

Quick Tips for Web Marketing

The Internet has revolutionised the way we do business. Over 850,000 people use the Internet in Ireland and over 86% of Internet activity is attributed to searching for information about goods, services and businesses – just like yours. Information is now only a mouse click away and if your website isn't listed on the search engines, your potential customers cannot find you.

What Type of website should I have? There are 3 main types of website:

- **eBrochure** website – which summarises your business: effectively a brochure for your business on the internet!
- **eBusiness** website – aims to complete certain “offline” business tasks on your website, such as: answering “Frequently Asked Questions”, providing information on products, services and pricing – saving you and your customer time and convenience.
- **eCommerce** website – allows you to sell your products and services through your website using functions such as a product catalogue, shopping cart and payment provision through either credit card or a 3rd party such as PayPal.

What costs are involved in setting up a website?

- **Design and development** – is the cost to the web developer for designing and building your website. This can range from a **few hundred to a few thousands of euro** – depending on the complexity of your design.
- **Hosting** – your website needs to be stored on a server. Usually either a specialised provider or your web company can do this for you. Expect to pay less than **€50 - €300 per year** for this, depending on size of your site and the level of service you can expect from your hosting company.
- **Domain registration** – you need to “own” or more accurately “rent” the rights to your website name – www.websiteName.ie. Expect to pay between **€5 - €75 per year** for your domain name depending on: its popularity, the domain extension (.ie tend to be more expensive than .com) and the length of time you sign up to own the name (you should expect a discount for buying more than one year's registration.) To see if your preferred domain name is available check a website such as www.register.ie
- **Maintenance, user support, upgrades** – Over time you may experience issues or errors which can arise, for example, due to updates to internet browsers like Microsoft Internet Explorer or you simply want to update your website. Find out up front if you will need to pay your web developer for this type of support each time, if it is included in your upfront cost or if you should pay an ongoing support fee to cover all such maintenance.
- **Website Management** – if you plan to update your website regularly and don't have the time or skills in house to do the updates very well, you can consider if it is cost effective to have your site managed by a specialised agency.

What Key Functions should I include on my site? Your site should also include:

- Describe your **products and services**
- **About Us:** customers like to see who is behind the business. Include some information about you and your team and if you are brave a photo or two! This will build trust with your prospective customer
- **Contact Details:** Include all relevant contact details for your business. Linking your online business (your website) with your offline business (your shop or premises) is very important and also builds trust and credibility.
- Consider a **Flash Panel:** which is effectively a “slide show” of moving images. This adds life, movement and a contemporary feel to your site. Don't go overboard with it as it can slow down your site performance, can irritate and distract some visitors and does not help most search engines find information on your web pages.
- If you are making regular updates to your site, ask your web provider about a **Content Management System (CMS)** so you can make changes to the information displayed on your site. A good CMS will also provide you with all the information and statistics you need about how your site is being used by visitors.

Often overlooked functions of a website include: sitemap, site search facility, print page, add to favourites, tell a friend, W3C compatibility and Web legals. Ask your web provider to ensure your site complies with all Internet legislation such as the Data Protection Act.



What is a Search Engine?

Most people do not look past the first 3 pages of search engine results to find the website they need – you need to make sure you are ranking high on search engines if you want to attract new customers through the web.

A search engine is designed to search for information on the World Wide Web. Think of it as a giant encyclopaedia. When a user enters a query into a search engine (such as Google or Bing) using keywords (words or phrases) the search engine looks for the web pages in its inventory (index) that contain those keywords.

While there may be millions of web pages that include a user's keywords, some pages may be more relevant, popular, or authoritative than others and most search engines employ methods to rank the results.

There are 2 main types of search engine listings: **Organic** and **Paid Search (such as Pay Per Click)**. Organic search relies entirely on the web page or site to rank on a specific search result. Pay Per Click involves paying to be listed under the keywords that you think your potential customers use when searching.



Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) techniques improve the performance of your website in “Organic” search engine rankings. It is free but takes time to do well. Here are five of the more common techniques for improving or optimising your web pages for search engines:

- ✓ Identify and use keywords in your webpages
- ✓ Use the Title and Meta tags
- ✓ Put sensible descriptions against your pictures – using the “Alt IMG” attribute
- ✓ Build web links into and out of your web pages
- ✓ Write the optimum amount of text per web page (copywriting)

There are hundreds of ways to optimise your web pages for the major search engines. However, don't forget that your website should be written for people first and not just the search engines. Spend some time optimising your site but don't become obsessed!

Search Engine Marketing (SEM) techniques involves using 3rd parties to promote, advertise and sell (or transact) on-line – for example using **Paid Search, Pay-per-click (PPC)** or paid advertising on search engines.

Before spending your hard-earned cash on advertising campaigns, do plan out what you want to achieve and set yourself a timescale and budget – a sort of “online marketing plan.” Your online marketing plan can be as short as 1-2 pages and should answer questions such as:

- What business tasks normally completed “offline” could you do “online”?
- How can your customers benefit from the internet?
- What technical functions do you need on your own website?
- What SEO techniques will you use? Have you the time and skills to do that yourself or do you need help?
- What (if any) Paid Search or Paid Advertising do you want or need?
- What will each of the above cost? (One-off costs, recurring costs, your time)

Contact us at info@see-360.com for a free template for online marketing.

The 2 most common types of SEM techniques are “Paid for Inclusion” and “Pay Per Click Advertising”.

- **Paid for Inclusion:** involves paying to be **included in an internet directory**. There are numerous directory sites out there and many offer free basic listing – use them but ensure you keep your contact details upto date!
- **Paid Per Click:** involves paying a search engine to list your web pages when people use your preferred keywords in their search. It is **an effective way to bring visitors to your site** – but takes a little planning and a little budget!

We hope this guide helps you. If you have any feedback please email info@see-360.com. Check www.westmeath-enterprise.ie as Westmeath County Enterprise Board runs training programmes to show you how to optimize your site yourself.

Best of luck!