



## Article : Key Points to Improve Your Web Site

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We have compiled a list of key points which are proven to help improve your web site:

- ▶ **1. Ensure that your site design is simple and consistent**
- ▶ **2. Ensure that you have a unique selling point**
- ▶ **3. Make it easy for your visitors and customers to contact you**
- ▶ **4. Avoid advertising other sites using banner ads**
- ▶ **5. Ensure you have good content**
- ▶ **6. Give your visitors a reason to come back**
- ▶ **7. Add an opt-in newsletter**
- ▶ **8. Ensure that your site is error-free**
- ▶ **9. Give visitors and customers instant feedback**
- ▶ **10. Ensure that your website is accessible for visitors with disabilities**
- ▶ **11. Avoid large graphics or Flash animations**
- ▶ **12. Ensure that your site's homepage loads in under 10 seconds**
- ▶ **13. Ensure that visitors can find your site!**
- ▶ **14. Respect the privacy of your visitors**

### **Ensure that your site design is simple and consistent**

Ensure that the design of your site is both simple and consistent. An over-complicated, clunky site will result in visitors who won't stay for long and definitely won't return. You should also ensure that they are able to easily navigate around the site, know where they are and be only one click away from the home page.

The best department stores are easy to find which are well laid out with uncluttered aisles. Prices are clearly labelled and you can find the checkout easily. If you need help with your purchase, there are sales assistants available to help.

### **Ensure that you have a unique selling point**

There will be 10s or 100s of sites offering the same products or services that your site does. You need to stand out from the crowd with at least one unique selling point. That selling point can be price, service, quality or just about anything. Just remember to sell it!

### **Make it easy for your visitors and customers to contact you**

In order to be able to gain credibility in a possibly overcrowded market, make sure that your visitors know how to get hold of you in the event of either a problem or even to praise you. Also, provide as many ways of contacting you as possible including email, telephone or live support.

### **Avoid advertising other site using banner ads**

Although banner advertising can bring additional revenue, they often detract from the prime purpose of your site. If you do need to include banner ads, ensure that they are placed logically based on the content of your site. Also, do not let them dominate a page. Content is king! Remember that most visitors hate pop-ups and pop-unders. They may pay more highly than banner ads, but you will lose custom if you use them on your site. Also be aware that your ad-server could serve your competitor's ads!

### **Ensure you have good content**

A nice looking website with no content won't attract returning visitors or customers. Great content is difficult to establish but is worth the effort. Don't copy content from other sites, make your content your unique selling point.

### **Give your visitors a reason to come back**

Your visitors have found your site, but you need to ensure that they return again and again and also recommend your site to their friends. This involves making your site sticky! First, make it easy for your visitors to add a bookmark for your site. Hold regular competitions to make sure visitors keep coming back to check if they have won. Make sure that you regularly add news articles to your site and if you are promoting forthcoming events or features, make sure that you stick to them.

### **Add an opt-in newsletter**

A regular newsletter is a great way of reminding occasional visitors about your website. Within your newsletter you can include details of what's happening at the site, forthcoming promotions and special deals. Don't send too many newsletters though otherwise they'll not be read and may be treated as spam. Also ensure that they contain great content and remind your visitors of your unique selling points. The better the content, the more chance that its recipients will pass the newsletter onto their friends and colleagues.

### **Ensure that your site is error-free**

In a rush to get a new feature added to you site, you may inadvertently introduce errors. Our best advice is to carefully check your site in a test environment prior to publishing. Check spelling, grammar, graphics and broken links in particular.

### **Give visitors and customers instant feedback**

If your site requires registration, ensure that you provide instant feedback via your website and email that the registration has been successful. This gives your visitors the feeling that they are important. Ensure that if a visitor purchases from your ecommerce site that they receive instant confirmation of their order. This confirmation should include full details of their purchase including delivery date and links to enable them to track or cancel their order. If you provide a delivery date, ensure that you can meet it and if for some reason you can't, let them know as soon as possible.

### **Ensure that your website is accessible to visitors with disabilities**

It is vitally important that in your site's design that you cater for visitors with disabilities. Ensure that all images have associated alt-text descriptions and provide facilities that enable your visitors are able to customise the way that your site is presented.

### **Avoid large graphics or Flash animations**

Large graphics and Flash not only take up valuable server space, increase bandwidth usage but will also slow down your site. Ensure that you optimise all graphics using a graphics package.

If you do include Flash animation, add the option for your visitors to skip the animation.

### **Ensure that your site's homepage loads in under 10 seconds**

You will lose a lot of visitors before they get chance to browse your site if your home page takes longer than 10 seconds to load. Ensure that you reduce the number of graphics and optimise your homepage to load as quickly as possible but still entice your visitors to dig deeper into your site.

### **Ensure that visitors can find your site!**

Even the greatest idea for a website will not receive visitors if they don't know about it. Publicising and marketing your site is of prime importance. The most common means of promoting your site is via search engines. Search engines rank pages based on different criteria. However, the main ones rank based on link popularity (the number of sites linking to yours) and the relevance of meta-tags (including page title and keywords) to the main page content.

Submitting your site can be time-consuming but given the percentage of traffic that you will receive from search engines, this time is well spent. In order to get your site listed, you can either use free or paid submission to the search engines. Free submission is popular but the downside is that it can take weeks or months for sites to be listed. Paid submission can result in sites be listed quicker, often in 24 to 48 hours. Be wary of services that promote 'submit your site to 1000s of search engines' as these simply won't provide the desired effect and may result in you being banned from the major search engine.

Other means of promoting your website are via affiliate programmes where other websites host adverts for your site and earn a fixed fee per click, lead or a percentage per sale.

### **Respect the privacy of your visitors**

With the dramatic increase in spam and online fraud, it is vital that the privacy of your visitors is maintained. Your site should contain a privacy policy that clearly identifies the measures that you take to ensure that their information is kept private. Do not sell or pass on your visitor details to 3rd parties. Under certain circumstances where personal data about your visitors is stored electronically, you will need to provide notification under the Data Protection Act.