

Website Templates – You get what you pay for

“Quality has a price - something that is cheap is cheap for a reason.”

As the internet becomes ever more crowded with not only websites, but also potential customers, being able to have an effective website is vital whether you are a 1 man company or a large national company.

Many small companies take the approach to having a website by buying a cheap website template. They copy information from a company brochure and then struggle to get it up and running on the internet. The website templates are available on the internet with user-interfaces to choose a range of styles, colours and fill in various boxes with text. They appear relatively cheap with a monthly fee for support and hosting. So what could go wrong?

To start with they are satisfied they have a website that people can visit, find out information and then contact the company and buy their services or products. Oh...if life was so simple.

The original mantra 15 years ago was “If you build it they will come.” It didn’t work 15 years ago and it still doesn’t work today. Most of these companies that take this cheap template approach ultimately find out that the website disappoints and doesn’t contribute to the business at all. It actually becomes a drain on resources and represents a cost-centre and not a profit-centre.

They hadn’t really questioned this – they had taken for granted that, of course, it would benefit their business. The reason that they ultimately realise, is that the website lives in obscurity, within a huge ocean that the internet represents. If a website can’t be found then it isn’t worth having. Potential customers are not even aware they exist.

I receive many enquiries from companies who have these types of template websites. In desperation they have heard of search engine optimisation (SEO) and hope it can transform their website from an unmitigated disaster to the main generator of sales enquiries. Unfortunately many template designs, whilst looking attractive have major constraints on being optimised as there are limitations on what

can and can't be changed - whether it is the underlying coding or the visible text to the human visitor of the website. To appear high up in the search engine rankings is vital for any company website that aspires to generate business. As the internet becomes more crowded it becomes harder and harder.

If you are not present within the top pages of the search engines then you are missing most of the visitors. In the search engines the top 30 results get 90% of the traffic and the top 10 results receive nearly 80% more traffic than those in positions 11 – 30 achieve.

So many attractively designed template websites are never found by just the type of potential customer that is looking for just the types of services or products that the website provides. And what makes it worse the owners of the website thought they were saving money by buying an off-the-shelf template website.

So is the cheap option really effective – not if you want a website that is a profit centre.

Potential customers are increasing using the internet to not only research products and services but also to carry out online transactions and where necessary contact the service provider. For many effective websites this has opened a floodgate of potential new customers where distance is no longer an issue and customer loyalty is no longer present. A properly designed website which has had search engine optimisation techniques applied may well cost significantly more than a template website.

However for those companies who have realised this and have avoided the cheap template websites, they can have an effective and profitable website rather than a costly obscure website that nobody knows exists (apart from the owner).