

SIX

fundamental rules

for online success

written by Josh Masters

Rule #1: Give the crowd what they came for

Whatever your business, your websites look and feel should be targeted to your audience. For some this may be slick and corporate, for others it may be weathered and natural.

As a designer I am one of the first people to spot a hideous looking website. However I have also eaten my words on more than one occasion when I find out those websites pulling in six figures. Beauty is not a consideration for the people looking at these websites. All that matters is that the information is in a format that they can relate to and understand.

Look around you to get an understanding of what the market expects of you. For example, if you're a bar you'll need to convey a visual image that reflects your identity because your aesthetics are one of the reasons you clients come to you. If you're a solicitor though, your image may be much more conservative and subdued.

A professional web designer will be able to provide you with numerous visual and layout techniques to suit a variety of styles ranging from sales and marketing websites to sites that rely on user-generated content. Ultimately though, these techniques should always be crafted to bringing you more business.

Rule #2: What's in it for me?

Let's face it, most of the time we're thinking about ourselves. And our clients are no different. All they want to know is what's in it for them. "How are they going to solve my problems, or save me time, or make me more money?"

The answers to these questions are what will essentially sell your product so you better be sure you're speaking about them. Clients don't care how many features your wonderful product can offer them, all they want to know is how it will **benefit** them.

So when it comes to your online communication you *must* sell the benefits. How can your product help them? How can you be of service to them? Can you save them time? Can you save them money? Can you fulfil their desires?

Work out why you matter, then tell people about it in your own words or through some well crafted copy by a professional copywriter.

Rule #3: Don't just stand there, do something!

Not all websites have the same role. Some are used to sell product, some are to capture information from enquiries, some are simply to provide information about a complex service. Whatever your website's role, make sure you're clear about what you're offering. Then put that offering everywhere.

If you're selling product, be sure all your content and offerings are driving traffic through to your buy page. Then make sure your 'payment gateway' is as smooth and streamlined as possible to make a purchase.

If you're trying to capture details to build your database, make sure you have a registration point on every page and be sure to provide an incentive for signing up. Whether it's a "chance to win..." or an e-book or some helpful advice, people will always be more inclined to do something if there's an incentive. From there you can keep in regular contact with your database to ensure you're always at the front of their mind when they need to make a purchase. Which takes me to my next point...

Rule #4: I'd like to talk to the person in charge please

People always want to speak to the person at the top simply because they know what they're doing. They're the expert. When you deal with an expert there is no messing about, no fuss, no wasted time. That's the ideal situation your clients are after.

So how do you become an expert? You have to convey knowledge. You have to tell people all about the subject you deal with – from the innovations to the classic fundamentals. You have to appear to be at the forefront of what you deal with and you have to communicate your expertise on a regular basis.

Fortunately the ability to do this is getting easier and easier as technology progresses. The advent of blogs, email marketing, social networking sites and a squillion other tools that enable us to talk to each other quickly on specific matters of interest.

So get out there. Write some articles and post them on your website, send out a monthly newsletter to your clients, start up a blog on Wordpress or hit Twitter for a daily post.

If it all seems too much, outsource it! All you need is a copywriter to write 12 articles on a chosen topic and your year is done. And there are some great systems that let you automate and manage any email marketing campaign you can think of.

Rule #5: Move out of first gear

I was walking through the streets of Tokyo one day and strolled right past a brand new, gleaming red Ferrari. The Ferrari was being driven, but like most traffic in Tokyo that doesn't get past 40kmph because of congestion, this Ferrari was at a standstill. Now admittedly there are plenty of reasons to own such an amazing car, but I did feel a tinge of regret for this beautiful beast who would probably never see an open road in her life. This car, designed so immaculately for performance, would probably never make it out of first gear.

The Internet is such an amazing tool simply because it carries so many technological tools, from automation to communication but your website may be the same as this Ferrari. Completely underutilised.

Can part of your marketing efforts be taken online? If so, would a simple database 'behind the scenes' save you hours of managing and sorting the names and details of new prospects or clients who would like to get in touch with you?

An automated email or newsletter could then be sent to those clients keeping you at the front of their mind the next time they were looking to make a purchase. Forget snail mail, you can reach 20,000 people within your database at the touch of a button.

Can you talk to your audience on all sensory levels?

Making an audio file is as easy as talking into your phone these days. This 'podcast' can then be integrated into your website for people who would rather listen to what you had to say while they went about their daily lives.

Doing something visual? Make a video. People love a performance and the moving picture will always demand attention giving you more time to get your message across.

Rule #6: Start waving the red flag

As much as we'd like to think that all these great tips will help you improve your business online, the simple fact is that if no one sees your site, it's a waste of time. It's a like a retail store in a dead end street.

Depending on your business, a lot of traffic can come through your site directly from people typing your domain name into the computer. So remember to put your domain name in as many places as possible – business cards, email signatures, invoices, store signage, promotional gifts, stickers, even the side of your company cars. The odd piece of guerrilla marketing on the street never goes astray either, like posters or a chalked domain name on the footpath.

When you're not sure of where to go though, people turn to search engines. And Google accounts for around 54% of search traffic on the web. So ranking on Google, whether you're a believer in statistics or not, amounts to a huge amount of traffic.

Ideally a website will be built with Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) in mind however a few minor improvements to an underperforming site can yield great results. Effective 'keywords' underpin the success of a great ranking. These are the words your target market uses to search for you in the online marketplace. A great tool from Google that shows potential keywords in your area can be found at <https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>. Here you can target specific keywords, analysing both their popularity and trends as search terms, as well as average advertising cost with Google.

The final word

After reading this document I hope you have a clearer understanding of what an effective website looks like. You will probably also notice how many websites you've seen that don't take these factors into consideration. They may look a million dollars, but are they an investment or an expense?

It's vital that you make your website work for you, that it returns at least as much time, money and effort that you have put into it. By following the recommendations here you will have a formula that we put forth every day to clients who are looking to create a successful website.

So don't get left behind, start making your website work for you. If you're not sure where to start or want to take it to a professional level contact us directly for a **free evaluation** of your site. We can create a complete online proposal for you, covering everything from design to database management, or we can consult to your business on an hourly basis.

We look forward to hearing from you.

The Jericho Project Team

About Jericho Project

Jericho Project is a boutique design studio that combines well-crafted graphics and digital marketing with a talent for technology. We specialize in creating websites for our clients that not only look good, but reach out and communicate with their audience in increasingly dynamic ways.

Our client base is as varied as our creative talent, ranging from restaurants and bars to fashion and retail and our care and attention make us the number one choice for companies both here and abroad.

Our creative team are trained to bring you design with purpose. No mess. No fuss. Just positive design work that carries world-class solutions through to your business.

Our technical team are exceptional and can bring you a range of technologies such as custom CMS, data-base management and e-commerce solutions that will save you both time and money. Visually, the technical integration of our virtual presenters, flashbooks and video are sure to keep your audience tuned in to your message time and again.

So call us today. We're focused on bringing you a positive return on your online investment and we'd love to hear from you.

w. www.jerichoproject.com.au

e. sales@jerichoproject.com.au

p. +61 2 9660 5090

f. +61 2 8252 0812



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