

### Questions to consider

Your audience



Your objectives



Your budget



Your content



Measuring success

### The benefits of planning

All web sites benefit from a project plan. A project plan will keep key objectives at the forefront and ensure that the site is organised and well-designed.

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**Information design is critical when planning a web site. Web sites that have skipped this process often suffer problems that are difficult to fix. Sites that have not been planned often contain inconsistent information, related topics that do not link, and a navigation system that leaves users frustrated.**

### Project objectives

It is a good idea to identify exactly the goals you want to achieve. Prioritising objectives will help guide design decisions later. Your list should reflect the advantages of the web, such as:

- To save printing costs on direct mail or catalogues
- To sell online
- To provide updated materials more quickly to customers
- To provide better customer service
- Enhance your credibility

### Audience analysis

The web is no different to any other communication medium. Knowledge of your audience is essential to planning and designing a successful site. If your project is like most, you won't be able to pinpoint any single characteristic across the entire audience.

It is also a good idea to prioritise the audiences. Ideally, you want the site to serve the range of users, but you may need to make design decisions that optimise the site for one type of user or another. These priorities should be laid out before building the site.

### Questions to consider

#### **Who is your audience?**

This will define everything from site colours, design themes and structure as well as content. Remember, successful sites are designed for the user not for the owner.

#### **What are your site's goals?**

Reaching out to customers with answers to frequently asked questions is very different from offering a e-commerce store. It is normal to set multiple goals in a site, but keep your number one goal in focus.

#### **What is your budget?**

This is key to understanding what sort of site you can plan and support until it is able to support itself. Hyperlink can usually suggest ways to work within your budget.

#### **What content are you using?**

Ideally, content for your site should be developed first. Your existing information can easily be adapted for the web. Remember, online viewing habits are different.

#### **How do you define success?**

This might be a reduction of telephone calls, and the increase in client queries, or online orders. Page hit counts may, but do not provide a clear indication of site usefulness.

### Avoiding common pitfalls

#### **Trying to do it too cheaply**

As with most things, you pay for quality. Your website is likely to become your most visible resource over time, so it is important that it distills a feeling of credibility. Good web sites, however, don't have to be expensive.

#### **Making it too complicated**

At the other end of the scale, are web sites which look stunning and seem to do everything. Web sites like these can be expensive to implement and maintain. In some cases, these extra features add little or no value to your site visitors.

#### **Re-inventing the wheel**

Unless you have been involved in previous web site projects, you can waste a lot of time getting your project off the ground. Knowing the right questions to ask and understanding what will and won't work are essential skills. Hyperlink will help you with this process.

## Planning questions

Your goals

Marketing issues

The content

The graphical look

The budget

## Have you considered?

What your key words and phrases are for the important pages of your web site?

How you will handle inquiries generated by the site?

How will you fulfill orders for your products or services?

Who your competition on the web is and what they are doing that is good?

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## Isolating your web site

To isolate your web site from your organisation's key processes is setting it up for failure. To gain the maximum benefit from your website, think about how you can use it to enhance your existing processes for:

- Marketing and selling your products or services
- Communicating with customers, suppliers and staff
- General administration duties

## Planning for the future

Having a web site involves a commitment. There are two main areas of responsibility which need to be assigned to people in your organisation:

### Site owner

The owner is responsible for the funding and strategic direction of the web site, ensuring its continued success by aligning it with the organisation's overall direction and working to promote the site at every opportunity.

### Site administrator

The administrator is responsible for making sure the web site continues to operate as it should. Regular checks of the site's functionality and content are advised. Web statistics should also be checked to monitor the effect of promotional activities. Promptly answering queries originating from the web site is another important administration function.

## Questions to ask when planning

Below are some questions to help define your requirement for a web site. Answering these questions are an important step towards building a successful business web site.

### Goals

1. What are your reasons for building a web site?
2. What are your goals for your web site?
3. How will you evaluate and measure the success of these goals?

### Marketing issues

1. Who are your existing customers?
2. Who are the intended audience of the site?
3. What will motivate people to visit the web site?
4. How will the web site be marketed?
5. How will the web site fit in with your current marketing strategy?

### Content

1. What content is necessary?
2. Who will develop the content?
3. How frequently will the site need to be updated?
4. Who will update the site and what training will be required?
5. What forms and interactive elements are necessary?
6. Does the web site need to interface with an existing database or computer system?
7. List the sites of companies in your industry which have good content and features.

### Graphical look

1. How do you want the site to look?
2. How does the site need to look to be graphically consistent with your branding?
3. List sites that you think look good.

### Costs and requirements

1. What is your initial budget for development?
2. What will be your ongoing budget for maintenance, hosting, and promotion?
3. What date would you like to have the web site completed?
4. Will you require a database or a secure certificate, for example?