

Is your Website ready for 2011?

Checklists for B2B Marketers

axongarside.

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Whatever your online marketing strategy this year, you'll want to drive prospects to your website. The website is the foundation of all successful demand generation, outbound marketing, inbound marketing, lead nurturing, content marketing and social media strategies.

If your site has been up for a while it may no longer reflect either this year's marketing objectives or the latest changes in the way that search engines work and buyers use the web.

So here are some suggestions and thoughts to help guide the review of your site. Some of these may require small changes to your existing site. Others may require a more fundamental appraisal of the site's continued effectiveness with the possibility that a site redesign should figure in this year's marketing plan.

Web visitors don't have much patience – and now nor does Google.

Matt Cutts, the head of Web spam at Google, has announced that site speed may be used as **a new ranking factor for 2011**. This shouldn't be a huge surprise because Google's long stated goal is to help its users to find information as quickly as possible but there are a lot of first generation B2B sites out there that will struggle:

How clean is your code? Tables, messy and overcomplicated code all affect load times as will the order of the content on your page. If you don't know how fast your site is loading, you can use tools like **WebPageTest** to find out.

If you have an animated flash landing page or auto playing music or video remove it NOW. These outdated and slow-loading bits of media only slow down your site visitors and make it more likely that they will leave your site without taking action.

Calls to Action are the key to improving your ROI and the basis of successful lead nurturing and conversion.

Is your site generating leads for your sales force? If you are to turn a visitor into a prospect – short or long term – you'll need to get them to take an action. Three quarters of B2B web visitors go on to buy within two years so you'll also need a wide variety of calls to action to appeal to buyers at every stage of the buying cycle. Does your site provide the structure that you need to provide content that is appropriate for both business and technical decision makers? Does your website make it easy for your prospects and customers to take the next steps in their consideration or buying process?

The more your offers are designed to engage prospects and start sales-winning relationships, the better, so give visitors different actions to take. Can your visitors subscribe to content via **RSS** or to an email newsletter? Can they find your phone number, request a callback, download a relevant document? Whatever the call to action on your site, make sure it is on every relevant page and customers and prospects know what to do. Track visitor behaviour so you can match this up to your objectives.

Does your content management system allow you to match calls to action with page content to increase relevance and actions taken? Your website is a living entity that should be easy to change to make it more effective. If you are constantly fighting with your IT department or a web vendor to make changes, you need to re-evaluate that relationship and the way your site is built and content maintained. Your company's success cannot be held back by technical limitations or the whims of your internal or external partners.

Building relationships – put your site at the heart of a Social Media strategy.

Does your site include blogs or forums? It should at least have a Blog. B2B online marketing has moved on from online brochures. If B2B sales is about building relationships –then your website must encourage people to keep coming back. You can't build a relationship in one hit. Blogs are a great way of winning confidence and getting people onsite. Tools like [RSS](#) make the process easier for writer and reader and the content easier to share.

Are you using Twitter to flag new content on your Blog? It's a great way of driving traffic to your site, providing of course that that is where your Blog is hosted! Last year lots of B2B companies started Blogs but many of them are anywhere but the corporate site. Consolidation of content is going to be one of the big trends this year. If you have a blog located on a separate domain it means that you have to build links, authority and a community on multiple sites. That's a waste of time and resources that you may not have. More than that, if you want to grow these social communities then burying their existence on your About page, contact page or some random page that no one can find is not the way to do it. Put your Blog at the heart of your site

When you do write a Blog make sure that you provide some good strong calls to action so that readers know how your company can help them out. There's no point creating interest in something if it doesn't eventually lead to a sell.

Are you ready for Mobile?

Just look at your colleagues to see how much of their time is spent nose deep in smart phones to understand how important the provision of at least some mobile content has become.

According to Comscore there was a 400% increase in people accessing B2B Blogs and RSS feeds last year and mobile traffic generally was up by a third. It is time to ensure that you blogs and probably your news is not only tailored toward mobile browsing, but optimised as well.

Sites like [BrowserCam](#) will help you to judge whether your site is ready to take advantage of the trend.

Are you ready for Real Time Search Updates?

This was the big news at the end of 2009. Google is now putting real-time search updates into search results. Comments by fans – and cynics alike on Twitter, Facebook, forums and anywhere else that people converse on the web will be included in the mix from now on. If you ever thought that you could control the way your Brand is presented on the web, you know that time has passed.

Now angry customers and cynical commentators will have immediate power in the search results. Google will pull comment from tweets, blogs, news, articles and other websites. Unless your site has all the tools to help you optimise your content, these may well appear above your own page content in the results listings.

This means that not only do you have to be even more vigilant in monitoring the conversation offsite (try tools like Twitter Search and Whos Talkin) but even more active in providing the dynamic, engaging and interactive content once you have drawn people back to your site. If your site has not been designed to do that or you don't make best use of the tools available, you will quickly lose control of the conversation in 2011.

Onsite SEO has moved beyond keytags

It will save you a lot of time and money in the long run, but the real cost of a site that hasn't been built with today's search engines in mind will be the sales opportunities that you miss. As Google has announced that keyword tags are now almost irrelevant to the search engine performance of your site, content and use of keywords on the page itself is now even more important if you are to have a fighting chance of attracting web visitors. Search engines are getting 'smarter' when browsing through your web copy and use algorithms to relate terms it knows are commonly found together (e.g. ERP & CRM) when determining how authoritative your content is. The more authoritative search engines deem your content (assuming they can easily read the content of your website), the higher up your web page will appear on the Search Engine Results Page (SERP). So ask yourself: Does our website include relevant, associated keywords and phrases that people actually use when searching? If the search engines can't find and index these keywords on your website, your site will never reach the top of the organic search results.

Research the latest words and phrases used most often by buyers in your markets? You can check using online tools but your customers and prospects are a really valuable source of information too because they actually bought something from you. Which words or phrases would they use to search for companies, products and services such as yours? Ask them. Are the more popular keywords and phrases in your URLs? Meta descriptions? Page titles? Headlines? Body copy? Text links? You may well have useful images onsite and great content in your pdfs and other downloadable documents but can Google read them? Are you giving your graphics file names that include relevant keywords? Are you including keywords and phrases in <alt> tags for each of your graphics? Are you using the latest version of Adobe Acrobat to make your PDF files indexable for the search engines?

Does your content management system create an automatic site map, pointing to all of your site's individual pages? Does your site map include lots of keywords and phrases in the page links and descriptive copy for each page of your website?

Check the usability of your site from your customer's perspective

You may have optimised your search results to drive great traffic, but how the visitor reacts to the site once he or she has arrived is just as important. If people can't tell what you do at a glance, they are not going to stick around. Many sites still fail to spell out with sufficient clarity basics like the products or services that they sell, the most common applications for their products or services and the types and size of businesses or institutions

How customer-centric is your site? The more experienced a web user – and B2B users are more experienced than most - the more that they expect to find the information that they want as quickly and easily as possible.

The structure, navigation and presentation of content on your site all need to work hard to keep visitors onsite and taking actions. Is it easy for your prospects and customers to find their way around your website? Are there clear and consistent menus? A functional search mechanism is vital on bigger sites and you can't have enough text links to related or in-depth information.

Perhaps most importantly: Does the site address your customer's needs from their perspective – and at every stage of their buying cycle? If it doesn't it probably won't have the visibility to be found in the first place

Check your website's Analytics to see what sites people came from or what keywords they searched to understand who stays on your site and who leaves. And ask your customers: Actual user feedback is the best barometer about your current site's messaging and focus.

Finally... Don't forget the little things.

Does your site feel fresh and alive – or unkept and out of date? Adding new functionality and pages is one thing, but do you keep the content on your website's existing pages fresh and up-to-date? If nothing changes, the search engines will pass by your pages in favour of competitors' sites with more recent content. Just as serious, out of date content, broken links, information gaps can give the appearance of a site that is more or less abandoned, setting up a serious barrier to your messaging. However, if the search engines see that your pages have changed, they have a reason to re-index them, and you'll get the chance to move your web pages to the top of the search engine results – and the visitors who arrive on site will be likely to stay there for longer with increased chances of conversion.

About axongarside.

For more information about axongarside, our approach to B2B marketing and the clients that we work with visit axongarside.com or to find out about axongarside's inclusive website design, build and performance management service [download our brochure](#).

axongarside Online Marketing Services include:

- ag.smartsite – web design, build and performance management
- SEO and Online Pay per Click Advertising
- Web Copywriting
- Viral marketing
- Video production

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