

Case Study

How good is your club's website?



February 2018



Introduction

These days an online presence is vital for any organisation and a quality website can be one of the most important investments your club can make. Many clubs still view themselves as an offline entity, focusing more on traditional means to promote

themselves and attract new members and visitors. This lack of investment in providing a good website experience is a risky strategy when society is spending more and more time online.

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Websites that are well designed with engaging content and imagery tend to perform better with above average metrics like high average time on site and a high number of pages per visit. All it takes is 50 milliseconds, that's 1/20th of a second, for a visitor to form an opinion of a website and, by association, the brand itself. So what makes a good website? Below we explore some of the basics of a website that make it effective, easy to use and engaging.

Purpose

What is the purpose of your club's website? If you can't answer this question clearly, then you are probably missing out on the opportunity to effectively communicate with your target audience. A good website needs to cater to the needs of the user and each page of your website should have a clear purpose to fulfil a specific need for visitors in the most effective way possible.

Visit the website of another sports club in your area and rate how well the website informs you about playing at the club or getting involved in the sport. Is that website fulfilling its purpose? Now compare it with your club's website.

Design

A great-looking website brings together form and function with the benefit of being seen as more credible according to a recent Stanford Study. The overall look and feel of your website is the first thing visitors will notice. An attractive website is far more likely to generate a positive impression and keep visitors on the site once they arrive. Remember, 50 milliseconds.

Navigation

Having clear, simple navigation on your site is critical to ensure visitors can find what they're looking for. Ideally, a visitor should be able to arrive on your website and not have to think a great deal about where they should click next. Moving from point A to point B should be as pain-free as possible. Keep the structure of your primary navigation simple (and near the top of your page) and don't offer too many navigation options on a page.

Images

When it comes to websites, people rarely read content word for word but on the other hand, images

stick with users longer. A picture can speak a thousand words, and choosing the right images for your website can help establish your brand and connect with your target audience. If you don't have high quality photos on hand, consider hiring a professional to capture compelling images that will help visitors to your site understand more about your club. Also consider using videos and graphics as these can be much more effective at communicating than even the most well written piece of text. Spend some time looking at the different images on your club website and ask yourself, does this portray our club at its best or does it create a poor first impression? If it's the latter, then it shouldn't be on your website.

Content

Even if you have a beautifully designed website, it's of little value without good quality content to back it up. Writing great content that tells your story takes time and effort but will ultimately pique the interest of visitors and will also help your site get more exposure. Google rewards high quality websites that contain original content with better site rankings in search results. Where applicable, make sure the content is actionable. The best content gives the user a sense of how to apply the information and take the next step.

Mobile Friendly

With more people accessing websites on multiple devices with varying screen sizes, it is important to consider if your website is mobile friendly. A website can be built in a responsive layout (this means your website will adjust to different screen widths) or as a dedicated mobile site (a separate website optimised specifically for mobile users). Depending on whether your club website is mobile friendly or not will also impact on its ranking on Google.

Maintain and Refresh Your Site

Far too many clubs leave their website to become outdated. Staying relevant is crucial, so update your website frequently with upcoming events, new offers and club news to keep your target audience coming back to the site. Don't forget to refresh the images. If your website is looking tired and not ticking the boxes for the points above, then it is probably time to start looking at an upgrade.

Conclusion

If it's been a while since your club last upgraded the website, start now by taking some time to identify the top three things you want visitors to do as a result of visiting your site. Get your members involved in the process by asking them what they think about the website. Ask friends and family outside the club for feedback to determine

if your current website is fulfilling its purpose to attract new members and visitors to your club. If you're looking for some advice on how to improve your club website, please feel free to contact your local Regional Support Manager or NZ Golf.

