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# The 5 things you must do when you design your website

SUCCESS

by Matthew Simmons

*We all have views on what constitutes a great website.*

*But your website is now the foundation of your marketing armory, and it must reflect you, your brand and products in the best possible light.*

*So, naturally, we would obviously recommend you have a professional design agency do it for you!*

*But whatever route you choose, here are 5 tips that are must have's and if your agency doesn't tick these boxes - find another!*

## Customers must be able to find your website

I know its really obvious, but before we start on anything else, potential customers need to find your website! If you are starting a fresh site, then SEO (Search Engine Optimisation – another subject entirely) needs to be at the front of the strategy. Content, keyword density, structure navigation and choice of programming language are all crucial to making it easy for the search engines to find your site.

You should be looking to create high quality content and relevant links into your site from the outside world.

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## Look through the customer's eyes - what do they want to learn?

This is what the search engines are looking for and is what will help you get up the rankings for searches in your sector.

If you have the choice, buy a URL (that's the words between 'www.' and '.com') that relates to your company name, product or service.

Put the URL onto every single piece of online and offline collateral and if you've just created a new site, tell all your customers about it –point them to it and invite comment.

## Make content interesting and dynamic

At the very least you need to ensure clarity in the detail – communicate clearly what you do and the benefits of the services or products you offer.

Choose fonts that are easy to read – if in doubt use verdana.  Verdana is a typeface that was designed specifically for reading on screen – makes sense to use it for web-copy.

Then choose a background colour that does not interfere with readability – and if in doubt make it white or pale grey.

### It should load quickly

### Make it easy to read.

Once you have got a prospect to your site, you need to keep them there!

In an ideal world your content will be compelling, dynamic and should be re-freshed regularly – to keep the punters coming back.

Even in these days of high-speed broadband, your customers get irritated waiting for a flash-animated home-page to load up – fact – you've got about 10-20 seconds.  If you are going to use video or flash–animations, use them for product demonstrations or, for example, a gallery of past work.

It is important to get the style over substance right. Customers need to be impressed BUT not at the expense of functionality. They are browsing you website seeking information, not to be wowed by your web-designer's flash programming skills!

## Consistent Layout and Easy Navigation.

You need to keep your prospects on your site for as long as you can. Make it easy for them to find their way around by using consistent page layouts so that navigation menus are in the same place each time.

This means a reader does not need to readjust their thinking each time they go to another interesting page. And the navigation needs to be easy and consistently applied.

You need to ensure that a prospect to get to and from pages with ease. You want them to be concentrating on the content - in other words what your, your products (or services) can do for them – not trying to work out how to get back to the contact form!

**Make it easy to browse and read**

## Make it easy for customers to contact you

Once prospective customers have found your website – make it easy from them to contact you. Put your phone number on at least the front page, even better on every page in a prominent position – top right is a pretty good start.

Have full details of you company on specific contact page, include company registration number and address – it lends credibility.

And finally have a contact form on the site – you can do this on the front page – to capture prospects' details so you can send them newsletters and further information.

Give us a call or drop me an email if you need help.

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