

Why redesign your website?

Introduction

There are many reasons for redesigning your website. Some are obvious and some are not so obvious. Here is a list of our top 10 reasons.

Websites Date

Just like hairstyles, websites date. What was all the rage a couple of years ago is now seen as passé.

Sometimes this is down to design trends – like the 3D buttons and interfaces that were so popular a few years back when graphics tools made it easy to create bevel and emboss styles. Other times it's because the web is maturing and web designers develop a better understanding of what visitors want. For instance, Flash intro pages were all the rage until web designers realised that users didn't like them and wanted to get straight to the content. Flash introductions are the beehive hairdo of the web design world: dated, impractical and utterly pointless.

So if your site is looking a little old, tired and sporting a beehive, it's probably time for a makeover!

Stay ahead of your competition

The web makes it easy for people to find information about your company and services at the click of a button. The down side is that this holds true for your competitors as well.

It's important for your website to make an impact and stay ahead. Surfers are an impatient and fickle lot and usually make up their mind about a site in a few seconds. Your website needs to out-do your competition or you'll face losing valuable clients. Spend a bit of time looking at your competition; analysing competitor's sites is one of the most important parts of the redesign process. How does your website compare to theirs? If they are 'better' than yours it's definitely time for a redesign. If your site is of a similar standard you may think it unnecessary to redesign, but it's much better to be leading the pack than following.

A timely redesign could enable you to steal a march on your competitors rather than waiting for them to redesign and then having to play catch-up.

The design does not reflect your brand or the aspirations of your clients

When people visit your site, they see it as a reflection of your company. If your site looks professional and is full of helpful content they will see you as professional and helpful. Likewise, if the site looks amateur and out-of-date they'll make the same assumptions about you. This is why it's so important for your site to reflect the identity and ideals (brand) of your company.

But your site shouldn't just reflect how you wish to be seen, it's important that it also reflects the ideals and aspirations of your clients. People like doing business with people they can relate to, feel they are similar to or who make them feel good about themselves.

Sending a strong clear message about who you are and what you stand for makes clients want to do business with you. If your site is sending the wrong messages, it's time to get a redesign.

A site that reflects where you're heading, not where you've been.

It's a bit of a cliché, but we do live in a fast paced world these days. Markets change, clients get more savvy and businesses evolve to meet new demands. If your site is more than a couple of years old the chances are it's more a reflection of where you've been than where you're heading.

Redesigning your site not only gives you the chance to align it with your current message, it also gives you the opportunity to think about where you're heading and to plan for the future. It allows you to sit down and really work out a strategy, learn about your clients, your competition, and set new business goals and success criteria.

Your website should be a reflection of where you are now and where you are heading, not where you have just been. After all wouldn't you prefer to do business with somebody who is looking to the future rather than being stuck in the past?

You want to update the content yourself, to keep your site fresh

One of the best things about using the internet rather than traditional channels is the ability it gives to respond to market changes, new business opportunities or customer requirements. You don't have to wait until your current brochure run is used up before you make changes; you can simply update your site whenever you want. Well that's the theory at least, but how many websites have you seen where the content looks like it hasn't been changed in months, or even years?

Often this is because the websites have been built so they can only be updated by the person who designed them. This is fine for some small sites but it really doesn't make the most of the benefits of doing business on the web. If your site's content is stale and out-of-date, it's certainly worth having your site redesigned to enable people in your organisation to update content themselves.

Fresh website content is an extremely important factor in encouraging people to revisit your site and can help give you the edge over your competition. Why would anybody come back to your site if it hasn't changed in months?

Attract more visitors

"If you build it, they will come" may have held good for Kevin Costner, (Field of Dreams) but it doesn't cut the mustard where websites are concerned.

Just because something is there doesn't mean people will come and use it. If people have never heard of your site, don't know what's there and don't know how to get there why on earth would you expect them to visit it?

A site redesign can help you attract more visitors in a number of ways. Building search engine 'findability' into a new site is much more effective than trying to increase your findability once a site has been built. Your site also needs to offer visitors useful information that helps them achieve their goals.

If your visitors' goals - and your business objectives - are not the focus of your website, it's time to think about a redesign.

Increase your turnover, get prospects to convert, shoppers to buy

It's amazing to think how many websites still get built without any goals or success criteria being set. These sites will get visually "designed", existing content will be "dropped in" and then 6 months later it'll be dead in the water.

If this is ringing any bells then it's time you thought about having your site redesigned.

While it's relatively simple to build a basic website, it's a much more involved proposition to build a website that actually performs.

The first step is to set some goals and success criteria for your site. What exactly are you trying to achieve and how will you know how when you've achieved it? Who are your users, what do you want them to do and what do they want to do?

With firm goals and an understanding of your visitors you can make informed decisions on how the site should look, work and sound. Does the site design back up your goals? Does the navigation encourage people to click on the section you want them to click on? How about the content - does it have the right tone? Does it encourage people to buy that product, register for that newsletter, read that article?

Make the site easier to use, help clients find what they (and you) want

We've all been there before. You've found a website through a search engine or by following a link on a site. You're after something specific but try as you might you just can't find what you're looking for. It's almost as though the site is conspiring against you and you come away feeling that it's your fault that you couldn't work out were the thing was.

Well here's a news flash: It was not your fault, it's the fault of the website! First and foremost, a website should be easy to use and easy to navigate. If you can't find what you're looking for, if the site navigation frustrates you or makes you feel stupid, the website is not doing it's job.

Site designers and site owners sometimes fail to see these problems because they are so familiar with the site design, content and navigation. Other times it's simply down to a lack of planning and bad design.

Whatever the reason, a site redesign will enable you to listen to your users, find out what helps them (and what frustrates them) and build a site that is easier to use and thus more effective.

Make the content more relevant, communicate with your clients more effectively

You may have noticed a common theme appearing amongst our top reasons for a redesign and now it's now time to hammer this home. Having relevant content is one of the most important things about having a web presence.

Relevant content does not mean just repurposing old brochures, leaflets and adverts. It means providing content that is interesting and useful to your site users while supporting your core goals.

Content needs to be written specifically for the web. Why? Simply because people don't read a website like they read printed material. Most people scan over web pages trying to determine if the page is going to be of any use. Only once they have decided it looks useful will they start to read the page and even then many people just skim read.

This is why web copy has to be short, punchy and to the point. The main concepts need to stand out and not get hidden halfway down the page.

People tend to use the web to get factual information, not marketing blurb. Nobody wants to feel like they are being marketed to (even when they are!), they want to feel that their needs are being understood and met.

Does your site force visitors to wade through pages of marketing fluff? A site redesign would give you the opportunity to re-address how you communicate with your clients and to write copy that is simple, on target and more effective.

A great marketing and PR opportunity

People have short memories and attention spans. They need to keep being reminded about things. There is a common belief that it takes around seven 'touches' (interactions between your brand and a potential customer) before they become a client.

Having a site redesign is a great opportunity to contact your existing customers, potential customers and the press. It gives you an excuse to contact them and let them know what you're doing, what's new and that you're keeping things up-to-date.

Simply put, a site redesign can be a great marketing and PR tool for your business.