

From Anticipation to Apathy – breaking the cycle, not the budget

Every two or three years a large majority of businesses spend a considerable amount of their budget on redesigning their websites, but quickly become disillusioned and disappointed when the expected results don't materialise. However, with a little more understanding about the real objectives of the website, some careful planning and by choosing the right technology this needn't be the case.

Currently, many companies budget just for the initial costs of designing and setting up a website, but this is approximately only a fifth of the total expenditure over a three year period. The ongoing expense to ensure the website remains fresh and operates at an optimum level, can be up to four times the initial budget. It's a sobering fact. One that many companies don't consider until it's too late.

The scenario of anticipation from when a website first launches to apathy within weeks is all too familiar for many companies. Once the realisation sets in that the functionality isn't there, it doesn't rate high on the search engines and it can't be easily updated, enthusiasm from within the organisation becomes deflated. A combination of bad advice and a lack of understanding of exactly what the organisation has paid for, all contribute to the frustration.

Companies often make the mistake of thinking that a weak design is contributing to a website's problems, but this is seldom the case. What they really need is a way to frequently update the content, refresh the layout and adapt the site easily to react to market dynamics. Implementing a full redesign will undoubtedly mean going over budget or shelving the project for another year. Even then, if some of the underlying fundamentals aren't addressed the cycle just repeats itself.

A content management system (CMS) can tackle many of these problems head-on and help to significantly reduce ongoing costs too. Like any other part of the business, website management should deliver a return on investment (RoI), but it is easy to see why this is frequently not the case.



Much of the initial cost in traditional static websites is spent on the actual build as each page has to be coded by a developer individually. A CMS works on a series of templates that enables content to be added by the business user. Instead of thirty pages, a typical company might just need two or three template designs. The savings can often be up to tenfold of the normal developing costs and allow for regular changes to refresh designs without rebuilding the whole site.

This aspect enables savings to be quantified, but there are other less transparent benefits too that also play a part when considering RoI. Less development time enables the website to be up and running much faster than with a traditional build. Content editing is as simple as creating a document with a word processor, allowing it to be carried out by business users, which in turn enables your content to be far more up-to-date and attract visitors to return to your site.

Taking the CMS one step further and using a hosted solution helps an organisation's budget work even harder. With a hosted solution there is no need for any supporting infrastructure, immediately eliminating expensive software and hardware maintenance and upgrade costs. All back-ups, new releases of software are handled automatically. In addition, a monthly rental fee removes the cost of a website from capital to operational expenditure. This allows departments such as marketing, to sign it off as part of their monthly budget, instead of having to present to the board to ask for more money.

A hosted CMS will help realign your website budget so that it focuses on design and content, not never-ending technology costs. All that is needed now is a comprehensive plan of what the website needs to achieve, in order to reach the business objectives and see a return on your investment.