WEB $TRATEGY
FUNDAMENTALS

A Book About Practical Web Strategy for the Non-Geek
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Introduction

The Web Strategy Book is about how a website is built from a visitor's perspective and the business structures that should be present on today's modern websites. It's not about web design, web development or the various trends that regularly show up on the Internet. Instead, it's about the basic commercial principles that all websites should have. Web strategy is based on existing business models, marketing plans, communication plans and digital communication plans. It doesn't matter if the website is for a municipality, a company, a non-profit organization or a sports association. The basic mechanisms for web strategy are applicable to all types of websites.

There are several groups of intended readers for this book: marketing and sales personnel, web designers, advertising representatives and students; in other words, anyone who deals with marketing, sales and the world wide web.

In the long run, a website should attract the right visitors. When a user comes to a website, she should reach the established goals and in some way become a customer according to the website's description of customer. It's easy to see the intention of a website that sells something directly; it's harder to see the intentions when the business happens off-line. This book describes how to make visitors into customers, called converting in the world of the web. The book also discusses how to analyze what happens on a website and how a marketing department

or webmaster can see what works and what doesn't on their own websites.

Design is important in creating an impression and eliciting a reaction from the visitor. At the same time, design is often based on trends, and is subject to short-lived fads, which is why this book does not deal with design.

With regards to development, publishing tools, html and other technical aspects, there are many valuable books. This book works for all types of tools and programs for building a website.

The Web Strategy Book is divided into four sections: Before you Build a Website, How to Attract Visitors to the Website, How to Take Care of your Visitors and Turn them into Customers, and How to Analyze your Website to Increase the Business Value. As the book's title suggests, the key word is "business value." The book provides answers to how business value can be created on a website. By business value, I mean that the website should be used to create business and/or to save money for the organization. It should be possible to evaluate the business value of a website by doing an expense-income analysis. In the field of web production, the term "Return on Investment" (ROI) is used to show the profitability of web site.

To avoid confusion, the term organization will be used to represent businesses, governing authorities, municipalities, sports associations etc.

Enjoy this time about web strategy and creating a website that gives "Business by web"!

Section 1. Before you Build a Website

How does one build a website? Normally a project starts with a sketch from an advertising firm that follows the graphic profile with Latin text and pictures that will strengthen a brand. Included in this preliminary design are various functions and a navigation bar. The risk with such a preliminary design is that the customer will take it as the final product, without taking into consideration important strategic deliberations. The result can be standstills in the project right from the start. If, for example, there is a navigation included in the proposal, the project group will often get stuck on the text in the navigation. The navigation bar is usually a standard navigation that looks the same regardless of who designs it. It is ubiquitous enough to fit many business organizations, and says nothing about what the organization does, or who is involved. Below is an example of what this type of navigation bar looks like.This particular navigation bar says nothing

| Start | Products | Services | News | About | Contact |

PICTURE 1. Standard navigation

about what the organization does, or to which branch or field of interest they belong. The structure of the navigation is routinely placed in the preliminary proposal without thought or adaptation to the needs

of the website's visitors. Luckily, the number of such projects is declining. Web businesses and customers have gotten better at defining requirements for a website, before the designers and developers begin the actual project.

Before you build a website, a pre-study should be conducted to make sure that the website properly and clearly communicates with the organization's target group(s). An effective pre-study should include the following points:

- ▶ the purpose and goals of the website

- ▶ the unique selling points of the organization compared to its competitors

- ▶ target groups for the website

- ▶ "know – feel – do", a model for managing target groups

- ▶ goals and how they will be measured

- ▶ navigation structure

- ▶ analysis of important search words used by visitors

- ▶ contents and functions

By using a pre-study, it becomes easier to formulate the requirements for the new website.

Capture the Needs of the Visitor, not the Internal Organization

When starting to build a new website, the largest obstacle is the organization itself. It is easy to get caught in an "inside-out perspective". It's easy to say that a website should be based on the visitors and their needs and wishes, but it's hard to do. Experience dictates that many web projects go wrong because it's difficult for a project team in an organization to think like an outside visitor. Even with external communication, thoughts and language are often influenced by internal

culture. Focus lands on what the organization wants to convey, rather than what the visitor wants. History is rife with examples of people and organizations that think from the inside out.

In the 1970s, Ken Olsen was vice president for Digital Equipment. The company built computers for production and administration. Ken Olsen had apparently said that he saw no reason why someone would want a computer at home. From Ken's perspective, this was common sense, because who would need a computer at home to manage a warehouse?

Ken Olsen had plenty of knowledge about his chosen branch, but still something went wrong. He had access to a large amount of information about his branch and its potential. The opportunity to predict the future was there, but he missed one thing that would have made the prediction much more correct. Olsen lacked the imagination required to see the possibilities outside of his own organization's limits. He saw, quite simply, from the inside out. What the organization delivered could lead to nothing else than to the statement that he made.

The biggest difficulty we meet when building a website is leaving the jargon, the internal language and the internal thought processes in order to see the organization through the eyes of the visitor. Additionally, too many people focus on the technical platform and the problems that follow. In reality, a website project is 90 per cent communication and marketing, and only 10 per cent technical platform. Think about that – 10 per cent technical platform. That means that most of the project will come about in real life, not on the computer. During a website project, imagination must be used to look at the organization with the expectations that the visitor has in mind when she visits the website.

A visitor always has a purpose every time she opens a web browser. It could be to purchase something, to find information or simply to be entertained for a while. There is always an expectation to meet a specific goal. There can also exist a hope to receive a little extra than expected.

Purpose and General Goals of the Website

The first step in a website project is to think about the purpose and the general goals of the website. Here are some examples of purposes:

- ▶ to sell something
- ▶ to generate connections with customers
- ▶ to improve a brand
- ▶ to support and help customers

The website can have one or more of the above stated purposes or maybe another purpose entirely. The purpose of an e-business website is to generate income for the website's owner. The goal is to guide a visitor to buy one (or preferably more than one) product. An e-business website also aims to support existing customers when they have questions and need assistance in using the products they have purchased on or outside the website. If the website sells a complicated product, and the time between the initial interest and the final receipt is drawn out, the website then needs to provide more information than usually exists in a product description. In these cases, the visitor needs more information to be sure that the product is right for her.

Why is it Important to have the Purpose and Goals Clearly Set Out?

Having the purpose and goals clearly defined explains why the website exists in the first place. It also points to how complicated the website is going to be. There is quite a large difference between building a website for a small business in a small town in North Dakota and creating a global website for a large company active all over the world. The purpose of the small business' website can be to give information

to visitors who will visit the actual shop, or to build on the benefits that a brand name can give to the customers. The purpose of the global website is to support the business processes for existing customers, finding new customers and to establish important networking contacts with suppliers and business partners.

The basic thought process must build on what the website will achieve; in other words, what benefits and effects the website will have. Again, this depends on the type of website being discussed and the most important aspect is to see it from the visitor's point of view. The difficulties of this can be explained by the following example. An organization requires a visitor to call a salesperson, but does not take into account that the visitor can visit the website at 7:00pm, when there are no salespeople available. Another example is the customer service-oriented company that has divided their services into "services" and actual "products," where the purpose of the website is to inform visitors about which services are services, and which services have been converted into products. If the visitor is not familiar with the company, there is a risk that she will not find the service she is looking for. She has perhaps chosen the "service" menu in an attempt to find something that the company defines as a "product".

In the dialogues surround the building of a website, the question arises whether the website is designed to sell or to inform. The weight should always lie on the selling side! This applies even to websites that inform. The information should be packaged and "sold" so that the visitor will become interested and take action. A website is not a brochure on the Internet, but a business generator. Business does not always imply that the website needs to actually sell something; it could be that a municipality wants to communicate information prior to educational choices facing students, thereby selling places in the various schools. It could also be that a governmental authority would like for its visitors to use the various e-services on the website

You don't need to have a web shop to make money with your website. Web Strategy Fundamentals deals with building a website from a visitor perspective and the business-related structures that should be in place today to make a website profitable for the organization. The book is not about web design or web development. It's about how to strategically create a platform for your Internet marketing. It doesn't matter if the website is for a municipality, a company, a non-profit organization or a sports association. The fundamental mechanisms for web strategy works for all types of websites. The book starts with a foreword from Internetworld's Swedish editor in chief Magnus Höij.

Author Anders Tufvesson works as a senior web strategist for the company Two. Anders has worked with the web and the Internet since 1996. Join him for a while with "Business by web."

"I have worked closely with Tufvesson on an earlier project with another company where my role with Solvalla was to improve Elitloppet (one of Sweden's most visited sporting events) as a brand name. At the time, I was a customer of Tufvesson's. I was deeply impressed with his simple pedagogical management of each individual process, which gave me as a customer a clear overview to create better business value. Elitloppet. se was a very well visited campaign site in 2008! Now, as marketing executive for Unibet with 3.6 million customers in 150 countries, it is even more important to simplify the "moneytainment" branch and this book that Anders has written gave me an honest "on the outside looking in perspective" that I respect. A good guy who gives me the tools to push business value to new heights. You should read it too…"

Andreas Slätt,
Marketing executive, Unibet, Sweden