



Web Site Preliminary Planning Guide

This is a ten step guide to help you plan your web site. As my background is in journalism I believe careful attention to detail and sound planning can help you achieve your desired outcomes.

I work with a graphic designer right from the planning process so that typography, colour, layout and graphics are integrated into your new site right from the beginning. After all, the quality of content and the look and feel of your site makes a lasting impression.

Define your site's objective

What is your main reason for wanting a web site? What is the key message you want to leave in people's minds when they visit your site? What do you want them to do ... what action do you want them to take?

Who and where is your audience

It is important to design your web site from the perspective of your audience/readers. It goes without saying therefore, that it is useful to know something about them.

Some questions to ask yourself: Is your audience local, national or international? Who would buy your product/service, or read your message? What is their age range and/or gender?

Are you providing a business-to-business service? Perhaps you might offer your products/services to specific companies? Perhaps you are also offering expertise to other professionals in the field? Who would you like to reach now and in the future? Who else, besides direct customers, might view or use your site? Competitors, suppliers, the general public, or members of groups or organisations?

How unique are you?

What is your competitive edge? What is unique about your business, company or group? Do you plan to compete on price, quality or service, or the uniqueness of your product or ideas/location? Do you have special products, services, knowledge, contacts, sources? Think about this and plan your site with that in mind.

Research similar sites

Look at similar organisations or businesses and web sites dealing with similar services and products -- or even your supplier's web sites. Make lists of addresses, content, features, and design elements you like and don't like.

Consider your site's features

Your site's features should provide a means for your audience to act -- that is, to do something.

Features could include booking or order forms, image galleries, testimonials, calendar of events, a space for updates and news, customer and reader feedback.

Do you want to manage enquiries via email, telephone or via a contact form? Do you want to update the site with new information or have this done for you? How often? Regular updates, if done correctly, can help your site rank higher in search queries. Out-of-date material will give readers a reason to leave your site.

Will you provide space for advertisers? Perhaps this will create a new way of dealing with suppliers or help fund projects, events or production.

Remember, let your web site work for you and not simply create more work. Keep it simple, clean and graphically appealing. Let it answer your audience's common questions and provide information to you about your customer's or reader's needs. View it as a tool that works for you.

Budget

A web site should be integrated into your existing and long-term business goals and not considered a one-time marketing expense. Budget for the initial cost of site design and development, but also keep in mind that you'll want to update your site on a regular basis depending on the nature of your business or organisation.

Marketing

Coordinate your online and print media design plans. Will you be using print advertising to advertise your site? Sending targeted emails or newsletters? Business cards and brochures? These can be designed for you.

Domain name and hosting

If you don't already have one, you'll need to find an available domain name and pay the annual fee, as well as the fee for hosting your site. Your domain name is your site's primary web address. Make sure it is easy to spell and fits well with your organisation's products, services and name. Will it look good when used on printed advertising? Come up with three variations of your preferred domain name in case one is not available to use. (eg, YOURDOMAIN.COM.AU)

I can take care of registering your domain and organise hosting.

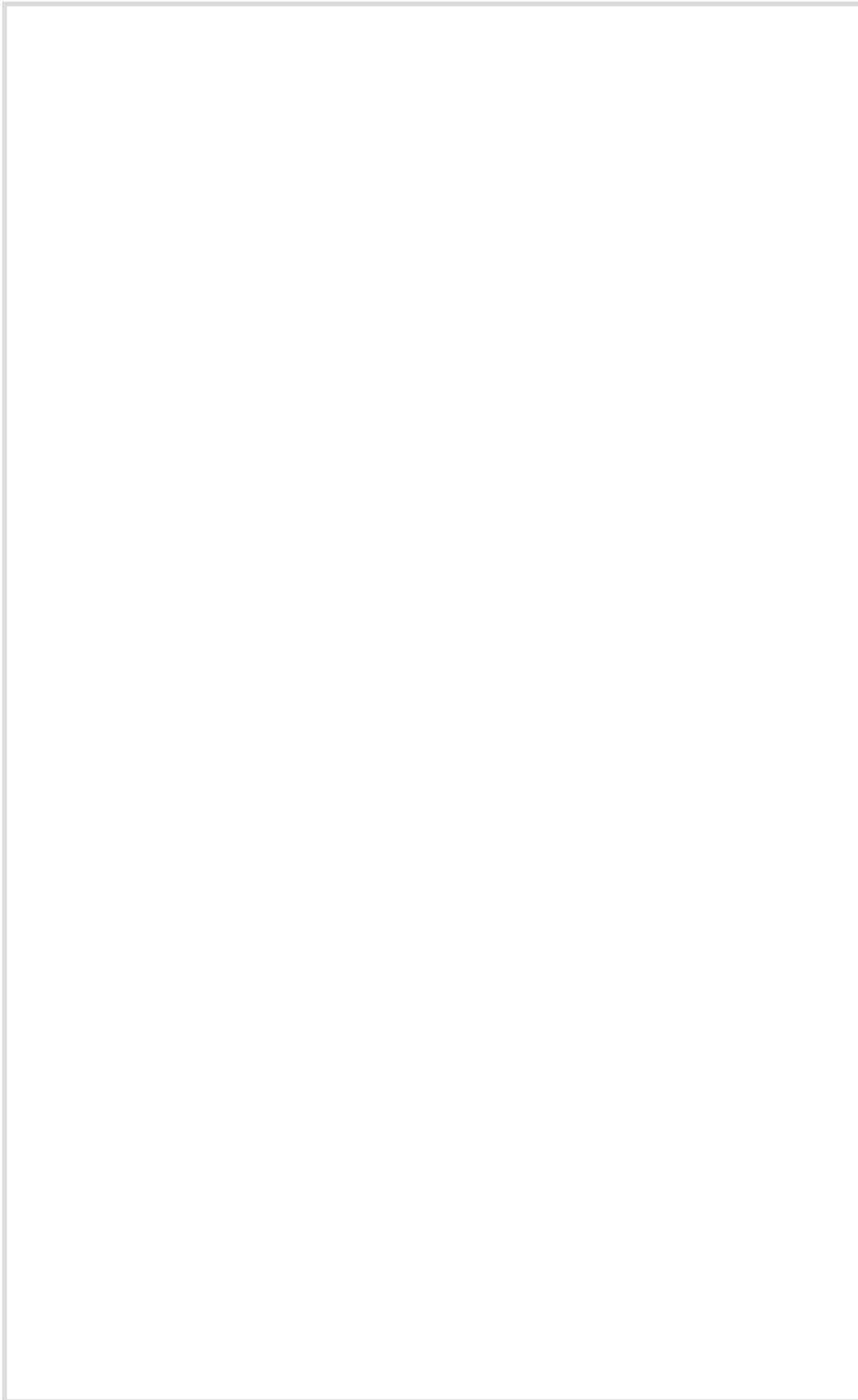
Assemble existing content

Inventory the content you already have in printed brochures, or newsletters. Collect graphics or photographs you have for logos, signs, posters, products, and staff. Consider what extra photographs or graphics you will need and make a list. Photographs, written material and editing can be arranged for you based on your needs.

Project target date

Set a realistic target date for when you want the site to be up and running. Allow enough time for reviews and changes to be made to the layout and content before launching the site.

Notes, thoughts and ideas



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