

## Top Tips 2 | Design tips from a web designer

**This article by Robert Edwards, a web designer, considers:**

- **ten hot tips when creating a website**
- **some technical dos and don'ts of web design**

### **Ten key points to consider when creating a site:**

- 1 Carefully analyse your aspirations for the website and anticipate its target audience. A website designed to sell to young people needs very different handling from a typical financial services site.
- 2 Top positioning on the search engines is vital for most sites to reach their full potential. Employ careful customer research and analysis, using the tools on the web to build a list of the search terms your customers will use to find you. Think laterally, if you sell 'aromatherapy oils' then a good search term may be 'sports injuries' as people with sprains may well find your product of interest.
- 3 Design your site to emphasise these search phrases. This will need some compromise when you plan the look of your site. If people cannot find your site on the search engines no amount of fancy design will get you customers you require.
- 4 Keep the website simple. Avoid gizmos - most customers want to get at the content of your site quickly.
- 5 Pay particular attention to making your site easy to navigate. Without offering help try watching an inexperienced computer user navigate your site – it can be very revealing.
- 6 Get fast reliable web space. This must include full graphical site statistics to allow you to monitor the success of your site and make periodic adjustments when you find pages that are under-performing.
- 7 Develop strategies for encouraging repeat visitors to the site, as these are often the most lucrative. You need to offer people some reason to return on a regular basis. This may be changing information, discounts on products, technical support ...
- 8 Consider building an email address list so you can occasionally remind customers of your site. This is a very powerful, inexpensive and simple way to spread your message.
- 9 Promote the site by means other than Search Engines or Directories - in the press, your email signature, links from other sites ...
- 10 Keep refining your web pages – a website is not a one off project but needs continual maintenance. Treat it like a weekly newspaper and not like a novel.

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### Now some specific technical dos and don'ts:

- Avoid Java applets. At present Windows XP does not readily support them.
- Avoid excessive use of Flash because of download times.
- Make sure your site works on a Mac and other computer systems.
- Ensure you site works well on a small 15inch (600x800) resolution monitor.
- Ensure that your web space provider gives you full graphical site statistics to allow you to monitor your site.
- Test your site on Internet Explorer, Netscape and Opera browsers.
- Use external JavaScript files wherever possible to improve the download time of your page.
- Use Cascading Style Sheets to control the look of your site.
- Build your site around the terms you want to be found under in the search engines.
- Think carefully before using a database driven site because it will not be well received by the search engines.
- Avoid frames on your site unless the designer understands how to handle the background controls. Failure to set these correctly will result in very poor performance on the search engines.

Source: Robert Edwards <http://www.magicwebs.net>

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