

Web Application Development

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Overview

The following is a taset, a brief of what you should be considering prior to embarking upon the development of even a static site. Years of knowledge and a broad understanding of the significance of owning a domain is difficult to summarise but you can be assured that the details held here are based on that solid foundation and that if taken as seriously as you take your business will most certainly assure you of a site that's appropriate to your needs.

Further documentation is available on Search Engine Optimisation, which should be used when any site is designed. Please get in-toiuch if you would like a copy.

Domain Name

These come in many flavours but should follow these few simply rules:

- Reflect the business or service you are offering
- Be easy to spell
- Be easy to remember

Pages

Decide which pages you want, a general idea is usually OK to start with and assuming that you only require a static HTML prescence then something along the lines of a home page, contact, about us and so on will suffice. However this, in conjunction with all the other features mentioned here will drive further development.

Navigation

The pages will generally dictate your site's navigational structure with something akin to a standard tree layout collapsing out and showing the different branches such as "products" and "services".

Content

Not only what you want to say but also images, links, events, calendars and blogs or forums should be considered here. This is an excellent opportunity to decide how you would like to engage your audience. There are a few key things to keep in mind at this point:

- Users generally do not like clutter so try and keep it simple
- Put things in obvious places, events calendars and contacts links just one click away from the home page for example
- Users usually prefer to find what they are looking for within 3 clicks. Complicated navigational structures may turn prospects away
- ✓ Ensure you have a clear idea of the content prior to delivery for the developer

Meta Tags

Meta tags may or may not be a term you are familiar with. For those who are uninitiated, meta tags are a series of hidden tags or elements that sit in a web

document in the "header" section. Invisible to the browser but seen and used by search engines. They generally comprise the following elements:

- Title
- Description
- Keywords
- Page Content

You can have additional meta tags such as "Copyright" etc. but the ones identified above should be in every web page you develop and should also be unique to that page alone. In addition to these there are "ALT" and "TITLE" TAGS, these are usually defined in-line and are used for such things as images and hyperlinks for a number of reasons but primarily so that the images, if unavailable, display a text description and also for disabled users and search engines.

Error Handling

This is more geared towards RDBMS, CMS and CRM web applications and is simply a way of handling users that request an incorrect page or a page they are not authorised to view. This may seem like an unimportant issue but bouncing users off a 404 error page every time they hit a link that does not work is only going to frustrate them.

Future Site Enhancement

A good developer will have this in mind right from the first informal discussion and it should be made explicit what "may" be required in the future. This not only impacts design but platform, as your current host's server may not provide the resources you require in the future. If this is the case and you are aware of it a transition plan can be put in-place.

Internal Vs External Customers

Ensuring that the site meets both needs may be difficult and should always be considered.

Wish Lists vs Business Reuirements

Sometimes it may be necessary to place articles, documents, links or files on a website for internal staff. These can be placed in a separate password controlled environment if required ensuring that the browsing public need never see them or even know they are there.

Visual Aids

People assimilate visual imagery much quicker than text which has to be read through. Icons, photographs and other images should be used wherever possible without turning a site into a photo gallery.

NB: A good developer will certainly walk you through all these items very quickly and draft a list of action both for their own use and yours ensuring a smoother delivery.