

Making your website work for your business

Create impact online





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For many people, your website is the first contact they will have with your business. It is important that their first impression is a good one, and makes them want to delve deeper into what it is that you do.

Your website needs to be a reflection of your business, and needs to get across in a succinct way what your USP is, as well as a number of other factors. You need to sit down and think long and hard about what it is that you want your website to convey, and how you're going to achieve this.

When briefing your web company you need to be clear on what functionality you want your website to have i.e. do you want to just inform, or do you want to sell through your website? Do you want to have a log in area to add value for your members? Do you want people to fill in an online form for you to then follow up? You also need to brief them on what your brand is and what your company stands for, as well as what you want the users experience to be of your website.

Your web designer will have a lot of expertise and creative input as well which you should pay attention to. But ultimately it is you, who knows the most about your business who needs to think about the content and the message. Here are some tips for creating a successful website:

Be consistent

As mentioned in our earlier guide about developing brand identity, you need to be consistent across all marketing materials. This includes your website. The house style you have developed, logo, colours, fonts and so on must be uniform as this will make your brand stronger and give you a professional look and feel. It will also ensure that people build up brand recognition. Remember that your homepage is the gateway to your site, so think about what core actions you want people to be able to do at the beginning of their web journey. Remember to have a 'call to action' – e.g. 'If you need more information or want to discuss contact us.'

Make it usable

The way that your website is laid out needs to be user friendly and easy to navigate. There should be a maximum of '3 clicks' to get to any content, any more and people will be put off. Ensure that menus and sub menus are clear and don't confuse the user. Also ensure you don't have any broken links and all forms etc work. Tell your audience when things are 'under construction – please come back later' so that they aren't left with a bad impression.

Make text legible

Text should be of a large enough font so that people can read it on different web browsers. It may be an idea to include a font resizing tool so that users can change it to suit their preferences or needs. Make sure that the text stands out from the background, and that there is a clear distinction in the colours. Also make sure that the way text and images are laid out is user friendly. Test your website out on different web browsers (Internet Explorer, Safari, Firefox,) and on both a PC and a Mac to check that it looks consistent across all these platforms.

Be stylish

The style of your website should be consistent with the rest of your marketing materials (brochures, stationary, business cards, etc). It is worth enlisting the services of a professional web designer who will work with your brand identity to develop a website that is both professional looking and functional. Your website can be fun and fresh, but still get across your message. A good designer will be able to help you achieve this.

Be speedy

It is a simple fact that if your website is slow to load, people will be put off. It is important that the graphics and images are optimized properly so that they load quickly. You don't want to have too many flashing graphics and images and anyway as this will look too 'busy.' Make sure that you get the balance right and that the images you do have are quick to load.



Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

It is imperative that you have good traffic inflow to your site and one way of doing this is through SEO. You want your website to be one of the top hits on Google for certain keywords relating to your business. Here are some tips for SEO:

- Code your website in HTML rather than embedding images and graphic elements.
- Use ALT tags for all images and graphics in addition to Meta tags and description tags.
- Submit your website to online directories.
- Get relevant links from others on the internet.

Read our other guides in the range:

- **Creating your marketing plan**
- **Know your tactics**
- **Raise your profile**
- **How effective are your communications**
- **e-marketing and social media**

Horizonworks Marketing is a strategic marketing company based in the North East of England specialising in the science, technology, healthcare and manufacturing sectors. We provide a range of services to clients including:

- Marketing strategy
- Marketing planning
- Communications
- Branding
- Public Relations
- Events management
- Sales and marketing campaigns
- Mentoring



Horizonworks Marketing

Collingwood Buildings
38 Collingwood Street
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 1JF

T: 0191 269 6919

E: info@horizonworks-marketing.co.uk

horizonworks-marketing.co.uk