

AN ALKALI INDUSTRY STUDY

The State of the *Established B2B Website*

What we found analyzing more than 55,000 B2B websites: the patterns quietly costing established companies buyers, and what the best sites do differently.

SUMMARIZE THIS REPORT WITH AI



Based on Alkali's audit of more than 55,000 B2B websites across the United States: manufacturers, distributors, equipment makers, and specialized service firms.

Inside this report

Why we made this	03
The findings at a glance	04
The eight findings, in depth	05
The blind spot	13
What the sites that win do	14
What to do about it	15
Who made this	16

The most expensive problem with your website is the one you can't see.

Established B2B companies rarely lose buyers loudly. Nobody emails to say your site talked them out of calling. They land, spend a few seconds, can't tell what you do or why to choose you, and quietly move to the next tab. That buyer never shows up in your analytics, your CRM, or your weekly numbers. The phone still rings, referrals still close, and the site feels fine, precisely because the people it costs you leave no trace.

We wanted to measure that invisible loss. So we reviewed more than 55,000 B2B websites the way a first-time buyer reads them: what they say, how fast they load, whether someone new can tell what the company does, and how hard it is to make contact. This report is what we found, and what the small share of sites that get it right do differently.

THE THROUGH-LINE

Most B2B sites don't lose to better companies. They lose to companies a first-time buyer could understand faster.

Eight things a first-time buyer runs into on a typical B2B homepage.

68%

don't say what the company does in the first five seconds

57%

give no clear next step: no obvious way to start a quote or reach a human

65%

take longer than three seconds to load anything

49%

look visibly dated, eroding trust before a word is read

12

the average number of fields on a first-contact form

44%

fail Google's mobile-friendly test

71%

show no proof a first-time buyer can verify above the fold

82%

aren't structured for AI search to read and recommend them

The homepage that says nothing

68%

THE GAP

never plainly say what the company makes or who it is for.

They lead with the company name or a slogan instead.

"Quality You Can Trust"

"Making It Happen Since 1966"

Just the company name

WHAT IT MEANS

The single job of a homepage is to tell a first-time buyer, in seconds, whether they're in the right place. A company name or a slogan that could hang on any competitor's wall answers a question the buyer hasn't asked yet.

WHAT IT COSTS

A buyer comparing three vendors in three tabs doesn't send a complaint. They close the tab that made them work to understand it. The clearer competitor gets contacted, even when their work is worse.

WHAT THE BEST DO

Lead with what you do and who it's for, in the plain words a buyer would actually search: the specific thing you make or provide, exactly who it's for, and what happens next. Clarity first, the fifty-year reputation second.

Nowhere obvious to go next

57%

THE GAP

give a buyer no clear next step above the fold: no obvious way to start a quote, and no visible way to reach a human.

Dead-end "Learn More" buttons

1 in 3 keep the phone in the footer only

WHAT IT MEANS

A buyer who is ready to act shouldn't have to hunt. Many B2B sites bury the phone number in the footer, point a "Learn More" button at nothing, or offer a retail "Shop Now" to a B2B buyer who wants to talk to someone.

WHAT IT COSTS

The moment of intent is fragile. A buyer who can't quickly see how to reach you does the easy thing instead: nothing, or the next tab. You never learn the interest existed.

WHAT THE BEST DO

One obvious next step above the fold, phrased for how this buyer actually starts: "Request a quote," with the phone number visible right beside it.

The three-second problem

65%

THE GAP

take longer than three seconds to show a buyer anything. The median site scores 43 out of 100 on Google PageSpeed.

Median score 43/100

1 in 14 rated "good"

47% slower than 4 seconds

WHAT IT MEANS

Google's own research shows that as a page goes from one to three seconds, the odds a visitor leaves climb sharply. Most B2B homepages sit on the wrong side of that line, usually from a decade of plugins and un-optimized images.

WHAT IT COSTS

A visitor who leaves during a slow load looks identical in your analytics to someone who was never interested. The loss is real and completely invisible, which is exactly why it persists for years.

WHAT THE BEST DO

Show meaningful content in under two seconds. It's rarely a rebuild, usually the boring work: compress the images, cut the plugins, modernize the top of the page.

A dated site describes a company that no longer exists

49%

THE GAP

look visibly dated: old layouts, small type, stock imagery, the signature of a site last touched a decade ago.

Median last redesign: 7+ years ago

"Not Secure" in the address bar

WHAT IT MEANS

Businesses evolve continuously; websites evolve in jumps every five to ten years, if that. The gap widens quietly until the page is describing a company the owner used to run, not the one they run now.

WHAT IT COSTS

A buyer with no relationship to you reads a dated page and quietly wonders whether the company is behind, still active, or the kind of place that will hit a deadline. Rarely fair, but it's how a first-time visitor reads a stale page.

WHAT THE BEST DO

Reposition the site around the company they are today: current capabilities front and center, the services they've added named, the real ideal customer spoken to directly.

The first-contact form is built for the wrong person

12

THE GAP

fields on the average first-contact form before a buyer can hit submit. Many run to 18, with a fax field and a nineteen-option dropdown.

Longest form seen: 18 fields

1 in 5 still ask for a fax number

WHAT IT MEANS

A long form makes sense for one person: the established customer placing an order or a reorder, who already trusts you and expects to give detail. It's the wrong tool for the other person entirely: a first-time buyer, sizing you up, who hasn't decided to work with you and is only deciding whether to start a conversation.

WHAT IT COSTS

A long first-contact form filters out the busiest buyers first, which is to say the best ones. The person with time for eighteen fields is rarely the one with the urgent, high-value job.

WHAT THE BEST DO

Keep the detailed order form for returning customers, and give first-time buyers a short one: name, email, company, what they need, and a file upload. Everything else gets asked in the reply, once they're already engaged.

Your buyer is on a phone, away from their desk

44%

THE GAP

fail Google's mobile-friendly test, even as roughly a third of a typical B2B site's traffic arrives on a phone.

~1 in 3 visits are mobile

Checked on the go, between meetings, after hours

WHAT IT MEANS

A lot of established sites were built assuming buyers look you up at a desk. That stopped being true. A purchasing manager between meetings, or a buyer comparing vendors in the evening, meets your company on a screen the size of a hand.

WHAT IT COSTS

They arrive to pinch-and-zoom through tiny text and tap links too small to hit. Most don't fight it. They leave, and they look identical to any other bounce.

WHAT THE BEST DO

One responsive site that reshapes to any screen, readable type, tap targets a thumb can hit, and a phone number that dials in one tap, not a hunt through the footer.

Decades of proof, shown nowhere

71%

THE GAP

show no proof a first-time buyer can verify above the fold: no named clients, no certifications, no real projects.

Just 22% name a real client

Certifications shown on 1 in 5

WHAT IT MEANS

Credibility on a website isn't the same as being credible in real life. A first-time buyer can only judge what the page shows them, and "trusted by industry leaders" proves nothing they can check.

WHAT IT COSTS

A buyer choosing between three vendors leans toward the one they can verify. The company with decades of happy customers loses to the one that simply showed a named client and a real project.

WHAT THE BEST DO

Show proof an outsider can check: named customers, certifications and tolerances, real photos of the facility and the work. The reputation you earned, made visible.

Invisible to the tools buyers now use

82%

THE GAP

aren't structured for AI search to read them: capabilities trapped in PDFs and vague copy a machine can't recommend.

Only 9% use structured data

Half hide their specs in PDFs

WHAT IT MEANS

Buyers increasingly ask AI to compare vendors, and the AI answers by reading websites. Capabilities buried in spec-sheet PDFs and "quality solutions for a variety of industries" copy give it nothing specific to work with.

WHAT IT COSTS

In a head-to-head, the AI describes the competitor it could actually read in confident detail, and describes you in a vague sentence, or leaves you out. Vague loses the comparison before a human weighs in.

WHAT THE BEST DO

Put capabilities in plain page text, name industries and specs, and add structured data. The same clarity that helps a person helps the machine that now recommends you.

The people inside the company are the last to see it.

None of this is a competence problem. The owners running these companies are excellent at the work. The problem is that nobody can un-know their own company. An owner reads the vague headline as obviously true, because they already know what the company does. The dated design reads as familiar rather than old. The buried phone number never slows down someone who has it memorized.

A first-time buyer has none of that context. They arrive knowing nothing, and the page has a few seconds to give them a reason to stay. The distance between how an insider reads the site and how an outsider reads it is exactly what this report measures, and it's the gap that quietly costs companies buyers.

THE 5-SECOND TEST

Show your homepage to someone outside your company for five seconds. Ask what you do and who it's for. If they can't answer, a buyer can't either.

THE TAB TEST

Open your site next to three competitors. A few honest seconds each. Which would you contact first? If it isn't yours, you've found the gap.

THE STEP COUNT

Count the clicks from landing to a submitted quote. Every extra step is a filter on people trying to reach you.

OR HAVE IT BENCHMARKED FOR YOU

We'll run your homepage through the same checks behind this report and send you what a first-time buyer sees. Complimentary, no call required.

Benchmark My Homepage →

What the sites that win actually do

The minority of B2B sites that convert first-time buyers share a short list of traits. None of them is about being flashy.

1 They answer four questions in five seconds.

What you do, who it's for, why you, and the obvious next step, all before a buyer has to scroll.

2 They load in under two seconds and work on a phone.

Speed and mobile aren't features; they're the price of being considered at all.

3 They show proof an outsider can verify.

Named clients, real projects, certifications, actual photography. Specific beats flattering, every time.

4 They make first contact almost frictionless.

A short form and a visible phone number. Qualify in the conversation, not at the door.

5 They describe the company they are today.

Current capabilities, current focus, the real ideal customer, spoken to in plain language a person and a machine can both read.

Fix the thing that moves the needle, not the thing that's easy

The instinct is either to leave the site alone or, when it finally bothers you, to rebuild the whole thing. Both usually miss. Most of the buyers a site loses come down to one or two specific things on the page, and the goal isn't to fix everything, or to fix a small thing just to feel productive. It's to find the change that is actually costing you buyers and prioritize that first.

RESIST BUSYWORK

A new logo, a fresh stock photo, a reworded "about" page. It feels like progress and moves nothing, because none of it was what a first-time buyer bounced on.

RESIST THE REFLEX REBUILD

"We need a full redesign" is the expensive answer to a problem you haven't diagnosed. Often the site is fine structurally and just never says what you do, which is a rewrite, not a rebuild.

START HERE

Find out what a first-time buyer actually sees, decide which one gap is losing you the most, and fix that before anything else. Seeing your own homepage the way a buyer does is the one thing you can't do from the inside, and it's exactly what a complimentary benchmark is for.

ALKALI

WHO MADE THIS

We diagnose what a site is costing you, then fix exactly that.

Alkali is a B2B web design and development studio. We've shipped for teams including 1Password, iHeart, and Pernod Ricard, and we work with established manufacturers, distributors, and B2B firms whose websites are quietly costing them buyers. Our whole approach is the one in this report: get the diagnosis right first. Sometimes that means a rewrite, sometimes a rebuild, but never before we know which.

"We've analyzed a lot of B2B websites, and the pattern almost never changes. Genuinely great companies lose buyers to a homepage that doesn't say what they do or why to choose them. It's the most common thing we find, and one of the most fixable."



Nick Baudoin
Founder & President, Alkali

SEE WHERE YOU STAND

Your homepage, scored against *the sites that win.*

We'll benchmark your homepage against the small share of 55,000 B2B sites that win first-time buyers, on the same eight checks in this report, and send you the scorecard with the one fix we'd make first. Complimentary, no call required, yours to keep whether you work with us or not. If you're making the case to someone else, your own scorecard argues better than any deck.

Benchmark My Homepage →

byalkali.com/benchmark