



Articles: Planning your Web Project

Introduction

Web projects require careful planning. Here at Pixelwave Design I often find that clients know they need a website and know their business will benefit from a website, but they aren't quite sure of the following important fundamentals:

- How their users will interact with their website
- What their users needs will be
- What features and functionality is available to them
- What to include on their website
- How the site will be managed on an ongoing basis

It is during the initial planning stages that these issues should be considered. This document is intended to help you think about addressing these issues, allowing you to start along the road of turning your web project from a pipe dream into a successful reality.

I will be happy to go into any of the elements in more detail during our initial meetings and assist you in collating the information required.

Who is your website aimed at?

The first stage in producing a successful website is a careful consideration of your audience and their needs.

- Who are your target audience?
- What content will users expect to find on your site?
- Do your audience have any special accessibility requirements?
- Do your audience require any unique or customised functionality?
- What other ways do your audience interact with you?
- Do you expect your audience to change in response to the release of your website? Are you prepared for this?



Once we know a little about your audience I can start to generate a picture of their likely internet usage patterns. This will aid in the development of a website designed according to the end-users needs and expectations. Areas of consideration in this process are:

- Levels of internet use.
- What type of device they use to access the internet.
- Special needs, either technological, physical or cultural.
- Connection speeds.
- Individual computer / web skills.
- What type of environment they will access the web from – Public / private spaces, noise levels, distraction levels etc.
- Their perception of online services / products.

Quality customer research will provide a clearer picture of your websites goals and requirements.

Defining your requirements

Equally as important as considering the requirements of your websites' audience is the consideration of your needs as the site owner.

- What do you expect to gain from your website? Likely aims are increased sales, increased product awareness, improved customer support, increased geographic range, development of new products and services etc.
- What are your technical abilities?
- Will you want to update the site yourself? How often will you expect to update it?
- How will you access the site?
- What other tools (such as e-mail) will you use in conjunction with your website?
- Do you have existing web services (such as domain names and hosting accounts) that you would want to use with your new site?
- Will your web project be part of a larger marketing strategy? Will the website work in parallel with these other projects? What are the milestones and key dates / events within these parallel projects?
- What future plans do you have for the website?



Other helpful information

When planning a new web project I like to acquire as much information about my clients' requirements as possible. I will gather information relating to both your audience and your requirements as outline above, during our initial meetings. Additionally, other information that will facilitate the planning of an effective web presence include:

- An outline of your business / organisation.
- The project objectives as far as your website is concerned
- An overview of the information and services the website will provide.
- Your main competitors.
- Examples of any websites you particularly like.
- Your timescales for the project.

Most of the information outlined above will be collected during an informal initial meeting. I hope this document will give you some ideas about the important issues to consider during the planning stages, allowing you to focus on the factors that will ensure your web project is a success.

If you would like any advice on this article or would like assistance with the planning of a potential web project, please feel free to contact me.

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