

Getting the most from your website



Content is the most important thing. Search engines like Google reward websites that are informative and give the visitor exactly what they were searching for. It's important for the site visitor too. You wouldn't want to walk into Boots the Chemist and find it sold car parts.

Google started life in a garage as a project by a couple of university students, Larry and Sergey, as a subject for their dissertation. They thought it would be really useful if you could type a few words into the internet and it would show you where you could find relevant stuff. That single minded focus on relevancy still drives Google today. They just aren't in a garage anymore.

Google and the like see websites as a series of related documents – each treated as a website in itself. Therefore, each page should be about a different aspect of your organisation or product/service you provide. If you provide 3 different products or services have them on 3 different pages.

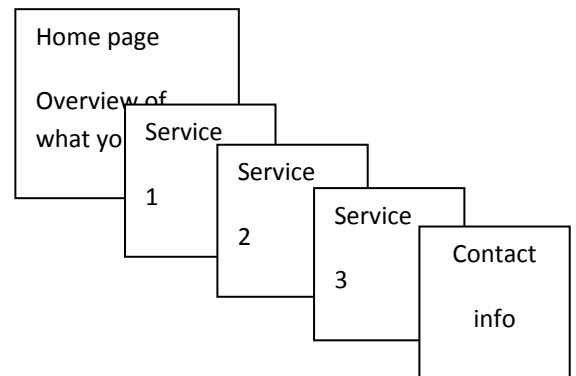
Key words are critical. These are the words that people will type into Google or similar when looking for your site. Try typing in a 3 word description of your organisation followed by the town you are in to see if your website is near the top. It should be.

Each page should feature key words or phrases that are relevant to what you offer, what's on that page and what people are likely to search for when looking for what you offer. But, take care not to overdo it. That's called spamming. Google measures key word density too.

Content also needs to be up to date and recent. Google can tell when you last updated your site even if you have forgotten. If it was a long time ago, it ignores you. Google will visit most websites every week. Nothing's changed? Down the ranks you go.

Inbound links to your website are an important factor in increasing the volume of traffic your site gets – providing they are good quality links. Google will decide that the site with the most links to it is the most relevant.

There are good and bad ways to link. Examples of bad links are "click here", www.your-web-address.com and links from sites that have nothing to do with what you do. These won't do you any good and might even reduce your website traffic.



Top tips

1. Never start your website with the words "Welcome to our website". Google will base its initial indexing of your site on the first 9 words in the content. It will then refine its index based on the rest of the content. "Welcome to our website" wastes 4 of the most important 9 words.
2. Even if it's just diary dates, meeting times or a simple 'News' section. Keep it up to date. Out of date info doesn't impress site visitors either.
3. It's important to have contact details on your site including an address and phone number plus anything else like company registration, VAT or charity numbers. It helps people contact you. Oh, and **you are breaking the law if you don't!**

The best web links are called one-way “embedded” or “anchor text” links. These are links which are embedded into words or phrases that are relevant to your site content. These words or phrases should be based on your key words – the important words that describe your business and website. These are also links that come to the relevant page of your website without going back out again. The relevant page isn’t always the home page. It should be the page that talks about your product or service.

For example, if you are a local fishmonger with a website at www.somethingfishy.com then your ideal link could look something like:

Something Fishy – We sell only the very best [freshly caught fish](#) from our shop in Touchwood, Solihull. Call 0121 789 3456.

The link to your website is hidden (or embedded) in the words ‘freshly caught fish’. This makes the link more ‘relevant’ to search engines like Google, who judge importance based on relevancy. Even better if the link went to <http://www.somethingfishy.com/freshfish.html>

Techie Stuff

There is some basic stuff you should have on your website. A **title** and a thing called ‘**meta tags**’. Basically it’s similar to writing something on the outside of a folder to tell people what’s inside before you stick it in a filing cabinet. For Something Fishy, it would look something like this:

```
<title>Something Fishy</title>
<meta name="description" content=" , Fishmongers in Solihull."/>
<meta name="keywords" content="fresh fish, shell fish, smoked fish, fish paste"/>
```

The keywords meta tag should be different for every page and related to the content of that page

But, don’t sweat too much on this. Google is going to look inside the folder anyway. Also, if you change the content because you stop selling fish paste and forget to change these, Google will be disappointed it can’t find the fish paste. So, use them but use them carefully.

Submitting Your Site

It’s not vital as it’s the search engines job to find you but help them out by submitting your site for indexing. You only need to worry about Google, MSN & Yahoo. The rest are small fry and either take their info from Google anyway or will find you soon enough. There is also something called DMOZ. It’s a voluntary organisation that manually indexes sites. Even Google respects DMOZ. But read the instructions very carefully. And only submit once. They don’t like being nagged.

Promoting Your Site

Find other sites like yours and ask for a link. Some will. Online directories can work too but can be expensive. Think carefully. Is it worth the cost? More importantly, tell everyone about it. Put the address on letterheads, newsletters, business cards, at the bottom of your emails, etc. This is also free.

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Contact David Rapson on **0121 711 3148** or email webmedia@solihull-sustain.org.uk for more information.