

Who is involved in a Website Project and which approach is best?

Description

Who should be involved in a website project?

The success of a website is dependent on the range of people involved in its development, and how well they work as a team. A typical profile of team members is as follows:

Site sponsors

These will be senior managers who will effectively be paying for the system from their budgets. They will understand the strategic benefits of the system and will be keen that the site is implemented successfully to achieve the business objectives they have set.

Site owner

Ownership will typically be the responsibility of a marketing manager or e-commerce manager who may be devoted full-time to overseeing the site in a large company. It may be part of a marketing manager's remit in a smaller company.

Project manager

This person is responsible for the planning and co-ordination of the website project. The project manager will aim to ensure that the site is developed within the budget and time constraints that have been agreed at the start of the project and that the site delivers the planned benefits for the company and its customers.

Site designer

The site designer will define the look and feel of the site including its styling through Cascading Stylesheets (CSS), layout and how company brand values are transferred to the web.

Content developer

The content developer will write the copy for the website and convert it to a form suitable for the site. In medium or large companies this role may be split between marketing staff or staff from elsewhere in the organisation who write the copy and a technical member of staff who converts it to the graphics and HTML documents forming the web page and does the programming for interactive content.

Webmaster

This is a technical role. The webmaster is responsible for ensuring the quality of the site. This means achieving suitable availability, speed, working links between pages and connections to company databases. In small companies the webmaster may take on graphic design and content developer roles also.

Stakeholders

The impact of the website on other members of the organisation should not be underestimated. Internal staff may need to refer to some of the information on the website or use its services. While the site sponsor and site owner will work within the company, many organisations outsource the other resources since full-time staff cannot be justified in these roles.

Options for outsourcing different digital marketing activities:

E-marketing function

1. Strategy
2. Design
3. Content and service development
4. Online promotion
5. Offline promotion
6. Infrastructure

Assign to

1. Traditional marketing agency
2. Digital marketing agency
3. Traditional IT supplier
4. Digital consultant

We are seeing a gradual blurring between these different types of supplier as they recruit expertise so as to deliver a 'one-stop shop' or 'full-service agency', but they still tend to be strongest in particular areas. Companies need to decide whether to partner with the best of breed in each, or to perhaps compromise and choose the one-stop shop that gives the best balance and is most likely to achieve integration across different marketing activities – this would arguably be the new media agency, or perhaps a traditional marketing agency that has an established new media division.

Which approach to a Website Project is best?

Observation of the practice of outsourcing suggests that two conflicting patterns are evident:

Outside-in

A company often starts using new digital marketing technologies by outsourcing some activities where there is insufficient in-house expertise. The company then builds up skills internally to manage these areas as digital marketing becomes an important contributor to the business. An outside-in approach will probably be driven by the need to reduce the costs of outsourcing, poor delivery of services by the supplier or simply a need to concentrate resource for a strategic core competence in-house.

Inside-out

A company starts to implement digital marketing using existing resources within the IT department and marketing department in conjunction with recruitment of digital media specialists. They may then find that there are problems in developing a site that meets customers' needs or in building traffic to the site. At this point they may turn to outsourcing to solve the problems.

The above approaches are not mutually exclusive. An outside-in approach may be used for some activities such as SEO or content development while an inside-out approach is used for other functions such as site promotion.

Category

1. Project

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