix.com, offers hundreds of different templates for all different types of businesses, personal portfolios, event pages and more. It is important to pick a template that is easy to navigate and user friendly. The template will come with a color scheme, but most web hosts have a variety of schemes to change the template. Just like the business cards, color is very important. Too bright of colors will strain the viewer’s eye but you still want to keep the sight interesting. Some templates are very complex and portions can be deleted in the creation of the site, but others are simple. In that case, links, menus and images can be added during the initial creation. Pick a template that gives your website the look and feel you want. Some templates are fairly generic while others are either themed to a particular type of product or service (with background graphics and other visual elements that reflect the product or service) or have built-in features that may make it more useful for you. No matter what your goal, you should be able to find a model that meets your requirements. While free templates are readily available, there are templates that are available if you are willing to pay.

**Organize your website**

The organization of the site lies closely with the template that is chosen. Making the site organized and having multiple ways to navigate from page to page is ideal. It is important that links available on the page are in working order and actually link to what they are supposed to.
The goal of having an organized web page is to not frustrate the user and make the website as welcoming as possible. At this stage, you need to start thinking about what your website will look like and how it will be used. This includes your logo and other visuals, the menu selections you want to make available, and the kind of information you want to put on each of those pages (Forbes 2012). With most website builders you have different formats and styles to choose from. It’s important to think carefully about how you want to organize and structure the information on your website.

**Develop content**

Developing the content is the most important portion of creating a page. Content can sometimes be the hardest part of your website. It needs to be interesting and straight to the point to encourage viewers to revisit the site. If the information is incorrect or uninteresting you run the risk of the viewer moving on to another website. When coming up with the information, think about it from an advertising perspective and check for accuracy. In addition to text, you also need images. If you chose a template that has imbedded images you shouldn’t have to add any. Making the pages professional looking is particularly important as visual impact and appeal are a key part of any website (Forbes 2012). You can include art graphics, images of your products, headshots of yourself and other staff members, or other graphics that might illustrate your process or approach to delivering the service you’re selling.

**Maintain website**

If the website it to remain active, it will be updated regularly. If the site does not have blogs and discussion boards, maintaining the site could just be updating the coloring scheme and adding new pictures every couple months. If the site has a blog or discussion board the web site
will need to be monitored daily and the creator will have an active role in keeping the website up to date.

Chapter 3
Methods

In order to expand ClarityADM, decisions had to be made about how to advertise. A website seemed like the best choice because it is free and can present all of the important information about the business. The website needs to be easy to navigate and appeal to all ages of customers. It also needs to look professional to maintain the credibility of the business and the work being provided. There is a lot of information that is included on the site: a price list for services, a spectrum of services offered, detailed explanations of those services, a page for reviews and comments by customers, a biography section.

Documents for Liability

In order to perform maintenance on fish tanks, a waiver of liability needed to be created and signed by customers in case of unfortunate circumstances. An unfortunate circumstance could include deceased fish or broken equipment. The maintenance contracts state that the business will not be held accountable for problems that occur. This leaves replacing fish and equipment up to the discretion of ClarityADM and ensures there will be no legal issues. These documents can be viewed on the website.

Getting Testimonials

The original customer for ClarityADM was a chemotherapy lab in downtown San Luis Obispo. A testimonial for the website from them would really help ClarityADM gain credibility
with potential customers. They agreed and wrote the owner a small testimonial to post on the website. Another customer who has ClarityADM come to her home wrote a testimonial as well. This gives the website a residential and business testimonial. There is a message box link on the website where new customers can add a testimonial if they wish. The message is screened by the owner and posted if it is good quality.

**Creating a Website**

First, a website template that allows customers to use the page for free needed to be located. Finding a low rate or free website was very important in order to maintain a low startup cost. Wix.com offers hundreds of website templates and allows you to publish at no cost. The template chosen was simple, with picture links to all of the information. It also had a small section in the bottom corner of the home page for testimonials. Researchers agree that colors greatly influence the human state of mind. Bright colors such as red and bright blue can fatigue the eyes. In order to keep visitors interested in the site, neutral and pale colors were used with natural colors like green and light blue. Since tropical fish are often beautiful and come in a wide array of colors, a few pictures of aquariums and fish were added. The pictures also serve as ideas for what the customers can have if they work with ClarityADM.

**Designing Business Cards**

A template was used for designing business cards for this small business. Colors were chosen carefully to maintain a professional look while still being unique. Gray was chosen for the background color of the card to make them stand out. A picture of a tropical fish was placed in the top corner to give an idea of what the business does. To keep the cards under a certain price
they were left one sided. Orange and white were chosen for the printed portions to keep the cards readable and presentable.

**Conclusion**

Having a website will increase awareness of the business and hopefully increase the customer base. Creating a professional email and having business cards to hand out can make all the difference when trying to increase integrity for a business. Choosing colors, designs and wording very carefully are crucial to appealing to the audience and having clientele chose ClarityADM for their maintenance needs.

**Chapter 4**

**Results and Discussion**

Since the overall goal of this project was to develop a website for ClarityADM, an aquarium design and maintenance service, the full project can and will be viewed at http://chels12porter.wix.com/clarity. The website was officially published on March 11th, 2015.

**Results**

The result of this project, which was a functioning, published website for my small business ClarityADM, will be presented in this section through a series of numbered screenshots representing the various pages and their functions.

Presentation of Website
The home page has the name of the business and links to each page of the website.

Each picture shown is a link to the “services” page which gives detailed explanations of services that ClarityADM provides. The picture that is the link for “troubleshooting and restocking is a Betta fish. They are one of, if not the most, common freshwater fish that customers own. The picture for the “design” link is of a planted freshwater tank. Tanks with live plants are the hardest to upkeep. This picture represents that ClarityADM is willing to design even the most difficult freshwater tanks. The “maintenance” link is of a gravel vacuum. Gravel vacuums are the main tool used for removing debris from aquariums and maintaining water quality. Each of the “read more” buttons are links to the services page.
The “about us” section gives viewers an introduction into why and how the business was stated. The picture shown is a picture of my first fish, a betta. There is a “read more” link under the introductory paragraph under about us that leads to the “about us” page. This part of the home page also has two testimonials. These are not links but just statements from two of ClarityADM’s first customers. Each of the pictures are just different varieties of freshwater fish.

**FIGURE 3A** | Explanation of Services Offered; Troubleshooting and Restocking

The first service offered is troubleshooting and restocking. Often people don’t seek help until there is already something wrong with their tank. This section explains that ClarityADM

**FIGURE 3B** | Explanation of Services Offered; Design

can come to your home and help you figure out what is wrong with your aquarium.
This portion explains that ClarityADM can redesign your aquarium to make it more appealing. It also mentions that a new tank can be set up and started if you are just beginning to be interested in aquarium keeping.

This section explains ClarityADM’s most popular service, tank maintenance. It gives an overview of the maintenance task offered. In the bottom right corner there is a link. The link connects to a document called the “maintenance contract” which is signed by the customer. It is shown below (Figure 3D)
This document serves as a waiver of liability from customer to ClarityADM. This document ensures that ClarityADM cannot be held accountable if there is an issue with a maintenance call. This document leaves the notion of replacing broken equipment and deceased fish up to the discretion of the owner of ClarityADM. It is to be signed after each scheduled maintenance appointment.
The about us page explains how me and my partner Lauren got started with aquarium keeping and how we taught ourselves about freshwater aquariums through research and personal experience. It explains their passion for the hobby and the business. It gives customers some insight into who would be coming into their homes.

This page allows customers to email ClarityADM through the website. They can ask questions regarding their aquariums or request more information about pricing or schedule an appointment.
This card provides my name and contact information. These cards were handed out to local businesses and my current customers to be passed on to potential clients.

Chapter 5

Summary, Recommendations and Conclusions

Summary

The United States is the top importer of live tropical fish. Aquarium keeping is a very popular hobby. An issue with the hobby is the required maintenance of the aquarium itself. People love to enjoy the live fish and plants but are unaware of the proper procedures for maintaining the water quality and fish health. The purpose of this project was to further develop and advertise ClarityADM, a small aquarium maintenance business based on the central coast.
The development of a website and business cards helped broaden the customer base and gain credibility for the business.

**Recommendations**

Presenting yourself and your business to the public through a website can be very stressful. It is recommended that you use a website template if you are not familiar with web design coding. Using website templates saves time and removes the difficulty of learning web design. Some sites have hundreds of templates available and you can make changes within that template to fit your needs. It is also important to have many people review your site to make sure it is user friendly. Some templates are plain but some contain many functions and links that may be useful to you. To choose a template you must decide what the function of your website will be first. For my project, the website was an extension of my business card with information about the business, the owner and the services offered. It is important to portray yourself just right to gain credibility and give customers confidence in your abilities. Decide how much info or advertising you want the website to do. Some templates are easy to edit and others are not. If the site is going to be posted and remain static, meaning you will not post much new information, then you can pick a complicated template. If you want to frequently use the website to post information like a forum or blog or news about your business then you’ll want a template that is easy to edit and repost. Creating the perfect website doesn’t ensure that your site will come up on a google search. You will want to maintain the proper settings and keywords to make your site readily available.
Conclusion

The *ClarityADM* website has been very successful, giving customers detailed information about the business and place to browse services. It met the purpose of free advertising and increasing the customer base.
References


