



## **Web design – putting functionality first**

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**The purpose of design is not just to make websites look nice; but to make websites that users want to use.**

Internet traffic grew world-wide by more than 1,000% between 2000 and 2018, a global growth rate of more than 15 per cent year-on-year. While usage in Europe and North America grew more than five times during this period, in Asia the growth rate was three times faster – and in Africa more than nine times faster.

Websites and online digital platforms remain the largest proportion of this traffic.

In fact, if you are a senior leader in almost any industry, in just about any country on Earth, the chances are you are regularly involved in the specification, commissioning or operation of websites.

And you have probably been hired for your industry-specific, professional or functional skills – it is pretty unlikely that you are a specialist in web development too.

**So what do you need to know? And what questions should you ask your specialists?**

## **1. Be clear about objectives**

Questions to ask yourself:

- Specifically, who is your website aimed at – and why would they want to visit?
- What makes a good experience from their viewpoint?
- What are the channels through which they will find their way to your website?
- What is a satisfactory and cost-effective volume of traffic from your viewpoint?
- Which measures will indicate that customers have had a successful visit?

## **2. Functionality first – before aesthetics, branding, user journey/user experience**

Form follows function. Should it be a standalone website, or section of a corporate site, IFRAME in a different URL, or a smartphone App?

What do we mean by function? We think these are the main functional forms, and they are detailed a little more in our handy guide.

- Transactional
- Commercial
- Information
- Interactive/communication platform.

## **3. Think hard about what and how to measure**

Traditional statistics and performance indicators represent a significant investment and may not all be useful. For example, time spent on site by the average visitor, a common e-commerce metric, may not be meaningful if your site provides information about services – where success and speed in getting an answer represents the best user experience.

#### 4. Remember this is a pull medium

Just because you build it, does not mean they will come.

It is important to understand the underlying digital business model and how purchase decisions are made online.

At the heart of this is a calculation about where and how you can find traffic in sufficient volumes and provide channels to bring the right kind of users to your site.

### Guide to website functions and formats

Function	Typical applications	Most suitable formats	Key characteristics
Transactional	E-commerce Enquiries and complaints Comparison sites	Website, IFrame set	Security Ease of use
Commercial	Corporate websites Landing pages for digital campaigns	Website, Microsite	Traffic Easy to find
Information	Subject-specific microsities / brochureware Service finder	Microsite, App	Connections / links Sources
Interactive / communication	Forums and discussion groups Internal communication channels Helpdesk / customer services	Website, App, proprietary platform	Interactive functionality Flexibility