

Our latest blog post

Why businesses fail online

It's taken as a given that any serious business will have a website in 2014. But are all of these businesses successful online? Firstly we must define what online success actually is.

What is online success?

Your business doesn't have to be an online operation, such as Amazon or EBay, to be successful online – the key is to think of your business as one cohesive entity which, just like people, has interactions both on and offline. This means that your business has one set of core business goals (making money is usually one of them), and digital assets such as a website and social media profiles are merely a set of tools available to you in order to help achieve these core business goals.

Even a business which you may not associate with the digital world, such as a solicitors' practice, could in theory be successful online. If this solicitors' practice used their website effectively to attract more client enquiries, which then potentially leads to generating more money, then they have used their website as a tool to achieve their business goal. So it's really quite simple - online success is using your online assets to help achieve your core business goals.

Three causes of online failure

This may all sound fairly obvious, but wherever there is success there is also failure. So why do so many businesses fail to use their online presence in an effective way in order to help achieve their business goals? Through our experiences working with a large variety of businesses we've found that there are often three main causes.

1. Lack of strategy
2. No evolution of capabilities
3. Disparate business tools

Lack of strategy

If you don't know where you're going then any road will take you nowhere. The first key thing to do is clarify what exactly these core business goals we keep talking about are for you and then identify exactly how your website can help you to achieve these goals.

No evolution of capabilities

Once you have specified what your goals are and how your website should help you to achieve them then you have a strategy. However having sufficient capabilities is also a crucial factor in your online success. Many businesses have what we call a brochure site, a website which has some information about products or services offered and contact details but is static, remaining the same over long periods of time. This is essentially a website which potential customers can visit and flick through but not interact with, rather like a brochure.

The reason for businesses having this type of site is often that the website was created by a web design agency that made the site look pretty but left the website owner with no control or functionality. These agencies will often then charge considerable fees for any changes or updating required in the future which deters the website owner from making any regular changes.

This is a fundamental flaw in any plan for online success. All businesses will have differing requirements for their website, however one thing which we can apply to all of them is that your website will never be finished. It is an interactive tool which must be kept 'alive' and also evolve with developments in technology. Many businesses don't have an in-house member of the team who happens to also be a web developer with a competent knowledge of HTML coding, therefore a content management system (CMS) is vital in order for your team to maintain control over your website, consistently adding and managing content, without the need for any knowledge of coding.

Another essential aspect of online success is measurement. The only way to identify success is to measure it, by setting realistic key performance indicators (KPIs) and monitoring your online business activity against them. Analytics software such as Google Analytics (which is completely free) is fantastic for this, providing comprehensive and accurate data on how people are interacting with your website and general website performance.

Disparate business tools

The final problem which many businesses encounter on their journey to online success is a disparity between their business tools. Three forms of 'tool' which need to be in sync with each other are people, process and platform. For example, a task such as publishing a news story on your website requires a person who has the ability to write news stories, it requires knowledge of the process of uploading the story to the website and it requires a platform, in this case a CMS, which allows you to upload things to the website. If any one of these three tools is lacking then one of your most precious business resources – time – will be wasted, as a less efficient approach to the task will inevitably be taken.

If you need help with any aspect of digital marketing for your business you can call us on **(0115) 837 2663** or email us at **help@6sm.co.uk**, we're just around the corner.

