

## **Five Good Tips**

### **Good Coding**

Make sure your pages comply with the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) guidelines. This may sound boring but standards have been set down regarding the HTML coding that makes up web pages and the various objects that they can contain. Recommendations are also laid down regarding the use of animations and pop-up windows etc. Modern browsers check this when your site is visited and may not display the pages correctly if they are not properly constructed.

### **Compatibility**

Ensure your website works with different platforms and browsers. This follows on from the point above. Not everyone uses Microsoft Windows and it is important to check that your website appears correctly with other browsers such as Google Chrome and Firefox. Indeed some people choose to use Apple computers, or even the Linus operating system.

### **Navigation**

A menu is simply a listing of other pages that your website contains. It is important for this to be clear and logical. With small sites of 5 or so pages it is sufficient to have a navigation bar with clickable links to each of the pages. With larger sites this can become impractical, so a system of sub-menus needs to be created with related items grouped together under main menu items such as 'recent projects'. Sub-menus can be constructed in a number of ways to suit the aesthetics of the page layout, but it is a good idea to maintain some sort of 'breadcrumb trail' so that the user can see where they are in relation to the rest of the website.

### **Focus**

Build your site with your target audience in mind. Put yourself in the place of a potential customer. What is the main thing that you would want to find on the website? Make that the most dominant item on the home page. Lesser items can be a bit further down or on other pages. What might seem like important options to you might seem like distractions to people outside your business, it's always worth getting it checked out by someone independent.

### **Currency**

Don't allow the content to become out of date. There is nothing worse than a latest news section that is obviously old news. It doesn't inspire confidence that the rest of the site is current, especially if prices are involved.

## **Five Pitfalls**

### **Splash Screens**

These are graphical animations that start automatically when you visit a site, usually with a 'skip intro' button somewhere on the screen. These serve no useful purpose at all, and most people just skip it anyway.

### **Pop Ups**

Pop-ups are windows that open unexpectedly usually with some advertising content, or announcing that you have won the lottery etc. They are often used as a way of getting advertising revenue but can be really frustrating if they pop up every time you return to the home page. Sometimes a web designer will choose to display content for you in a separate window. If this is the case you should be told that this will happen.

### **Music**

Music is very subjective in nature, so unless you are very sure what people want to listen to, it's best to avoid soundtracks that start automatically when a page loads. Music files can also be relatively large which means that it takes longer for the page to load. Looping tracks can also get a bit tiresome so there should be a way of turning it off.

### **Clutter**

If people can't find what they want quickly, they move on. Don't try to put everything on the home page; it can be confusing. Concentrate on the main purpose of your site and make that prominent. Stick to a logical menu system so that people can drill down to find details if it is appropriate.

### **Waiting for Content**

Don't assume everybody has a fast broadband connection. Large graphics can take a long time to appear on a slow connection. Consider using thumbnail images with larger versions that can be accessed by clicking the thumbnail images. Some over-designed pages can employ complex image structures that simply slow down the site for no good reason except the ego of the website designer.