

CHAPTER 1 : WEBSITE PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Primary purpose :

For every web site it is absolutely important to define the primary purpose of the site before any work begins. This will make possible a web site which users will find effective, efficient and usable. Too many websites often end up being about displaying the needs of the owner with little attention paid to the needs of the site users to the effect that they become boring and consequently have very few visits. What are the main purpose of the site and how will it also pay attention to the needs of the audience ? Other features maybe regarded as extras.

Intended audience

Who will be visiting the web site? It may be argued that just anybody can access practically any web site on the internet so there should be no real need to segment users. However, a website is still very much like a product regardless of whether it is a commercial or non-profit concern. It must therefore have a defined market or it will fail to yield any specific result. Factors such as user categories and goals of both the owner and the user will be of paramount importance in defining the structure of the website..

- **User categories-** what age groups, and geographical distribution details are to be applied for target audience? Corporate web sites for example are a lot more difficult to build because for some of them not only will the site need to be defined as a business to business (B2B) communication tool but also as a business to consumer (B2C) site.. It is quite often difficult to strike a good balance between both objectives and if this is not done properly the result is often a website which looks like hastily cobbled together with elements and features appearing like afterthoughts... While a design aimed for B2B interaction will expressly frown at web objects not staying in position such as in flash animations, a B2C design will expect to have a lively interface which engages the attention of the user as an essential feature.

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- **Goals-** what would the audience be looking forward to both from your web site and how would this enrich their life aspirations? Again for a B2B centered site the primary intention may be to impress other businesses and affiliates with details of infrastructure and with financial information. This is of little use in a B2C oriented design where the user will be more interested in matters such as the nearest sales or business office , current bargains and promotions of the company, and also visual demonstration of the company's products in use.

Most other sites will typically permit almost any combination of content. The foregoing however should enable much of the basic structure of the proposed site to be defined. The right mix of the requirements of both audience types will differ according to purpose of the site..

Pages and information

Having sufficiently defined the required structure of the planned website through establishing the purpose and user needs it may now be easier to determine what type content will attract such users. Textual and image contents are typically the major components of a well –planned website. Downloadable contents and also a database will often enable interactivity.

Text and image content - will need to be hierarchically structured and conveniently made accessible through an intuitive system of menus and submenus.. Again how will the audience be able to identify with the display ? A drab site just won't do , and for each website there exists an optimum amount of entertainment that would be considered tasteful. This we often test the skills of the designer.

Download content - such as forms, brochures, software, financial statements, are now considered essential features of most websites, as they effectively help to reduce overhead previously wasted on mailing these items .They also need to be made easily available and to be of easily manageable sizes.

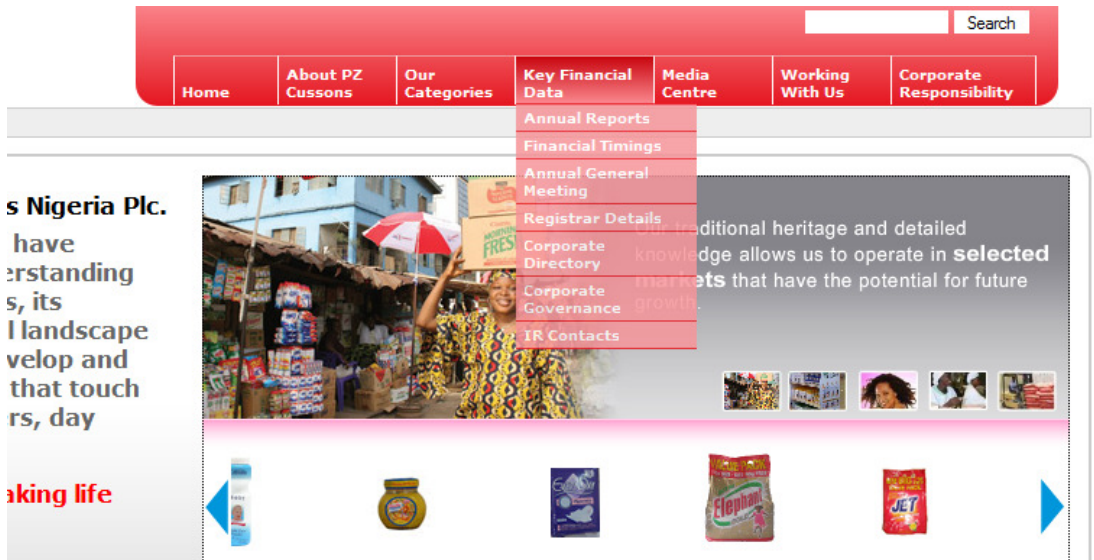
Database - will often be needed to enable the implementation of dynamic site contents. These days it has become standard for websites to be created from Content Management Systems which rely extensively on one or several online databases.

Quality and usability

To assemble the right mix of content for a corporate sight is often a job for experts, but thankfully for most owners worked examples are already all over the internet from sites built by competitors. .Therefore the task that will be of more concern should be to assemble content in a manner which demonstrates acceptable quality

and usability goals for the specific purpose. Some imitable goals for a web site project would be: professionalism, navigability and also a means of evaluating performance of all the web pages in terms of views.

- **Professionalism** - The website must be seen as well conceived and professionally constructed. Dead links and uncompleted pages will usually give the impression that the site owner is careless and unreliable. A web site ought to demonstrate the superiority of the owner or at least show that it is equal in stature to its competitors.
- **Navigability** - The website must be constructed in a manner which makes it easy for users to locate information quickly
- **Evaluation** – It should be possible for site administrators to access user statistics to all pages. Acceptable means of doing this includes embedding Google Analytics codes in pages to be tracked.



Navigation must be intuitive and easy to use

Budget

The structure of a proposed web site, will determine what level of expertise will be required to build the web site.. It will also determine what web technologies will be appropriate. These days most web sites are built on a framework of Content Management Systems (CMS) of which there are several varieties created from several technologies. Again while some owners will place the lower cost of using open source software above other considerations, others will feel more comfortable with

**SAMPLE CHAPTER FROM “ DRUPAL WEBSITE MODELS by Timi Ogunjobi”
PURCHASE FROM <http://www.websesame.com/node/139>**

proprietary platforms or custom built applications. These considerations will have a direct influence on the cost of the webs site.

Information gathering is a potentially huge costs which is often neglected in the planning stage especially when the project is for a company of considerable size where bits and pieces of these information reside in diverse departments and often in a form that are not immediately useable . A full time coordinator may be needed within the company to facilitate the collation of these information.

Sample Guidelines For Planning A Web Site

Who will be the main target audience for the web site ?	<i>Consumers, business partners</i>
What do we expect to be their purpose for visiting the web site ?	<i>To be updated on the company's activities</i>
How frequently should we expect them to visit ?	<i>Every day</i>
What would be their expectation and experience when they visit ?	<i>Learn about new things that we are doing and about our new business and employment opportunities</i>
What nationality will they be and what language will they be speaking ?	<i>UK, USA . Implement IP ban on other countries</i>
What type of information will they be looking for ?	<i>Jobs , special bargains, financial information , , sales outlets</i>
Will they want to read the information, print it or download it ?	<i>Read , print</i>
What type of browser will they be using, and how fast will their internet access be ?	<i>Internet Explorer, Safari, Mozilla Firefox</i>
What will be their typical computer screen resolution ?	<i>800x600, 1024x768 and 1280 x 1024.</i>

Structure and content

The website is only as useful as the accessibility of the contents. Information needs to be structured in a way that will be meaningful to the audience. Users must be helped to find their way around the site through the use of intuitive menus and also a site map. One idea that works quite nicely is to make the target audience to a site feel “at home” on the website by using navigation conventions similar to that of sites which they are also likely to visit, or are likely to be familiar with.

Speed is of essential consideration on the internet – a site with pages that load too slowly is likely to merely frustrate users with slow internet connection and have few visits. .

Accessibility standards these days require that when images are used on a web page , alternative text description should be available for such images. This is primarily because some users turn off graphics on their browsers in order to increase speed . The visually impaired also use text only browsers. Therefore it is often wise to provide support for these users to satisfy acceptable standards for accessibility and usability.

CASE STUDY : Specification For A Corporate Web Site

Details of the broad requirements for the proposed design of the GRINCHWORK INC. web site

We seek a dynamic and informative website that reflects our work in promoting Grinchwork as a business leader and our role as agents of change. The website needs to reflect:

- Our successes - we have a demonstrable history of delivering projects and products which meet international standards of quality and safety.
- . Our aims and objectives - a declared position to create a prosperous business affiliates and satisfied customers. Our role in effectively training a highly skilled workforce, and supporting and enabling our communities to be agents of social and economic change.

1. Technology

It is intended to make use of the cost and flexibility advantage offered by open source server side scripting languages in the implementation of the proposed site development solution. Thus a Content Management System (CMS) based on PHP will be used to implement the web site. the following will be the requirements for the CMS:

- The CMS will be very user friendly, adaptable and modular.
- All pages will be fully editable within the CMS.

2. Design

The Web Developer will be required to design a new corporate website and advise on web best practice on an on-going basis. Once the new site has gone live, it is anticipated that the majority of content management will be undertaken in-house once style sheets are agreed, however some additional design may be required from time to time e.g. the creation of a new section or mini-site. Web Developer should clearly indicate how they can meet the following requirements:

- The over-riding design challenge is to present Grinchwork's range of information and services so that first time site users can access the information they need quickly and easily online..
- The majority of the website content will be re-written and provided to the Web Developer. A shared folder/FTP area should be provided to enable

information and content to be easily managed between Grinchwork and the Web Developer through the project implementation.

- Web Developer will be responsible for uploading the initial content onto the content management system however, once the initial site is live this will be managed by Grinchwork.
- Programme pages should be re-designed using a standardised format so that users can access important information quickly, for example programme overview, eligibility criteria, company testimonials and application progress.
- The site design should use relative sizing and undergo testing on multiple screen resolutions including: 800x600, 1024x768 and 1280 x 1024.
- Users should have the option to print from the website using printer-friendly formats where appropriate.
- Company case studies should be presented in a gallery format and audio-video testimonials should also be supported.
- Organisation of documents should be improved by presenting executive summaries. A dedicated simple search mechanism should also be provided so that users can search for documents from summaries..
- The news section should include the headline, a paragraph summarizing Grinchwork press releases and stories and photograph/s where appropriate
- User registration for alerts of new material uploaded onto the site must be considered, for example events, and news items.
- Site navigation will need to improve the user experience.
- Grinchwork must hold the copyright of the site, as well as all text and images.
- The Web Developer must provide access to detailed website statistics to enable daily, weekly and monthly monitoring through an easy to use reporting tool.
- The events section would benefit from different viewing options that are more calendar based such as view by month and a year planner.
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3. Accessibility

The changes to the site must conform to at least WAI AA accessibility levels. The Web Developer needs to outline how this standard will be met and previous experience in this area.