



## **Web site design basics**

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Today's web site designers need to be skilled in connecting design with function and usability. They also need to design with a strong creative element yet ensure the web site ranks well with search engines.

When looking at designing a new web site here are some guidelines:

- Keep all important information above the fold (ie above the bottom of the viewing screen)
- Use “off the shelf” content management software where possible so you can manage ongoing changes to content yourself and do not have to incur a charge from a web designer each time you need some content changed.
- Ensure your web site hosting agreement includes enough space for multiple web pages, domain names and can cope with ecommerce engines and a growing customer data base.
- Ensure you provide your web designer with a list of key words for your site before it is designed to maximize search engine optimization
- Ensure the colours and typeface used are consistent with all your other materials.
- Provide free downloads in exchange for information such as contact details
- Document all community and sponsorship activities in the “About section”
- Give the site some personality to differentiate it from the competition.
- Use images of the solution you are providing rather than the actual product.
- Remember, sell emotion first.



## **Website Effectiveness Guide**

If you already have a web site here are some questions you can use to audit its effectiveness:

1. When was the last time you used it as a customer would?
2. Will each page load in a 8 seconds or less?
3. Do you have a headline which tells customers the specific benefit that they will be getting from your product, service or information on the first page? Is it reinforced/repeated on succeeding pages as well?
4. Do you have your name, email address, address, phone number, website address, etc. on each page or listed in a central place so they can easily contact you?
5. Do you give customers a reason to give you their email address and is your web site privacy act compliant (see detail on the privacy act at the end of this chapter)?
6. Do you regularly examine your site's traffic logs to determine the source of your visitors, which keywords they used (if they came in from a search engine), and what websites they come from and go to after visiting your site? This is vital information.
7. Do you regularly examine your position on each of the search engines to determine if you are in the top 10 selections based on the appropriate key word searches?
8. Is your email address on your website monitored at least daily (or preferably more often) than that so that you can respond as required?



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Not doing so is tantamount to opening a new retail store and not having anyone at the front counter!

9. Do you concentrate on your customer's or prospect's specific needs and position yourself in the appropriate niche(s) so that you are seen as a specialist rather than a "me too" business?

10. Do you make product or service information available from your website?

11. Do you regularly collect testimonials and display them on your website?

12. When was the last time your web site design was refreshed? If your web site was built using pop up technology, chances are most of your customers cannot view it as their web browser's default setting is to block pop up messages which will include your once state- of- the- art web site.

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