

Topic | The basics

Tutorial 4

Web Strategy – Cost And Timings

This tutorial will review the cost and timings of a successful online strategy.

Reading time: 25 minutes

Prerequisite: Web Strategy: Assessment And Components



This tutorial is part of the complete online education program, the Tourism e-kit.



The Tourism e-kit has been produced by the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse, is an initiative of the National Online Strategy Committee, and is funded by all the Australian States & Territory Tourism Offices.

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1. How do I work out how much a web strategy costs?

It is not always straightforward to work out the cost of a web strategy as it depends on the website's requirements, the level of search engine optimisation and marketing.

It will also depend on how much of your time you are ready to invest and how much professional assistance you will require.

The only certainty is that the cost of technology has decreased over the past 10 years. The hardware required is affordable to all businesses and most of the software is free or has free equivalents such as the ones listed below:

Programming languages, application frameworks and databases:

- HTML (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HTML>)
- CSS (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cascading_Style_Sheets)
- PHP (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PHP>)
- ASP (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ASP.NET>)
- MySQL databases (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MySQL>)
- Microsoft SQL server (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microsoft_SQL)

Open Source content management systems:

- Joomla! (www.joomla.org)
 - Drupal (<http://drupal.org>)
 - DotNetNuke (www.dotnetnuke.com)
 - CMS Made Simple (www.cmsmadesimple.org)
 - WordPress (www.wordpress.org)
 - SilverStripe (www.silverstripe.com)
- For a full list please visit:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_content_management_systems

Photo and video hosting:

- Flickr (www.flickr.com)
- Photobucket (<http://photobucket.com>)
- Picasa Web Albums (<http://picasaweb.google.com>)
- YouTube (www.youtube.com)

Photo editing software for your computer:

- Gimp (www.gimp.org)
- Irfanview (www.irfanview.com)

Word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, graphics, databases:

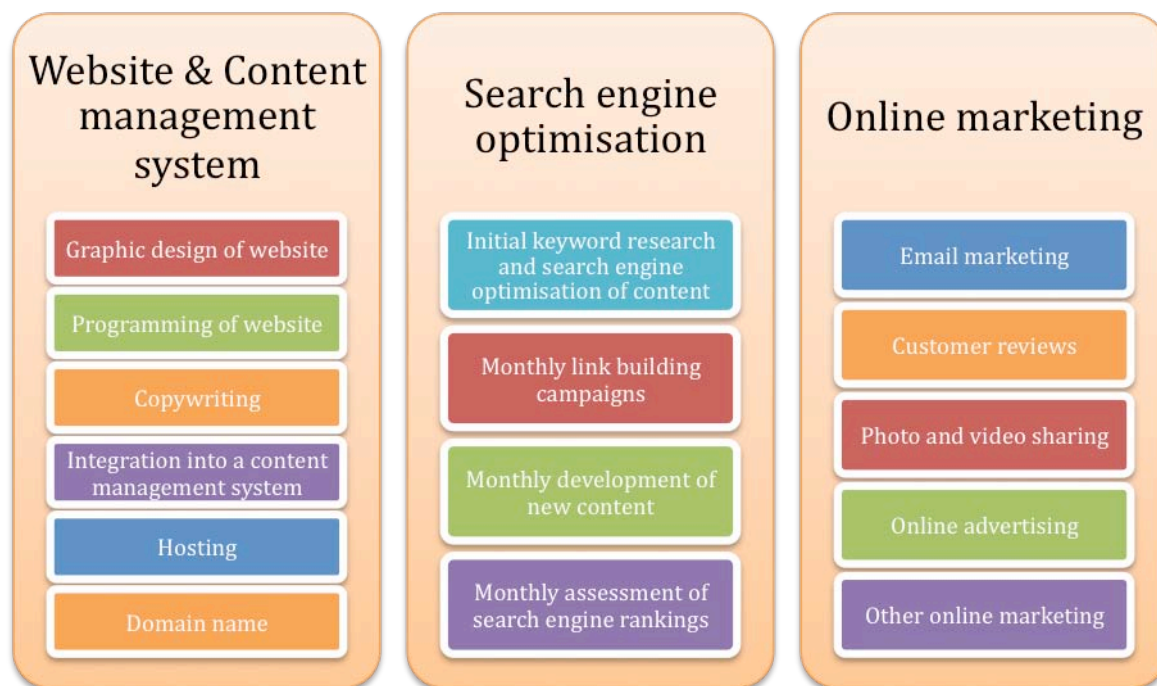
- Open Office (www.openoffice.org)

a) Pricing the 3 key components of my online strategy

The website will be the most important outlay; even though most of the programming software is free, you will still need a professional to put it together for you.

Search engine optimisation and online marketing are components, which can attract a one off fee (such as initial keyword research) and then a monthly or bi-monthly maintenance fee (such as monthly search engine optimisation). You should aim at developing your knowledge of key search engine optimisation principles to minimise the requirement for professional assistance.

The graphic below indicates the cost of each component of a strategy.



\$3,000 - \$20,000+

\$200 – 2,000 a month plus your own time as investment

To keep the cost down you can conduct many of the above activities yourself.

b) *What cannot be outsourced?*

Each component of your marketing strategy can be outsourced to a web professional. However, no one is more suited to draft your online content than yourself. **Content is king. Please note: if writing for the web isn't your thing it is important you use the services of a copywriter.**

Your product or service can be the best on the market but if you cannot translate how great it is using words, pictures, videos and audio there is little chance anyone is going to book you. Your online visitors will only contact you if the content appeals to them.

You need to be aware that web development companies will generally not write your website content. Your online marketer will guide you to best write your content, however the copywriting role usually remains yours. You can decide to outsource the copywriting to a web copywriter but you will still need to spend time letting them know about your business.

2. How much time will I need to dedicate to my strategy?

There are two components to a successful online strategy:

- Setting it up

- Continuously assessing it, managing it and developing it.

This paragraph will give you an overview of the timings.

a) Setting up an online strategy

The most difficult part when setting up a strategy is making the decision and putting together a plan addressing:

What to do, **who** is to do it, **when** to do it, and **how** to do it.

The one-month schedule below is aimed to assist small to medium organisations like yours setting up an online strategy. 30 minutes every day over 4 weeks is all you need to set up your strategy.

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Day 1: | Assess your current level of online-readiness and aim to reach the next level up within 12 months. |
| Weeks 1 and 2: | Research best practices by familiarising yourself with the Tourism E-kit tutorials and reading the ones you believe most relevant. Make notes of how you will best address each component of the strategy (web, search engine optimisation, online marketing). |
| Week 3: | Now that you know what needs to be done to improve your existing strategy, assess the different components of your existing website and strategy and make a note of how you are currently performing against these. |
| Week 4: | Define a 12-month plan by setting up monthly objectives and tasks that are both manageable and achievable. Start by defining your objectives on a monthly basis and then define the weekly tasks involved. |

If you have chosen to work with an online marketing company it is also important you go through this exercise by yourself as it will help you explain your requirements in the brief to your online marketer.

If you have decided to fly solo, it is recommended you get an online marketing professional to read over the key points to ensure all your efforts are rewarded with more business. A consultant might charge you between AUD80-180 dollars for an hour of their time but you can be certain the knowledge you will gain is well worth the money spent.

b) Managing my strategy

Once your plan is set up, you should expect to spend 1-2 hours at least, each week, working on the tasks you have set. You will also need to review your analytics to see if your efforts are paying off.

The key success factor is regularity. Below is an example of what your strategy schedule could look like:

| My strategy: | Daily | Weekly | Fortnightly | Monthly |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| Emails: | Check and acknowledge emails 3 times a day, respond at least once a day. | | | Newsletter marketing |
| Content: | As required. Use guest feedback to improve your website. Successful tourism businesses update their content once a week and build new pages every time there is a new event in their region from which they could get business. If you have set up a blogging strategy, ensure that you blog regularly and respond to comments. | | | |
| Photos: | Be prepared to take action shot photos (clients, staff, scenery) when required | | Add new photos to website, Flickr account | Change photos if they are not relevant |
| Videos: | Be prepared to take videos (clients, staff, scenery) when required | | | Add new videos |
| Social media: E.g. Facebook | Twitter (monitoring) | Twitter (posting) | Monitor new groups | |
| Online reputation: E.g. TripAdvisor | Ask or incentivise clients to leave reviews Respond to reviews | Monitor your reviews | | |
| Website analytics: | | Keywords Call to action Source of visitors | Pages most visited | Revamp content according to the results of analytics (e.g. if a page's bounce rate is over 50%) |
| Backups: | Backup computer (Automatic) | | | Backup website on server |
| Inbound links: | | | Check if there are any new incoming links to your site | Source one new link a month Check who links to you |

3. Key learning outcomes

- Ensure you consider Search engine optimisation when you budget for a new website
- An online strategy is not a one off but needs to be conducted throughout the year
- It is therefore very important you have an online plan and follow it.

4. Related material

a) *Related tutorials*

- Web strategy: assessment and components
- Target market 101
- Website 101: visual design and content
- Website 101: usability and technology
- Email best practices
- Images 101
- Understanding inbound links to your website
- Sourcing inbound links
- Bringing people to my site with e-marketing
- Social media for tourism
- Customer reviews and TripAdvisor
- Google Analytics
- Security and backups