

Ten top website tips

Here are ten vital tips to ensure your website attracts more visitors.

By LAWRENCE SMITH.



BUILDING or redesigning your website will not in itself deliver you more business. Being online is critical but creating a new website without investing in the right kind of promotion is like throwing a pebble into the Pacific. It will make a splash but only the very closest to you will hear it.

When you produce a brochure you have to pay for distribution to ensure visitors pick them up. Your website is no different.

So how do you attract more visitors? It's mostly common sense but not necessarily common practice. Here are our top ten tips on getting more visitors to your site.

1 PROFILE your site on your business cards, letterheads, compliments slips, posters, advertisements. Nothing should be published without reference to your site.

2 LAUNCH your site. Use it as a way to talk about yourself. If you don't tell anyone, no-one will know. You may only get a few PR bites but it's worth doing.

3 If you have a customer database, use it. Tell them your site has changed, invite them to visit and tell their friends.

4 GIVE people a reason to visit. Try "website only" special offers or provide a referring bonus to existing clients; a voucher for a discount or upgrade they can pass on to friends.

5 ADVERTISE. It's no different to the offline world. You have to advertise to be seen. But only advertise in relevant places.

6 TRY Google Adwords. This is particularly useful in the early months of your site's life. Getting organic search placement in Google can take time.

OPTIMISE your content. There is

7 a lot of good, free advice available online (see our references alongside). If you don't have time to do it yourself engage a professional search engine optimisation company. It's worth the investment.

8 GET linked. Build links over time with relevant sites. Don't buy from link farms. Ensure you are profiled on key travel portals. Be patient and don't expect overnight success. Make sure partner businesses link to you.

9 STAY fresh and relevant. Make your site interesting, and you meet visitors' needs early. A good experience online leads to good referrals. If your content is old and tired you may get visitors but will they stay?

10 TAKE the promotion of your site seriously. Sixty percent of travellers book online. How much of your marketing budget is allocated to your internet profile? Many business budgets still don't realise the value of the internet as a distribution channel.

Your measurement of success should be on quality, not quantity. One visitor spending \$100 is worth more than 1,000 visitors spending nothing. Focus on the spend per visit or the increase of bookings from your site versus offline channels.

Lawrence Smith is the "Chief Cabbage" at Cabbage Tree Creative, a web and software development company specialising in tourism solutions online for more than 10 years. www.cabbageagetree.co.nz

Where to go for help

New Zealand Travel Portals:

www.newzealand.com

www.aatravel.co.nz

www.tourism.net.nz

www.fourcorners.co.nz

Plus your regional tourism sites

Search engine specialists:

www.netaction.co.nz

www.intersect.co.nz

Online search engine blogs which include more useful leads:

Google Webmaster Blog

<http://googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com/>

Search Engine Watch:

(slightly more technical)

<http://blog.searchenginewatch.com/blog/>

Search Engine Land:

<http://searchengineland.com/>

VISIT THE
HP.CO.NZ/SMB PORTAL
FOR INFORMATION
ON ALL
HP PRODUCTS.

