

Creating an Effective Website.

Every Business and Club should have a web site. Remember that if you're not on the Web, you can guarantee that your competitors are! Your web site should not be simply a brochure on line; it should be much more than this.

Don't be daunted by the thought of creating your own web site. It is no longer a difficult task. ZyWeb has been designed specifically to enable anyone to create a web site, from the junior secretary through to the Managing Director. If you create your own web site you will have the added advantage of being able to update it as often as you like, when you like. Essentially, it puts you in total control.

ZyWeb is a browser based authoring tool which is controlled on the web server so that you simply access it through your web browser, which is generally far easier to use and you have no complex software to learn. This also allows you to access your website from any Internet connected device from anywhere in the world. This is great for the travelling businessman or whilst away on vacation. Of course, the web site hosting is fully included.

This is far easier and quicker than the desktop web authoring tools such as Frontpage and Dreamweaver which are based on the more traditional DTP (desktop publishing) principles so if you want to include graphics then you have to use a package such as photoshop or paintshop pro and then you will import the graphics files into your pages. You will then need to upload them to the web server via a system called ftp.

Designing your website:

Before you begin to create your Web site, spend some time planning what the purpose of the site will be, what content it will contain, and how to structure it. Planning before you begin helps you create a Web site that has a unified look and a well-designed structure.

Putting your business on the Web will require new ways of thinking. To help evaluate your needs look at various perspectives for your business on the web:

- Information Distributor – Determine your information relationship with your customer. What do you need to tell the customer, or prospective customer? What format best suits your product or service, pictures, text or graphics?
- Information Gathering/Market Research – Get to know your customer or prospective customer. What information do you need from them? Include a feedback form on your web site.
- Marketing versus Sales – Is the site going to be a promotional tool or a selling platform. Will customers gain decision making information quickly?
- Customer Quantity versus Quality – Will the website increase the number of customers that you can reach? Will it expand your business to a new demographic of customer?
- Satisfaction Measurement – Ensure that you monitor the statistics to determine whether the site is effective. What are the number of hits? Has it extended the reach of the customers? Has it reduced print and postage costs? Has it reduced sales and distribution costs?
- Revenue – Examine new markets and revenue streams that can be generated from your web site.

Your own Domain Name

Make it easy for your customers to find you on the Internet with your own unique domain name (also known as an Internet address or URL) for example www.yourname.co.uk. Having your own domain name also makes your email address consistent and meaningful, eg Joe@yourname.co.uk and it means that you don't have to change it when you change ISP

Thousands of domains are being registered every day so we strongly recommend that you register your domain name now, otherwise you may find your company name already taken. You can register for your domain name by selecting the 'Extra Services' button from within your FileStore in ZyWeb.

Appearance of your Website:

Above all else you must ensure that your website looks professional to give a good 'first impression'. ZyWeb's unique inbuilt graphics enable you to create a professional, good looking site easily.

Navigation - Many visitors will arrive at your home page; make sure that your visitors can get a general idea of what's on your site and can easily access the different pages. You can do this with the use of navigation buttons.

However, keep in mind that not all of your visitors arrive at your home page first. For this reason, it's a good idea to make it easy to return to your home page from other pages in your site, by including a link to the home page. Your material should be organised so that your visitors understand it.

You will need to lead your visitor through your site so that their eye flows from one element to the next. Don't put pictures next to unrelated text. You might know what you mean, but your visitors sure won't.

Positioning - A few more tips for positioning words and pictures on your new site. Most of us are used to reading English and other European languages from left to right and top to bottom. Our eyes are used to going to the top left corner of a page - so place the information that you want people to see first up there and arrange other elements to flow across and down the page in decreasing order of importance. Don't put too many distracting links to other pages or topics all over the place.

Graphics & photos - Don't get carried away with graphics, photos or typefaces. You should be conscious of the download time as you don't want your visitors to go off as your page takes too long to view. ZyWeb produces optimised graphics and photos which are a high quality resolution, whilst be small in size and hence quick to download.

Style - Try to keep a similar style throughout your pages. Colour will make your page look great. Colours will make it distinctive and memorable and colours also have strong psychological effects that can set moods or convey feelings. Most web sites are set in a theme colour throughout. A small vivid splash on the graphics will have a great effect to highlight something but vivid splashes everywhere will be overwhelming. You should, ideally, use only 2 colours with shades of those colours.

Colours - Legibility is vital - your page needs to be read! So adequate contrast is the answer; light type, dark background, dark type, light background. Obviously black and white give the maximum contrast, but that's boring. Colour contrast creates powerful effects. Cool colours, greens, blues, tend to calm, while warm colours, reds, yellows tend to excite. Dark colours can convey heavy and oppressive feelings while light colours promote open airy feelings.

Here are a few sure-fire colour combinations. Stick to light coloured backgrounds, white or light grey, tan, light blue, light green or pale yellow. Use black or dark coloured text on these backgrounds. Avoid bright text colours on light backgrounds. Large, bold text can be coloured in strong colours - try bright red, orange or blue, but don't overdo it. Use light type on dark backgrounds in small areas where you want to attract attention

Interactive - Make the site interactive to retain the concentration of the visitor for the maximum amount of time. Ideally, build interactivity into the opening home page screen with the use of clickable navigational buttons. The wording of the label on the link should prompt the visitor to take action. Highlight buttons to take visitors to special areas and always put the more important ones at the top. Remember to lead the visitor through your site.

Update your Website regularly:

A failing with many web sites is that they are not kept up to date. You should edit your site frequently to add or remove information, products or pictures. Tell the world about a new special deal on a product. Visitors are more likely to keep on coming back if they see something new every time! Here are some changes you should do:

- Change the designs or the colours but you must ensure that you retain your identity brand.
- Update your products and prices
- Scrolling text. Use moving messages catch the attention of the visitor and use it to announce news.
- Audio message – include an audio message to announce news.

- News – ensure that you keep your news up to date. Provide interesting news to your Visitors.

Make your Website interesting to your Visitors:

Your primary objective with your website is to attract and retain visitors, both new prospective customers and existing customers. You want to convert the prospects into actual customers and you need to retain existing customers. You can become a reference point or 'portal' to extend the length of time that visitors are on your site so that you can also gain revenues by selling advertising or sponsorship on your site. Interesting features for your website include:

Relevant articles - If you are a lawyer specialising in Employment law then have some articles on some of the regulations, health & safety requirements, etc. Become known as a reference site on those specialist topics. Not only will it attract and retain visitors but it will also show you to be an industry expert.

Forums or newsgroups – Initiate some forums or newsgroups so that your customers and prospects can communicate amongst themselves. Many companies use forums for support and it is very often the case that members answer each others' queries.

Industry news – Include some relevant industry news.

Links to other sites – provide links to other sites that are of interest, in the case of the lawyer they would like to relevant government sites, Health and Safety information, etc.

Prize Draws and Competitions – you could run a competition and have a form on your website for the entries to be emailed to you.

Use your Website for CRM:

CRM (customer relationship Marketing). Use your website to build a relationship with your visitors and customers. There are various different uses when you put a form on your website and have the results emailed back to yourself:

- Feedback forms – use these for comments or suggestions.
- Questionnaires – use these for market research.
- Product information requests.
- Customer support queries

Web Site Promotion:

Promotion of your web site is a key element to its success. When you have completed your web site you must let people know that it is there. Put your email address and site address on all your stationery - business cards, letterheads, even business vehicles. Use email to tell all your friends, far-flung family, customers and business colleagues. Use snail mail to tell those who are not switched on yet. They may know someone who is!

Register your site with the search engines and directories, as many as possible. Use the Web Site submission accessed by selecting the 'Extra Services' button from within your Filestore in ZyWeb. Your webpages have a 'metatag' which include a brief description and your keywords. The list of key words that you provide will be used by the search engines to match the required word to that which a user has requested. You should submit your home page once a month. Do not do it too frequently otherwise the search engines reject the entry as being 'spam'.

Tracking your Visitors:

You have now published your website and taken all the right steps to attract visitors and, very importantly, keep those same visitors coming back. Now you need to monitor its effectiveness. You can use the simple visitor counter to monitor the visitors, but measuring the effectiveness will require a good analysis tool, such as the RealTracker module from the 'Insert Module' option within the ZyWeb builder. You will be able to monitor when the busy times of day are for visitors on your site, where they are coming from, ie how they are finding their way to your site, their 'surfing' behaviour within your site, etc.

Success

ZyWeb is the ideal tool to enable you to easily create a professional, good looking web site. The content is in your hands. You have achieved success for your web site if it:

- Fulfils its purpose
- Creates a lasting first impression
- Generates prospects for conversion into customers
- Assists customer retention
- Provides good cost effective customer service
- Increases your revenues

Extending your Web Site

If you don't have the time to create your initial web site but would like to have the control to update it in the future or if you wish to add any extra features onto your website but don't have the skills or the time to do it then our sister company, Zynet, can do this for you. Contact steve@zynet.com