

Wise to websites

Harjit Gammon sets about the task of de-mystifying the web masters

Websites seem to be de rigueur these days, yet for many small and niche companies they remain rather baffling. You know you should have one but what should it look like and more to the point what should it do?

A multitude of companies has sprung up over the last few years to meet the demand and, in the process, to add to the confusion. Add to this a host of freelancers and you get the picture.

Broadly speaking, the provenance of these outfits seems to be either 'techie' or graphics led. So if you are thinking about an update or upgrade or you need a new website, read on – and use our tips to help you trawl through the companies out there.

CASE STUDY

PJH Law's experience of revamping their existing website illustrates the process well. Having decided to revisit their website, partners Phillip Hyland and Sarah King adopted a methodical approach to their search. Using a mix of personal recommendation and some web browsing of their own they invited five companies to pitch.

Titman Firth, a Peterborough-based graphic design and new media agency, were selected, in spite of not being the cheapest, because of the marriage of technical and design skills the company offered. This was important to achieve a consistency between PJH Law's marketing literature

and the website.

A brief was set, concepts developed, and the project delivered on time. An ongoing relationship followed.

Titman Firth's site optimisation expertise (how prominently the website features on, say, Google) has proved invaluable in ensuring the firm's high web profile. For example, keying in a phrase such as 'dismissal procedure' (PJH Law are exclusively employment law solicitors) results in the firm being number one on the web search. A blog, which is updated daily, was also incorporated into the website, making them unique in the law fraternity.

RESULTS

The benefits of a well designed website have proven manifold to the firm commercially. A direct outcome of the website has been the appointment of the firm to act as employment lawyers for a premier ship football team.

In addition to generating direct business, it has raised the firm's profile, led to invitations to speak at industry events, provided a showcase for their awards and boosted their perceived authority among their corporate clients.

Compelling evidence, if any were needed, that 'your website needs to be at the core of your overall marketing strategy' in the words of Leigh Titman.

▲ Titman Firth Tel: 01733 253934 www.titmanfirth.com
▲ PJH Law Tel: 0870 3505805



PJH Law partners Sarah King and Phillip Hyland and (inset) the home page of the law firm's website.

Five tips to help you find a web designer

- ▲ Get browsing. Look at their websites.
- ▲ Prepare a brief.
- ▲ Compile a pitch list. Remember to consider chemistry as well as expertise and track record. You need to feel comfortable with them.
- ▲ Look for a demonstration of an understanding of your business and questions to ascertain its needs. The pitch shouldn't just be showcase of their work.
- ▲ Clarify the fee structure, Do you want a fixed fee per stage? Understand scenarios for additional billing to avoid unpleasant surprises.