

PLANNING YOUR WEBSITE

thewebsiteschool.com.au

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WHY, WHY, WHY?

Why should you plan your website? Well, it represents your business and you need to make a great first impression so your customers will buy your products or services. Simple as that!

YOUR WEBSITE IS ABOUT YOUR CUSTOMERS (NOT YOU!)

How many times have you seen something, somewhere, and you go and find them on the web. What do you think if their website isn't up to date, doesn't work properly (on your phone for example), looks a bit dusty? Or, worse, they don't have one?

So, like your printed brochures, business cards, and your bricks and mortar office or store, your website needs to make a great first impression that is compatible with every aspect of your business.

WHAT KIND OF IMPRESSION DO YOU WANT TO MAKE?

CONTEMPORARY, UP TO DATE, CARED FOR? (OR DATED, DUSTY AND NEGLECTED?)

I know it's all too easy to jump right in and say "I like that website... I want one just like that". Because why? You like the colours, or the clever navigation, or the images, or you've found a brilliant template and want to use it - regardless of whether or not it's really going to work for you (even if you know how to choose a great template ... but we'll get to that later!).

We're going to start with some planning!

You need to have a clear map of what's what. After all, you wouldn't build a house without a plan. Well, I hope you wouldn't! You need to know where the power points will go, where the plumbing needs to be, and a myriad of other things.

Before you do anything else, you should know WHY you need a website and how it will benefit your business.

IF YOU CAN'T EXPLAIN YOUR PURPOSE, HOW WILL YOUR VISITORS KNOW WHAT IT IS?

- You need to make sure your website is included in any planning you do for your business overall.
- You must always give as much care to how your website is created and presented as you would a magazine ad, a commercial or a video.
- You should have a budget for your website. That may be perceived to be free because it's your time you're 'spending' on its creation and ongoing maintenance (I'll talk more about this during the full program) but to do a professional job, you will need to spend some \$\$ on your website.

I'll be focussing here on new websites, but the same principles apply if you're redeveloping a website you already have if, for example, you're rebranding your business.

I know its all to easy to jump right in and focus on how you website will look, but I'm going to be a party pooper and tell you to take a step back. Step away from the design!

I WANT YOU TO FOCUS ON PLANNING WHAT YOUR CUSTOMERS WANT, NEED, AND LOOK FOR IN YOUR WEBSITE.

To kick things off, we'll look at some basics about your business, your customers, and your products and services.

Some of this may seem repetitive, but I want you to look at your website through your eyes, and more importantly, your customer's eyes.

The rest will follow.



SO, WHO IS YOUR IDEAL CUSTOMER?

This is about your target audience - If you don't know who you're selling to, you'll struggle to get the right tone and pitch.

You may have already done an exercise like this when you did your business plan, but if you haven't, grab a pen and get going!

My ideal customer might look something like this:

- ◆ They are a business owner, typically 20-40 years old, both male and female.
- ◆ Their business may be relatively new, but some have long-standing businesses that haven't kept up with the rapid expansion of online stores etc.
- ◆ Probably internet savvy and definitely wants to create or re-do their business website themselves. They want ownership.
- ◆ Often social media savvy but they have realised that that alone is not enough.
- ◆ Have skills, and are keen to learn, but don't know where to start.
- ◆ Quite possibly time poor, but they are prepared to spend the time into their website - it's a good investment! They don't want to wait now they've made the decision to do it!
- ◆ Possibly overwhelmed with research, not knowing where to start and what to look for. They need a map of where to start, and what to do.
- ◆ Budget may be an issue and they want to keep costs low. Spending \$500 to DIY now is preferable to spending \$2,000+ on a designer who they don't know and they're not sure will actually do what they want OR they may have had their cousin's friend of a friend do their website and it hasn't gone well!
- ◆ They need advice/guidance from someone who is tech savvy but not in a scary way and won't baffle them with jargon they don't understand.
- ◆ Once they're on the right track, they're good to go ahead, but may need some additional help from time to time. They're happy to get this help online (email, forums, etc) but knowing they can ask a real person is important too.

What does your ideal customer look like?



What's their age, gender, location, income?



Are they experienced using the internet?

Do they buy from me now?

What is it that they want/need?

What 'problem' do you solve for them?



Do you know your ideal customer already? Or, are you expanding or refining your products and/or services?

What does your ideal customer want to know about you?

Put yourself in your customers' shoes and ask yourself why someone wants your products or services and what information they need to achieve that.

THIS IS ABOUT HOW YOUR CUSTOMER VIEWS YOUR BUSINESS.

If you're not sure about how to do this section, you could ask your existing customers by doing a short survey, or ask a couple of questions when they complete their purchase.

What is it they really want?

e.g. they might be buying a haircut, but it makes them feel better!

How is your business better than where they go now?

e.g. you may have more convenient opening hours

How much does your product/service cost compared to similar businesses?

Are you a member of any professional associations?



What do your customers think about you? Are there any testimonials I can see?

When are you open?

How do I find you?

How do I contact you or make an appointment?

WHAT'S YOUR 'ELEVATOR PITCH'?

DESCRIBE YOUR BUSINESS/PRODUCTS/SERVICES IN 1 MINUTE

You have less than 10 seconds (and that's being generous) to 'grab' visitors once they land on your website, so you need to be crystal clear about what it is you do. If you can't explain it coherently and quickly, and present it well, you can't expect visitors to understand it either.

REMEMBER THE THE KISS PRINCIPLE
KEEP IT SWEET AND SIMPLE!



It can be very easy to say (write) a lot because you can ... not because you should! What do you do when you see that dreaded wall of words if all you're wanting is a link to buy a product, or a phone number or contact form? Remember, as with a lot of things in life, less is more.

I'm talking about 'day to day' products and services here, e.g. accountants, equipment repairs, office supplies, plumbers, builders, fashion boutique the doctor, vet, etc, etc. If, for example, you're a rocket scientist or offer highly specialised consulting services, it would be far more challenging (and you probably wouldn't be creating a website for mass consumption) but you do still need to know the same information.

Whether it's an online store, a brochure site, a one-pager, or a larger site, you need to be able to articulate a few things:

What do you do/sell?

Who is it for?

What's the benefit for your customers, ie why should they choose you?

How do customers contact you or buy something?

GO, NOW, AND WRITE DOWN YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH IN 50 WORDS OR LESS. READ IT OUT,
WOULD YOU BUY WHATEVER IT IS YOU'RE SELLING?

WHO ARE YOUR COMPETITORS? WHAT MAKES YOUR BUSINESS DIFFERENT?

You need to know who your competitors are.

WHAT IS IT THAT YOU DO BETTER THAN YOUR COMPETITORS? WHAT IS IT THAT SETS YOU APART FROM WHAT THEY OFFER?

- ▶ If you're a restaurant, do you use fresh local, produce?
- ▶ If you're a clothing boutique, do you buy from local designers, or only from manufacturers who have ethical production processes.
- ▶ Do you offer free shipping or a no questions asked return policy?
- ▶ If you're a plumber or a builder, do you actually turn up at the time you say you'll be there?
- ▶ Do you have a unique product that you can't buy anywhere else?
- ▶ Do you offer any purchase+free, e.g. 24 hour access to the gym, or a discount for referring a customer.

There will be hundreds of examples that can demonstrate a point of difference - you need to know the ones that are specific to your business, products and services.

Who are your top 3 competitors?

What do you already do that's different from them?

What could you add to your products/services that would give you an edge over your competitors?



PLANNING CONTENT

This is without doubt the most difficult thing to do - and the thing most of my clients find the most challenging! So challenging in fact, that they would almost prefer to get someone to write for them than to have to do it themselves!

I think the impediment to writing content is not knowing who you're writing for, i.e. your ideal customer and what you're writing about, i.e. your products/services. But you know that don't you?!

For a new website, a client might say to me they "just" need an about page, and a contact page .. oh and maybe a page about services. If you dig a bit deeper, there's always more!

So... this is one of the easiest way I've ever found to plan content for a small-medium site, and trust me when I say I've tried them all!

- Find a blank wall somewhere
- Grab some Postlt Notes
- Write down everything you think you need to include on your website
- Stick them up on the wall
- Arrange them into groups
- Leave it alone for 24 hours
- Revisit and re-arrange
- Leave it alone for 24 hours.
- Repeat as necessary!



You might do it in one go, or you might need to go through this exercise a few times but for a reasonably straightforward site, 3 revisions is usually enough.

Don't stress too much about this - you can always revisit later, but the time to think about content is NOT when you design your site - you need to start thinking about it now because it may affect how you actually set up your site when you're ready to go!

If you have any content, e.g. brochures, start collecting it together because you will need it.

We'll cover writing actual words for the website later in the program but to get you thinking about it, here's some starters for pages you may need on your site (in no particular order):

- About the business
- About you
- Services
- Contacts: phone / physical / map / form / phone / social media
- Prices
- Availability
- Products + variations, e.g. you sell t-shirts in 10 colours and 10 sizes Shopping cart (or not!)
- Terms and conditions
- Conditions of use
- Policies, e.g. refunds, shipping, returns
- Image gallery or videos
- Downloadable documents, e.g. brochures, user manuals
- Event calendar
- Booking calendar
- Blog: categories / topics
- Member directory
- Professional associations
- Testimonials
- Frequently asked questions

Write down any other pages you think you'll need. Think about the questions your customers ask you - these may give you some good ideas for additional information on your website.

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You can (and should) revisit this from time to time.
Don't stress about getting it 100% right now.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT ...

- Be clear about what you want; but be open to suggestions.
- Use the technology to your advantage, don't let the technology be the decider - just because it's the latest thing doesn't necessarily mean it will work for you.
- Ask questions and get feedback ... but be selective about that feedback. Just because your partner/kids/relatives think something is a good idea for your website doesn't necessarily make it so!
- Do some brainstorming, a mind map (see tonybuzan.com if you want to find out more), meditate on it .. whatever works for you!
- Keep a list somewhere - use 'notes' on your phone, your journal, a paper list, something where you can jot down any ideas that you want to think about incorporating ... sometimes a random thought can lead you to something awesome!
- Do you have a logo (do you want one?)
- Does the information you need exist (it's hard to create a website from nothing ... even though I've had to do it sometimes!) - brochures, info from suppliers, even your business plan will have some information you can use.
- Do you have images (and not ones you've Googled!)
- Do you have a style or colour scheme in mind? e.g. If you have a quirky little bookshop, make sure that quiriness translates to your website.
- Are there sites that you like? What do you like about them?
- Do you have a budget?
- Do you have a deadline?
- How much time do you want to spend on your website - now and in future?

We'll cover all of this during the program ... but it's good to start thinking about it now!

ABOVE ALL, REMEMBER... YOUR WEBSITE IS ABOUT YOUR CUSTOMERS (NOT YOU!)

WHAT'S NEXT?

The next steps in this journey will start with registering your domain (website address) and a few other one-off jobs that are vital to getting the bones of your website set up.

And after that we'll cover a host of topics including email, setting up WordPress, plugins, design, themes, colours, images, writing all kinds of content and more!

But first, you need to FINISH YOUR 'HOMEWORK! If you've done that, well done ... you're on your way to having your website plan good to go.

Have some fun with it, and keep your plan handy. After you've created and published your website, you should refer back to your website plan regularly (like your business plan), and refresh and adjust as necessary.

I look forward to welcoming you to The Website School - your website is going to be amazing!

MORE INFORMATION

For more information, go to thewbsiteschool.com.au.

Contact me via the website or by email to hello@thewbsiteschool.com.au.

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