# Logbook Exercises – Planning the Site

# What is Your Website About?

Write a simple sentence or 2 to summarize it in your logbook and call it 'Mission Statement'. It will help you to maintain focus throughout the development process.

Mission Statement Examples:

“*Organize the world’s information and make*

*it universally accessible and useful.”* *Google*

“*To provide a global trading platform*

*where practically anyone can trade*

*practically anything*.” *eBay*

In your logbook, write down your notes about the following sections (as completely as you can). You will not be able to answer all of them + you will think of others:

# Your Market

l **Demographic:** Age, gender, marital status, ethnicity, occupation...

l **Geographic:** Country, County, city, town, size of population...

l **Behavioural:** Benefits sought, Occasions (e.g. Christmas), usage rate, price sensitivity...

l **Psychographic:** Interests, activities, opinions, attitudes...

# Your Target Audience

Your target audience should dictate:

\* Tone of voice \* Method of Contact

\* Where you advertise \* Colours used

\* Navigation \* How you advertise

\* Services offered \* Your logo

\* Prices \* Depth of content

\* Products Sold \* Everything!

# Competitor research

Unless you are first to market you will be competing with other websites. To avoid reinventing the wheel take advantage of their hard work and have a look at what they have done and sign up to any newsletters / marketing emails they have.

l How have they structured their website?

l What tone of voice do they use?

l What services / extras do they offer?

l What can you do differently / better?

l What are their product features / prices?

l How do they promote themselves (new and existing visitors / customers)?

Note: This isn’t to suggest you should copy any design work or web copy; just take inspiration from what is good and fill any gaps you see.

To see how active they are marketing themselves and gaining brand exposure use Google’s web search, news search and blog search. To find out which sites are linking to them there are many tools you can use.

Bing's is in with its webmaster toolbox: <http://www.bing.com/toolbox/webmaster>

It is also worth looking at their metadescription and meta-keywords. Although they no longer really influence the large search engines, some sites still add them (and it doesn't hurt to be safe, rather than sorry ...). From this you can see which keywords they think are the most important and then use that information on your own site. You should also be trawling through the Adwords research tool results: <https://adwords.google.co.uk/o/Targeting/Explorer?__u=1000000000&__c=1000000000&ideaRequestType=KEYWORD_IDEAS#search.none>

# Search results

Conduct a series of searches using your market’s core search terms (you should brainstorm key search phrases with your client):

l Which sites are ranked highest organically?

l Which sites are advertising using PPC?

l Are any user feedback / comments ranked highly and what do they say?

l Who are the big directories / forums / blogs in your market?

# Forums, blogs & niche social networks

Have a look around the social media sites that cater for your target audience and see what people are saying about their current providers, both positive and negative (e.g. “I wish they gave me xyz as well” or “Mine has been so quick in responding to me”). From this you can see where the gaps are and what people consider to be important.

# Choosing a Domain Name

The sooner you get this the better! It needs to get out there and start climbing out of the Google sandbox ASAP!

If you possibly can, choose one that has a key search phrase in it, eg yumyum-*chinese-restaurant-Godalming.co.uk* gets the name of the business in there + a descriptive phrase + a town name + it's not too difficult to remember. Bear in mind, Google’s EMD (exact Match Domains) Algo update: <http://www.seomoz.org/blog/googles-emd-algo-update-early-data>

# Draw a site map

One of the most frustrating experiences is to hand code your navigation’s menu and copy that across the entire site only to find you need to add another page and link. After updating all the menu’s you find yet another page is required and you have to go back through it all again (and again...).

A little bit of planning up front will become a major time save further down the line so before you dive in to coding your site sit down with a pen and a paper and draw out how each page links to the others. Here's a free tool: <http://writemaps.com/>

# Wire framing

Once you have done this the next step is to ‘wire frame’ your pages. Here you forgo any thoughts about the design (colour, icons, font formatting etc.) and piece together the basic layout and purpose of each page.

Following this process may seem a bit boring and tedious but because you have already visualised how the page elements sit together you can prevent any unnecessary (and painful) changes further down the line where you hit a brick wall and have to come back to start again. This should be agreed with your user.

Don’t forget to refer to the MindMap for any other design links that may help you (+ the *Essential Tools for WebF.doc* helpsheet)

Now – for ‘the dark side’ – from [http://www.webpagesthatsuck.com](http://www.webpagesthatsuck.com/)



Take a look at: <http://www.constellation7.org/Constellation-Seven/Josiah/Index.htm> and

<http://heaven.internetarchaeology.org/heaven.html#bottom> and

<http://www.merciame.ic24.net/Merciame.html>

Make short comments in your logbook about these sites (you may also find some ‘special’ sites of your own) -

Q1. Looking at the homepage, how easy is it to identify what the site is

about? Does it tell you what you can do and find on the site?

Q2. Is the information organised in a coherent and intuitive manner?

Q3. How easy/difficult is it to find what you want (set yourself a

simple task such as “I want to find the nearest rubbish tip.”)?

Q4. What do you like and dislike about the site’s appearance?

# The Details

You need to get thorough now – What colours, fonts, graphics, pages, etc. have you agreed with your user? Have they got a logo? Will you be designing it for them?

What features will be on the site? Blog? Forum? CMS? Shop? Contact Forms? Embeds? Slideshow? Etc.

What languages are you going to use? JavaScript? PHP? ASP?

XHTML or HTML5?

Which CSS?

What are you agreeing to, re maintenance?

Draw a detailed design for every page you have already wireframed. Your client will need to sign this off (you don't want the scope slipping – that's a lot of extra work).

**Get your logbook signed.**