

Building Your Site

By Chris Falck

Building Your Site

Chris Falck
support@autoreply2u.co.uk

AUTOREPLY2U <http://autoreply2u.co.uk>

=====

BUILDING YOUR SITE - Things that you must consider

=====

Building Your Site

Now is the time when you have to decide what you actually want a Web site for. Only then can you give a proper briefing to your Web developer so that they can get the content just right.

Your Web site development should be approached in a professional manner. This way it will enhance and reinforce your business presence in the marketplace as well as allow you to use the site for online trade.

Things to Bear in Mind

So that your company Web site will really work and become an effective tool in your business arsenal, it is important to plan its development effectively. Bear in mind that the site should be easy for visitors to use and even if you are only thinking of a marketing site, there should be a continuity of message with your other corporate literature. Thankfully, you can go back and tweak your Web pages for any errors or with updates with minimal cost, unlike corporate literature, business cards etc., which can't be changed once; you've signed them off to print. That said don't allow this to promote sloppiness in the design process. Insist on thorough proofreading and then signing off anything to be published on the Web in the same way as you would with any corporate brochure text and design.

Structure

Planning the structure of the site is vital to its success. The objective should be to create a structure that allows your visitors to move from page to page using a hyperlink, making it

easy for them to get the information they want, and get off-line quickly

Brainstorm for success!

Get your people together and brainstorm to drive out the elements that will create your site. At the end of this session you should have a list. The main point about brainstorming is to write down every suggestion your team makes, regardless of how ridiculous it may seem. These elements are anything, whatever the relevance to the business or product. By using this technique, you will not forget any elements, and grouping them afterwards should be easier.

Groupings

The next step is to try to make some sense of the list you have created. Work through the list grouping related elements, such as products, target market and so on. It's your aim to make the navigation around your site as easy as possible. The groups that you are creating here will become the navigation buttons and hyperlinks on your site!

Perhaps your grouping might look like this: -

Homepage. Why people want to talk to us and buy our products. Our target markets. Who we are and what references and history can we write for people to feel comfortable with us. Products and everything that makes our products different and better than others.

From this it is easy to set up hyperlinks from one part of the site to any other part of the site.

Who Would Be Right For Developing Your Web Site?

Now we come on to some questions you'll need to find answers for. There are loads of people and companies out there who claim to design web sites. Some of these are design houses and some are technically driven companies and, of course, some are from marketing. They're charging structure varies wildly.

Who do you get to develop your site?

To end up with a Web site that is going to suit you and your business you need to have clear objectives. Recommendations are a great way of finding a developer. However, there are lots of Web sites out there, some on shopping malls where they may not be found easily, and some that are totally inappropriate for the medium. While others are inappropriate for the business they're meant to represent. Nevertheless recommendation is a good starting point.

Always look around the Web for any sites they particularly like (or dislike). Design is a very personal thing. It's a bit like selecting a spouse or partner! Thank goodness we don't all like the same thing! The fact is there are no rights and wrongs over what constitutes good design.

Your Web site should reflect the message you want to put across about your business. Try to choose a designer who understands what you are trying to create. So, if you find a site that you like and you can get the name of the developer, then perhaps you are on the right road.

Advertisements.

Web designers can be found in numerous, advertisements in Internet and PC magazines. Pick out advertisements that you like the look of as you may well have found a designer you can connect with. However, you should always ask for references and reference sites to view before going further.

Marketing company.

You probably already deal with a marketing company, so ask for their advice. These people will know your business and will give you an element of comfort because of this. They, of course, should already have discussed the possibility of a Web site and, even if they do not have their own in-house developers, they are likely to know of someone they can recommend. But again, do ask for reference sites so that you can have a good feel for what they do.

The IT whiz.

In our experience, despite the fact that some of our best friends are technological wizards, the last person you should give a Web development project to is a techie. They will probably come up with a whizzy Website capable of whistling Dixie, but will that fulfill the main criteria for your business?

The kid-next-door.

This could be worse. It may sound like a good idea and you'll find that younger people have the edge when it comes to what works well on the Web. However, you should ask yourself how much business savvy the kids-next-door will have. Almost none! Things like continuity of style, corporate image and business message will all be lost, and that will eventually cost you more time than if you involved a web designer.

DIY.

If you have the time and the talent in all the areas needed then I recommend you go for it! But at the end of the day that's for

you to decide!

Essential Questions to Be Answered Before You Embark on Your Business Web Site

Don't stumble into your web development. Always apply standard business practices. If you were launching a brand new product, you would do all the following:

Write a business case
Cost the development time
Cost the packaging
Cost the literature
Cost the marketing
Cost the delivery etc.

In order to provide the best business case for your company, running through the following questions with both your own staff and potential developers:

What are our realistic deadlines? Get the main concept work agreed and, second, have it ready for approval before publishing it on the Web? Can our deadlines be met? Who will do the actual site creation? It's very important to get on with the designer because this relationship should be long-term. What sites have you already designed? Can we speak to the owners of two reference sites and see some of your work? What do you charge for updates? How much will the whole project cost? Do you accept stage payments? How much of our business time will be involved? Which of our staff will be involved? Who is going to sign it off, and at what stages of development? Have you already designed sites for our type of company?

Again let me emphasise the importance of identifying your objectives clearly.

To make your Web site compelling, you should always:

Make an impact on first-time visitors so that they remember the site and come back. Keep abreast of current Web culture. Ensure that you do not just provide pages of content that have been lifted straight from catalogue. Update your site regularly, giving visitors a reason to return. Make the site easy to find by registering it with search directories and search engines. Make your site easy to navigate. Make the home page easy to use with good, well-signposted hyperlinks. Give the visitor an opportunity to feed back with an automatic e-mail link. Keep graphics small and simple so that your visitors don't leave before getting the info they want. Apply the Three Clicks rule: no information should be more than three clicks away from your home

If you can incorporate the factual answers to these questions into your Web site plan, then you have the potential for a formidable site and one that will be valued by your customers.

Written By Chris Falck
Director Rose Data Systems Ltd

Chris Falck is an IT Consultant, Internet Marketer, Designer, and Webmaster of AUTOREPLY2U - <http://autoreply2u.co.uk> and eCom-RDS - <http://ecom-rds.co.uk> . (Amongst Others).

AUTOREPLY2U is the Ultimate Autoresponder & Follow-up Service and provides FREE & PRO accounts to its many users. Take the TEST-DRIVE by visiting the site or by emailing us at <mailto:testdrive@autoreply2u.co.uk>

Want a Feedback Form on your site but haven't got a script? Use ours - <http://freeforms.autoreply2u.co.uk>

eCom-RDS offers Web Design, Hosting, Maintenance & Marketing services to SME's

You may reprint this entire newsletter and resource box on your web site, provided it is reproduced in it's entirety along with this resource box.

Copyright 2001. All Rights Retained by Author.

Get-Articles.com : 1000's of printable business and internet marketing-related articles.

[Submit your article for reprint.](#)