

Step-by-Step to Building a Successful Website



**Create a Website that Sells and
Fulfills Your Customers
Wants, Needs, and Desires . . .**

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Planning and Development.....	4
Content Writing and Design.....	8
E-commerce Tips.....	12
Employee Use and Site Upkeep.....	14
Internet Marketing.....	17

Introduction

A website is a necessary part of any business or profession and in today's world no business can afford to ignore the impact or importance of a strong websites. An effective website will make a lasting impression of your company and allows for the world-wide expansion of your business. In a sense, a website can function as a super employee that works for your business 24x7x365 and develops noticeable revenue.

It doesn't matter if you own a small, medium or large company, or you're a professional free lancer, in order to have an edge in today's competitive business world you must own your own website. For online success your business needs a website that has an attractive and unique design, is user friendly and implements an effective Internet marketing plan that reaches your intended audience.

Planning and Developing



The beginning stages of building a website include having a rock solid plan. It's important that you identify who your customers are and what you want them to do on your site. Do you want them to buy a product? Join a mailing list? Receive a subscription? Download a form? Read your brochure? Take a guided tour? Is your website being used as a means to display your portfolio or work? Your motivation for owning a website might be one of these and it could be all of them. But before you begin actually thinking about the design, we must now determine how you are going to guide your customers throughout the site.

Alignment: The role of alignment is to ensure that all practices in your business align with your business goals. In order to align your website, you must make sure that each section of your website meets the requirements of at least one goal. This should be the basic standard of measure from which every section of your site driven. It is possible for a website to work without alignment, but it will not be of any help to your business in the long run and your website will be ineffective.

Each section of your website needs to have a clearly understandable purpose. This should be the foundation of every site because it defines the look and feel (and eventually the content) of each section. A clear purpose helps you creating the content, and allows your website to be easily understood by the visitors. Otherwise, they may get confused and leave the site. Remember that web visitors are very fickle and impatient because it is so easy to click the back button and have other options. So, keeping them on your site as long as possible is vital.

Choosing an Effective Domain

Having a good domain name or web address is very important. If you already have one, great, but you might want to consider investing in multiple domains. Registering domains is very cheap (only about \$10 a year depending on which service you use). Although it is not required to have a keyword based domain, it can be quite helpful if you do. For example, if you are selling lamps, having "lamps" in your domain makes your site more relevant and easier to find for someone who is searching for lamps. However, you don't want to go overboard and have an extremely long domain. It has to be something that can easily be remembered by people and, in many cases, shorter names are better. Also, you do not want to use hyphens in your domain

name. People are often forgetful and don't remember to put hyphens in.

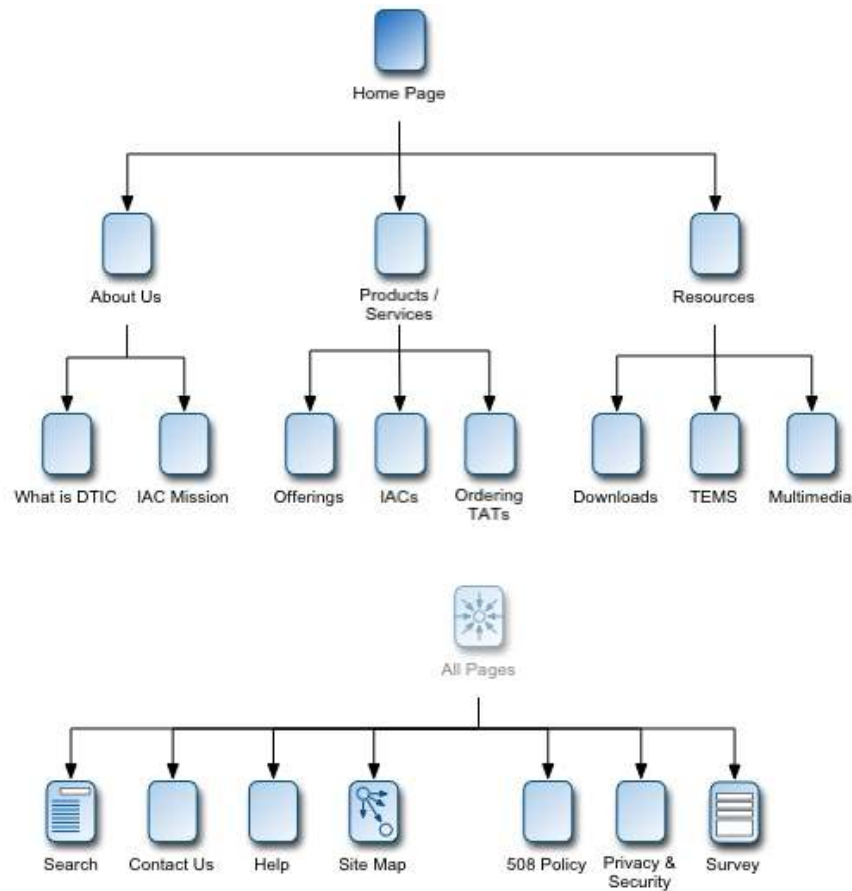
Another thing that you might want to consider is buying domains that are already taken. If you go to www.buydomain.com you can look up and bid on domains that are in your market. The prices vary but it can definitely be worth the investment to have a marketable domain.

And always, always, always, use .COM!!!

Creating the Navigation or Outline

Navigation is considered one of the most important tools to make your website effective. Navigation is made capable by the links and the buttons that visitors use to quickly and easily access the information on the site. The work of navigation is to ensure that every individual visitor knows what he or she is looking for and how to find it. This is where less is more and simplicity outweighs complexity. Making the site as simple as possible will help the customer find what they want quickly. Moreover, the majority of users will appreciate the convenience of a website that presents information in a straightforward manner. You can create the most beautiful site in the world with awesome graphics and animation, but if your customer is confused about how to navigate your website they will often leave the site and look elsewhere.

The best way to set up effective navigation on your site is to first create an outline of your website that corresponds to end goal of your users. Navigation can also be referred to as a "site map." A site map is a sort of blueprint that will display all of the different pages on your site and how they link together. Below is a helpful example of a site map:

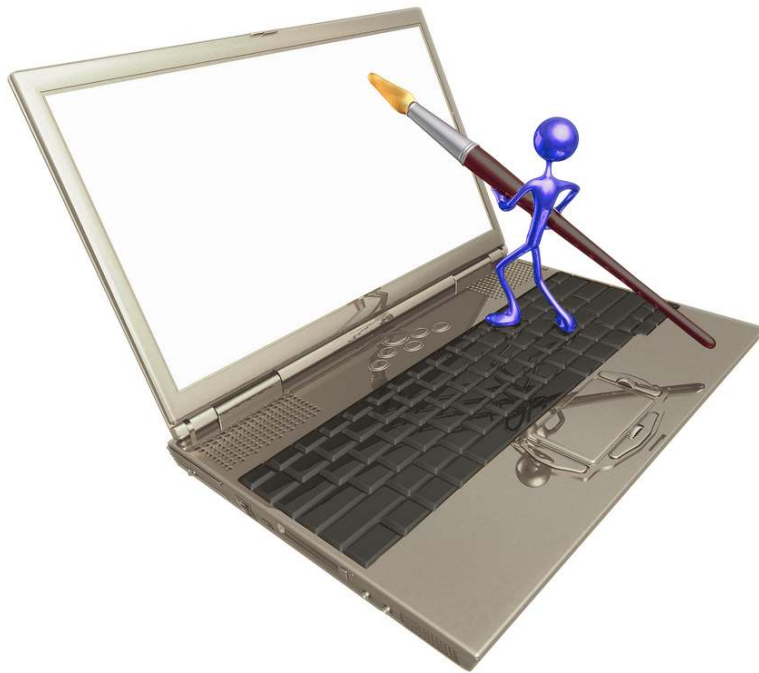


It's absolutely essential to create a site map before you begin designing. Keep in mind what you want displayed on each of these pages and how it is going to help the user arrive at your desired end goal. Having redundancy can be okay and effective for your site. What is meant by this is to keep your, "call to action" (what you are asking the user to do, i.e. fill out a form, etc.) or end goal for your user always just one click away. Another good rule of thumb is to have every page of your site accessible by at least 3 clicks so that no matter where the user is on the site, they can access any page within just a few clicks.

It's conventional to display the navigation bar on either the top or at the left side of your website. This is a good standard to stick with. Don't reinvent the wheel, users will just get confused!

If you have over 15 pages in your web site, it is advisable to put a search box feature. This will help your visitors find what they are looking for quickly and easily.

Content Writing And Design



Content Writing

Writing content for the web is different from print media. In other words, you have to adjust your writing style in accordance to the site users' preferences and browsing habits. Visitors generally ignore language that is wordy or verbose. Use plain language will help the user understand the needs and objectives of your site. Your writing should not be an advertisement; rather, it should simply communicate information that is oriented towards your goal of servicing customers. Try to make short and concise paragraphs and phrases.

For any kind of transaction, you need to develop some sort of relationship. In the virtual world, there is no one to create a personal relationship with. In fact, in a virtual world, a user can wander anonymously to your site and avoid creating a relationship. This makes it even more important to focus on content that will help create a relationship between the site and the user.

Beginning Design

Figuring out exactly how you want your website to look can be a difficult task. Chances are you're not a designer or a graphic artist so it might be a good idea to hire an experienced professional to help you. However, YOU are the one that knows your business and industry better than anyone and, while particular designs might be very pleasing to the eye, they may not appeal to your industry or target audience. It is beneficial to think about how you want your site to be perceived by others. Ask yourself: do you want the site to be trendy, prestigious, friendly, corporate, fun, or cutting edge? It is also helpful to browse and examine websites that are in your same market and even some websites that are outside your market. What are they doing? How do they present their information? What color schemes do they use? Do they use animation? If so, then how? Doing competitive research will not only help you with your design ideas but also with creating your navigation and site map. Again, the important thing to remember is to not reinvent the wheel when creating your site. Get some good ideas from others, expand upon them, and make yours even better!

You will also want to consider how you will incorporate your existing company literature such as logos', brochure, etc. on to your new web site. Brochures, logos, photographs, product descriptions, business cards etc. are all recommended resources to use.

Colors, Logo's, Font.etc.

Choosing effective colors is very important when creating your site. It is a good idea to choose two or three complementary colors that you will use throughout your website. Once you have selected these colors, stick to them. If you already have a company logo, you may want use the colors from that logo. Your website's colors should be uniform. Giving each individual page different colors will often cause your website to look unprofessional.

Use proper background color: Remember to use readable text that is easily visible against the color of your background. Creating contrast is extremely important. Accordingly, stay away from color combinations like yellow text on a white background or black writing against a dark blue background, etc. You should also ensure that your links are easily visible both before and after they are visited. For example, the color of the link should change depending on if they have been clicked or not. Thus, showing the user what links they have already visited. Again, creating contrast with the link color and the background is important in order to discern the difference between the two. If you use a dark background, use a light color for links and vice versa. Below is a great resource for choosing color schemes.

<http://www.colorschemer.com/online.html>

Another thing you have to consider is your sites alignment and the organization of your content and pictures. People can often make the mistake of putting as much as they can on each page, but this approach can be harmful. It is best to balance your use of positive space (your content and pictures) as well as negative space (areas of blank canvas). Keeping your site simple and easy to read and navigate can be your site's greatest attribute.

Fonts: It's important to always use Serif font for the headlines and Sans-Serif for the textual matter of the website. The Sans serif fonts make the smaller text easier to read for people who have low resolution computer monitors. On the other hand, Serif fonts will be

less readable and blurry when used for the smaller text. Use example below for reference.

AaBbCc Sans-serif font

AaBbCc Serif font

AaBbCc Serif font
(red serifs)

Make use of standard font families. Stick to fonts like Verdana, Geneva, Arial, and Helvetica. These fonts make the content appear more readable and professional.

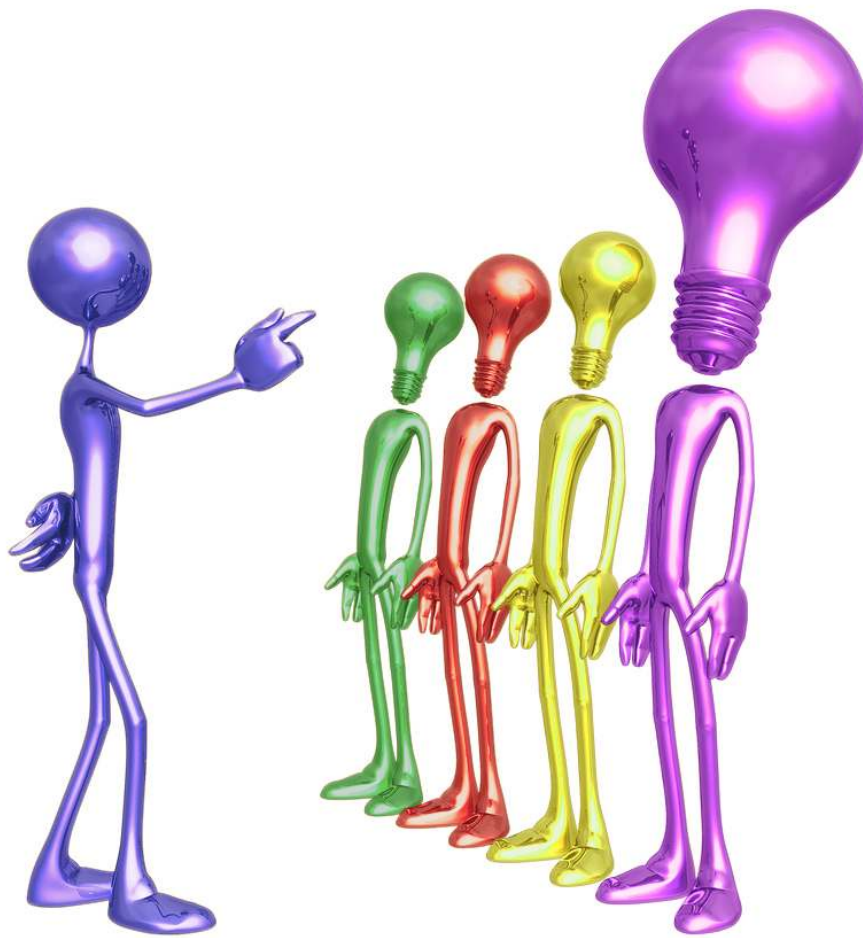
E-Commerce Tips



So you created a nice looking site—now let's make money with it! There are various things that you need to consider when setting up your ecommerce site. Your primary goal is to sell products... don't lose sight of that. On your product page, it's always important to not get carried away with graphics and to make sure that your site loads fast. Also, you want to use server side include (SSI) files to make your customer feel safe. It's important to get the customer involved and not just list your products. List your top sellers on your homepage and provide recommendations. If you need an example of how to display your product page Amazon.com is a great model. When a customer is considering buying a product, they want to be presented with as much information that there is about that product. Amazon provides this information directly on the product page. They have detailed product descriptions, product reviews and ratings, as well as other recommendations and product accessories so the user doesn't have to leave their site. The more information you can put the better! Users are quick to get suspicious and find a reason to not buy, so include all shipping information, other hidden costs, company information, etc.

Lastly, make it easy to complete purchases. Don't force customers to register on your site for simply adding items to a shopping cart. People are wary not to give out their information unless they are telling you where to ship their purchase. Focus only on the necessary information during the sign up process. Make sure that you give them as many payment options as possible. If you don't already have a merchant account for accepting credit cards it is recommended that you get one. Another great tip is to offer free shipping for certain price threshold. Remember; keep it simple and easy for your customer. Displaying your products in a nice fashion, give them lots of information about each item and create a short and easy checkout process that will help to minimize last minute resistance and allow your sales to increase dramatically!

Employee Use and Site Upkeep



Creating an Employee Intranet

You can increase productivity dramatically in your company through professional custom Employee Intranet website design. Imagine a centralized password protected Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that allows your employees to manage quotes, transactions, downloads, uploads, and more. Now imagine that that same system provides an incredibly secure network which protects your financial transactions and valuable company information. Custom Employee Intranet website design can do all this and way more.

An Intranet Website or Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software streamlines your business operations for increased productivity and profitability, giving your team an aggressive edge in today's competitive marketplace. CRM allows you to schedule regional and promotional events within a centralized calendar so events are viewable and, if enabled, easily altered by other employees. Employees and managers can also download, change, and upload documents. Everything from tracking sales activities to submitting sales quotes can be streamlined by this system.

Intranet gives you all the technologically-advanced communication abilities and also provides that extra layer of security. Intranet access can be limited through the implementation of passwords or it can be restricted to particular networked computer-based work stations. Passwords can be changed easily at your discretion or you can look at a digital record that allows you to see user's log times and actions. It's highly recommended that you look into creating an Intranet to streamline your business.

Using a Database Driven Site – Content Management System (CMS)

If you want to create a state directory, article directory, dating site, link directory or you just want a site that you can make regular changes to, you need to be knowledgeable on how to operate a database driven web site. To those who are unfamiliar with database driven websites, this may seem like a frightening task. However, I was once in the same boat as you and I assure that it's not as difficult

as you might think it is. Listed below are some benefits of building database driven websites:

- Ability to store vast amounts of information about your products or services
- Sort and retrieve data
- Difficult queries and statistical analysis are performed easily
- Ability to create new pages easily without manually creating or editing
- Easy for clients to post content, update records without the need to know html or rely on a web developer
- Advanced search capabilities
- Draws repeat visitors with fresh and constantly updated content.
- Updates site information online without having to upload web pages.
- Site maintenance greatly reduced
- Increases sites interactivity

It's highly recommended that you use a "Content Management System" or CMS. A quality CMS makes it super easy to change your site instantaneously and to do different tests to your site to optimize its performance.

It's important when setting up your CMS that you take the time necessary to fully map out exactly what you want to be able to change or update on your site. With today's software capabilities you can develop almost anything.

Internet Marketing



Now that you've built an awesome site, how do you get customers to visit it? Internet marketing is currently in great demand. There are a 3 primary ways that people can find your site:

1. Typing your domain name directly into the address bar
2. Finding your site through the search engines
3. Finding your site through another site

Of these three options, the first option is the least likely method new users will use to visit your site. A visitor would have to know your exact domain to get to your site in this manner. Therefore, unless your domain is your targeted market keyword (e.g. golfclubs.com), you're not going to get a lot of traffic that way. With this in mind, we're going to focus more on options 2 and 3.

It's recommended that you consult a professional to help you with number 2 and 3 but we will at least go over the basics. Placing high on the search engine results depends on two factors: your site's page structure and your site's incoming links. Your website's page structure is the way that it is coded and written to optimize the site's connection to specific keywords or keyword groups. The incoming links are links from other sites to yours. Google's algorithm (or formula for ranking website search results) depends highly on these two factors.

Great! So how do you implement these two things correctly? The answer is that it's not quick and easy process. However, if you already followed all the recommendations listed above, you're off to a good start. Search engines are very smart and aware of people trying to trick them into ranking their sites high. That is to say, they want only the most relevant sites to rank on their search engines. By staying away from over-flooding your page with keywords and instead focusing on just using relevant wording, you will put yourself on the right track. Also, the more pages and content you have the better. This will both establish your site as a relevant resource and increase the number of times that it is viewed.

Remember the old saying, "The more you give and the more you shall receive." Well, it is true in life and it's also very true in Internet Marketing. Writing a bunch of helpful content and creating a great resource for your customer or your industry will help you do two things: first, you will have more relevant content that search engines

can easily pick up; second, other sites will be more likely to provide links to your page as an informational resource.

The more you give the more you'll get! Focus on creating an organized and predictable interface, provide your customers and industry with some great tools and information and you'll reap the benefits!

CONGRATULATIONS! You finished the course and now you should be on your way to creating your own website authority! Remember to keep using this as a reference and feel free to give it away or show it to your friends. If you have any more questions or concerns about anything don't hesitate to send us an email at info@cartyws.com.

I hope this has helped a lot and GOOD LUCK!!!

