



This document provides you with some key items to consider for maintaining an effective website. WebAxia, Inc. data shows that only forty percent of a website's effectiveness is due to the website. The remaining sixty percent of effectiveness is due to the operations and processes "behind the scenes" that manage the website program. Consider that point when you review the tips listed below.

1. Treat your website with the respect that it deserves.

Consider this: Most businesses in developed nations will pay \$US50,000 to \$US100,000 per year for a top notch salesperson, plus a bonus, plus an expense account, plus a car, plus health benefits, plus retirement, plus formal training. Yet, a salesperson can only call on five to seven accounts per day, maximum. Most businesses will pay \$US30,000 to \$US50,000 for an inside sales person and provide little or no training, yet that inside salesperson can deal with thirty to fifty people in a day. Most businesses pay less than a few thousand dollars to construct a website which is an autonomous tool that can touch thousands of potential customers each day.

Why do so many businesses invest the least amount of money into the tool that impacts the most number of customers? Business owners and senior management teams have little training or background in how to develop and measure an effective website program. Websites, if developed and maintained properly, can be the best and lowest cost business advocate and sales tool a company can have.

2. Involve your whole management team in the website development process, not just your website designer.

Make sure you consider all aspects of how your visitors will interact with your website. Then make sure everyone from the appropriate department is involved in the creative and maintenance process, not just your Information Technology (IT) personnel. Things to consider during the website design (or redesign) process are:

- Does the website reflect your corporate or organizational image and message?
 - *Involve your senior management team, marketing department and ad agency.*
- Is the website expected to bring in sales or leads?
 - *Involve your outside sales, inside sales, customer service and marketing departments. If you really want to enhance the site, talk to your current customers and examine your competitors' websites for more ideas.*
- Should your website provide additional resources to website visitors such as: product configurators, downloadable manuals, software updates, warranty registration and verification, links to related sites, access to customer purchase orders or shipping data?
 - *Involve your sales, customer service, manufacturing & technical support departments.*

3. Formally document all the processes involved with your website.

Once the website is up and running, the number one problem of maintaining an effective website is collapse of the processes. Websites are dynamic. Many things change on a regular basis once the site is launched; some in your control, some not. Develop written procedures or checklists with specific dates for review (weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually) to verify your site is in perfect shape. Here are just some of the things to consider:

- Is all of your organization's contact information accurate and up to date?
- Are website-published press releases fresh or outdated?
- Is your site optimized for all the latest versions of the popular Internet browsers (Internet Explorer, Mozilla, Firefox, Netscape, Safari and Opera)?
- Is your site designed for the most common monitor settings?
- Is your website's message fresh and current?
- Do you have any broken links?
- Are all downloads still accessible?
- Are you measuring the website's effectiveness on a recurring basis to look for ways to improve or things to correct?

4. Examine your website design from a business viewpoint, not just a computer or artistic viewpoint.

Most professional website designers come from either a computer technology or artistic and marketing background. That is good news. However, most do not have a background in business. That is bad news. A website is an extension of your organization and must be examined in the same way as if you were constructing a new factory, opening a retail store or building a community center. Yes, when you open a brick and mortar establishment it is important to consider the appearance of the facility, but the function of the facility is even more critical.

A well-functioning facility (or website) enhances business by:

- 1) quickly and intuitively showing customers what they need and where to find it;
- 2) recommending additional appropriate products or services;
- 3) anticipating additional customer needs (such as gift wrapping, shipment tracking, support manuals, contact points or a help desk), and;
- 4) providing informational resources (advice, recommendations, reference library), and;
- 5) carries forward your organization's image in order to strengthen your message and brand marketing.

5. Design your website with sensitivity to those with special needs?

Many website owners either do not consider viewers with special needs or assume visitors with special needs will not be visiting their site. This is truly one of the biggest mistakes one can make. Figure 1 shows the percentage of people with disabilities by age. Keep in mind, these disabilities include common problems such as color-blindness, poor vision and unsteady hands (poor small motor function). Are you willing to potentially abandon ten percent to over seventy percent of your prime customers or clients?

Figure 1.0 Percentage of People with Disabilities by Age Group

Age Group	Percentage with Disabilities
0 to 21	10%
22 to 44	14.9%
45 to 54	24.5%
55 to 64	36.3%
65 to 79	47.3%
Over 80	71.5%

Source: This data is from the 1994-1995 Survey of Income and Program Participation by the US Census Bureau. (Courtesy of Microsoft Corporation.)

6. Consider usability of your website with regards to all potential international visitors.

Many business owners and website designers, particularly in North America, are very centric oriented. This means they think most, if not all, visitors will have the same background, culture, language and understanding as them. It also means they believe they know which type of visitor will come to their website. Nothing could be further from the truth.

One of the most important things to remember is that the first “W” in “WWW” stands for “World”. The World Wide Web implies by its name that anybody can access your website and undoubtedly will. On any given day, the WebAxia, Inc. website receives visitors from places as far-reaching as Malaysia, South Africa, Germany, Thailand, Sweden, China, United States, Mexico and Egypt. You cannot control who will visit your site, so help make their visit more pleasant and user-friendly by following some of the following guidelines.

- Do not limit contact telephone numbers to toll-free numbers only, unless any international caller can use it. Most toll-free numbers only function in their home country.
- Always include a mailing address for written contact. Just because a visitor could access your site does not mean they have access to email. Many visitors utilize Internet cafes for conducting their online activities and must follow-up with telephone calls or postal mail.
- Do not assume everybody purchases your product in U.S. dollars (or your local currency). If you show dollars make sure the visitor knows whether it is U.S. dollars, Hong Kong dollars, Australian dollars, etc. Provide currency converters to help visitors understand the price in their local currency or allow visitors to purchase in local currency. Many merchant banking accounts support this capability.
- Do not use slang or colloquialisms in the body of your text. Language and regional differences can cause confusion or total misunderstanding. Keep language simple and straightforward.
- If you provide products or services to a very localized area, make sure your homepage identifies your area of activity so visitors know whether they should continue to view your site. Nothing can be more frustrating than deciding to purchase a product you

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have been researching for a long time, then realizing the web vendor does not ship to your country.

- Use graphical elements to help visitors understand your message. Icons and arrows can simplify the appearance of a website and help foreign-speaking visitors maneuver around the site much easier, leaving them relaxed to read the important text.
- Make sure all contact information is international-friendly. Do not use abbreviations in your mailing address (for example, write “Road” instead of “Rd.,” “Strasse” instead of “Str,” “Ontario” instead of “ON”). Add your country code to your telephone number and tell visitors which time is best to call (including which time zone you are in – even better if you put it in terms of Greenwich Mean Time).
- Ensure purchase order or email entry fields are understandable for all countries (for example, the term “postal code” is a better choice than “zip code”).
- If you must use abbreviations or acronyms, introduce the words first followed by the shortened version (for example, Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)). Even better, also include a glossary of terms or include explanations in your Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section.

Summary

Most website tools examine what we at WebAxia call the “physical” items of a website. These tools provide such checks and services as:

HTML code syntax problem identification	Typographical error identification
HTML code validation	Spell check review
Search engine optimization	Broken links detection
META tag analysis	Visitor statistics measurement
META tag generator	Color analysis

All of these areas are important, but they only tell part of the picture. At WebAxia, Inc. we compliment the “physical” tools by adding another powerful website tool, the **WebAxia**™ Website Effectiveness Analysis. We like to think of it as “psychology for your website”.

A **WebAxia** Analysis probes deeper into your website than conventional physical tools by asking you questions about not only your website, but also the operations and processes that support it. The key elements described in the preceding pages represent some of the areas that a **WebAxia** Analysis investigates and should be examined in order to have an effective website. Please utilize this free document as a tool to help your website effectiveness and we invite you to try a **WebAxia** Website Effectiveness Analysis.

Very truly,

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