

How to make the most of your website

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10 things to think about

Having at least some presence on the web, no matter how small, is arguably now essential for most voluntary and community groups. From a listing on DIVA <http://www.divabradford.org.uk> to a fully interactive site, there are lots of options available.

1. Set a budget – before you get quotes, work out what is essential and what are the optional extras you'd like, if you can afford them. Website costs should be part of your core costs, not a separate project. Make sure you include both the cost of creating a website and updating it, in your general running costs e.g. when doing a full-cost recovery review.

2. Be imaginative – a website is more than an electronic leaflet. Consider the possibilities to communicate with your users through online diaries (blogs), video and audio clips.

3. Make the most of it – your website should help to deal with simple enquiries for you such as people looking for your contact details, how to find you or what's going on.

4. Have a consistent image – use the same font, colours, logos and similar layouts to those that you use for printed publicity. It should be instantly recognisable as your site.

5. Design it with your users and volunteers – if the site is aiming to appeal to them and people like them, start with asking them what they'd like to see and what they'd like it to look like. If photos aren't appropriate, why not have a competition for artwork instead?

6. Get ideas from your board – your trustees/ management committee members are ambassadors for your organisation. Make sure their input is captured early on in the design process as the site may end up helping them keep in-touch with their organisation.

7. Keep it current – a designated person to update the website is a good idea. A volunteer, trustee or if you're lucky a paid staff member should know how to update the site, how often to do it and what you're aiming to achieve.

8. Don't hold on for too long – if you need a holding page whilst you get a full website together, consider using it to display key information – contact details (and how to find you), your logo, funders' logos. Much better than a blank page that just says that the site is underdevelopment. However, don't use a holding page for too long. After 6 months people may stop checking back and assume the worst! Not good for your image.

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9. Review and refresh – keep a list of websites you like and collect feedback from users of your website. It's amazing how quickly sites can get out of date (or look out of date).

10. Make it accessible – last in this list but it should come first in your thinking. Not least because of the Disability Discrimination Act. All the services you offer, including your website should be made as accessible as possible. A good guide to commissioning accessible websites is available online from the ICT Hub:

http://www.ictHub.org.uk/publications/how_to_commission_and_design_accessible_websites.pdf

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