



Web site planning guide

Thorough organization and planning are essential for a successful Web site. If your company has a detailed marketing plan encompassing everything from corporate identity through promotion, you probably have a good understanding of what you want your site to accomplish.

If your company is new, rapidly growing, changing direction, or diversifying, completing this short planning guide can help you organize the materials you already have and make developing your site much easier.

STEP 1. Review your Mission Statement

Your mission statement should provide a clear vision of what you wish to accomplish over the long run. It is the measure against which you can assess your company's current direction and strategies. When you know your mission, determining the message and objective of your Web site becomes much easier. If you can state your mission in one well-thought-out sentence, you probably know where you are going.

"To be rich and successful." Not a mission statement.

"To develop and produce an innovative professional boomerang with national distribution to major boomerang leagues by 2010." This is a clear, precise mission statement upon which you can build effective marketing strategies.

Your mission statement:

STEP 2. Analyze your competition

Unless your situation is very unusual, you have competitors seeking the attention, loyalty, and income of your target audience. Review their print ads, brochures, radio and TV commercials, and visit their Web sites. Jot down anything that strikes you as particularly effective or ineffective. It is often easier to spot problems with another company's marketing tactics than with your own, and this can help you build a better Web site.

Summary of your competition:

STEP 3. Determine your Web site's main objective

Web sites that try to cram in every piece of information about a business or organization can be very costly — and are likely to fail! Your Web site should have a specific purpose that supports your mission statement. This objective is determined by two factors. First, and most important, what information will *visitors* want to find on your Web site? They may want credentials about your company/organization, product support, pricing information, a schedule of events, or timely news to name just a few possibilities. Once you figure out what visitors need from your site, you can consider the second factor — how to integrate related information *you* want visitors to receive.

“To show visitors the intricacies of our internal organization.” *Probably not a good objective.*

“To demonstrate the unique features of our boomerang, and encourage interest and participation in the sport.” *An objective that supports the mission statement.*

Your Web site objective:

STEP 4. Collect and review your current marketing materials

There's no use reinventing the wheel — unless it's square. Look at your Yellow Pages ads, brochures, sales support materials, PR photos, letters from satisfied persons, business cards, press releases, and so on. What has been working well? Which are out of date? What should you toss? Select pieces that can help achieve your Web site objective either in copy or graphics. There can be great savings in re-using existing photographs and artwork, as well as reinforcing your marketing message through a family of related materials.

Available marketing communications materials:

STEP 5. Meet with Web site designer(s) (graphic designer/copywriter/developer)

After sharing the results of steps 1, 2, 3, and 4 with your Web site designer, together you can start detailing site specifics. Your site designer will then summarize all this information in a concise Web site analysis that will include:

- Site type (informational, promotional, e-commerce)
- Target audience
- Visual style and tone
- Content
- Organization

If you agree with the site analysis, your Web designer will develop a proposal containing:

- Site outline/schematic
- Detailed cost estimate
- Preliminary timetable

Now, all your hard work will pay off as the actual design and copy development of the site begins. Good luck!

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