EBO Digital

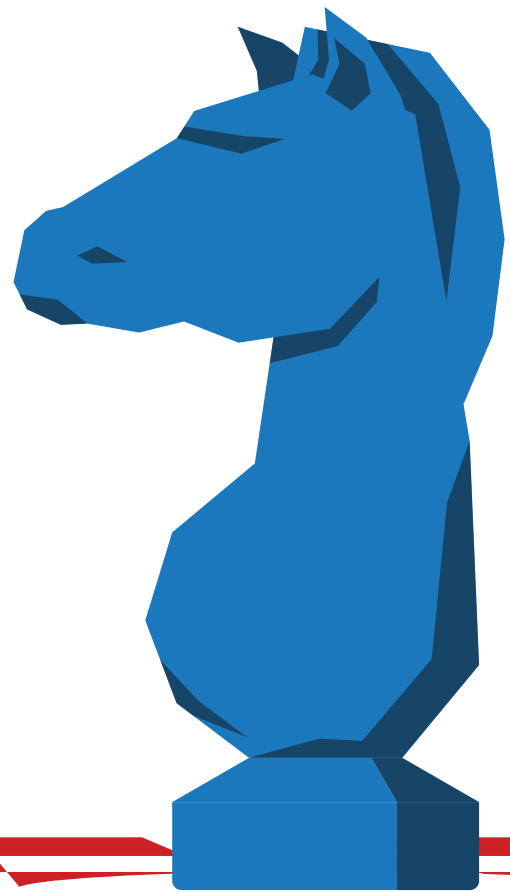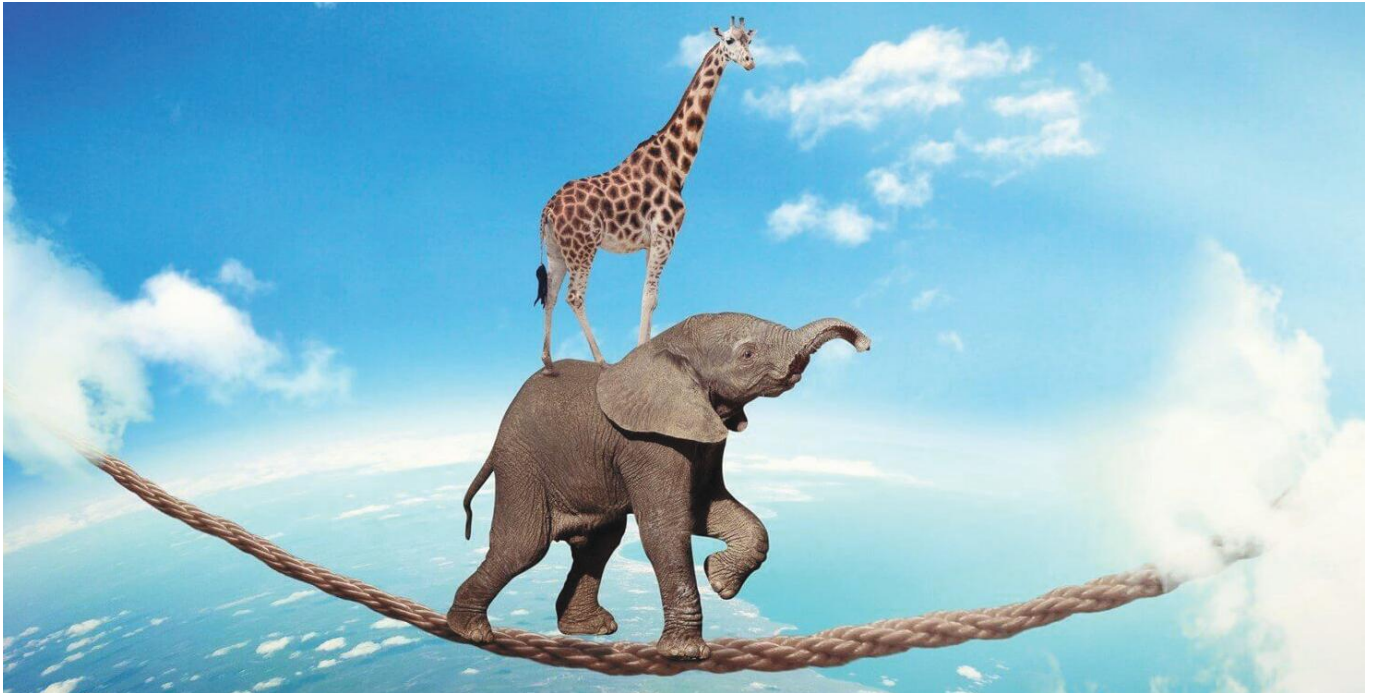# WHAT IS WEBSITE STRATEGY & WHY IS IT SO INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT?

"Trust is the most valuable currency on the web" 🤝🔒

The primary goal of any website should be the same thing…building TRUST.

Sure, your business mightn't be selling the same thing to the same people as the next person or even with the same process (eg. online eCommerce store v Real estate agent) but hey, at the end of the day the only reason people will choose to engage with you over others on their journey to handing over money has a direct correlation with the level of trust they have in you.

The biggest fundamental to building that trusted relationship in the digital world so that your website visitors convert as you want them to is to ensure your website is planned and built right which means **starting** with a rock-solid strategy based on proven principles and methodology.

Section #1
Why Strategy & Planning First Before Anything Else? 🗺️📅

Chances you are reading this because you want to get more from your website. It could be the desire to be the leading authority in your space or gain better brand recognition and respect although most likely you are chasing more good fit leads that convert to sales revenue for your business.

There can be a lot of different reasons why you want to redo your website, (maybe it's looking dated, the technology platform is outdated etc.) although almost always the perspective is to

make an overhaul in response to how you feel about your website and not enough is done analysing why. To build the best performing website for your business you need to begin with the 'why' not the 'what' is going to be done.

If you neglect to peel back the layers on the onion to get to the reason why you are embarking on a redesign of your website and just instead proceed only focusing on the 'how' and 'what' will be done it almost certainly will end up not delivering you the results you are wanting. Focus on the 'why' and put efforts into first creating a strategic masterplan which lays out how your website should be built the right way so that it serves those it was built for like it should, which is to answer their questions and subsequently build trust.

The Traditional Way of Scoping Websites Is Faulty (We Learnt The Hard Way) 🤼 🤬

At WEBO Digital we used to follow the traditional process when it came to new websites which saw us scoping the complete website throughout the sales process. This meant that we were really just providing a proposal on the assumption that our clients were fully educated as to good website design practices and knew what they needed for their new website.

Most agencies still use this exact method to price up websites. Here's typically how it rolls, a prospect's existing website is reviewed, some 'must-have' and 'nice to have' features from the client identified and then a proposal is put together accordingly in response.

The problem is…the end result is that the client ends up with a website they **thought** they wanted instead of what they **really needed** or in the case of an existing website redesign, the outcome is just a spruced-up version of their original one.

After exploring a more focused approach to the **strategy & planning** element of the website build process it became clearly evident that the extra effort in drilling down further often resulted in uncovering needs that the client wasn't even aware of which could then be planned and scoped out before any work got started.

Previously, when these unidentified needs became apparent there were two options; The first was a rescoping of the project with the client part way through or secondly, leave these requirements unmet due to them not being budgeted for. Neither options were a good experience for the customer.

So, What Does An Ideal Website Strategy & Planning Technique Look Like?

We now follow a process we call "The Website Blueprint", which means a full collaborative understanding of what should be built with your new website to deliver your expected outcomes is arrived at before anything else is undertaken. This different approach has totally transformed the way we produce websites. The end result is better, customers are stoked and better still, we can actually produce them quicker and more efficiently.

Imagine you wanted to build a new house right? Think about the chaos and waste that would come about if you totally skipped the design & planning part and just threw your build budget at the contractor to let loose with. So to reiterate, please don't launch off into constructing your new website without first having a clear strategy & plan in place **beforehand.** It will be a waste of money and a disappointing experience.

Section #2
Its High Time To Start Treating Your WEBSITE Like Your Best Salesperson 🏅

Most organisations believe their website is the marketing department's baby. Yup, it's the marketing team's responsibility to get it built, update & maintain it, get leads (only highly qualified ones too please) from it, report on it, justify spending money on it and so on. It's just plain wrong and it's time for organisations to change the way they view their websites because your website is actually a **sales tool.**

The trouble with the approach that websites are a marketing duty only is that it totally ignores the essential essence of information and feedback from the coal face! It is the sales team who are dealing with customer questions all day long and helping them with answers to solve their real-world problems. This information is all relative to establishing trust, speeding up the sales cycle and ratcheting up conversions, so why in the world wouldn't you insist on having it all over your website?

Your website should quickly identify with your prospect's burning questions and provide the answers to them. Statistics have suggested that **over 70% of a buyer's purchasing decision is made before they even speak to someone** by doing their own online research. That's before you even have a chance to know who the prospects are or even have an opportunity to speak with them. Power is in the consumer's hands now more than ever when it comes to making the buying decisions because of the internet and the way to win here is to be the online source that provides quality content that answers their questions and ultimately builds a trusted relationship.

To recap, if your website isn't answering the most common questions your prospects are asking, you can be guaranteed it will **NEVER** deliver you the results you desire.

Ok, so how do we do this? Answer the "Burning Questions!" 🤔🗒️

Get the sales team involved. Get the questions that they are asked during your sales process daily from customers all listed out and start documenting the answers to them!

Some to start with are the most common ones around the topics relating to your products/services of;

- **Problems** – both the problems you help solve but also problems that can be related to the solutions to those problems.
- **Pricing** – What factors influence your pricing, things that can make pricing higher and things that can make pricing lower.
- **Comparisons** – your website visitors are researching and your website isn't the only one they are on. Give them honest comparisons and win their trust.

You should work to providing this content on your website in both written and video format. Visual learning is a powerful form of teaching and people buy from people so introducing your team from the get-go via video format immediately begins a credible relationship and helps start building the ever-important trust element so crucial to influencing the buying decision.

You now can introduce this information earlier into the buyer journey so that prospects are guided to consume this information and have many of their questions already answered before the time comes for their first booked appointment or sales consultation.

Your goal here is to establish genuine trust with your prospects and help them become so well educated on the solutions you provide to their problems that actually closing the deal is made a whole bunch easier. The most important metrics to watch here are the length of the sales cycle and the closing rate.

Keep It Real! 💯😊

Just remember to keep it real with your content answers. Ensure you are talking in the language of your ideal customer and are relatable eg. don't expect good buyer engagement if you deliver content in lawyer-like style on a website that is servicing the construction industry. Also don't avoid talking about the more difficult subjects related to what you do such as pricing, alternative options and your competitors. You see so many businesses that quote chapter and verse on the features and benefits information of their products and services but then run and hide when it comes to sensitive ones like their pricing or possible competitor options.

Just be open and address the elephant in the room when there is one! Your prospects will appreciate it and you will be more credible to them for doing so. Also don't try and push an aggressive and pushy sales agenda onto your audience in your content, they can see it a mile off and you'll immediately lose trust.

Section #3
Stop Talking About YOU! 🤙 🔊 🤓

Most business websites we see talk way too much about themselves. Way, way too much. Keep in mind who the website is for...your prospects and customers! ...not YOU!

We go on at length to the website visitor about ourselves, how good we are and all the things we do better than everyone else. Think about how *that* would go down if on a first date with someone. Probably won't get a second one huh?

If you want people to genuinely engage with your brand, you need to talk about them. Use the word "you" versus "our," as in "our company" with the ideal ratio to aim for is 5 times to 1 which means you refer to your customers 5 times more than yourselves. Identify with the problems, worries and pain points they might be experiencing which you can help solve for them. Discover what really matters to them and talk about it.

To make your clients feel special, treat them like it by providing value in exchange for their time spent browsing your website. The best way to do this is to educate them. You must make it your objective that every piece of information on your website teaches the visitor something that can help make their life better. Step back and look at your website in the mindset of the buyer and then answer the questions you would have if you were buying.

It's best practice to use video to communicate with prospects on your website as it makes it more tangible and realistic. It also has a massive influence on conversion rates with studies showing it can increase conversions by 80% when compared to non-video content. You must include video in your website strategy.

Section #4
Give The People What They're Looking For! 🕵️ 💻
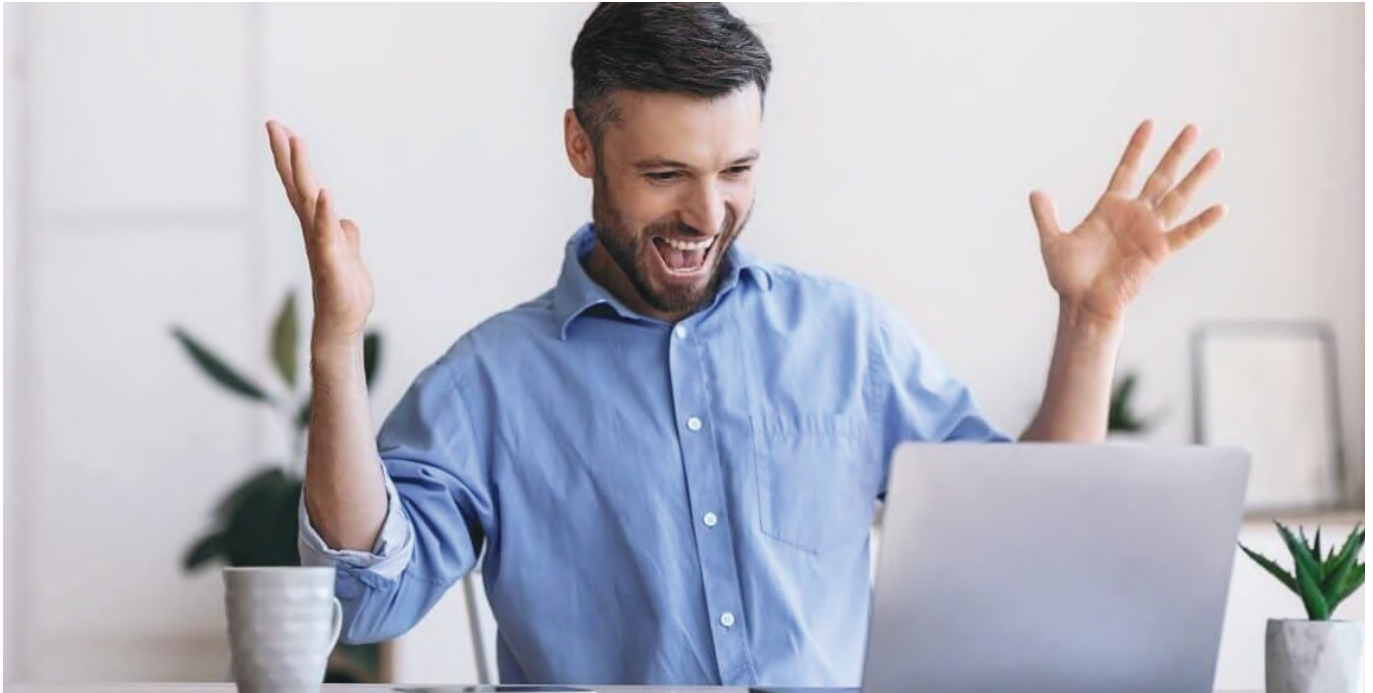
Ideally, we want to provide our answers to potential buyer questions whenever they ask them, and that includes prospects using search engines. So not only do you want those questions answered on your website assisting your sales process but you also want to be the first in line when it comes to search rankings. Google's objective is to provide the user with the most valuable information related to their search query in the shortest time possible. Whilst their algorithm will continue to change the objective will remain the same which means granted you are delivering value in answering questions honestly and in an unbiased manner, Google will reward you with higher rankings.

Website Load Speeds ⏱️

In the age now of connectivity we are more impatient than ever and lose interest quickly, especially in the digital world if we are made to wait any longer than we have to. Website load times are a huge part of Google's love and the faster your website loads (ideally no more than 2-3 seconds) the better your chances of getting organic traffic preferences.

Structured Content Is Important For SEO

You need to structure your content by way of subject topics and then you can further demonstrate strong knowledge of these main topics by way of linked sub-topics which further break down the different elements of the main pillar subject topic. This should be all supported with the use of relevant keywords and structured accordingly throughout your website pages. This will go a long way to pushing higher results from your web traffic.

User Engagement

User engagement is important to Google as it tells them how interesting and valuable your content is. The number of pages a user visits in a session as well as the length of time they stay on the website is huge when it comes to assessing how valuable it is to the visitor. The higher the number of pages visited and the longer the time spent on the website means more authority when it comes to Google deciding where to send a new user to find the valuable information they are looking for.

Content Updates

Updating your subject matter is also a critical component of ensuring you stay on Google's 'Favourites' list. To remain an expert teacher in your particular field, you will be staying up to date with everything going around the subject, correct? If your website's content isn't being regularly and consistently updated you will not be considered as staying relevant by Google and will be penalised. With our experience in working with businesses in lots of different industries, you need to be producing content at least 2 times per week to get the full tick of approval from search engines in this area.

Mobile Responsiveness

The explosion of mobile devices in the last 10 years has also meant that almost half of web searches are now done on mobile or tablet devices. This means you must adopt a mobile-first mentality when it comes to the design and layout of your website. If visitors are frustrated with the mobile experience you will end up with an extremely high bounce rate (where the visitor 'bounces' off your website after hitting it) and Google won't continue to send traffic to your site.

Website Security 🔒

An SSL certificate is a technology used on your website which ensures all information transferred between the user's web browser and the server hosting your website remains private. While most people don't even know explicitly what an SSL certificate is or how it works, they do expect to see one on websites they're visiting, particularly sites that are asking for personal information and payment details. It is about trust and Google will not send traffic to untrustworthy websites and their algorithm demands it in order to rank a website well.

Backlinking 🔗

To get your website considered as an authority by Google, its imperative you are seen as a trusted source of information by other credible websites in the form of them pointing users towards your content through links on their sites.

Localisation 📍

Search engines have gotten a lot smarter in terms of serving the best results based upon the user's location. For example, a search made in Perth for 'best burgers near me' will return way different results than if that same search was made in Sydney. Google takes the search intent and realises that the searcher is looking to buy food in the immediate proximity so burger

restaurants nearby will be prioritised over ones that are too far away to be of any use. In contrast, if a search was made for 'how to tune a guitar' from either location the results would be fairly similar because the geographical location of the content result has no relevance to the desired answer so the winner here will be the person who provides the answer in the format which Google believes will provide the most value.

Section #5
Give Your Visitors A
Great Experience 🤑🎈🎉

The most important thing you need to focus on when strategising your new website is to look through the eyes of the visitor and make it stupidly easy for them to quickly find what they are looking for in as few clicks as possible. Don't structure your website around your business's organisational structure or even necessarily your product hierarchy if it makes no logical sense for your buyer.

Make it easy for them to "Self-identify" so they know they are in the right place by using their language and discussing their problems to assist them to genuinely understand and believe in your ability to help them. You then help them learn how you solve their own specific problem by highlighting the pain points first of which the visitor immediately relates to and then can proceed on to learn how you help solve them.

Self-Selection

People are expecting customised experiences more and more today and there is no question that it creates an emotional connection when a possible solution is personalised specifically for you. Incorporating tools into your website whereby a user answers a few questions or selects options as applicable to them allows you to hook them up with the correct solution immediately. They don't have to waste any more time searching for the right answer as you have given it to them!

Design

The design element has an incredible influence on how the visitor feels when hitting your website. It stirs emotions and is a crucial part of the first impression your brand portrays when meeting anyone digitally. People buy on emotion and the visual representation of your website is the most powerful way to inspire emotion.

When it comes to your website's design, it is imperative you keep in perspective that you are designing the website for the target audience which is your ideal customer aka your "Buyer Persona" Remember the design is for them not you.

It can be difficult to keep on track with this (particularly if you have been given a range of options) as it's easy to get attached with your own personal choices. Your preferences don't matter at all if they are poles apart when compared to your ideal customer.

A well-designed website will be number one, easy to use and navigate. It will make the user at ease, make important elements clear to identify and use whilst emphasising your brands positioning. A poor design will be hard to navigate, difficult to interpret and lose the interest of your audience before they even get to your offering. The overuse of flashy and moving elements can be detrimental to a site's performance and effectiveness. This isn't to say there is no place for these element types but their use should be supported by good reasoning and clear purpose.

Section #6
Continually Provide Conversion Opportunities 🎵

Now we have gotten this far, let's remind ourselves of the goal of our website which is to build enough trust with our prospects that they convert to paying customers. All the time along the way, you are wanting to make your prospect comfortable to have a conversation back and forth that results in them giving you money in exchange for the value of the solution you provide.

The way to do this is to ensure your website strategy makes every step of the buyer journey as frictionless and easy as possible for your prospect to do business with you. Here are a few things that need to be included in this approach;

Site Structure & Content

Every page on your website should have a specific goal for users to take action. This can be tricky when you have multiple offshoots to other pages, blog articles etc so it is essential that you have user flows that layout the intended path and opportunities for conversion at each step.

Self-Identification & Self-Selection

Self-identification options help create a bond with the user as they will understand you get them and be more open to engaging in conversation with you. Self-selection tools build an emotional attachment with your buyers by providing customised solutions for them which encourages more engagement and increases conversion.

Video 🖨

The biggest way to increase your conversion rates via your website is by utilising video. We previously touched on this, people buy from people, and what better way to identify with your buyer and communicate your solutions than with video? Even implementing simple videos explaining why someone should complete a form on a landing page results in an average of 80% increase to conversion rates.

Live Chat & Bots

People want answers when they have questions, and now in the world of instant messaging, they want them in real-time. While forms still have their place on web pages it is time to integrate chat functionality into your website strategy. Leveraging the power of chatbots is also a great way to deliver more value to your visitors whilst sparking essential conversations with them to further conversion opportunities.

A critical thing though, you can't just implement live chat functionality and consider it done. It needs a solid plan and commitment to seeing it is attended to and visitors chats responded to. The last thing you want is to provide the option for your prospect to start a conversation and then remain mute or unresponsive. You can implement chatbot responses to help the user with applicable content and qualify them further but you must certainly ensure you are ready to give the live chat experience when your prospect wants to talk to a real human.

Section #7
Maintenance Is Crucial To Maintaining The Peak Performance Of Your Website 🔧 🧰

Just like a car, your website needs continued maintenance to keep it in good running order and operating at peak performance. Regular servicing is essential to preventing roadside vehicle breakdowns and your website is no different.

If you think that it's all over once you have built your new website and launched it live then you are, unfortunately, just plain wrong! A website is never "done" and if you really want to get the best digital marketing and sales results possible from it you need to consider it as a constantly growing and ever-advancing project.

Technology doesn't stop evolving and that includes how websites are kept secure. Regular backups should be taken as well as the testing of their redundancy to ensure your most important asset is easy and fast to redeploy should the worst happen and your website goes down hard.

Data Driven

A very important part of managing your website is the ability to track performance results and respond accordingly quickly when needed. The following sections are the important pillars of successfully managing your digital marketing investment.

Website Analytics

This shows how visitors are engaging with your website and flowing throughout its inner pages. Google Analytics is the most popular tool in this category.

Contact Analytics

Customer relationship management (CRM) tools allow you to track your individual contacts journey through your digital marketing funnel. From their very first touchpoint on your website right through to the closing of a deal. It also gives the sales team a lot of intelligence about a contact's interactions with the company digitally before meeting with them for the first time. There are multiple, although our primary choice and recommendation is HubSpot

Page Analytics

These tools allow you to watch "over the shoulder" of your visitors and see what they are doing on your website pages. General functionalities include screen recordings, scroll & click heat mapping and polling surveys. Some tools for this analysis area are Hotjar and Lucky Orange.

This reporting helps you to determine exactly how your website is performing and how it is contributing to your bottom line. It also gives you the ability to make informed decisions to improve performance and conduct experiments in a controlled environment.

Section #8
Closing Words ⏳

We trust the information in this guide has given you more of an overview of the foundational things that need to be addressed when considering the strategy of your new website. In summarisation the following are the most important ones to note;

1. **Make the primary goal of your website always about establishing trust with your buyer.**

2. **Move to make changes as an organisation that ensures total buy-in with your website and don't just leave it to the marketing department.**

3. **Identify your prospects 'burning questions' and then answer them everywhere!**

4. **Introduce video into your content strategy.**