Building Your New Website:

Ten Things to Think About

You've decided to take the big plunge and have a website designed for your company, but where do you begin? Your website should be functional and meet your business objectives, but it also should have a design that is appealing to your potential customers. Before you dive in, here are ten things for you to think about that will prepare you for the web design process and help to make your website launch a success.

FUNCTION

1. Who is your audience?

You've made the decision to build a website, but who are you building it for? Think about who you want to visit your website. If you sell construction cranes, do you want to attract home-owners looking for step-ladders? If you want to sell home-made cookies, do you want to attract major supermarket chains, or people in the local community looking for a sweet treat? By knowing who you are trying to attract, you can begin to design your website messaging.

2. What is the purpose of your website?

Websites can serve many purposes. They can be your online product catalog, they can entice visitors to come into your store, or they can used to educate potential buyers about why your widgets are the best in town. Do you want your website to raise awareness of your political campaign, or to let antiques collectors know that they can buy that hard-to-find item from you? Defining your website's purpose early in the process will help ensure that your website works for you.

3. What functionality do you need on your website?

Besides looking pretty, your website should help you in your business. Some of the possibilities are gathering e-mail addresses for your monthly newsletter, a shopping cart for selling merchandise online, or a contact form so that customers can obtain a personalized quote online. Think of the many ways that your website can become a valuable part of your team.

4. Have you thought about a domain name?

Choosing a domain name is important. Your domain name, www.YOURCOMPANYHERE.com, is the way customers will find you on the internet. You want a domain name that people will associate with your company or product. It also should be easy to spell and easy to remember. Take the time to choose your domain name carefully; it's a big part of your online identity.

5. What is your web design budget?

There is a large range of prices for websites. You can build one yourself for free or you can spend well over $100,000 to announce the release this year's luxury auto. Many web design clients want to keep their budget a secret, but giving your designer an idea about how much you are willing to spend will prevent them from designing features are too expensive. With a clear idea about your budget, it's easier to design a website that is attractive and affordable, while still being appropriate for you and your business.

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DESIGN

6. Do you have a logo?

Everyone recognizes the "Golden Arches" or the "Swoosh" on a pair of athletic shoes. Like those other famous companies, your logo is an important part of your company's identity. If you don't already have a logo, no need to worry. Your designer can work with you to develop one that represents your company and makes it uniquely recognizable.

7. What other websites do you like, and why?

Take a look at other websites. What are the things that appeal to you? Do you prefer "Friendly" websites or those that are "Strictly Business"? Are the colors bright and jazzy, or subdued with crisp, black and white photos? Don't forget to take a look at your competitor's website. What things do you like or dislike about their website? Write these things down, they will help you when it comes to designing your website.

8. Who will generate the content?

The written content on your website describes your products and services, and is what encourages your potential customers to make a buying decision. A compelling "call to action" is an important part of any website. "Buy Now!", "Call for a Free Estimate!", and "Add to Shopping Cart" are examples of a call to action. When you meet with your designer, you should have a good idea of what you want to say on your website, and it's great if you already have a first draft. If you need help putting this together, you can hire an independent copywriter or ask your designer for help.

9. What images will you use?

The right photos can greatly enhance a website. You can take your own photos, but they should be high quality and of a suitable size and resolution. If you don't have your own pictures, you can use stock photos which can be purchased at a low price, but add big excitement to your website. Would a video of your product in action lead to more sales? Letting your designer know this ahead of time will make planning your site and the necessary bandwidth easier.

10. Who will maintain your site?

Are you tech savvy? Will you have to make frequent updates because you sell seasonal merchandise, or because the price of raw materials changes frequently? Updating your site from time to time keeps it fresh for returning visitors, and gives them a reason to come back. Knowing how often and who will maintain the website will play a role in how your website should be designed. Speak to your designer about your options.

**If you have any questions, or are ready to start building your website,
call SixFour Web Design at 336-303-0640 to discuss
your custom web design needs.**