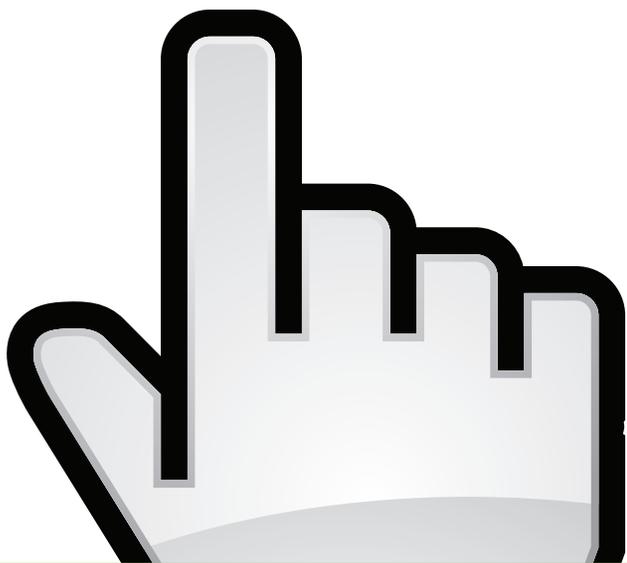


Web design guide

→ This guide can be found at www.pauldesigns.co.uk/pdflibrary/webguide.pdf



A clients guide to the web design process

Intro

A quick guide to web design

So, you're thinking about having a web site built for your business? Why may I ask, what do you want the web site to do, what are your long-term objectives? It's essential to plan the website with these objectives in mind from the outset.

A web site can be designed to suit any type of business, from a 3 page brochure site advertising a single product or service, to a fully functioning sales tool. Whatever type of web site you're planning, I can help your ideas become a reality, regardless of your turnover.

This document touches on all aspects of the website design process, it's designed to give you help and advice which will enable PaulDesigns to take your vision forward. Should you require further assistance please get in touch at www.pauldesigns.co.uk/contact.

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Identifying your goals and ambitions

What are your objectives? What are you hoping to achieve with your new website? Maybe it's to build your brand awareness, or save money, or sell products or services online. It could be to provide improved customer support. Once you have this vision, it's easier to steer the design process in the right direction.

It's also important to think about the structure of the website. What else do you need it to do? Maybe you also want to collect customers email addresses so that you can keep in touch with them easily, or maybe ask their opinions via an online survey. Whatever you need it's critical to plan at this stage. Think about the process of constructing a building; all the planning, architecture and designs are carried out before a single brick is laid, a website is no different.

Identifying your audience

What is your business? What's your average customer like? Are they young or old, male or female, wealthy, or less well-off? Maybe your business serves all these types and you don't have a typical customer. If you do specialise in a particular product or service it's very important to engage with your target audience, this can be done using colours, graphics and fonts.

Of course the way you deliver textual content is also crucial, should it be formal, professional, relaxed, or casual? Put yourself in your visitors shoes; what do they expect from your web site? How can we help them achieve their objectives?

Strengthening your sales

Maybe you already have a strong and recognisable brand - how can a website be used to strengthen it? Turning a prospect into a customer can be hard work but the more quality, and well presented information you give them the more likely they are to proceed with a sale. Use your website to tell potential customers exactly what you do, even down to the most smallest detail, even if it seems insignificant to you.

Present your website using brochures and quality images of you and your staff, your work, and the products you sell. Quality content is king - ask previous customers for testimonials, keep the web site up to date with news, special offers and updated products.

Make use of a contact form so that customers can get in touch easily. If you have business premises offer directions and mention local facilities such as parking, or public transport information. Make the most of your new web site, integrate your web and email address into press advertisements, leaflets and stationery such as business cards and letterheads to maximise traffic flow to the site.

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Choosing a www domain name

Getting the right domain name for your business is crucial to its success. Again, think about your target audience, and who you are trying to attract. A funny or quirky name could work against you, or a name with no meaning may be overlooked in search engine listings. There are some golden rules to follow when choosing a domain name :

- ▶ Make sure it's easy to spell
- ▶ Make sure it's easy to remember
- ▶ Keep it as short as possible
- ▶ Keep it relevant to your business audience
- ▶ Make sure it's not too similar to that of a competitors business name (even if they don't already have a web site).

Check out the Companies House web site to make sure you're not infringing on someone else's business name :<http://www.companieshouse.gov.uk/info>. Check to see if your preferred name is available : contact me. Once I have purchased your domain name (if you don't already have one) I'll be able to set-up email and webmail on your account. Domain names (even when purchased by me on your behalf) always remain registered in your name.

Logo design

What does your logo say about you and your business or maybe you don't have one yet? Again your logo should be based around your customers expectations and should clearly represent what your business offers. If you offer a fun, and leisure orientated business then your logo could be bright and quirky. If you offer a professional service then maybe your logo should be more reserved. If you run your business from your vehicle then your logo and website address details should be clear and easy to read by passing motorists.

The design of a web site is strongly based around its logo, everything from the font & colours used to its overall look and feel. If you don't yet have a logo, or you feel your existing version needs a makeover then take advantage of my logo design service. My logo design service includes 3 drafts, which are presented to you in PDF format, and/or full colour print. You will also receive copies in various formats on CD so you can paste the logo into your emails, adverts & publications etc..

The design process

Once the previous sections have been covered I'll have a clearer vision of what you're trying to achieve. By this stage I'll know your goals and ambitions. I'll also know more about you and your business and its customer base. It's now up to me to come up with a preview design that brings together all that we've discussed. I will start the process by putting down on paper a 'wire frame' design, which is a basic map of what the contents of the site will be, and how the pages will be linked together. Following on from the wire frame I will be able to design a graphical preview of what the website home page could look like.

This design prototype is a non functioning image that we can use to discuss and evaluate, making sure the design process is going in the right direction. Continued...

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The design process (continued)

During this process you can expect me to work closely with you, keeping in regular contact and meeting face-to-face (subject to distance) to discuss the design. It's at this stage that I will request from you the content that I'll need to place into the site, e.g. text, documents, terms and conditions, photos etc...

At this early stage it's necessary to discuss any *bolt-ons* you may want. Popular items include :

- ▶ WordPress Blog
- ▶ Twitter integration
- ▶ Twitter account branding
- ▶ Google Analytics installation
- ▶ Google Adwords Account Management
- ▶ Microsoft Outlook Exchange Email (*please see : www.pauldesigns.co.uk/pdflibrary/cloudservices.pdf*)
- ▶ Secure Remote file backups (*please see : www.pauldesigns.co.uk/pdflibrary/cloudservices.pdf*)

At this stage there is quite a lot to consider, but don't worry, I'll guide you throughout the process. If you ever need my help or advice I'm only a phone call or email away!

The build process

Now that all the groundwork has been completed it's time to move on to the actual build process. This doesn't mean that you can't make any further changes though, far from it. I want you to be extremely happy with your finished website so along the way I'll continue to liaise with you over the phone or by email to make sure the website is going in the right direction.

During the build process you will have access to the website so you can see it being built. You will be provided with a username and password so only you will have access. At this point I will require site content from you, for example images of yourself, staff, premises and any documents or brochures to be held on the web site. I will also need text content to fill the relevant pages.

You will be provided with a 'content request form' listing the items I will need from you to complete the build.

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Testing and the final review

Before you sign the website off it's important for both of us to check the design. Everything needs to be checked :

- ▶ Site works in all major browsers (Internet Explorer 6/7/8, Firefox, Safari & Chrome)
- ▶ All hyperlinks work
- ▶ Check text for spelling & errors
- ▶ Check code for accessibility

Don't worry if something is missed, it can easily be changed/updated once the site is live, but it's a good idea to make sure everything is spot-on for your first visitors.

Going live

Once I have received your final sign-off I will remove any passwords protecting your site. I will also submit the web site to Google (the world's most popular search engine), BING, Yahoo & Ask for ranking. These search engines will release what is know as a spider. These spiders will 'crawl' your website, indexing pages as they go. This is why it's very important that I consider SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) best practices at the design and build stage.

At this point (if you have requested it) you will be given details of your Google Analytics account. You will be provided with a username and password so that you can log in and check how your website is performing. You will have access to powerful stats showing you how many people have visited your website, how long they stayed, what pages they looked at, and importantly, how they found your website.

Maintain and update

So the site is ready and people are visiting, so what's next? It's important to look after and continually develop your website so that it doesn't become outdated. A visitor will soon lose interest if the content hasn't been updated for months (or years)!

Also Google (and other search engines) favour new content in their search rankings, so it's crucial to keep things up to date. A website is like any other part of your business, it's necessary to continually improve and update it. I advise my existing clients to aim for at least 12 updates a year, obviously if your website is an ecommerce store you'll need to do this more regularly.

For more information on keeping your website updated in a cost effective way please see :

www.pauldesigns.co.uk/pdflibrary/maintenancepacks.pdf

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