

TECH
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WHITE

Keep ahead of online competition

VERY often the first port of call for your customers is your website. In an instant they will be gaining an impression of your business. Does it look credible and reliable? Do they have good credentials? Where are they located? Can I trust them?

Your website is a key element. Whether predominantly trading online or offline, getting your online presence right should help to build your reputation and therefore your business.

The design, content and overall experience of your website should let your business personality shine through. Make clear what you do. But think about what is important to the visitor and importantly, what it is you want them to do when they are there.

For example, do you want them to buy something, sign up to a newsletter, email or telephone you or get a sales person to visit?

When reviewing your website, devise a strategy. The order can vary, but this gives you a starting point.

Stage one is planning and review. Get feedback from existing customers. Study any statistical information you have, for example from Google Analytics. This will give you information such as the amount of visitors, pages viewed, how long they were on the site.

Stage two is design. This includes the aesthetics, how the user interface works and the overall user experience. Make sure navigation is clear, and make it obvious what is important. Text should have a clear hierarchy. Then there's photographs. Make sure any images are of a high standard and, ideally, unique to your website.

Stage three is functionality. This means any unique features that run on your website, such as order forms, sign up areas, e-commerce systems and forums. These are always changing and new features are always being developed.

The main thing to consider is that any functionality is there to improve the visitor experience.

Stage four is search optimisation. It enables your business website to be found easily. Research your keywords carefully and ensure they are included and updated regularly.

Stage five is testing. Thoroughly test your website, get associates and customers to use the site and report back any issues.

Stage six is launch. Don't forget to tell everyone about your new website.

Stage seven is feedback and review. You need to ensure that you stay ahead of the competition.

It can be a detailed process but if done correctly, you should reap the rewards and stay ahead of the competition.

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