

The Website Trap



...and how to avoid it
an opinion by Paul Smith
Unicorn Web Design **Version 1**
(all rights reserved)

What is the "Website Trap"?

Over the years I have viewed many thousands of Websites and pages, some good and some bad (in my humble opinion). This White paper is intended to present many of the observations I have made over this time.

There isn't actually a single "Website Trap", there are many of them. Perhaps it is more like a minefield...the trick is to avoid as many mines as possible.



Firstly, we need to start at the beginning. Every good Website starts with thorough planning. When planning your Website you should consider things like:

- *do I need a Website?*
- *why do I need a Website?*
- *who is going to host my Website?*
- *who is going to build my Website?*
- *who is going to maintain my Website?*
- *what product is my Website going to be developed with?*
- *what functionality does my Web Server need?*
- *what are my email requirements?*
- *what are my storage requirement?*
- *what are my traffic requirements?*

...thats just a start, but you get the idea. **The solution: *Consult a Professional***, preferably before you embark on a new Website, but if thats not possible, all is not lost.

The "Park the Car in the Garage" Syndrome



This one has to be my personal favourite!

Ask yourself the following:

- *would you buy yourself an expensive new luxury car and leave it parked in your garage?*
- *would you entrust the servicing of your new luxury car to a someone who has just become a qualified mechanic, or worse still, your brother's kid who is a car "expert"?*
- *would you take your new luxury car to a spray painter and have it painted all colours of the rainbow, oh, and have them throw in a couple of fluffy dice in the process?*
- *would you hand over your car keys to someone who has just got their drivers licence?*

I could carry on with this analogy. But when taken in the context of Website design, it illustrates some interesting pitfalls.



So take that car of yours out of the garage; keep it well serviced by a real expert; show it off sure, but keep it tasteful; measure its performance and make sure you are in control of it at all times.

Some Website Design Tips



Employ the KISS Principal when designing your Website

KISS is an old business acronym that stands for:

K eep
I t
S imple
S tupid

This is pretty self explanatory, but keep your Website simple. If you make it complicated, you will confuse visitors to your site and they will leave and probably not return to it.

It doesn't matter how much cool or interesting stuff you have to tell your prospective customers. You may have the best products in the world, but if they can't find what they're looking for, they will probably leave your Website in frustration.

Try to keep your Website consistent in it's navigation structure, clear and concise.



Be SMART

Yep, SMART is yet another old business acronym that stands for:

S pecific

M easurable

A chieveable

R ealistic

T imely

Specific

Being specific applies to the planning of your Website as well as the content of your site. In the planning phase be specific about what objectives you have for the site and what you want it to achieve.

When designing your Website make sure your site design meets your business needs...[\(we can help here\)](#).

Measurable

How do you measure the success of your Website. Unfortunately there is no simple answer to this question. Hopefully you have internal systems to measure sales and gross profit that may help identify the effectiveness of your individual marketing initiatives, including your Website. Clearly you need to take the costs of implementing and maintaining your Website into account when making this analysis.

There are ways of measuring the "hits"/"page loads" your Websites gets (there is a difference). This is of dubious value unless it's done in conjunction with other marketing/promotional activity...[\(we can help here\)](#).

Of more use are other statistics such as the number of new visitors and returning visitors to your Website...[\(we can help here\)](#).

Achievable/Realistic

I have put these two together because they go hand in hand. Don't set unrealistic goals for the your success of your Website. Typically, the effectiveness of your Website will grow slowly, although there are ways to hasten this process...[\(we can help here\)](#). Be patient and follow these rules.

Timely

Put the goals and milestones for your Website to a timeline, making sure that these are achievable and realistic.

In other words, Project Manage the development and implementation of your Website. Remembering that things often take longer than expected, and therefore be prepared for this...[\(we can help here\)](#).

A is Worth a Thousand Words

Yes, No, well Maybe?

Never, ever do what I just did. Do not use a picture as a substitute for a word. Never assume that a visitor to your Website will understand what you mean by this.

Pictures are great, but keep them to a minimum, to make a point and create impact.

Some Don'ts

- avoid the temptation to use too many; fonts, colours, pictures, animations or sounds.
- any multimedia objects, like pictures, animations and sounds should be relevant and appropriate.
- don't make assumptions about your visitors and how they will perceive your site. Remember there there are a lot lot of Internet "newbies" out there.

Some Do's

- use a consistent "theme" throughout your Website as much as possible.
- use fonts, colours, pictures and animations to add **IMPACT**, not just because they are there.
- make sure the above are consistent with your Website's theme and are relevant.
- follow the simple principals outlined in this document.
- stay in control of your Website at all times because no one knows your business better than you do.



Static vs Dynamic Websites

This is a whole subject on its own and a very important one. It's something that needs to be assessed in conjunction with the objectives of your Website and your own business needs. I would be happy to discuss your specific needs with you.

Conclusion

A Website **can** be a powerful addition to your sales and marketing arsenal...it can also be a financial burden, a distraction and an unnecessary, resource hungry white elephant. **So seek the advice of a professional.**

You may have noticed that this document has "Version 1" as part of it's title. The reason for this is that the document is a "work in progress". This is how your Website should be, embracing new ideas, promoting new products and services...constantly changing.

If you would like to talk to talk to me feel free to contact me on (07) 573-5547 or email unicornweb@orcon.net.nz, even if you have a Website or are considering one.