

## **Liven up your website**

It's intriguing to see that while some companies adopt an innovative approach to their website, others use a standard template and many more make some quite fundamental mistakes. If your business has a website and you're happy that it's delivering all the things you want to achieve from it, that's fine. If you don't yet have a website or doubt the value of spending time updating or upgrading it, you may find that what follows offers some food for thought.

### **Who is the website for?**

It's essential to ensure that your website contains appropriate messages targeted at your key audiences, but you'd be surprised how many get this basic element wrong. Existing customers are rarely a key audience for any company's website, in most cases customers will contact you directly when they need your help and will only go to your website if you have directed them there. The real target audience for a company's website normally includes:

- Prospects who have been recommended to the business.
- Prospects who have found the site when searching online.
- Ambassadors and advocates of the business and the directors e.g. bankers, solicitors and other networking contacts who want to check out what the directors have told them about the company.
- Suppliers and prospective suppliers.
- Finally, and this is a commonly overlooked but often very important audience, prospective staff or investors.

### **Basic information**

Once the website's target audience has been identified, the next step is ensuring that they get what they came for. Is it easy enough for visitors to find that information or will they be sidetracked by numerous other pages and unable to find their way back to the key data?

As a bare minimum your site should identify what you do, who you do it for, what makes you different, where you're based and how visitors can get in touch with you using their preferred method (phone, email, or post) or, if you are able to persuade them as to how it benefits them, your preferred method (i.e. filling out a form online to receive a quote without talking to anyone first).

Do you or colleagues waste time or lose prospective leads because they speak to the 'wrong' person when they call? It might be worth considering how best to direct them to the 'right' person through your website.

## **Am I in the right place?**

The main objective for many companies' websites is to help generate new clients. Some invest in search engine optimisation (SEO) or arrange a 'pay per click' campaign using Google adwords. This article won't go into too much detail about these, but suffice to say that such efforts are a waste of money if the landing page on your website fails to provide the information being sought by the web user. There are a couple of points to remember in each case:

### **Search Engine Optimisation**

It doesn't matter that you feel comfortable to service new clients across the UK. Most people who search the web for a new supplier are looking for someone local to where they are based. Your website will never rank highly for SEO purposes unless it incorporates key search terms on the home page and in the title tags. Remember that few new customers will come from people searching for your business name. They will be searching for generic terms and your site needs to be optimised to beat the local competition.

### **Adwords**

In this case you're hoping that the advert catches someone's eye while they are searching for a supplier. Instead of clicking on a search result you want them to click on your advert. If they do, you will 'pay per click'. However, bear in mind that you'll be wasting your money if the advert leads to a generic page on your website that makes no specific reference to the subject matter of the advert.

### **Who should I ask for?**

It's astonishing how many company websites fail to provide visitors with the name of the principal or indeed of anyone in the business. Even where there is a list of directors profiles, the 'contact us' page often simply has a phone number and an info@ style email address. I think it's a fundamental mistake to omit the use of a name on the 'contact us' page. People buy people. However many (or few) calls you get at the moment, you will get more once you identify yourself.

If you have security concerns or 'size' issues, use your secretary's name or the name of the secretary you would engage if you were big enough or bothered enough to have one. This also enables you to immediately identify callers who have come via your website as they are the only ones to ask for that person when they get through to you.

Some company's prefer email rather than phone as they are often out of the office. Others provide only an office number and hope that visitors will leave a message if there's no answer. Relatively few strangers will leave a message on their first call to a prospective new business contact. If a real person doesn't answer the phone, the visitor calls someone else.

If you're unable to answer the phone personally when a new prospect rings, consider engaging a virtual reception service. You can't force people to leave messages on an answerphone or to make their first contact with you by email. You can try and some may do as you want, but many others will simply chose to move onto the next accountant's website.

### **Losing prospective staff**

Imagine for a moment that your business has placed a recruitment advert in the professional press. What do you think is the first thing that any half decent candidate is going to do these days if the advert catches their eye?

Anyone worth their salt is going to check your website. Companies tell us that they can't recruit enough good staff. There are more vacancies than good quality candidates. Which firms do you think the good quality candidates choose to visit? I suggest it's those whose websites make the firms seem attractive places to work.

### **REMEMBER!!**

**However effective your website is at converting visitors, will it present the necessary information to a good quality candidate? For example, does it have a 'careers' page or a bland 'vacancies' page, as if you were a supermarket with vacancies for additional cashiers or cleaners? To our mind, a professional company should be enticing new recruits by talking about their potential careers with the firm rather than simply the positions the firm wants to fill.**