

## Websites

Websites ceased to be a luxury many years ago and today, remain a vital part of an organisation's marketing mix. Yet, despite this, many sites lack vitality and the level of interactivity that such a facility was originally intended to provide. Simply creating an "on-line" brochure misses many opportunities.

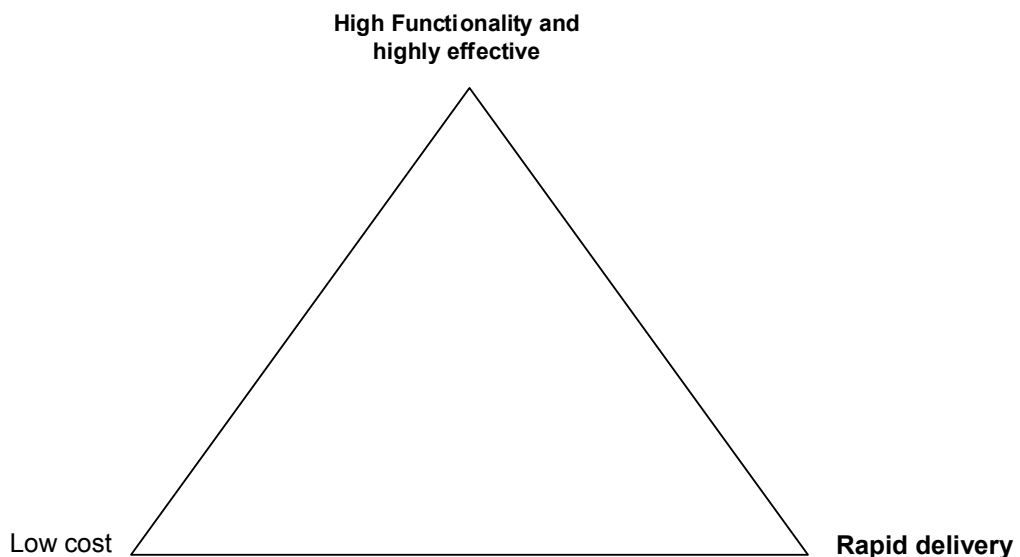
A good website will create business, create greater efficiencies in your marketing communications, enable you to track trends and see whose interested in what you have to say.

So, where to start?

### **BUDGET**

This has to be established at the outset. The cost of websites can vary enormously so it's vital that the cost parameters are established early on. Whilst it's possible for us to create a website for just a few hundred pounds, it's unlikely that this will provide any level of interactivity.

A good starting point here is to consider what you want the website to do in relation to the sort of money you're willing to spend. Take a look at the diagram below and put an imaginary dot in the triangle to represent where you want your site to be.



What this shows is that you can have a low cost website but it will not contain many features and its effect will be limited. Or, you can have the features and a highly effective site but it will neither be cheap, nor will it take just a few days to produce.

In order to establish the budget, a number of questions need to be answered;

### **WHAT DO YOU WANT THE SITE TO DO?**

- Do you want it to be an information tool or a communications portal?
- Do you want to be able to update the content yourself?
- Does it need to provide on-line payment facilities?
- Do you want to be able to track visitors to the site?
- Do you want to encourage repeat visits to the site?
- Does it need to form part of a wider marketing programme?
- Do you want moving images, sounds and video clips (and do you have those video clips already)?
- Do you already have hosting facilities and web space?
- Do you have a domain name registered?
- How much information is needed to be contained on the site?
- Do you want people to be able to search the site?

Although there are many more issues, these are the key areas that will start to provide an idea of the sort of costs that are likely to be incurred. A benefit of website production is that much of the work required to develop solutions to each of the above areas can be priced individually, so you can – to a certain degree – choose what you want in relation to the cost for each item.

However, a word of caution. Selecting elements purely upon price can lead to false economies. For example, you may not deem it necessary to update the content yourself but like the idea that visitors can search your site. (The cost to provide both facilities is roughly the same). If you're not going to update the content yourself, you will have to pay us to do so. As the site grows and you find increasing need to change the content (which any good website should!), you'll find that whilst you saved money at the outset, over the course of a year, it's actually cost you more in update fees.

Avoiding such a scenario takes us neatly to the next important element;

## **ONLINE STRATEGY**

To get the most out of your website, you need to plan how its going to be used, promoted and grown. Developing on-line strategies is something that Page is highly skilled at. The process of developing effective strategies comprises the identification of the following;

- The core objectives – what you want the website to achieve (sales, enquiries, hits, etc.) These should be quantifiable.
- Who you want to visit the site
- The likely stimulation to get them to visit – and come back!
- Development of a competitive advantage
- Timing

With this information, a range of tactical solutions can then be developed to help you get the most from your site.

## **SEARCH ENGINE RANKINGS**

A common question we get asked is “how do we get to the top rankings of search engines”

The simplest and most effective answer is to throw money at it. There are thousands of programmes and service providers out there that will get your site to the top of any search engine – the more you use, the higher the ranking.

However, this is hardly the most practical solution so here's a few more down-to-earth tips;

Change the content regularly – Search robots (programmes that scour websites for relevance) remember what was on each site they came across. If the content is the same as before, it will not deem it that relevant and thus place it lower down the listing. If the content is fresh, it recognizes this and gives it a higher ranking.

Meta tags – These are hidden tags that contain the key words that someone will use to search for your services or products. By making sure they are relevant will help to get a higher ranking.

Links – When a search robot sees a site having many links from other sites, it considers it to be of greater relevance and thus, it will achieve a higher ranking. Gaining links from other sites is part of the strategy development process.

Before any of these are actioned, it's worth considering just how important high search engine rankings are to the success of the site. Many people get quite hung up on this for no reason. If you're developing an on-line business then clearly it is of importance but if the site is to provide additional support to other marketing elements (which is the case with the vast majority of sites), then one could consider rankings as superfluous to other, more controllable elements.

## **OFFSHORE DEVELOPERS**

There's an increasing number of offshore companies offering complex web development services at ridiculously low prices. However, as the maxim goes, if it looks too good to be true, it usually is – and such is the case here.

Any marketing services work requires close working relationships between the agency and client – something that's impossible to achieve when the agency is in India! When this closeness isn't present, there's greater pressure on the client to get the brief spot on and even then, misinterpretation often occurs.

Copy is often overlooked when creating websites yet it's an important element. The way in which copy is written for on-line publication is different to that for print based media. It's unlikely that many of these developers would understand the subtleties of this.

Page provides much of the development work from our own resources. When we do seek external development support, we only use local specialists.

And one final thought on this; what happens when your website, upon which you've come to rely on for sales, is down? It's Monday lunchtime and your Indian developers have just left for the evening and can't be reached. It'll be Tuesday lunchtime before anything's resolved! A day's sales lost – quite possibly the loss of profit equating to the cost of having the site developed in the UK!

## **THE PAGE DIFFERENCE**

Page develops website from a marketing perspective rather than a technical one. We focus on developing a site that meets objectives, using appropriate technology and brilliant design.

In our templates section, you'll find an outline website brief. It takes you through the steps you need to consider and provides the opportunity to create the basis of an effective site. [Click here for the briefing template.](#)

