

Dear Client,

Welcome to our monthly newswire. We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and find it useful.

Best wishes

John Harrison

IMPROVE YOUR WEBSITE'S PERFORMANCE

Designing and creating a website is probably one of the most important elements of a modern business's marketing plan. Companies around the world rely on their online trade to increase revenue, improve visibility and help expand their customer base.

While having a fantastic-looking site brimming with valuable information and high quality pictures is advantageous, it is also important that the site runs smoothly. Any site should be easy to navigate, fast to load and easy to use. If these three boxes aren't ticked, you can lose customers and revenue rather than gain them.

One of the most important decisions you will have to make is which server to use. Many server companies offer different packages, many with unlimited access. This is all good news, but you will still need to determine which offer faster speeds and which are accessible globally.

Another important element is to cache any landing pages, as this will help your pages load more quickly and ensure your customers have a responsive online experience. Using website load speed test software can also help you to ensure these pages load with ease and without delay, reducing the risk of your customers moving on to another website to find what they are looking for.

It is important that all pages are named clearly. This can help your customers find what they are looking for with ease and help your site to perform better in search engines. In many cases, a customer will visit a site and start looking at pages which appeal to them, even though they may already have a specific product or service in mind. If they cannot get to the page quickly and easily, they are likely to move on. Test the website yourself in order to get an idea of what your customer's experience is like.

Remember that as your business grows, so too will your customer base. This can result in a large number of customers logging into your site at any given time. It is essential your website can manage the load placed upon it during busy periods, thereby offering an exceptional service to all of your customers.

APPLE WATCH

Apple officially unveiled the Apple Watch at the iPhone 6 and iPhone 6 Plus launch event. It will be available in "early 2015", starting at \$349 in the USA with prices elsewhere yet to be announced (a rough conversion would be £220).

Smartwatches have become increasingly popular since the launch of the Samsung Galaxy Gear. However, Apple's watch is a bit different as it is the first mainstream piece of wearable technology to support mobile payments. Apple Pay will be enabled, meaning you can swipe it to pay at shops (as you would with an NFC-enabled debit or credit card). For fitness fans, there is built-in heart-rate tracking technology which works optically, much like recent heart-rate wrist monitors. The four-sapphire-lens array underneath the Apple Watch seems a lot more robust, at least in external design, than other heart-tracking watches, and could be more accurate.

Apple's customised fitness apps seem intelligently designed: one tracks calories, activity and time spent standing, while another is a dedicated workout app meant for a range of activities including cycling. The Apple Watch works with other fitness apps: it is Nike Plus-supported, and there are bound to be more apps available by the time it launches. Apple aims for the Apple Watch to have an edge on other smartwatches in terms of apps. Android Wear already has a fair amount of app support, but apps are a secondary part of Google's watches.

Apple also added a different type of controller: a little Digital Crown on the side. This is a clever idea as it merges a home button and scroll wheel in one. It aims to help make pinch-to-zoom and scroll functions easier to pull off, while IR and photo sensors give it extra sensitivity. Using a direct-communication suite of apps called Digital Touch, the Apple Watch will also act as a personal communicator to other Apple Watch owners. You can scribble designs, send vibration-enhanced taps, or send audio messages like a walkie-talkie.

Which phone do you need?

An iPhone 5, 5C, 5S, 6, or a 6 Plus is required. Earlier iPhones are excluded, and so are other phone platforms like Android.

How does it work?

The Apple Watch is meant to stay paired and connected with your iPhone while you wear it for most features, but it also does some things while disconnected, too. The watch charges via a clever combination of magnets and inductive charging: the charger just snaps on the back.

Aesthetics

The Apple Watch comes in various different styles but they're all based on the same curved-edge rectangular-screen design. There are three different construction styles, two different sizes, and six different watch bands, leading to a surprising number of combinations. If it catches on, the Apple Watch could be the next "must have" gadget for business executives. However, will senior business people be willing to ditch their Tag Heuer or Rolex in favour of a touch screen device? Only time will tell...

CREATING GREAT CLIENT MEETINGS

You are the heart of your business and your clients are the lifeblood. Most businesses have client interactions that involve meetings. The difference between a good client experience and a great one are often down to “touch points” with the firm, such as client meetings. Your goal for every client meeting should be to create and nurture a connection with the client. Whether it's to deliver what you promised (your offering), to talk about an upcoming project or product, or to show a great big thank you by taking them to lunch, connection is always the platform for any meeting with a client.

Timing

Set up the meeting in plenty of time. Give your client, and yourself, lots of time to prepare for the meeting, if you can and if circumstances allow. This practice also allows you to create enough time around the meeting so that you're leaving yourself lots of time to get there, and time afterwards so you don't feel pressure to rush off. Allow plenty of time to get there. Don't make your clients wait for you. Resist the temptation to do 'one more thing' before you leave the office. Respect them enough to be there when you say you will.

Preparation

Whether this is the first meeting with a client or not, arrive prepared. Do the necessary research and prepare the materials you need. Decide what you need to bring in terms of reports or documents. Visit the client's website and have a look at any publications such as their strategy or vision, so that you understand their business, their aspirations and where they are going.

Be Human

Start with the personal. At the meeting, make a personal connection before you get down to discussing business. Take a few moments to ask about them, and even their family if you know something about them. If you know your client is into say, sport, then discuss a recent result or an upcoming game. The aim is to make a human connection with your client. You want to make them like you as people prefer to do business with people that they like.

Have an Agenda

Create an agenda for the meeting and send it to the client a couple of days in advance. However, if during the meeting, you deviate from the agenda in a positive way then just go with the flow. Let the flow of the meeting be determined by the client as much as by you. This doesn't mean that you have to be held hostage when you have other commitments. Most people wouldn't want that anyway. However it is valuable to give the client some latitude in your conversation. You'll often learn useful information, and even give them a chance to offer you another opportunity to do the work you love to do for them.

Follow Up

Do the work required to follow up, and do it promptly. Do what you say you're going to do. When you follow up you are building trust with your client and it validates the trust they already have in you and your business.

THE DIGITAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

As the digital marketplace continues to develop and expand, customer expectations are changing. Businesses need to adapt in order to meet the needs of these customers.

The online experience

Users want a good online experience and they have expectations of what a quality website should look like. They will no longer wait long periods for a website to load. Customers also expect your site to have clear navigation, regardless of the type of device they are using. Social media is now a fact of life and your customers expect to be able to find your firm on platforms such as Twitter and LinkedIn in addition to your website.

Smartphones

A vast amount of web traffic now comes via smartphones. Your customers now expect to be able to buy your products or services via their smartphone. Therefore contact pages, “buy now” functions, etc. must now be able to function via smartphones. This presents another challenge to businesses, as some customers use Apple devices while others may use Android, Blackberry or Windows smartphones. In order to have a consistent online experience for your customers, you need to develop your web and social media platforms to function properly on different operating systems across a range of devices.

CRM

Customer relationship management is more important than ever in today's digital-focused world. Customer data must be captured and kept up to date in order to allow email, social media and digital campaigns to be developed.

Search Engine Optimisation

The aim of the digital game is to make it easy for potential customers to find your business. Customers will search for your type of product or service by using a search engine such as Google. The rules of search engine optimisation (SEO) are always evolving, but the days of stuffing your website with keywords and meta tags are long gone. Instead, your website, blogs and social media updates should contain text which is written with the customer in mind.

The digital marketing space is now more competitive than ever. If you and your firm can master it, you can drive new customers to your business. If you brush it to one side, you stand to lose out to competitors who have embraced the digital space. Your business should try to develop a digital strategy that is appropriate for your customers' preferences.

Please contact a member of our team if you would like to discuss any of the issues raised.