

Five Steps To A Successful Website

Whether you hire a design professional or attempt to do it yourself, the following steps will assist you in organizing your website design project. Creating a successful website may not be as easy as it might seem.

1. Determine who will be involved

Who in your office will be the person in charge of the website? Will someone in your office build your website or will you hire outside help? Will someone in your office update and maintain your website? Which people will have initial input and review of your new website? Which company will host your site? Will you contract a consultant or team to realize your project?

2. Define the purpose and layout of your website

Is the goal of your website to expand your customer base? Provide information to your existing customers? Support your corporate marketing activities? Will you sell goods on your website? If so, which payment system will you use? Do you need ongoing website metrics? Do you require a content management system? Begin with a writing pad and start making a list of pages. Draw a page flow chart to help you to visualize the layout of your new website.

3. Build and test your website

Create your homepage and get the key decision maker's approval on colour, graphics and layout before building more pages. Assign several people to cross-check parts of the website if your site is large. Have people test surf the website to make sure they can find information. If visitors have an unsatisfactory experience, they won't come back. Check all spelling on the site. Misspelled words will quickly erode your company's credibility. If yours is an e-commerce website, online order forms must be tested in order to avoid costly and embarrassing errors.

4. Promote your website

Even if you are familiar with web marketing techniques, a web marketing professional can determine the most effective marketing strategy for your website. There are many web marketing options available. Selecting those that will be most effective for your new website will save you considerable time and money. Be sure to put your website address on all your business cards, letterheads, brochures, advertising and all corporate marketing material. You should also create and use an email signature which includes your website address. Send out a press release announcing your new website. Inform all of your current, past and prospective customers.

5. Maintain and update your website

As your website evolves, pages will be added and removed. Regular maintenance should include searching for any broken links and missing graphics. A qualified Webmaster can help you to do this quickly and effectively. Old price sheets and outdated articles will destroy your credibility. If you want to keep your market coming back, you will need to regularly update your website and add new information. News items, key business initiatives, announcements, client assistance documents can all generate ongoing return visits. No one is interested in returning to a stagnant website.