

## Building a better Website

There is an astounding volume of content on the internet; distributing information, promoting sales or services, building communities. Unfortunately the quality is about as diverse as the subject matter. So if you have, or are thinking of adding a website of your own, I offer a few thoughts on what separates the Good from the Bad – and the Ugly.

### 1. Keep to the Plan

It is all too easy to lose focus and forget the purpose of your website and just because you *can* do a thing does not necessarily mean that you should. The most common example of this is high spec toys that only really serve to make your homepage loading time unacceptable to anyone who does not have a super-fast internet connection. Lengthy introductions have no value if you're aiming at return customers, after you've seen it once it quickly becomes an irritation.

On average you have only five seconds to engage visitors' interest - fail that and they will go elsewhere for what they want.

### 2. Build to Standards

Everyone who offers goods or services on the internet is required to meet certain standards (UK, Disability Discrimination Act – US, Section 508). Aside from legal liability, the fact remains that Google and other search engines are more likely to list your site well if their cataloguing software can easily read it. Test for everything; the web browsing population is much more diverse than it used to be, *Internet Explorer* is not the only browser software and *Windows* not the only computer operating system.

You can't afford to neglect handheld internet access either – analysts predict that mobile data demand is likely to double every year between now and 2013. People quickly learn to tell a good site from a bad one and have zero patience with things that don't work properly.

### 3. Embrace Change

The internet is a place of rapid evolution and your site should be too. Changing contents regularly not only engages visitors but can help to boost your listings with search engines. Maybe consider adding dynamic resources to your site – a RSS feed can provide frequently updated snippets of material from relevant sources.

A site that never changes or looks like it was designed years ago is unlikely to engage trust or attract return visitors.

There are many tools available that will help you build your own website, some quite good, some laughably poor. But if you are serious about your business it is worth engaging a professionally trained designer as I did with E132 Internet Solutions ([www.E132.co.uk](http://www.E132.co.uk)). They manage all the technical issues so you get on with your life!