

## Designing web sites

The web advertising industry is evolving at an ever-increasing rate. Businesses around the world continue working to find web campaigns and pricing models that differentiate themselves from their competitors, and meet the needs of their consumer markets. The explosion of user-friendly, service oriented web pages is largely responsible for the growth and popularity of web-based advertising carried via the Internet. The Internet itself is an interconnection of networks, on an almost global scale, which allows information to effectively transcend international borders and empower the consumer by the wealth of information it carries.

### Benefits

- Removal of time and space constraints associated with the physical marketplace (ie 24 hour access to your business).
- Access to information from anywhere in the world.
- HTML, which allows text and graphics to be shared by users at remote locations.
- Sharing of resources and multimedia information around the globe.
- Access to any other document/site on the www through the use of hyperlink technology.
- Provision of an efficient channel for advertising, marketing, and – in some cases – direct distribution of certain goods and services.
- Access to previously unknown or inaccessible consumer influences.
- Increased user control, more sophisticated content, and speed of transmission (the combination of which will enhance the customer's service experience with your organisation).

### Benefits to your customers

Following are a list of basic elements you need to consider for inclusion in your web site:

- Comprehensive production information.
- Product information updates.
- Technical support information.
- Links to complementary product/service providers.
- On-line trouble-shooting guide.
- Facts and questions.
- Demonstration downloads.
- Client feedback mechanisms on every page (eg: your e-mail address).
- Service guarantees.



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## Web-based marketing communications strategy

- Do you have a web-based marketing strategy that is fully integrated into your business processes?
- Will your customer find your web site easy to use, informative and interactive?
- Does your web-based marketing strategy leverage the individual benefits of print, broadband and interactive media (chat lines, video clips, video conferencing etc)?
- Have you subscribed to at least ten search engines/browsers in an effort to attract prospective clients onto your site?
- Does your web site have on-line ordering, e-mail, and information retrieval facilities for your customers' ease of use?
- Have you established links with complementary product/service providers?
- Have you tested your web site to measure its capacity for carrying multiple users? (Is your system's capacity only designed to cope for 100, or can it cope with up to 10,000 users just as well?)

## Business processes

- Have you established an extranet link with your suppliers?
- Have you implemented an electronic purchase, ordering and invoicing system for your suppliers and customers?
- Have you investigated, with your bank, options to pay your bills electronically?
- Is your web site fully integrated with your
  - accounting systems software?
  - inventory management system?
- Are there sufficient resources at your disposal to cater for timely service delivery to your customer in the event of increased demand?
- What are the costs of maintaining the site on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis?
- Have you considered software, which enables you to carry out your own web site enhancements as your business grows?
- Will your site be effective with the graphics turned off? Surfers of the Internet often have the graphics component of their browser turned off. When graphics are turned on, your sight should load in less than 12 seconds.

## Business structure

- Identify the possible implications for your business in terms of:
  - operational requirements to cater for an increase in demand.
  - human resource requirements to manage offshore markets.
- Assess the need for technical support during pilot and final implementation of your web site. Are there sufficient technical skills in-house, or is technical assistance easily accessible in the event of something going wrong?



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## Essential web site components

- Does your site concentrate on emotional appeals by presenting product information in an entertaining format?
- Does your site highlight differences between the products you offer as opposed to those offered by your competitor?
- Does your business have a unique presence by utilising a variety of unusual graphics to help customers easily navigate around your site?
- Does your site help you to directly manage the interface with your customers?
- Will your site act as an on-line shop front offering consumers the opportunity to purchase directly from the firm?
- Will your site offer consumers the opportunity to sample the product online (eg: software demonstrations)?
- Does your site allow customers to easily order products from you, or make their selections in a most effective manner?

## Development

- Have you allocated a budget to developing your web site?
- Have you considered involving customers and suppliers in the design and development of your web site?
- Do you have source material for development of your web site content?

## Engaging a web site designer

- Have you spoken to others who have used web site designers to gain a better understanding of what to expect from their services?
- Consider quotes from at least three web site designers. Ask each for evidence of their track record and examples of successful sites?
- Remember the lowest price is not necessarily the one that best meets your needs. Customers will pay for better quality and better service.

## Important considerations

- Where possible, avoid competing on price alone. This is especially important if the product/service you are offering cannot be demonstrated on-line, or by way of a sample download.
- Monitor savings that have resulted from reduced printing and distribution costs.
- Monitor the reduction in ordering costs – especially where consumers complete their own forms on-line (as this transfers control to the consumer, satisfaction with your service is also likely to increase).



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## Implementation

- Have you incorporated an e-commerce merchant system onto your web site?
- Have you assigned an employee to manage and liaise with the web design consultant (entry onto the web site must be modest and expandable with property of the HTML code being transferred to your business upon completion of web site design),
- Does your web site have a definitive statement about who and what you are?
- Have you included an e-mail link on each page of your web site? Do you have a mechanism in place to collect e-mail addresses?
- Does your web site include Meta Tags so that search engines can find your business? (Meta Tags are used by the majority of search engines to locate sites in response to web surfers' queries. The text of your home page, along with your Meta Tags should include key words about product, service, location, features etc. of your business).
- Have you included a search facility to help users navigate your site?
- Have you included contact details, such as names and telephone numbers, for your business during office hours?

## Further information

The following fact sheets provide further information on these issues:

- Benefits of e-commerce
- Set up a web site