



BSSEC

resources

Promoting Your Enterprise - a resource pack

Part 6 - Creating website content

Developing a website can be a great promotional investment for your enterprise – but only if some thought has been given to how best its content and presentation can be shaped to promote your enterprise as effectively as possible.

Rather than the technical aspects of building websites, this section of Promoting Your Enterprise is about maximising the promotional potential of your website. It is aimed at enterprises that already have, or are considering investing in, a website.

Initial decisions

Making decisions on the following questions will help to develop a direction for the content and visual presentation of your website.

Why do you need a website?

As with any promotional item, before you begin to develop its content you should consider its purpose. Give some thought to what the main aims of your website are, and ensure that all of the content is focused on achieving these aims. Some common website aims are:

- To increase awareness of services and/or products
- To increase sales
- To provide relevant information to potential customers, funders, investors, and employees
- To promote achievements
- To provide a platform for published documents (annual reports, etc)
- To keep existing customers etc informed about service developments

Who do you want to visit your website?

Your website needs to 'speak' to the audience it's aimed at, so consider your target markets and assess why they should visit your website, the information needs they are likely to have and what kind of content will be relevant, useful and appealing to them.

How often will you update your website content?

Making a realistic judgement on how often you'll be able to amend or add new content to your site will help you determine what it should feature.

"Give some thought to what the main aims of your website are, and ensure that all of the content is focused on achieving these aims"

Promoting Your Enterprise - a resource pack has been produced by Birmingham & Solihull Social Economy Consortium (BSSEC) - a practitioner-led network that supports and promotes the social enterprise sector.

The pack provides guidance and information for social enterprises to help them improve the effectiveness of their promotional activities. It comprises:

Part 1 - Getting Started

Part 2 - Defining Your Market

Part 3 - Writing press releases

Part 4 - Creating leaflets and brochures

Part 5 - Producing a newsletter

Part 6 - Creating website content

The pack can be downloaded, free of charge, at www.bssec.org.uk

BSSEC contacts

General enquiries

Alun Severn
BSSEC Secretariat
Tel: 0121 233 0278
alun@bssec.org.uk

Media enquiries

Sarah Louise Taylor
Alpha Communication
Tel: 0191 375 0101
sarah@alpha.coop

See the test version of our Purchasing Guide to Social Enterprise & the Voluntary Sector in Birmingham & Solihull at www.bssec.org.uk

If you plan to update your site frequently, then its content can include time sensitive material such as latest service promotions/offers, regular news stories, event details, etc.

If you're not able to update it regularly, then avoid using content that will date quickly as it will convey the impression that your site is largely unmaintained, and while this may be true - you will probably find that quite a lot of the content will remain static - it's not a positive message to send to any target market.

Your update schedule should reflect the nature of your business. If you're an enterprise that regularly adapts or introduces new services, for example, or your enterprise works with many different clients on shorter-term projects, you should communicate this with regular updates.

If your enterprise has mainstay services or longer-term contracts that aren't subject to frequent change, then you may find that it's more suitable to update the site just a few times throughout each year.

Also, to ensure that your site is updated regardless of the decided schedule, the responsibility of collecting fresh material should be assigned to one or two team members.

Planning content

To help you to decide what content your site should feature, consider the categories of information that will be needed in order to meet the requirements of your target audience.

Some common information categories for social enterprises are:

“Consider the categories of information that will be needed in order to meet the requirements of your target audience ”

- Information about your enterprise
 - Company history and structure
 - Why the business is a social enterprise
 - An outline of the social benefits it delivers
 - Key personnel
 - Contact information
- Information about your services/products
 - What services/products you provide
 - How a customer can access/obtain them
- Information with customer appeal
 - Unique selling points
 - Customer recommendations
- Information with employee/volunteer appeal
 - Employee/volunteer benefits
 - Training/development policies
 - Accreditations
- Information with public purchaser appeal
 - Details of the social benefits your enterprise delivers
 - Details of successful projects delivered
 - Accreditations
 - Company and VAT number

BSSEC is developing a Purchasing Guide to Social Enterprise & the Voluntary Sector in Birmingham & Solihull which is designed to meet public purchasers' need for better market intelligence about social enterprises. You may wish to investigate the guide and see whether you could use some of its information categories for your own website. Also, you may wish to register your enterprise for free inclusion in the guide.

Go to www.bssec.org.uk/purchasing_guide.html

Writing for the web

When you've decided on what kind of content your website needs to feature, you need to start collecting, writing and editing suitable material.

You may be able to use text from existing sales brochures, etc, however it shouldn't be copied directly word for word. Websites are an entirely different medium to printed literature and so they require a different editorial approach.

Brevity is the key - some writers recommend that any text created for print should be reduced by at least 50% if it's to be transferred to a webpage.

Try to keep text as concise as possible without compromising its meaning.

Also, content displayed 'on screen' is often harder to read, so use techniques to break up large bodies of text:

- **Headlines** - increase 'scannability' by using plenty of headlines and subheadings throughout your webpages.

- **Relevant titles** - to maintain attention, readers need to know quickly what each page of your website is about. To ensure this, make sure that the headlines are direct and relevant.

- **Text emphasis** - if a body of text contains key facts or pieces of information, highlight them and make them stand out by boldening them or using an alternative text colour.

- **Regular line breaks** - break up large chunks of unappealing text.

- **Links** - instead of inserting lengthy descriptions or detailed data within bodies of text, you can insert links that point to more detailed information on another page.

- **Verbs and adjectives** - use plenty of action verbs and positive adjectives throughout in place of long-winded descriptions.

Bearing these points in mind, you should still apply basic promotional writing rules:

Start with the basics

The starting point for any text is to identify the key information it absolutely must contain and use that as a basis for its content.

Write for your market

As with all promotional material, you need to understand the audience you are speaking to and write accordingly.

Reflect your ethos

Try to use language that reflects the nature of your enterprise and what it provides.

Be consistent

Avoid confusing readers by using multiple terms for the same thing.

Choosing images

Website visitors tend to skim site content and images contribute significantly to the first impression.

Ensure that any images you use are positive, promotional and relevant. Ideally use images that will reinforce your key messages about what you do, how you do it, and who you seek to benefit.

Website images should also:

- Be bright and eye-catching, with a good level of contrast.

- Feature bold shapes rather than intricate details.

- Illustrate or complement content - images increase download times of webpages so superfluous pictures are often deemed to be a nuisance.

Also, if you plan to use any photos that don't belong to your enterprise, ensure you get permission to do so first.

“Ensure that any images you use are positive, promotional and relevant. Ideally use images that will reinforce your key messages about what you do, how you do it, and who you seek to benefit.”

Child protection issues

It's possible that you may wish to feature images of children on your website as this is relevant to your enterprise.

If this is the case then you should seek permission to use the image from the children's parents/carers and try to avoid using images of individual children – use group shots instead.

Never provide the names or contact information of the children featured in photographs on your site.

Promoting new content

Adding or updating content to your website will increase its promotional value, but in order to ensure your efforts aren't wasted, make sure you alert your customers, funders and employees of new additions to the site.

Some inexpensive methods of promoting new content include:

- Including links to new content in your email signatures.
- Sending out an email newsletter to all of your contacts.

- Issuing a press release to highlight substantial new content.

- Ensuring reciprocal website links with other enterprises or organisations that you may wish to feature on your website.

- Mentioning your website address wherever possible - make sure that it's featured on all stationery, proposals, leaflets, etc.

- Adding an online form to your site encouraging visitors to register for news and updates.

Website optimisation

Your website designer or other IT professionals can also optimise your website to ensure that as many search engines as possible are able to find it and add it to their directory.

By choosing targeted keyword phrases related to a site and its contents, website optimisation also aims to ensure that a site is ranked highly in search engine listings.

Website optimisation is worth considering as it's often an inexpensive service.

Issues to consider

Accessibility

Websites should be created to enable as many people as possible can use them. To encourage this, there are a number of design and programming guidelines available to help website developers create sites that are accessible to people with disabilities, as well as people with varied computer systems.

Your legal obligations regarding website accessibility vary depending on what kind of organisation you are and what your site offers. However it's widely accepted that an enterprise should make reasonable adjustments to their website to offer a basic level of accessibility. Whether you produce your website in-house or contract an agency, it's your responsibility to request that its pages comply with accessibility guidelines.

The World Wide Web Consortium has produced guidelines and a free accessibility validation service which anyone can use online to check how accessible a webpage is. Go to www.w3.org for further information about its Web Accessibility Initiative.

W3C's Website Accessibility Initiative www.w3.org/WAI