

## The Secret Sauce (or Keys) to Expertly Crafted Websites: Education, Communication, and Process



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**“Ultimately people see what we do, how we do it, and the work we have done, which makes their selection process pretty easy when searching for an expert web development partner.”- Martin Sawinski**

**CEOCFO: Mr. Sawinski, what is 3five?**

**Mr. Sawinski:** 3five is an agency that designs and develops expertly crafted eCommerce websites and comprehensive marketing communication websites.

**CEOCFO: What do you understand about creating websites that perhaps others do not?**

**Mr. Sawinski:** Through our experience of designing websites for various sizes of companies, from startup businesses to enterprise organizations, we have boiled it down to a sharp focus on user experience and conversion. I believe that is where we excel. With our extensive experience in eCommerce, we understand how website visitors interact within the digital landscape, and through our process of design we create methods to drive a customer to take action. In the eCommerce environment, it is how we present calls to action, display the information customers are looking for, and lead them to the point of purchase as quickly and efficiently as possible. That background knowledge applies really well to all websites in general.

The focus of any website should be to communicate efficiently and effectively to get someone to do something. In most cases, it is initiating contact, submitting an inquiry, or engaging with a service. We have found that there is no real difference between eCommerce and marketing sites, or even between industries. We are industry agnostic because our focus is on user experience and optimizing conversion.

**CEOCFO: Would you give us something subtle that might not get attention as it does not immediately jump out, but makes a difference?**

**Mr. Sawinski:** It depends on what the focus is. If we are going to take the direction of a redesign, we make sure that clients think through the entire process and about the goals. That is the biggest priority: having clearly defined and articulated goals of what the end result will be in the project. That way they are measurable. Like pretty much everything in business, decisions should be made around the idea of ROI. If you can measure your success against achieving your goals, that is a win. In redesigns, many times we see businesses just wanting to update their site but not understanding why or in what ways. We have refined our process over the last decade that has allowed us to effectively design a solid solution without a bloated process involved. I think one tidbit of our strategy is content first — focus on the message and method of how you are going to introduce that content to the visitor or customer.

**CEOCFO: When might a company turn to you and how you work with them to decide what they need and how you would implement?**

**Mr. Sawinski:** In most cases, people seek us out for our expertise with a particular platform, and within 3five, we build on WordPress as a content management system, and Shopify as an eCommerce focused content management system. In

most cases, their interest peaks when they see the work we have produced. Our portfolio brings them in the door, as well as our verifiable expertise in the marketplace or their respective community. From there, once we are engaged, our typical process is communicated and we explain how we collaborate. We work with a content-first approach, create a sitemap to define the overall structure of a site, which ensures we understand the navigation and the depth and breadth of the website. From there, we gather the content to populate those pages or those sections of the website, making sure that it's unified and whole before we even begin to structure the website in any way or create any design.

**CEOCFO: *What does unified and whole mean?***

**Mr. Sawinski:** In many cases for a website redesign, someone will have a website that already has content and pages; however, it is probably dated three to five years old and does not quite communicate the value of the business today. We spend time to make sure that the messaging and content in the website is accurate, comprehensive to the business, edited for tone, and that it is complete or whole. With the content gathering and editing complete we can structure it within the pages of the website, or the templates that are used to present that content. We make considerations for the layout, structure, and how the content is presented either through image galleries or images and text, paragraph sliders, tabs, or however the content breaks down. We create wireframes to demonstrate that structure. Wireframes resemble a blueprint when you build a house; you get an idea of how many rooms you are going to have and an idea of how those rooms flow, as well as how you enter and engage with the amenities. Once you have these blueprints — the wireframes — we apply the design to it and give it its look and feel.

**CEOCFO: *Once you have done a redesign, do you continue to work with that client?***

**Mr. Sawinski:** Absolutely. Our approach is not “one and done.” We approach each and every engagement to build a partnership with our client and their business needs. We don't see it as a matter of needing a website and we'll deliver it and be done. From the beginning, we evaluate how we can make this website work well for our clients now and into the future; we think through the business challenges and needs and how we are going to support that, either by ourselves or by providing the tools to the client so they can do it themselves. Most engagements are multi-phased with ongoing work. We design, build, and support long term through technical support, digital marketing, consulting, or strategy.

**CEOCFO: *How do you know when it is time to make a change, when something has gone from a new idea to a trend?***

**Mr. Sawinski:** I'd say a trend is established when the frequency of a good idea is constantly recognized and applied across disparate industries or markets. When you start seeing these things happening across the board, that is a tell tale it has been widely adopted. It is kind of like when you can't seem to turn on a radio without hearing that one song. A perfect example of this is Parallax, the effect you see on websites where certain content moves and slide over other sections as you scroll. It trended quickly until Flat Design or Material Design move in. On the flip side, there are new ideas being developed every day on the web, and all it takes is a bit of traction or adoption for it to become the next big thing. Take Responsive websites for example. Responsive websites were a new idea before mobile traffic surpassed desktop users.

**CEOCFO: *How do companies find you? How do you reach out or jump off the page when someone is looking?***

**Mr. Sawinski:** We are listed in various directories as experts. One of the more prolific is the Shopify expert network. They have a directory of Shopify experts where we've been listed from a very early stage in a Shopify existence. We have recently been listed as a Shopify Plus expert too, which is their enterprise-level service. That recognition provides a healthy flow of work for the Shopify side of 3five and we also do a fair amount of digital marketing through PPC or retargeting of Google ads to capture those searching for our capabilities. We have strategic partnerships with agencies who we support by providing our skill set, which augments theirs where they may be deficient in design or development. We also have referral networks, organizations that are larger than ours and who are contacted by clients with budgets that do not match their minimums. Ultimately people see what we do, how we do it, and the work we have done, which makes their selection process pretty easy when searching for an expert web development partner.

**CEOCFO: *What has changed in your approach over time?***

**Mr. Sawinski:** One thing that we have invested in heavily is our process and educating the client through each phase as to what we are doing and why we are doing it. Earlier on in the history of our business, someone would contact us that they needed a website, and they would give us a logo and colors, and we would deliver them a website. It was a pretty linear process. As the needs of businesses changed, and as the web evolved, projects have become more complex, so our process also had to evolve. We spend more time now communicating up front and investing more time in discovery to understand, so we can define goals and deliverables, and make sure everyone is on the same page to avoid surprises at the end or create unrealistic expectations that weren't delivered.

Our process relieves a client's anxiety of what is being done, how it is being done, and what role they play in the project. We apply more and more emphasis on crystal clear communication. We deliver weekly status reports to communicate what we perform, where we are in the process, including roadblocks we encounter and what deliverables the client needs to provide us. We help them understand what is being done regularly so they are not blind to the process or the project phases from content structure into design and development. They know what that means, what feedback is required from them, and what they gain as a result. Client education is a big one: by spending more time educating and communicating, our clients and our team gain greater efficiencies, more accurate timelines, and stronger relationships.

**CEOCFO: *I see the client tools section on your website. Would you tell me about that?***

**Mr. Sawinski:** The client tool system provides the introductory information that we need to help initiate the process, and expose our thought process or method for how we do our business. Within there, we have a client primer that details how we work and how to successfully engage with an agency, ourselves, or others with digital projects; project questionnaires to help clients prepare, plan, and think through what their project might look like; how to engage with us; and costs of services so they have a general idea of what to work with. Client tools help us save time not having to repeat information every time someone inquires, as well as helping the client be prepared when they do choose to engage with us.

**CEOCFO: *How is business?***

**Mr. Sawinski:** It is a still steady growth. We have experienced exponential growth over the last ten years. There has never been a flat year, which is really exciting.

**CEOCFO: *Tell us about the authentic expert service. Why is that important for you and your clients?***

**Mr. Sawinski:** We chose authentic because we are not a chop shop. We do not just take in requirements and produce work either by reusing templates or oversimplifying the work that we deliver. There are many other businesses out there that use pre-existing themes to make some minor modifications and charge extreme overhead and profit margin on that. Instead, we approach each project as a unique challenge and deliver something that is authentic to our process, creativity and expertise, and authentic to the client's business — based on the process we go through to deliver that.

The logo consists of the characters '3fiva' in a very bold, black, sans-serif typeface. The '3' is a simple, rounded numeral. The 'f' is tall with a short horizontal bar at the top. The 'i' is a simple vertical stroke with a dot above it. The 'v' is a simple, wide character. The 'a' is a simple, rounded character. The overall style is clean, modern, and highly legible.