

## Top Tips 1 | Making your website work

**We've all had to wait an eternity for a webpage that is, in the end, a waste of space to download to our browsers. Although this article is Australian in origin, all the points about fast download, accessibility, user-friendliness and involvement are just as relevant to any business site in the UK.**

There are many different elements to creating a successful website and good design is an integral part of the mix. Establishing your goals and objectives will greatly influence the style and design of your website. There are some basic parameters you should be aware of when you're planning your website design:

### 1 The pages should be quick to download

Pages on your site should quickly come up on the screen for viewing - ideally no more than 10 seconds maximum - otherwise most visitors just won't wait around to read your message. It's important to remember your web page is only one of over three billion web pages, so why would they wait around to see yours? (No matter how good it looks when it finally appears).

### 2 It should be accessible by as many people as possible

This means it should be able to be viewed by people who have early model computers and browsers (a browser is the software program that allows you to view the Internet). It should also work equally well in Internet Explorer or Netscape and on a PC or a Mac. Many of the high tech bells and whistles you see on some websites, look fantastic when viewed with the latest software and equipment but may not even be able to be seen at all by some people. Visit <http://bobby.watchfire.com/bobby/html/en/index.jsp> - to judge the accessibility of your website.

### 3 It should be simple and easy to view

It should not require special plug-ins i.e. require the viewer to go to another site to download a program before viewing your site. It should not have to tell the viewer to adjust their monitor or upgrade their software - they should be able to just see it! KISS (keep it simple sweetheart) is the best philosophy. Most people just want information in the quickest time possible - they are not interested in seeing how clever your web designer is!

### 4 The site needs to be user-friendly

It should be easy to navigate and find your way around. It should be interesting and/or entertaining and it should contain information of value to the visitor.

### 5 It should be up to date and encourage people to return

Your site should contain useful current information and be updated regularly. Ideally it should also include some element that gets visitors to return to the site over and over again.

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### 6 It should be proactive

Your site should invite your visitors to interact with you. Encourage visitors to subscribe to an email newsletter, with advance notice of your special offers/discounts and other deals. Visit <http://www.wilsonweb.com> for creative online marketing ideas.

### 7 It should be a part of your overall marketing strategy

Your website should be an adjunct to and integrate with, your other marketing and promotional activities. It should not be a stand-alone project created by your IT department or graphic artist. It should be developed in close consultation with your sales and marketing departments and everybody in your organisation should be aware of what you are trying to achieve with it.

### 8 It must look professional

And, of course, your website needs to look great, be visually appealing and fit your business' image and profile. Find out how not to do it at <http://www.webpagesthatsuck.com>

### 9 It must be search engine friendly

Search engines use electronic robots known as "spiders" to roam the Web looking for new sites. Your site needs to be optimised to their requirements to ensure a good ranking. You will find some excellent search engine optimisation tips at <http://www.searchenginewatch.com>

### 10 You should expect a return on your investment (R.O.I.)

And, last but by no means least - it should generate more business for you. Either directly or indirectly by improving your service and the awareness of your products or brand name. It could also save you money on printing and perhaps even distribution costs.

In other words, it should be an asset to your business - not a liability!

#### Useful websites to visit:

<http://www.overture.com> - to help you to find the right search engine strategy

<http://www.selfpromotion.com> - learn how to create search engine friendly pages

<http://www.topwebsite.co.uk> - resource offering information on key words, meta-tags, submitting and site design

Extract taken from <http://www.thenet.com.au>

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