

HOT LEMON
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OUR THOUGHTS:

WEBSITE CONTENT

WHAT CONTENT SHOULD A WEBSITE HAVE?

A challenge faced by many businesses when it comes to developing their first website (or even redeveloping an existing site) is what to say and communicate – or in other words – what content should the site include and how should it be structured.

THERE ARE NO RULES

The first thing to understand is whilst there are recommendations based on what has worked before, and what consumers ideally want (in terms of their information needs), there are no definitive rules. Indeed, quite a few businesses have succeeded by being disruptive – although these businesses have tended to be of the more avant-garde variety.

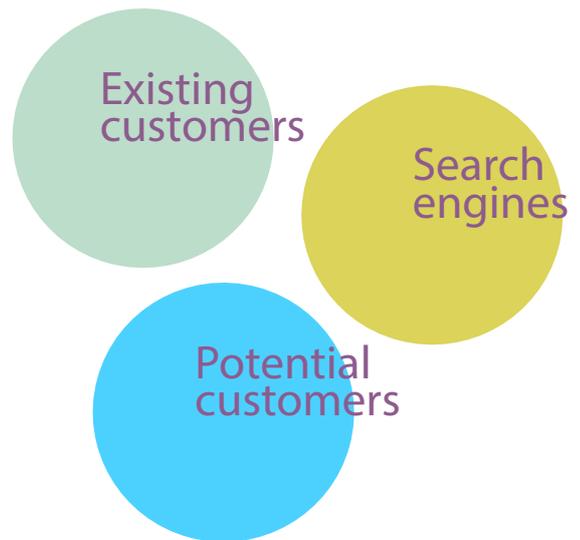
A website's content should be defined by the marketing objectives of the business (and of their website), their brand awareness within the target market, the complexity / simplicity of their product or service offering and off course, a host of other factors.

MULTIPLE AUDIENCES

Also, when developing a content outline, businesses need to be aware of the multiple audiences their website needs to communicate effectively with. These audiences can be split broadly down into three simple segments:

- **EXISTING CUSTOMERS** which know the business
- **POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS** which don't know the business but are interested in the product / service the business offers
- **SEARCH ENGINES**

Content ideally needs to be structured to accommodate each of those audiences collectively – not separately.



REALITY BITES HARDEST

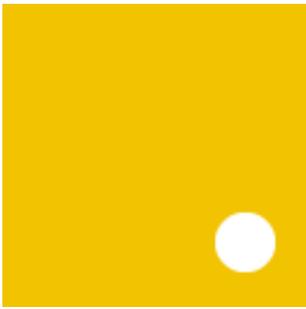
However, most businesses aren't avant-garde, don't have a strong brand, are relatively traditional in their structure and product /service offering.

As such, the following recommendations in terms in terms of website content are appropriate.

WEBSITE CONTENT

We've split our recommendations up into three chunks and a wee section on how to structure and organise content to make it work harder for you.

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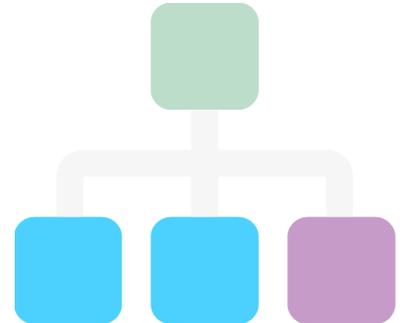


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CONTENT - BASICS

Here we are covering an introduction to the business, a description of the products and services being offered and a means of initiating some form of engagement with the visitor through a contact page.

- **HOME PAGE** - the main landing page of the site, containing an introduction to the business, the product / service offerings (benefits not features – although depends on the market) and a strong call to action (which should be to engage with the website – not to try and sell directly)
- **PRODUCT / SERVICE PAGES** – specific pages detailing the product or service the business offers. Our strongest recommendation here is to be as granular as possible (i.e. if the business has five products have five pages detailing those products – if appropriate) – this helps search engines understand the page – and makes the page easier to digest – especially on smaller screen sizes
- **CONTACT PAGE** – usually in the form of a form – a page to encourage visitors to engage / contact with the business.



This is fairly obvious stuff, and as such – should be fairly standard for any site.

Now to some of the less obvious stuff.

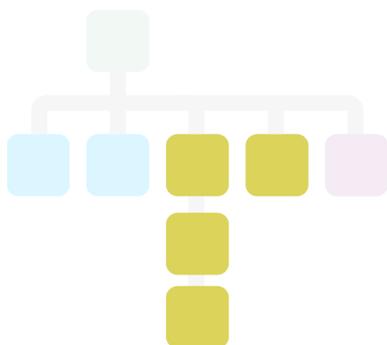
CONTENT - HYGIENE

The majority of businesses do not have strong brand awareness, and many will be trying to use the web in order to generate new business from new clients (i.e. as a business generation tool – as opposed to a business support tool).

But what many businesses fail to realise is that for a visitor to their website (who hasn't had prior experience of the business) their business is a completely unknown quantity. Therefore the business needs to do its best to demonstrate that:

- They are an actual real business – not a spoof or fraudulent site
- They have expertise / experience in the products or services that they are offering
- They have the capability to deliver their product or service
- That they are professional.

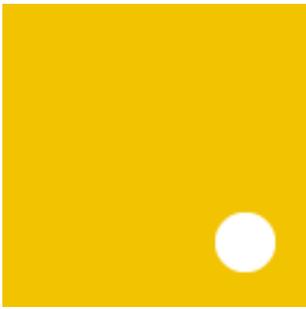
The best way of achieving the above – in terms of content (there are other ways – for example professional memberships / associations and the like) - is by having pages similar to the following:



- **ABOUT US PAGE** – a page that describes the business, its capabilities, successes, recent history – a page which demonstrates that the business has the professional capability to do business with
- **LOCATION PAGE** – to demonstrate that the business has a real physical presence – even if the business is an online business, visitors want to know that it exists in the real world that worse comes to worse they have somewhere to go (the use of a landline telephone number is recommended for the same reason)
- **KEY PERSONNEL PAGE** – especially relevant if the business is dependent on the professional expertise of the business – and this type of content reinforces perceptions that the business is real
- **TESTIMONIALS / CASE STUDIES** – great for a number of reasons – and can really help sales. In this context they provide independent third party verification of the business (or at least the perception of) – which is one of the reasons why review websites play such an important role nowadays.

We like to call the above hygiene pages – as they help to alleviate doubts which the visitor may have in the online world.

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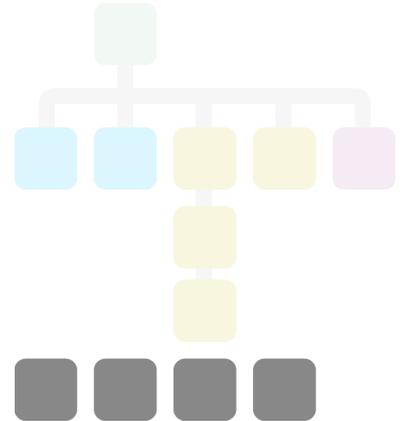


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CONTENT - LEGAL

Often overlooked by many businesses is that a website has the legal equivalence of any other marketing material that a business may generate. As such there are legal requirements – especially if the business is a limited company – which should be on a business's website.

- **COMPANY INFORMATION** – if the business is a limited company, the business needs to display the company's registered address and company registration number on each and every page (actually this is good practice with regard to hygiene as well)
- **COOKIE INFORMATION** – if the business uses cookies on its website (which virtually every website does) European Directives stipulate that the business needs to define what its cookie policy is and how it uses the information collected by such cookies (this doesn't have to be in the form of those annoying popups)
- **PRIVACY POLICY** – if a website collects data from visitors (by the way of contact forms / purchases and the like), there is a requirement under Data Protection regulations to stipulate what happens with that data – where it is stored and whether it is going to be used for marketing purposes and the like
- **TERMS AND CONDITIONS** – not a necessity, but a recommendation. A T&C page is designed to limit the potential liability of providing inaccurate information on your website.

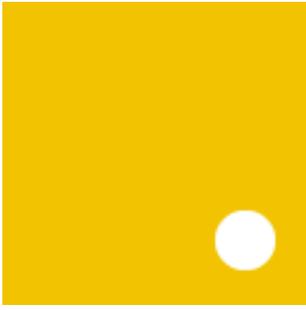


CONTENT - ADDING VALUE

This isn't necessarily required, or for that matter recommended content – it's a couple of suggestions to make you structure your content better, and to make it work harder for you. Both in terms of "stickiness" (having visitors revisit your site) and search engine results.

- **GRANULARITY** – whilst certain avant-garde websites like to use one page layouts (which are incidentally great for the mobile user experience) we would recommend the opposite. Specifically try to structure your content so that there is one subject per page. Two benefits of this – it allows for greater detail for the subject to be communicated, and secondly, it helps search engines index the page more accurately. So for example, if you have ten products – have ten pages – a product a page.
- **GIVE & HELP** – (wanted to say "Add value" but got that as the sub-title already) – visitors (and search engines for that matter) are looking for relevant and appropriate content. Give it to them. Unless you have stylistic, editorial or structural reasons not to, give your visitors some added value content – in some cases there is no need – but for many others you can distinguish yourself from all those that can't be bothered by going the extra mile. Examples of giving include:
 - **GUIDES** – how to use the product or service in question (for example supermarket chains distribute recipes)
 - **HISTORY / BACKGROUND INFORMATION** – of the service or product (some people are interested)
 - **REVIEWS** – if appropriate reviews / performance ratings of the product or service (widely used by PC sellers)
 - **RECOMMENDATIONS** – if it doesn't conflict with your business – don't be afraid to recommend other providers products or services – it will actually help build trust in your brand
 - **SOCIALISE** – leverage your existing content using social media (primarily Facebook, Twitter & LinkedIn – and depending on the sector – other social networks like Pinterest) (this is where your "giving" (see above point) comes into its own). Also create positive feedback loops – where you publish your social feeds on your own website which helps make your site more sticky and helps with SEO (do it properly though – so that such feeds are capable of being read by a search engine).

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The above should give any type of business an idea of what type of content they should have on their website. Although remember - these are recommendations - they may not suit all types of businesses. Different businesses in different markets with different types of customers will all have different communication needs.

Whilst it is dependent on the business, the brand of that business, its communication strategy and its overall objectives. Generally speaking – if it relevant – more content is generally better. But, content, like everything else needs to be maintained and a balance needs to be struck between generating good relevant content and managing that content with the resources available.

As per always, if you want to find out more – please get in touch with us.