



Internet & Telecommunications Australia

Web Site Strategy: A Guide for Business Managers

The following information is provided for organisations considering a new or revised web site presence. Making use of the web is only partly a technical task. Of more importance is the consideration of the following items by you, the business stakeholder.

Who do you want to reach?

First, consider who you want to see your web site. Consider your primary and secondary audiences. Initially you may only try to get to your primary audience, with other viewers merely a bonus.

Think also about how involved these audiences are likely to be with your web site. Are they closely aligned with your business and so will take more significant time at your site, or are they new customers or contacts who will be passing through on their search for information?

What does your target audience want from your site?

Try to think in terms of your audience. Rather than starting with what you want to put into your site, picture them in charge of the mouse and think for a few moments about their needs. Think also about what actions you want them to take while at your web site. What information do you want (and can reasonably expect) them to read and then what call-to-action do you want to encourage?

What sections and content should be included in your web site?

Having considered who you want to see the site, and what you want them to see and do, you're well on your way to knowing what are the salient sections and information your site should include. Bearing in mind that your site should have some form of entry page that introduces the site to visitors and some form of call-to-action page (such as an enquiry or order form), you then need to consider what other sections your site will include. Remember though that you will need to provide the content for each section. Don't fall into the trap of dreaming up a wonderfully inclusive web site that you will never be able to feed with content.

You may wish to include information about your organisation and your products and services, contact or location information, as well as the entry and call-to-action elements discussed above. Your site may include some form of catalogue or database functions as well.

Once you have an idea of what sections you want in your site, draw a quick map of the site, and then try to match your existing content to that map. Highlight what content you have, and what content you will need to produce or procure.

What will drive my site's appearance?

The most important element in determining the look and feel of your web site is the target audience and their needs. Someone searching for fast information on spare parts is unlikely to thank you for inflicting large animations upon them before they get to the real information. Your interior decorating or accommodation business would do well to spend more than the usual amount of time on the appearance of the site, including the use of high quality photos of work samples or the venue. So just like when we considered the site's content, we need to keep our audience foremost in mind when considering our site's appearance.

The other major constraint or directive in terms of your site's look and feel is the architecture of the site as driven by the site's sections and content. A properly designed site will support, and not detract or distract from, the content and desired user actions. Function over form, rather than form over function should be your rule.

Other influences on your site's appearance include your current materials. Does your organisation have a logo or complete style guide incorporating logo, stationery, and promotional materials? If so, these will drive the site's colours and layout. If not, you will need to allow for some additional development time to 'start from scratch' and create a suitable on-line feel for your organisation.

Be pragmatic

Remember that while web technologies are extremely powerful, everything still takes time to develop and implement. Be pragmatic about what you want to achieve, and definitely consider a phased approach to your ultimate Internet strategy. You might want to undertake complete purchase transactions, but first need to understand your target audience better, or prepare your own business to be able to trade via the Internet.

Find an Internet business partner

When considering your first web site, don't just look for someone who can build you a web site. There are millions of individuals and organisations out there just dying to build a web site. Your preferred developer should be a true business partner, and should be able to advise and support you on the business imperatives of the Internet. This should include the ability to develop a web site and ongoing strategy specifically for your business, which meets the functional needs of you and your customers.

Where to from here?

To discuss further, please contact us at info@ita.com.au and we can discuss further your Internet strategy.
