



Report

Publishing Your First Web Site
by Paul Smithson

Legal Notice

Please note that while all and every attempt has been made, in the production of this report, to verify the information provided within the publication itself, neither the Author nor the Publisher assumes any responsibility for discrepancies, errors, inaccuracies or omissions that may be contained.

Individuals purchasing and/or reading the report herein are responsible for the use and interpretation of the information contained, and it is the reader's responsibility to ensure that in using the information all applicable laws, regulations (federal, state, local and/or international) are adhered to at all times.

This document does not constitute professional or legal advice of any kind and the reader is advised to seek competent counsel from appropriate sources in any matters pertaining to the reader's business or personal affairs.

Any similarities between characters or businesses named in this report, and actual people and/or businesses are unintentional.

No responsibilities or liabilities are assumed by the Author or the Publisher whatsoever.

Publishing Your First Website

By Paul Smithson

Publishing your first Web site is a very special event – it's your first step into a bright new world of visitors, clicks, downloads, sign-ups and orders. The early stages of setting up an online impression is a daunting time for many, and so this short report will hopefully give some insight into how best to focus your energies early on .

Contents

Introduction	1
Objectives	2
Topic	3
Research	4
Keywords	7
Structure	8
Content	9
Setting 'Actions'	10
Building your site	11
Publishing / Hosting	12
Promotion / Traffic Building	13
Follow-up / Testing	15
Conclusion	16
About the Author	17

Introduction

Designing and publishing your first web site can seem a daunting prospect to the uninitiated, not just because of the technical aspects involved, but because of the many different options too - it's often hard to know where to even start.

This mini-report gives you an introduction to the process of planning, designing and publishing your site in the hope that it will help you overcome that initial inertia - to get you off the starting blocks.

The first thing you need, when starting an online site is objectives.

Objectives

Nothing will hinder you more than if you set out not knowing *exactly* what it is you are trying to achieve – clear, concise objectives will keep you focussed, across all aspects of the site creation process.

Indeed, you ought to be *continually* referring back to these objectives as your site development progresses.

Objectives might include "selling a product" or "building a mailing list" or "communicating your brand" or perhaps simply "providing information about you, or your business".

Whatever your objective is, online, write this down and pin it to the wall where you can refer back to it on an ongoing basis.

Topic

With your objectives set, you need to pick your topic.

Now, this might seem obvious (after all, you may think you already know what your site is going to be about, right?) but with such huge competition online for certain keywords and phrases, and within individual niches, it pays to give due thought to the niche in which you're planning to compete - it can make a huge difference to the quantity and quality of traffic you're able to generate and, ultimately, to your chances of success.

Research

When creating an online business, you need to do plenty of research, just as you would if you were setting up a bricks-and-mortar business.

The great thing on this front, of course, is that the information you need is all readily available online, at your fingertips – you just need to know what to look for.

You need to be performing simple searches for the following information:

1. Who is competing in your proposed niche?

Who are the top-ranking sites for your niche's primary keywords and phrases? If you were looking for your own product, in a completely natural way, what sites would you likely come across, first and repeatedly?

2. Who is succeeding in your proposed niche and how/why?

By ***succeeding***, we of course mean "achieving their objectives". Evidence of success is likely to be a little opinionative so you'll need to check out authority sites, forums, blogs and reviews in your niche, and try to pick up a feeling for who the key players are.

With an idea of who the most ***visible***, and most ***successful***, players are, 'go to school' on them - try to unravel the secrets of their success. Pick apart their marketing, sales-process, product offering(s), site configuration and also their follow-up (to sales enquiries/purchases).

This research, more than most, will give you some great ideas and likely save you weeks (or months) of work. Piggybacking off proven, successful models.

3. Where is there traffic coming from?

You can use simple tools like Google's "link:" operator when searching for a domain (i.e. searching for "link: www.site.com" to see back-links to that site), or more advanced tools such as Compete.com, to give you a more accurate indication of referring sites. The obvious step (in due course) will be to approach these sources and attempt to redirect traffic to your own site (see the section on "redirection", later in this mini-report).

4. How are they monetising their site? (If indeed monetization is important to you).

This is simple. Put on your "mystery shopper" hat and check out the top sites in your niche. You'll quickly spot the points at which these sites are taking money, grabbing e-mail addresses or getting some other kind of 'action' from you (perhaps getting you to download a trial, or a free report, as a long lead-in to a possible future sale).

5. What other goals do these sites have?

Successful sites tend to have pretty clear objectives that have been set over years of testing and experience. There's a good chance that the reason the top-performing sites are focusing on a particular set of goals/objectives is that they're the most profitable.

6. How have they structured their site?

Site structure can be a very important part of your site design, overall. When checking out the top-performing sites in your niche, check out what pages (quantity and types) are featured. An easy way to do this is by viewing a site's "sitemap".

Make notes on what you find, ideas for your own site structure.

7. What content do they have?

Within the pages of the successful sites you have identified, within your chosen niche,

- What is the content mix?
- Is it predominantly text?
- Do they feature audio, video, RSS?
- Where is there content coming from?
- Is it all unique, or are they featuring third-party articles and press-releases?
- How 'fresh' is the content?

Looking at the content-mix of sites can give you some super ideas on how to plan for the long-term growth of your site's content.

8. How are they generating repeat visitors?

When looking at the content on successful sites, ask yourself what, if anything, is likely to keep visitors on a site and/or to get them to return. This "sticky"

content helps you balance your customer acquisition cost (after all, it's far cheaper to keep an existing customer than to find a new one...).

9. What approach have they taken to design? Does it work, in your opinion?

Design can play an incredibly important role in the success or failure of your site - not design in the "fine art" sense, but in the way you approach layout, colours, headings and so on.

These fundamental aspects of your site will help you to direct visitors to your intended actions, to convey a sense of professionalism and quality, and to ensure a positive visitor experience.

So once again, look at these sites specifically to identify what it is that makes these sites successful from a design perspective - have they got clear graphics drawing you to the intended action? Do they use high-quality imagery to instil confidence? Do they have a simple layout, making navigation easy? And so on.

The above list is by no means exhaustive, but it gets you into the mindset of the sorts of things you need to be looking for when you're researching your niche.

Keywords

Once you've got your topic chosen, and some research under your belt, it's time to choose some keywords. Keywords (and/or key phrases) are the lifeblood of your web site page content - once set they should underpin everything you feature on individual pages, even the structure of the site itself, so it's important you get this part right too.

To find out what keywords to use you might want to try a few different things:

- 1. Use Google's keywords tool** to figure out which primary keywords (and related, or "LSI" keywords) for your site (<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>);
- 2. Use other tools**, such as "Wordtracker" to make a keyword selection;
- 3. Reverse engineer other, successful sites' keyword selections** (within your niche, of course). To do this you can again use Google's keywords tool (this time looking up a competitor's web page to see what keyword themes Google finds) or by checking out individual pages' meta-tags (by viewing the source of a web page you can see these tags in the upper part of the web page HTML code).

The key point here is that your keyword themes should be 100% relevant (i.e. they should make sense, given your existing/planned page content) and clustered so that overall your site is focussed on the main keyword theme(s) you have chosen but that on page-by-page basis you are either choosing different selection of related keywords, or are refining the keyword theme for your page to better match it's content.

Once you've set your keyword "themes" you should work around these when creating your page content. So that means featuring the keywords in the page copy, using keywords in the alt-tags (for images), file-names, links, link-text, headings and page descriptions.

You need, in as natural a way as possible to ensure that your pages are rich in the keyword themes you set above, without being 'over-stuffed' - using keywords in an organic or *natural* way will prevent your pages from being seen as 'artificial' or overly optimised (as if they're deemed overly-optimized, this can actually have an *adverse* effect on your ranking).

Structure

Setting your site structure is very important, not only from the point of view of ensuring that the pages that need to be featured *are* featured, and so that visitors to your site can find your content easily - it's also important because of the impact it can itself have on your search engine ranking.

For example, you ought to make sure you feature certain "standard" pages (contact, privacy, legal terms, etc.). Equally, you need to make sure you have a site-map so that your pages can be readily indexed, by passing search engine spiders.

And if you want to take your site structure to the 'next level', to maximize the benefit from your keyword themes running through your site, then you should consider setting up a *silo* structure (more on which in another report).

Silos, briefly, extend keyword theme clusters into the actual structure of your site, by ensuring that pages within your keyword theme are grouped together in their own (appropriately named) directory. There are different ways you can achieve this (manually being a little taxing!) but quality web design tools such as XSitePro (<http://www.xsitepro.com/home/1and1.html>) can make this an easy process if you feel it's important.

Content

The content you feature within the site itself has to be one of, if not the number one, most important parts of the site-creation process.

Quite simply, the content (perhaps in conjunction with your traffic generation efforts) will determine the success of your site. It's as simple as that.

Whatever you've come up with for your site structure, you need to populate that with high-quality, relevant, keyword/phrase-rich content that is totally focussed on the specific objectives for that individual page.

Sound complicated? Not really. Just use that last sentence as an aide memoir when starting your page-content creation process:

1. Am I adding quality content?
2. Is it relevant to the visitor/topic?
3. Is it rich in keywords/themes (but not over-optimized!)
4. Am I pushing the visitor to the intended action for this page?

Keep these points firmly in your mind when adding content and you won't go far wrong.

As for what content to actually include, well... there are literally hundreds of sources of great quality content available to you. Not only can you originate your own content, you could have content generated for you (using services such as ODesk, or Elance) or grab readily available content from sources online, including:

- Articles
- Press Releases
- Videos (embedded from sites such as YouTube or DailyMotion)
- RSS feed content
- Quotes/Sayings
- Public Domain Works
- User Generated Content (comments, testimonials, forums)
- Reviews
- Surveys Polls
- and much, much more...

Just keep it quality, relevant, keyword theme-specific and only use it if it helps achieve your page objective(s).

Setting 'Actions'

Ok, so the site and its pages are coming together. It's worth spending a moment discussing actions (or page objectives). There's little point in spending all that time researching and planning, building a great-looking, professional site, generating traffic and persuading your visitors that you're the 'best thing since sliced bread' only to miss out on the last step:

Give a clear, concise action for them to carry out.

This action might be to purchase your product, request a brochure, watch your sales presentation, send you an e-mail, join your mailing list, recommend a friend, download a free report or even just learn about your company.

Whatever your action is, for your individual pages make sure the page content drives the visitor to that intended outcome as much as possible.

Building your site

With your planning done, keywords chosen, objectives set you will need to choose a web site design tool at some point in the proceedings, so that you can actually put all of your ideas down and publish them to the Internet.

There is a wide range of web site building software available, some on-line (or 'server-side') and some off-line (often referred to as 'client-side'). The general rule of thumb is that online tools have to sacrifice a degree of power, control and functionality for being web-based. Off-line tools allow you to work uninterrupted on your web site project before publishing in one hit.

XSitePro (<http://www.xsitepro.com/home/1and1.html>) is an example of an off-line web design tool that helps you through the process of building a professional-looking web site (either using a template or starting from scratch) - it's used by many online entrepreneurs and features all of the tools you could want for building and managing your site onward.

Publishing / Hosting

Once you have built your site, you'll need to publish it. To do this you need:

1. A domain name
2. A hosting account

Luckily, most ISPs - including 1&1 Internet - allow you to buy both of these things together and to point the domain name (the address for your web site) to your web hosting account (the actual space to which you publish your web pages).

If you use 1&1 Internet you'll be given some *FTP account details* at the tail-end of the domain/account set-up. And, if you're using XSitePro (<http://www.xsitepro.com/home/1and1.html>) to build your site, these details just need to be entered into your web site settings (a one-time process) – it'll will take care of the whole publishing process for you from there.

Promotion / Traffic Building

With a web site published, you might be forgiven for thinking the work was done, and that now you could sit back and watch the traffic come flooding in - the orders to pile up, the mailing list grow.

But sadly, you'd be mistaken!

The next step, once you have your initial web site up and published, is to drive traffic to it. Traffic generation is a whole science in itself (and far too large a topic to cover fully in this mini-report) lest to say there are a number of key areas you ought to focus on initially, to get the ball rolling:

1. Search Engine Submission.

This is an essential first step and involves 'informing' the search engines, proactively, that your site is published (for the first time).

Depending on whether your site has search-engine site-maps inbuilt (*XSitePro* does, for example) you may or may not have to put this XML sitemap file together by hand (or using some of the free tools out there like <http://www.xml-sitemaps.com>).

2. Pay-Per-Click (PPC) Advertising.

This is another great source of traffic (often profitable, long-term traffic, too). It's really only applicable if you're prepared to spend a bit of money generating the traffic though (so if there's a chance you'll sell some product to the visitors who click through your advertising).

Google's Adwords service is by far the most popular, and so is a good starting point for you in this regard (www.google.com/adwords).

3. Link-building Campaign.

This might perhaps seem a little obvious, but link-building campaigns are often not carried out with sufficient vigour and proactivity by site-owners. You need to build links to your new web site, inbound, from as *many* possible sources online as humanly possible!

This is a key determinant not only of *traffic* from these links themselves but also of the *ranking* Google gives you as a site within your niche. The simple formula is this:

More links into your site, from quality, related sites makes your site more 'important' in the eyes of the search engines, and so your ranking is enhanced.

So, getting your links out there needs to become a priority. Here are a few ideas for getting inbound links for starters:

a. Contacting related, but non-competing, sites within your niche and asking for a link (usually best to reciprocate on that front, placing a link to their site in exchange).

b. Updating your 'signature' (sig) at the foot of all your communications (e-mails, blog posts, forum posts, social networking communications, even business cards! etc.) to include your web address, to your new site.

c. Submit Articles, Press Releases and Video content (to places like YouTube), all featuring links to specific pages (ideally) within your site (i.e. not all just pointing to the home page).

d. Get creative! Give away free reports with your e-mail address in them; post comments on related sites with your web address in the comment text; Call up your local radio station and plug your site - in short... find relevant sources of traffic and get your address in front of them!

4. Traffic redirection.

This is kind of a *composite* of the points 1, 2 and 3 above, but worth mentioning in its own right. Redirecting traffic is about thinking of "where your traffic is right now...". That is to say, right now there are thousands-upon-thousands of *would-be* visitors to *your* site - potential customers - browsing and shopping online.

Your task, in promoting your online presence, should be less about finding "*new* customers" and more about "redirecting *existing* ones". It's kind of like finding that pond full of hungry fish (hungry for your product, service and/or information) and dropping your baited hook (using just the right bait of course!) into the water *right there*, rather than bobbing about on the vast blue ocean, hoping the fish will swim to you.

In other words, find the highly-trafficked, relevant forums, blogs, groups and other meeting-places for people in your targeted niche and *get involved*. Join in discussions, post your service-offering as a (relevant) solution to other peoples' problems, where you come across them, build relationships throughout the community of customers you're trying to attract.

You'll soon find a steady stream of traffic coming from a reasonably low level of time-investment on your part.

Follow-up / Testing

So, your site's got traffic, they're buying off your site (or at least carrying out the desired 'action' you specified in your objectives) and all seems to be going well.

Is that it? Can you now retire and sit on a beach in Hawaii?

No! Still not there yet... Time to test, refine and improve your site's performance.

First off, you need to get measuring. To do this you're probably best starting off with free tools like "Google Analytics" and "Web Site Optimizer".

Analytics will enable to not only to analyze how many people are visiting your site, and where they came from but also a whole lot more information besides.

Web site Optimizer lets you test variations on your key web-pages (such as your home page, or sales page) to identify the optimal page design, or elements within the page, so that you are maximizing the 'conversion' ratio of visitors to paying customers.

This testing process is open-ended - really you should *never* stop testing (certainly it's a key feature of almost every successful Internet Marketer's site you'll find). The more information you can gather about what works, and what doesn't, the more 'goals' you'll score from your inbound traffic.

Conclusion

Hopefully this short guide has given you plenty of food for thought. As mentioned in the outset it's intended as a simple introduction to getting started with your first web site (and you second, third and fourth for that matter!) and if you can follow the advice within these pages you'll doubtless be well on your way to online success!

About the Author

Paul Smithson is the founder and CEO of Intellimon, creators of XSitePro, the best-selling web site design software aimed especially at Internet Marketers, SMEs, affiliate marketers, or anyone wanting to start an online business.

It's designed to simplify the process of making professional-looking web sites, whilst at the same time offering users all the power and functionality of applications several times the price. To find out more visit the XSitePro Web site (<http://www.xsitepro.com/home/1and1.html>).

Wishing you every success!