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Effective Website Development for small businesses

Every business should have a website!
A poor website can damage your business' health!

There are a variety of factors to consider **before** developing an effective website for business:-

- **WHY? - to sell or tell, inform or entertain?** or some combination of these?
 - A site could be just a straightforward "front page" like a static print advertisement for anyone who happens to come across it;
 - or a full-blown e-commerce site to sell your products/services;
 - an informational site, similar to a printed brochure to entice people to contact you to find out more or to purchase your product or service
 - or any permutation in between.
 - Publishing photos and graphics on a website is easy and can give visitors a much better feel for the quality and range of your products/services.

- **Who are our customers?** You need to consider your target audience:-
 - existing customers
 - potential customers?
 - do we know their age profile, location? etc
 - The demographics suggest that increasingly it is not just the younger generation who are using the internet, but older visitors may be discouraged by some features which youngsters enjoy

- **What will those customers be looking for?**
 - Information?
 - Detailed specifications?
 - to order or purchase?
 - to check availability?
 - for ideas?
 - for a response?
 - Is your site "interactive"? – i.e. can visitors ask questions/contact the business?– can they calculate the cost of a product/service, or check its availability?
 - Can they find the information they want quickly and easily? Fancy graphics and animations may be entertaining, but if they get in the way of the customer's needs then the site will have failed.



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- **How will people find the site?** – publishing a website is not enough – there are literally millions of websites and you need to make sure that those people who are interested in your product/service can find it – hence the need for search engine optimisation and relevant links to other websites. Will you include the website address in all your printed material?
- **How will it reflect your business?** You will have your own “house style” in terms of design, efficiency, friendliness, approachability etc – and it is important that the site reflects this. Visitors to an untidy or neglected website will assume that the whole business is the same?
- **How will the site be managed?** A website needs nurturing and maintenance. There are few things more off-putting to a potential customer than a website which doesn't work well, is not up to date, and which is difficult to get around. Internet users are accustomed to getting up-to-date information, and if the site is still showing last December's Special Offers then most will not stay and fewer will return. Do you have the skills and time to update the website when things change – prices, products, services?
- **Can the business cope** with the consequences? – e.g. messaging, order processing – are there systems in place? Unanswered emails give a poor impression of your business.
- **Can you afford not to have a website?** What are your competitors doing?

At BlueBox we look to establish a long-term relationship with our clients and to build some mutual interest in the success of the website. This is because we believe that website development is evolutionary and success takes time – time to get featured in search engines, to develop cross-links, to understand what visitors and customers are looking for, and time to learn how best the website can add value to your business.

We can offer: -

- Fully functioning websites with effective navigation, site search facilities, email forms
- Search engine optimisation and submission
- E-commerce facilities for selling online with a variety of payment facilities and product pricing schedules plus detailed reporting on sales activity
- Regular reports on site activity, visits etc
- Regular site updates
- Site hosting and domain registration