
Putting your site where everyone can see...



Planning Your On-Line Success

Plan Again

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Plan It Again Sam

“It’s not the plan that is important, it’s the planning” – Graeme Edwards

We now have a good idea of what our website is going to achieve. Now we need to work out what the site will look like and what it will say to a visitor. In this section we are going to look at the content of the site, the graphics, the navigation and the stickiness of the site. Often this stage is left to website developers. There is definitely a time to hand over to the experts and it is often sensible to have experts involved, but at the end of the day it is your website and your business, so don’t be afraid to have some input.

One thing I would suggest at this stage is to try and evaluate what value your website should give you. Consider the benefits it should offer versus the cost of implementing the site. The benefits should include any reduced costs in money, staff and time, the better use of staff, increased profits and increased customer loyalty.

Also, consider the value the website should offer your customers. What benefits will they see? Customers will tend to value their time, money and control when assessing a website. You need to be confident you are offering your customer something of value before proceeding.

Then lastly before committing your budget, ensure that you have considered the expected return on investment, any maintenance costs, the life expectancy of the website and the scalability of the design. You don’t want to have to start again in a year’s time, because the site cannot be expanded.

Content

The content of a website is the most important element. Graphics have a huge influence on how people perceive your business, and help to establish 'Trust', but the content will finally decide whether a visitor becomes a customer.

The first step is to create a draft version of the site content, trying to ensure you meet all the objectives you have already set. Once you have done this then you may want to pass it to an on-line copywriter to review. They will ensure the message is short and to the point.

Also, let an Internet marketing expert review the text to ensure that it is search engine ready. Once the content has been reviewed, check it again to ensure that the changes have not affected your objectives and that the message you wish to convey has not been lost.

So what makes successful website content? The following are some of the things you should try to consider:

- Avoid under construction pages, they offer no value to your customers
- Keep text brief and to the point – 80% of visitors will only scan the text.
- Contact Info should be easily found
- Security Information should be visible – Make sure the customer knows the site is secure.
- Privacy Policy – Tell the visitor their details will not be passed on to anyone else.
- Avoid Sound where possible – Always consider office workers, they won't visit your site if the rest of the office is going to stand up and stare at them.
- Avoid all capitals and large text – it is the internet equivalent to SHOUTING.
- Ensure fonts are not too small to be read

Look & Feel

The graphics or the look&feel of a website are almost as important as the content. In a recent study by Stanford University, they found that nearly half of the study participants rated website credibility in part by the overall design or look. This is one area I would suggest leaving to the experts. Without credibility there is no trust, and without trust you will not make a sale.

Even though I suggest leaving the design to the experts, I would make sure that they are aware of the following:

“65 percent of Internet users surveyed won't patronize a poorly designed site — even that of a favorite brand; 30 percent reported that website design is more important than a great product.”

Source: CyberAtlas

- Retain the company branding, logo's and corporate colours
- Choose the font and background colours carefully. A light background, with dark text is easiest on the eye.
- Make sure images are appropriate. If you can't see why an image was chosen without the designers' explanation, then do you think your customers will?
- Consider download times. Large graphics will take longer to download and if your target audience does not have broadband they are very likely to give up.
- Always ensure that every image has alternative text ('Alt Attributes'), so that anyone viewing the site with graphics disabled will still understand the site purpose.

Navigation

A visitor will not stay long if they can't find the information they require. Make sure that the site navigation is simple and items are where a visitor would expect. Make sure that the navigation options are consistent throughout the site. The most enjoyable experience for most visitors is when they have not had to search too hard.

Also, make sure that there are no dead-ends. You don't want a visitor to reach a page where the only way to get to the information they require is to use the back option. Always give them a simple option. If you have to use a pop-up window then, give them a close button. If you are allowing them to view another site, then insist that a new window is opened so that your website is retained.

If your website is large or complex, then you may want to consider a site map and/or search facilities. Where possible always try to create more than one route to important information.

Stickiness

Stickiness has been mentioned a few times, but what exactly is stickiness? When a visitor comes to your site you want to keep them there and more importantly you want to get them back. This is stickiness. In order to keep a visitor on your site there has to be something that captures their interest or imagination – The WOW factor. Once you have their attention you need to use it to guide them to the important areas of your website. You also need to give them a reason to come back again.

So what can you use to create stickiness? This is an area that I am sure you can expand, but here are some ideas:

- A 'What's New' page – If you have a news page, then make sure it contains information relevant to your industry, services or products, and is of interest to visitors. Also make sure it is updated regularly. A visitor won't return too often if the information is always the same. Also, ask if you can mail a visitor when news is available.
- Contests & Competitions – Offer a meal for two, or one of your products or a trial service. Try to ensure that any prizes are appropriate for your target audience, and make all your entry limitations clear.
- Polls / Surveys – Allow visitors to vote on issues relevant to your business industry, and allow them to see previous survey results.
- FREE Stuff! – Everyone loves a freebie. Why not offer samples for limited periods. Again request the ability to follow-up with email and where possible always direct them back to the site from an email.
- Discounts & Vouchers – A printable voucher is fantastic. Not only will it encourage visitors to come to the site, they are very likely to join your mailing list and they will save you the printing costs of creating the vouchers.
- Specials & Promotions – A page dedicated to special offers and promotions is always a pulling point, but as with the news area, it needs to be regularly updated.
- Event Calendar – Networking events are a huge attraction, but also include industry related events, trade shows, AGM's etc
- Employment Opportunities – You may think that someone looking for a job is not important to keep on your site, but it is

simply a matter of statistics. If someone is coming to your site regularly no matter what the reason, they are more likely to remember your business if a need should arise.

- Useful links – Always check any links regularly, dead links do not impress a visitor.
- Chat areas – Encourage relevant discussions, but ensure that you keep control.
- Tips of the day/week/month – Excellent for business advisors or accountants. Again consider a newsletter that directs readers back to the site.
- Encourage bookmarking – Tell visitors to bookmark your site, people often do as they are told.
- Cartoons, jokes, games, trivia....

Asking For Help

“A ship in port is safe, but that’s not what ships are built for.” –
Grace Murray Hooper

IF you would like us to help you access the full potential of the internet, or you would like us to advice you on what to do next, then feel free to contact us. We are great believers in education, rather than using the technical myths surrounding the internet to generate business.

intheopen are a UK based internet marketing company, who are dedicated to helping small to medium-sized business succeed via the internet.

Contact Us

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Our Mission Statement

Service

We will always remember that we are a service company. Each and every customer is valued as a part of who we are today, and who we'll be tomorrow.

We will work hard to earn our customers' trust and loyalty. And more than simply responding to customer needs, we will work to anticipate and exceed them.

With unquestionable honesty, fairness and respect.

Technology & Innovation

Our products are grounded in technology and innovation. We believe that research, development, quality and performance are key to our future. We have earned, and will continually strive to retain, our leadership in this industry.

Our dedication to technology and innovation is motivated by the desire to provide services and products which contribute to the growth of our customers.

And we share in the responsibility of providing the world with new advancements.

Success

We will work for the success of our customers, our company and each other.

We understand and respect the value, the contributions, and the achievements of each colleague. We will support personal growth through education, training, and new opportunities. We will never be content with who we are, or what we have accomplished.

We are inspired by what is yet to come.

intheopen	Project Considerations		
Task	Required	In House Task	Outsource
Determine Objectives	✓	✓	
Target Audience Analysis			
Competitor Analysis			
Site Storyboarding			
Site Graphics			
Site Content			
Site development			
Viral Marketing Strategy			
Permission Based Marketing Strategy			
Off-Line Marketing Strategy			
Site optimisation – Keyword analysis			
Site optimisation – Development			
Site optimisation – Affiliate Program			
Site optimisation – Pay-Per-Click Campaign			
Communication & Staff Training			
Site Launch Process Definitions			
Newsletter Design			

