

Finally - a solution for people
who 'don't do techno'..

Eight simple steps to improve your website



Grab your clients and keep them coming
back..

Getting your website to work for you

Why have I written this?

There's plenty of myths around websites these days. People telling you about the 'look' they need, the importance of knock'em down graphics and something called keywords.

You may not know about my 'other' life. I'm a partner in a cafe & catering business with my wife, Georgie. Two years ago our website, www.foodforme.com.au, went live. For many people that's the end of it. *Bupp Bupp! Wrong!* We've since learnt the importance of using our site as a way to engage and entertain our customers and of course, attract new ones.

This guide catches what we've learnt. It's not techno. Just based on our experience. Use it to make sure your web designer is doing what you need. If you've already got a website in place, use it to review your site to look for areas of fine tuning.

Step 1. Make sure people can find you

Most of us have heard about the importance of key words. Make sure that the content on your site relates to what people are likely to be searching for. If you're not sure, go and ask some friends or colleagues on the search phrases or terms they would use. Say you're a local or regional landcare group - a term like 'landcare grants' or 'water quality' may be important to potential users of the site.



Keywords are also what search engines like Google are constantly trawling through websites for, linking these to the searches people make. So how you use these keywords is important. Having your key words as a [link](#) to other places on your webpage improves the chances of search engines finding the words in your site & ranking them.

However, many people (including me) fall for the 'click here' trap. This actually reduces the value of your keywords. For us we were using 'To get a copy of our catering menu, [click here](#)'. *Bupp Bupp! Wrong!* The search engine recognises the link 'click here' rather than the term we need people to find. A better option is 'Click the link to get a copy of our [catering](#) menu'. This will increase people's chance of finding us when they're searching on the term 'catering' (rather than the ones searching on 'click here!')

Step 2. Establish credibility

Too often we see 'crapibility' on websites. Companies or organisations claiming that 'we are this'; 'we do that'; 'we we we'. So what's wrong with this? Well if a potential client coming to your site doesn't know you yet, why would they believe you? So it's a matter of building the relationship with them.

Start by changing the language to *you*. Remember it's all about the clients needs! For example, we start our webpage with 'Food for Me is your local cafe'. Short, sweet and simple. Think of how you could use this approach with your webpage. Maybe 'The West Midlands Group is your local grower group. It's here to provide a local focus on crop and pasture research, natural resource management and the role of women in agriculture.'



Then link this to a *benefit* for the client. 'This ensures you get up to date information that's relevant to your business. You'll save hours of your valuable time normally wasted trying to actually find the information you really need.'

Step 3. Use your site as a marketing tool

Being able to contact people after they've visited your site is a major bonus. Your website **must** have an *automated sign-up form* where visitors to the page can provide their email addresses to sign up to receive your newsletter or special updates. Having some kind of 'special offer' as an incentive to do this helps a lot! Incentives include free reports, free ebooks, discounts for free trials.



Step 4. Get interaction

There are some simple tools you can use to get people engaged with your site. Three easy ones are:

- Comments
- Voting polls
- Surveys

People love putting *their views* forward and love to be heard. Each of these functions allows this. A comments section can be hooked up to your websites blog. If you don't have some form of blog, talk to your web designer ASAP about getting one in place, or set one up yourself. Just make sure the blog links back into your website. That's a task to complete within the next five days!



Voting polls can be placed in any section of your website. They're a good way to get an indication of what people think of a specific issue (by voting), they're quick to use and easy to set up. Again they get interaction with your audience. Whilst your getting your web designer to set up your blog and automated sign-up form, get her to show you how to set up a poll. That way *you* can change them regularly.

Blogs, comments and polls will also help your *search engine ranking*. The search engines are looking for sites that are active, with plenty going on. Having people 'do the work for you' through their comments and votes assists this, showing the search engine that there's plenty going on there.

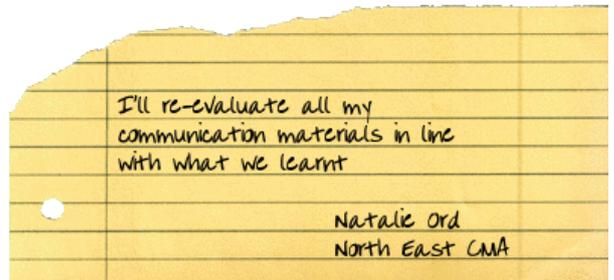


Surveys can also be linked in to your site. I use www.surveymonkey.com The survey helps us to find out what our clients like or don't like about us and some of the changes they're looking for. Surveys are also a great way to generate testimonials (see Step 5) and referrals.

Step 5. Let your clients do the talking.

This helps to overcome the 'we we we' complex. How? Get testimonials. Yep – just ask your clients how you, your organisation or staff has helped them (you can do this in your survey). And record the answers. Simple!

But wait, it gets better! With your website you'll have a choice of written, audio or video testimonials. Each has its own strength.



- Written are immediate. They can be read as soon as your visitor hits the site.
- Audio give more character to the person. Audio makes them real
- Video is tops! People can see the passion and emotion of the speaker. It creates greater interest and is also a winner for search engine rankings

Testimonials gain strength when:

- They have the person's name (preferably full name)
- Where they live
- What they do, why they use you or length of time as a client

You can see how the above example could be improved further. (Natalie attended the 'Ten steps for grabbing your clients' workshop in Wodonga in 2009 - thanks for the testimonial Nat!)

Step 6. Maintain interest

Another tactic to maintain people's interest and time spent on your website is through news and case studies. Doing a regular *newsletter* is a great way to maintain interest of current clients. It also helps potential clients to get a better feel for your business or organisation. It's a chance to set yourself apart.

Again the content should be about your clients wherever possible. Having some reminder stuff about you is fine, but avoid being over the top about it. Otherwise the newsletter can be seen as more junk mail. Our cafe newsletter includes interviews with customers, competitions, stories about customer and news about customers (eg births, marriages, congratulations & even farewells!) We also include articles of interest (eg recipes) and try to keep it light & fun.



A more focused version of the newsletter are case studies. They can be used in either a video, audio or written format – or all of these! Remember to include benefits for the clients in any case studies and maybe even your role in this.

Step 7. Set up links

Links to other sites can assist your sites ranking. The sites need to be relevant though, with content similar to yours. A Landcare group site linking to a tree nursery site makes sense. Linking to a petrol company's site may be a bit harder for search engines to make sense of. I've also heard of local websites all linking together to share traffic (eg local businesses around Margaret River) but don't know how this effects rankings.

Inbound links

These help bring traffic to your site. They are links from external websites to yours and assist in improving search engine rankings. You can 'build' these by making comments on other sites and blogs and by listing your website in local (industry, regional, state or national) web directories. This is time consuming and could be a good 'project' for work experience students.



Comments on blogs & sites

Making comments on other websites and blogs is another way to bring people to your site. Keep them genuine and remember the relevance factor too. Making comments can also be a good way for you to position yourself as a 'local expert' on a particular topic.

Step 8. Using Google

Google, Yahoo and other sites are some of the biggies for search engine ranking in Australia. To advance your cause with the Google gods, set up an account with Google. Just go to www.google.com.au and sign up for an account. This enables you to list your website with them, including your key products or services. Adding Google Maps to your site will further strengthen your presence with Google. It allows you to upload a few pictures and video as well (hint!!)

Google has a great tool called Google Analytics (although I thought Andrew was a much better name...) You can use this (for free) to track the traffic to your site, where it's coming from and how often. It also shows the search terms people are using! Use the 'Business Solutions' section of Google to step you through the process of getting your site registered.

Summary

So that's it for now. If you can use email and MS Word, you should be able to do most of what I've described above. If you're having a bout of 'techno-fear' get help. There are plenty of people around with good skills in this area and I'd be happy to recommend a few.

Remember

- Make it easy to be found
- Establish credibility
- Maintain interest
- It's about the client
- Stay current



Background on Andrew Huffer

Andrew is a qualified facilitator and trainer with 18 years experience in working with managers, rural communities and businesses across Australia and overseas.

His expertise includes:

- Client engagement through direct marketing
- Project reviews and case studies
- Group facilitation & planning
- Community engagement
- Developing effective teams
- Conference facilitation

In his consultancy role he has delivered 624 workshops (at last count) for a wide range of clients over the last ten years. These workshops used a participatory approach to ensure all people were involved in actively contributing to the workshop outcomes.

Go to www.andrewhuffer.com.au for more information on effective promotion, facilitation and community engagement.

Contact Andrew directly via andrew@andrewhuffer.com.au if you need the services of an experienced 'no-fluff' facilitator.

Andrew Huffer and Associates Pty Ltd

m. 0429 470 285
fx 08 9472 4268

andrew@andrehuffer.com.au

www.andrehuffer.com.au



Copyright Andrew Huffer and Associates Pty Ltd 2012

Take action now!