What is a website for? What should I consider when developing one?

Website skills surgery
Agenda

• Understanding the **purpose** of a website
• How can a website help us **meet our objectives**?
• Doing some **research**
• Things to **consider** when developing your site
• Knowing your **audiences**
• Questions?
What is a website for?
Why do you need a website?

• A website is **never** “just because…”!!

• It must have a purpose…

• A website is a **communication and marketing tool** generating:
  • **2 way** communication - with ‘you’ and your users/audiences
  • ‘**call to action**’ – every website should have an objective it wants users to complete

• A call to action provides…
  • **Focus** to your site
  • A way to **measure** your sites success
  • **Direction** to your users
Helping you meet your objectives

• What can we use our website for?
  • **Promote** ourselves and our work
  • Create **interest**
  • Generate **revenue** (directly and indirectly)
  • Maintain and increase **reputation**
  • **Recruit** staff and students
  • **Engage** with our audiences
    • Creating positive (hopefully) reactions and emotions
  • **Stand out** in the market
    • Uniqueness
    • Differentiation
    • Comparing you to the competition
  • An information **source** and information **gathering**

Why ‘us’ over ‘them’?
What is a Call to action?

• It answers the [unspoken] question, ‘That’s interesting. Now what?’
• A simple way to interact directly with your online visitors
• Encourage them to take an immediate action after reading your website’s content or viewing your pages
• Creating useful and relevant links
  • “Read more about…”
  • “Register for our newsletter…”
  • “Contact us…”
• Buttons, graphics or banners indicating the user has an action to perform
• The key factor for success:
  • make the process as easy as possible
  • make sure you create a simple and clear message
Call to action examples

Blogs

Wordpress blogs

Wordpress is ideal for a public blog. Imperial can offer Wordpress with an Imperial URL and branded template design to students, staff and research groups. Terms and conditions apply and there is an approval process when considering a Wordpress URL.

Key features
- Filtered search on your specific blog
- Categorisation based on tagging
- Automatic archive of your content by month
- Popular posts based on user views
- Automatic RSS feed for consumption by other websites
- Easily embed video, slideshows and audio
- Access to site statistics via the College's Google Analytics account

College provisions for this app
- Any rebranding or redesign happens automatically
Do some research...
Competitor analysis

- Other universities (use league tables... http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/aboutimperial/league_rankings)
- UK and International
- Similar research groups, departments etc...
- HE sector and outside the sector
• Put yourself in the place of your audience

• What keywords, phrases or search terms would you use to find your site?
  • This can produce similar, or competitor, sites
Things to consider
What is your website for?

- What need does your website need to fulfil?

- It is important to understand this before you embark on setting up a website...

- Your administrative/organisational structure will not (or rarely) matter to your audiences
  - So don’t plan your website around this structure

- Remember: a website is never “just because”
On-going considerations

• The communication and impact your website has doesn’t necessarily end when the user closes the browser…
  • You need to leave a positive and lasting impact

• On-going maintenance
  • Who will be responsible for maintaining your site?
  • Why should users come back?
  • They will need a reason to so regular updates are important!
  • You wouldn’t send out a brochure with content 2 years out of date…!

• A longer term website/digital strategy will ensure they do

• People and contacts
  • Any names/email addresses/contact numbers will impact upon future communication and contact with audiences

• Is the end point that you want your audiences to contact you?
  • One to one and personal communication is fine, if that’s what you intend
  • But ensure you are able to deal with it…
Other important considerations

• Proof reading
  • Does it make sense
  • Check links and Calls to action
  • Spelling!!

• Search engine optimisation → web surgery on this topic
  • How easily can users find your page?
  • Correct use of headings, keywords and site description

• Use of images → web surgery on this topic
  • Choosing the right images
  • Sourcing images

• Page layout → web surgery on this topic
  • Page elements within the templates

• Writing your content for the web → web surgery on this topic
  • Its not the same as writing for print!
  • Targeting content at your audiences
Knowing your audience
**Who will be visiting your site?**

- What is the level of knowledge of your audience?
  - Are they experts in this field or not?
  - This can guide the **detail** of content and who it is **tailored** towards
- Audiences can be **broadly** considered to be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Staff</th>
<th>Prospective development partners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Students</td>
<td>Specialists and specialist groups in science, technology, medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospective students and families</td>
<td>Academics (not Imperial) with general queries about College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prospective employees</td>
<td>Peer communication with colleagues at Imperial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitors to the College</td>
<td>Prospective clients/users of academic resources at Imperial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni</td>
<td>Key decision makers in government and industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journalists</td>
<td>Non-specialists in industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current and Prospective funding bodies/sponsors</td>
<td>Particularly relevant with funders (<em>the man that writes the cheque may not have any knowledge – or limited – on the subject</em>)</td>
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Bringing it all together

A great website!

- Other web surgeries covering these topics, and more:
Questions
Need more help?

Contact Emma Chesterman: e.chesterman@imperial.ac.uk

Content forum:
http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/webguide/strategyandpolicies/governanceandmanagement/contentforum

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Representing</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Sean Conner</td>
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<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>Lucy Stagg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Admin/Support</td>
<td>Peter Gillings</td>
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Thank you