

There are some basic rules that should be applied to most websites to make them effective and work for you. Here are the top ten rules recommended by Prestbury Digital Services for making the most of your website.

Rule 1: Firstly, forget the web! Initially you should go back to straightforward marketing and communication principles. Think Audience, Audience, Audience.

- Who are you trying to reach?
- How will you reach them?
- What is the best style to communicate to them?
- What kind of language will they respond to?
- How do you want to be perceived?
- What is your brand?
- What do you want to achieve from this communication?

Once you have answered these questions then you can start to think about how to communicate using your website.

Rule 2: Ensure your website looks like yours. Your website should have a similar visual style to all your other communication media. Even if your website has been built using a template you should ensure that your logo and colour scheme and the overall appearance of the site are consistent with and make up a coherent promotion campaign that aligns to your brand.

Rule 3: You should only use good quality images. Use them sparingly and with relevance.

Rule 4: The overall design of your site should be simple and easy to navigate. Big is not necessarily best! Visitors commonly make up their mind about a page within the first couple of seconds and will move on to another site if they do not find what they are looking for quickly and easily. If your site consists of more than a handful of pages consider using a menu and always ensure that visitors can return to the home page.

Rule 5: Your site should be easy to find. Most internet users use Search Engines, such as Google, to find sites that are relevant to them. You have to make sure that these search engines know about your site and rank it at the top of search results. The best way of doing this is to make sure that the text within your site is relevant and contains keywords that

potential visitors will use to search for you. If you install replacement windows in Sunderland the text on the home page should include the words "replacement windows Sunderland".

Rule 6: Content is King! You have answered the questions above and have a good idea of who you are talking to and what you want to say. You now need to distill this into simple, concise copy. You also need to define the keywords that you think people will use to search for your site pages and use these within the copy. And most importantly you should keep the copy fresh and current.

Rule 7: Your website should exist for one primary purpose and you should be clear about what that is. This may change over time but you should build in a prominent "call to action" to direct visitors to achieve that purpose. For example, it may be that you want to generate more visitors to your showroom. You could build a page that highlights the showroom with opening times and a map. Then you need a prominent link to this new page at the top of your home page. Then you need to measure the response in terms of visitors to the page and visitors to your showroom.

Rule 8: Analyse visitor traffic to your website. You need to know if your site is being visited. You need to know if visitors stay or leave quickly. You need to know which pages are being visited and you need to know if your latest promotion is generating interest. There are easily available tools to help you do this, most of them free. When you know this information you can respond and make changes, without this it is pure guesswork.

Rule 9: Make sure visitors have several ways of contacting you. Some people prefer to use the phone, others prefer email and many visitors will want to see a postal address. This will reassure them that you are real and have a physical, as well as a virtual, presence. Make sure that whatever contact methods are advertised they are available and you respond promptly.

Rule 10: Finally, don't panic. There are many web designers and developers that can help you. Prestbury Digital Services offers a range of services from creating a new website to helping overhaul an existing one or helping with improving your search rankings. Please contact us for a straightforward, no obligation discussion on info@prestburydigital.co.uk or 07929 003037.