

## Is your website working?

“If your website doesn’t work then why have one?”

Most company websites start out creating high expectations for the company only to disappoint several months later. The website was seen as a new route to market that was going to achieve its objective - whether it was to generate sales leads, increase transactions or get prospective customers to sign-up for services, such as newsletters.

So where did it all go wrong?

Unfortunately whilst many websites are designed to look attractive they are not effective in meeting the objectives of the website which should have been set when the website was first created. All too often the website objectives are not even considered when the website is initially created.

Any good website designer's first question shouldn't be focused on the appearance of the website, but on the objectives of the website. Whilst a website can be a critical marketing and sales tool for a company it should not be created just for the sake of having a website. A route many companies have taken.

Once a list of objectives has been determined a website can be designed to meet these objectives. Moreover it should be created in such a way that it is flexible and upgradeable so that it can evolve as the company changes over time. The appearance of the website meeting the expectations of both the company and the visitors should be taken as given.

So what do you do if you have a website that disappoints and have no preset website objectives?

The worst approach is to do nothing, as you end up not maximising the potential of your website whilst still incurring the cost and missing out on a huge opportunity cost. Furthermore the website may negatively impact your brand or reputation if you have a professional company image and yet a website that has a non-existent presence.

Start with the basics and really define what are you trying to achieve through your website. Create objectives that are realistic and are consistent with your company's overall marketing and sales strategy. Make sure that you have identified your target market and you know what you want to tell them AND critically what you want them to do as a result. The website should be an integral part of your marketing effort. It must complement your other routes to market and maintain and enhance the image and branding of your company.

### So what objectives should a website have?

Depending on your product, service and target market you may have objectives that are aimed at generating sales leads, carrying out online transactions or providing key information to your focussed market. You may be trying to get your visitors to sign-up for a newsletter or a subscription service. You may be using the website to show yourself as an authority or an expert in a particular specialised area, or establishing your brand and reputation in a particular market. Once you have identified your objectives they should be prioritised. Some may be complementary and by focussing on one you may achieve several of the others as well.

It is only at this stage that you can return to your existing website and truly evaluate it relative to your objectives. The changes to the website can now be identified and carried out. You are now in a position to move ahead with your company website so that it can truly contribute to your company.