

# a website buyers guide



**What you need to consider  
to plan a successful  
website for your business**

**A little time invested in planning your website at the start of the project will *save you a lot of time and money* later on.**

You may also find it useful to read our website planning workbook available from: [www.ActinoWebDesign.com](http://www.ActinoWebDesign.com)

## What do I want to get from my website?

You need to be clear in your head what it is that you want from your website:

- Are you wanting to sell direct to your customers?
- Are you looking to expand your business from a local to national or international?
- Are you looking to position your business into a more lucrative market?
- Do you want to sell more to your existing customer base by making them aware of your other products or services?

## What will my customers want from my website?

Always think “**what does my customer want** or need?”. If you provide exactly what your customer wants they will feel a little more relaxed about the price they have to pay.

If you can surpass your customer’s wants and needs and really “Wow” them then you will have a) a loyal customer and b) an advocate for your services. A recommendation always beats advertising.

- **Who are your customers?** Be realistic this is where it is better to be a big fish in a small pond.
- Create a couple of simple personas based on your better customers. Include their age, sex, location, what do they like? Why do they come to you?

Once you have spent a bit of time thinking about who your customers are it is time to **consider their goals**. What will they be wanting from your website? Why will they bother to visit your website as opposed to your competitors?

- Do they just want access to an online brochure so that they can compare you to the competition, online window-shopping.
- Do they want to be able to purchase direct from your website?
- Are they looking for detailed product specifications?
- Can you provide articles, information or other free services of value to your clientele?
- What will they like about my competitors websites?
- Will they just be looking for your hours of business and your phone number?

## Marrying the two

If you can describe what it is your customers want and you know what you want to achieve then you are in a position to develop a clear and simple strategy for your website.

**Don't make this really complicated**, just come up with a couple of simple guiding principles on which to base the rest of your decisions.

If you know that most of your clientele are wealthy retirees then you may wish to consider the overall tone of your website and make it more accessible and easier to use for older people. Make sure the font size is large enough to be easily read. Avoid using flashy gizmos and other things that may prove off-putting and confusing to less technically adept users.

**Always, and above all: Use what you have discovered about your customer to help them achieve their goals — quickly and easily.**

Try to develop a voice — a personality — for your website. Think of this voice as being the personification of your business. Will it be reserved or more casual? More friendly or professional? If you can present your business in this way it will feel more consistent and dependable to your customers. What voice would your customers want to hear?

## **What will I need to provide?**

Even the most basic websites tend to need the following ingredients:

- A logo
- Photographs
- Copy or text

Whilst your web designer will probably be able to design you a logo and arrange photographs for your website you will still need to provide some text.

No one knows your business like you do. Unless your web designer used to work at your firm it is unlikely that they will be able to write knowledgeably about your products or services. They may however be able to knock your text into shape for you, or to outsource the editing to a person specialised in copywriting for the web.

If you are going to write all of your own text then keep it short, simple and to the point. No one reads web pages: they scan them. Employ the Newspaper style technique of using descriptive titles, followed by a brief summary, and only then going into any depth.

Avoid having great tracts of fluff and vanity — your customers won't read it and it will make it more difficult for them to achieve their goals.

## **Domain names and hosting**

A domain name is the address of your website, for example [www.ActinoWebDesign.com](http://www.ActinoWebDesign.com). Your domain name will also be used in your email address, for example [info@MyFirm.co.uk](mailto:info@MyFirm.co.uk). Avoid using Hotmail and Yahoo email addresses as this looks very unprofessional and will reflect poorly on your business.

Web hosting: your website is hosted on a computer, a computer that is connected to the Internet 24 hours a day, all year round, on a high speed connection. There are various types

of hosting including private servers (expensive, essential for high traffic websites) through to shared servers (cheaper, lower traffic sites only).

Computers are prone to breakdown from time to time. This means that your website will not be available 100% of the time unless you are prepared to pay for a premium level of service.

## **How will people find my website?**

“Build it and they will come” — a quote from a bad film, and a very poor idea for marketing your website. You need your website to rank highly in Google for at least a couple of terms:

1. The name of your business. If your business is called Taylor’s Auto-spares and based in Harrogate then you want your customers to be able to type “Taylor’s Auto spares Harrogate” into Google and for your site to come first.
2. Your website must be optimized to score well on relevant keyword searches. If your business is a 60s clothes shop in Brighton then you may want to rank well in Google for “Mod suits” or “retro clothing Brighton”.

Include your web address on any advertising, business cards etc. Join online forums and communities about the thing you do. Spread the word and try to get links back to your site from quality, relevant websites.

The most important factor in how well you rank in search engines though is having fresh, relevant, and regularly updated quality content...

## **Updates and maintenance**

When planning your website and online marketing ensure that you budget for updates and maintenance. Even with the best plans and most flawlessly executed of web design projects changes will need to be made.

Whether it’s as simple as promotions and special offers, or whether you are looking at providing a resource such as news about your industry changes will need to be made.

Rather than getting into the cycle of buying an entire new website every 18 months or so you want to work in partnership with your web designer. Tell them about your plans to expand, where you want to go. That way you can ensure that you get a website that grows with you and your business.

Not only does this avoid the pain and extra work of having to continuously start again from scratch but it means that you can react to changes in the market and take advantage of the opportunities available at the time.

Alternatively, invest in a Content Management System (CMS) based website. The initial outlay is greater, however it allows the owner to easily update the images and text through a simple system that anyone who can operate Microsoft Word can easily get to grips with.

We hope that this guide has been of use to you. If, however, you feel that there is something that we have missed, or something that didn't make sense, please let us know and we'll ensure that we cover it in future revisions.

Not only that, we'll make sure that you are the first to know by emailing a copy straight to you. **Please send your suggestions, revisions etc. to [info@ActinoWebDesign.com](mailto:info@ActinoWebDesign.com)**