

## Web design is a waste of time

Well it is unless you've thought first about all the other things that will decide whether your website will be a success or failure.

Sure good, or preferably great, design is lovely to have but it really is a complete waste of time if no one sees the site or does what you want when they get there.

Unfortunately though that's where so many organizations start. It's easy to see why – people feel they understand a visual and it's so much easier to feel comfortable with and to comment on than a marketing plan. But actually an internet marketing plan is what is needed first.

So, at a very high level, here are some of the detailed things you should be thinking about first and deciding on how you are going to achieve them alongside the site design and build. Unless you want your site to really be an online brochure that you just tell people about you also need to consider what to budget for these activities. We'd say you have to think in terms of an initial test budget of a minimum of 3-5 times the design and build budget.

## Search Engine Marketing

### SEO



In years past, organically ranking in the top 5 positions on the first page of Google was the key to driving traffic to your website. As we highlighted last year with the changes to local search in Google and the 'promotion' of Google Places local search will become more and more important. Not only will ranking in the top 5 positions be important but showing up in Google Places will also be required.

People will pretty much always use search engines to find relevant content and Google isn't going to be dethroned soon but a better Bing and new search engines such as Blekk mean it will be challenged.

The approach to SEO remains the same: write good content, test out keywords and get links targeted towards your niche customers. More content brings more opportunities and the possibility to use 'long tail' keywords that are less competitive and thus more likely to be top 5 successes. Acquiring quality links is still necessary either from websites with unique and relevant content or references from high authority users of social media.

### PPC

Pay per click advertising prices are still reasonable and can bring in cost effective leads

and sales. The issue for too many smaller companies is that they think they can do everything themselves and that it's cheaper that way. Unfortunately, that's not always the case. Pay per click can become very expensive if you do not understand the concepts and principles of direct marketing, as that's what it is. Google and other search engines will happily take your money if you don't set objectives and goals, structure your campaigns and monitor the results. You also have to invest in tests to prove what works before rolling out and spending a great deal. Finally, it's not a cheap way to buy sales but it can be very cost effective when a campaign is properly run.

## Social Media

If your business isn't on Facebook or Twitter and other social media platforms then you're missing an important opportunity. Social networking has come to stay and will continue to grow.

Facebook has Marketplace Ads and Social Advertising has some advantages. It has more precise audience segmentation and perhaps more 'interesting' adverts as well as real-time bidding. However when people search they are looking for something so PPC works. Social networkers are not doing what searchers are, so the adverts are likely to have a lower ROI.



Bing is working with Facebook and likes may well become more important especially now that Google has launched its +1 button social networking and search seem even more likely to become intimately connected.

Social commerce which is use of social media in the context of ecommerce and retail is increasing. Good integration of social into ecommerce can improve conversion rate, customer satisfaction and customer life-time value. It means getting as many validated ratings and reviews for all your products as possible. Shopping is a social experience in the real world and becoming more so online. The rise of deal-of-the-day from companies like Groupon is spreading.

Blogging may seem to be 'old hat' but search engines want to ensure that they bring the most relevant information to their users and good blogs are regularly updated so they not only appeal to the search engines but also with like, retweet, dig and other buttons embedded they fit well into a social media strategy.

## Mobile

Smart phones and other mobile devices are changing the way people surf the net, shop and do business. More people will access the internet with mobile browsers than with the PCs. The release of 4G mobiles will lead to faster and more reliable communications that will enable many new services to be launched and turbo-charge the trend. So, think mobile.

More and more search queries are originating from mobile devices. More and more apps are being created. Because of Android (Google's mobile operating system) Google will do what it can to make search core to mobile. But mobile search will be different with different keywords, copy, landing pages to 'hit' by searchers who are themselves mobile.

Apps like Siri which is a "virtual personal assistant" that can help to make reservations with voice instructions and that learn personal preferences and have API connections with a variety of merchants to execute transactions are likely to increase.



Location based marketing has been touched on in our newsletter before too. As more and more people check into places Foursquare, Gowalla and Facebook Places are going to become more mainstream. Being a combination of social and mobile they have everything going for them – especially when they start making offers as you check in.

## Video

TV, PC, tablet and mobile are all driving video content. YouTube is already the second largest search engine in its own right. According to comscore, in August 2009 Americans watched 10 billion videos on YouTube and conducted 9 billion searches on Google. That's right they watched a billion more YouTube videos than they conducted Google searches. Pew Internet says that 7 in 10 adult internet users (69%) have used the internet to watch or download video.

A YouTube channel is the equivalent of a Facebook profile and can help with SEO.

Although YouTube marketing isn't anything new, it's gaining momentum because the cost of video production has reduced and as cheap high definition cameras (Flip HD is less than £100) and phones increase their penetration more video will be produced.

But there's no point in doing it unless you are clear how it supports your internet marketing strategy – no video is better than bad video. Some people seem to believe that all they need to do upload any old video to YouTube and wait for viewers to watch by the millions but expectations need to be kept realistic! A good video engages people and produces a positive reaction – laughter, tears, sales etc. To get that sort of reaction you have to know why you are there, have determined that it's for the long term and that you have the ability to produce regular new content that will engage people.

## **Email**

To some email marketing is too intrusive or ineffective, but the truth is that email marketing is still a very important tool when used wisely.

Many still consider email their primary online communication method and service or information orientated messages with important or useful information tend to give a positive impression. If you also write well and with some personality rather than in corporation speak and jargon people are quite likely to use the share with your network link.

In addition to this you really cannot run a lead generation or ecommerce website without email! The development of good response emails and pathways is an essential tool to not only keep customers happy but also increase conversion and retention.