

## **Make your website work harder for you**

If you're reading this, chances are you have a website – or are considering launching one. But, just as not all retail shops attract your attention to pop in and shop, not every site you visit will interest you enough to click.

Whether you're creating the site as a start-up travel consultant or undergoing a redesign, here are a few key questions to consider before you go live – even if you've outsourced the design to a professional.

### **1. Who are you talking to?**

The golden rule of all marketing efforts: know who your audience is. If you're a sports tour operator gear your page to their interests by including images of international stadiums, matches or fans in full-kit. Or, if your clients are corporates, the page should look professional and trust-worthy; blue is often used to engage those in business as it is associated with credibility and responsibility – just think of all the financial services companies that use this hue. Too many businesses or their owners design their websites and its homepage, around what they like, without considering what their audience wants; a mistake that could cost you a sale.

### **2. What is the purpose of the page?**

Another marketing gem, understand the intention behind your business – and then scream it from the rooftops! While this may sound a bit airy-fairy, it's central to connecting with the right customer as if you're clear on what you do, then they will be too: A confused mind does not buy. Your intention could be to service church and school groups in your neighbourhood who travel regularly. Or offer holiday-makers off-the-beaten track adventures hand-picked and packaged by you. Whatever your offering, be clear on what it is and then ensure that the tone of your copy, the visuals you choose and the layout of the design reflects it.

### **3. Do you create a good first impression?**

There's little more off-putting than visiting a homepage only to be greeted with tacky pictures, out-dated fonts and psychedelic design. Avoid sending your visitors packing before they've even stayed long enough to browse by banishing clutter – remember to keep it simple stupid (KISS) – writing simply and concisely (big words fool no one), and using a modern template that is in line with today's Insta-obsessed, visual-first fashion. Failing this, you risk being perceived as low-budget, incapable and unprofessional; which, as a travel agent who relies on trust and relationships, is a big no-no.

### **4. Does the page encourage visitors to click-through?**

While a stylish homepage is one thing, driving visitors through to its other pages is another. Just like a front door is the entrance into a shop, you need to direct visitors around your e-store. A clear navigation bar that can be easily found and clicks-through to the site's other pages is a must. As is hyperlinking different sections. So if you offer corporate and leisure travel, then ensure visitors can click-through to each's own page from the homepage. Avoid too much copy too and rather use simple directional words to drive clicks-through deeper into your site.

### **5. Is there a call-to-action on the page?**

Some visitors may just want your contact details, others a quote. Make this easy by including clear buttons that drive conversion. The chances are you've driven them to your site either through

Google, a referral or word-of-mouth; give them the information that they want up-front and keep the pillow talk for later when they've got more time to hang-out and explore. Common call-to-action words are "Get a quote", "Contact Us" or "Sign-up here".

#### **6. Are your social media widgets easy to find?**

Some visitors may want to follow you for updates so make sure your Facebook or Instagram feeds are visible and live. There's nothing worse than wanting to follow a company only to find that their widget isn't linked to the page; the majority won't make an effort to find you via Facebook search. Once a fan, you can engage your community with interesting information about your travel speciality, or share specials and deals.

#### **7. Is your logo large and in charge?**

There is only one place for your logo and that's top left-hand corner. Don't be creative and pop it in mid-centre; there are rules and this is one of them. It also needs to fit. And not be pixelated. Your logo isn't just a pretty picture; it's a hyper-condensed summary of everything your business is and does. Make sure it has pride of place, is easily recognisable and striking.

#### **8. Is it responsive?**

As more and more people use their phones to research for information or to buy online, ensuring your website works on a smartphone is essential. You'll soon know if it's not; when visiting via your phone the page won't fit properly and the text may be too small. Visitors will have to persevere to use the site and may lose patience. Instead use a responsive template or ask your designer to ensure the site sits well on a phone. And keep the design clean and simple so that it translates well onto a smaller screen.

#### **9. Are your contact details clear?**

Some visitors may only want to reach you by phone or send an email so make sure these details are visible and easily found. And, while you'll likely have a "Contact Us" page too, don't rely on it; include your phone number, address and social media widgets on every page.

#### **10. Are your images blurry?**

Such a no-no! Tying into point 3, if your pictures aren't perfect it leaves a less-than-glowing image in your visitor's mind. Blurry, pixelated and the wrong size image will erode your credibility fast. Rather purchase high-res photos from reputable stock libraries, or better yet, take your own – using a professional of course. Stock photos - while good, especially as it's unlikely you'll be able to visit every destination you're selling – are also a dime a dozen and you could easily end up looking just like your competitor if you all promote white sandy beaches as your homepage. If you must, then find a unique way of explaining your services – are you excellent at customer service, do you hand-pick your packages or do you work with high-flying CEOs; then choose visuals that best reflect this vs. using the expected picture postcard. If budget is a concern try Google image search, which offers great quality images for free but be sure to set the parameters of your search properly. This can be done by clicking on "Search tools" on the Google image search page and make your appropriate selection of size and correct usage rights.

Following these ten tips can help your website work harder for you, and may bring in more business. Have any more ideas to add? Share below in the comment box.