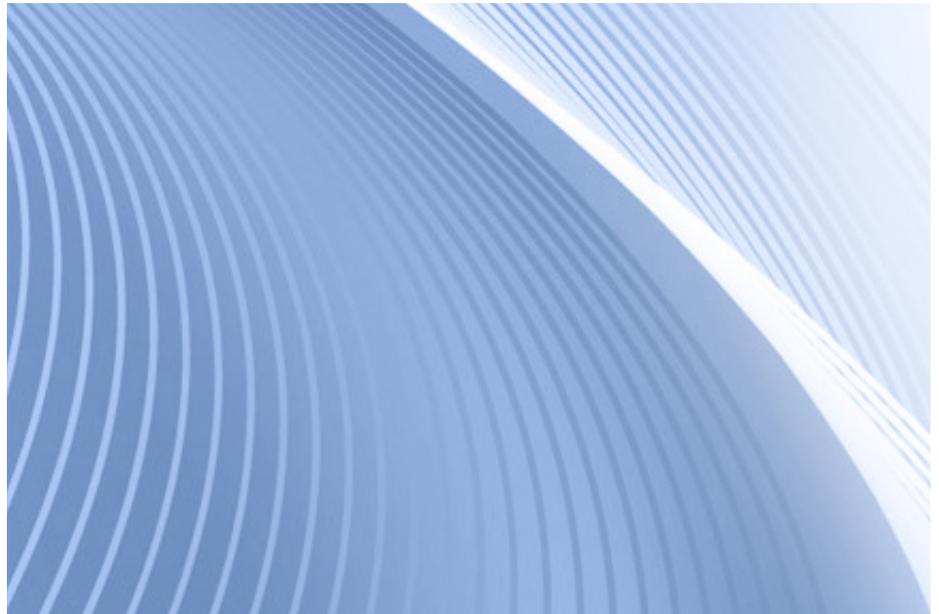


Introduction

Our guides are for small businesses and aim to provide helpful information surrounding key areas of marketing communications that allow you to make better decisions for your business.

In the second of our marketing guides we look at websites in more detail and the decision to either "DIY build" or to have a site professionally designed and built.



Website Facts

In 2012 there were 612,843,429 active websites.

There are 71.2 million Wordpress websites in the world.

In February 2012 there were 2,459,646,518 internet users.

Online retail sales in the UK increased by 14% in 2012 to more than £50bn.

Microsoft Research found that users often leave web pages in 10-20 seconds.

According to a study by 'Adobe Digital Resource' into 'Holiday E-commerce Traffic Sources', the following sales traffic was generated:

- 40% from direct traffic
- 34% through search engines
- 25% through other websites
- 2% via social media

What makes a good website?

So what makes a good website? Like everything in life, it's a very subjective question and what looks like a good website to one person may not look very good to another. However, there are certain elements like design, content, navigation, usability and accessibility that allow us to differentiate between a good and a "not so good" website.

When looking at a new website or the re-design of an existing website the most important question you should consider is, "what do you want the website to do for you?"

What affects the cost of a website?

For many businesses the question of budget is an important one when considering a website. There are three that you should consider when setting your budget.

1. Design & artwork

Using a traditional layout & design will save you time & money. It will help contribute to a website that is user-friendly for visitors, easier to maintain and easily responsive to mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets.

A bespoke design may be visually striking but will more than likely cost more both initially and in future maintenance of the site. It may also reduce the flexibility for you to be able to maintain your own website through a content management system (CMS).

2. Content

Whilst your website is nothing without words and images, and these too are some of the most important elements of your website. Whilst these are two areas where you can make savings from doing them yourself,

if your budget allows we would recommend firstly, professional images, either through commissioning your own photographer (costs approx. £ 180 - £250 per day) or purchasing images from an image library such as iStock.com (costs range from £5 upwards per image). And, secondly professionally written copy which will add impact to your messages.

With respect to imagery, with the age of digital cameras, taking your own photographs is an extremely popular choice and many people are happy to take their own photographs. However, to quote our photographer..."just because I can pick up a guitar and play a few chords, it doesn't make me Jimi Hendrix!"

If you intend to carry out your photography, at least spend 30 minutes looking on Google for useful photography tips. Poor photographs may take more time to rectify in Photoshop before they can even become useful on your website and make sure you know the design of your website before taking a picture. Taking all portrait images for landscape frames will make it much harder to work.

3. Development & purpose

Be clear from the start on what you want your website to do, not just not immediately but also in the future. If you need an e-commerce website in the future, you'll make savings in the long-run if you build a website where you can simply add an e-commerce plugin to the your website in the future.

Animations can be visually exciting, however, they can also add significant amounts of money to your budget.

4. Website management & maintenance

CMS systems offer a great amount of flexibility by allowing owners to manage content "in-house". However, they do require a good level of IT literacy. Adding, resizing and cropping images is the common issue we come across.

Ask your provider if they provide a maintenance package or what their hourly rate is for editing content.

What do I need to have an e-commerce website?

Choosing to sell online shouldn't be an "off-the-cuff" decision & quick decisions may end up costing your business money & poor sales.

1. **Products** - what you choose to sell will dictate how you sell it. Are there specific laws you must abide by to sell your product online. Do your products come with warranties, or guarantees. Is it a downloadable product or delivered?

2. Payment Gateways & Merchant Accounts

- PayPal & Authorize.net offer cheap solutions. However, depending on your customer, they can put people off buying through your website due to a lack knowledge of internet security & bad press. Worldpay offer a secure & reliable service. Talk to your own bank about what they offer.

3. **Shipping** - how will you ship your products? What will you charge customers? Can you offer incentives (e.g. Free shipping over £50)? Will you use a courier or Royal Mail. The size, weight & quantity of products will usually have an affect. We recommend finding & using just one or two companies. This way you can manage costs & establish better prices the more you despatch.

4. **Reporting & management** - before choosing your system, find out more about the system you will be provided. Does your supplier have a demo you can try? What reporting do they have on sales, stock control & marketing? Are there any in-built marketing features. How easy is it to add, edit & remove products?

5. **Marketing** - this is the most important aspect for your website. The marketing that will work for you will depend on your product & target audience. SEO is considered one of the most important online marketing activities; social media can offer cost effective channels for creating conversations & communities around your business, whilst off-line marketing such as exhibitions, shows, PR & direct mail can be used to drive traffic & online sales.

View our [SEO Marketing Guide](#).

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