

RE-DESIGNING THE COMPANY WEBSITE

You have been asked to contribute your ideas and views for the redesign of the company website. Bear in mind that extra functionality costs money but that an attractive, easy to use website can earn back the money invested very quickly.

Fill in the following questionnaire:

Functionality

Which of the following features does the website need?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> catalogue of products | <input type="checkbox"/> passworded zone for customers/clients |
| <input type="checkbox"/> order forms | <input type="checkbox"/> up-to-date share price information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> search facility | <input type="checkbox"/> database of job vacancies in the company |
| <input type="checkbox"/> e-mail newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> other (please specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> branch/office finder | _____ |

Usability

Are there any aspects of the current website which make it difficult to use? For example, the layout or navigation. How could the new website be better?

Content

What content does the website need?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> product/service information | <input type="checkbox"/> videos of advertising |
| <input type="checkbox"/> company news and press releases | <input type="checkbox"/> financial information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> company history | <input type="checkbox"/> other (please specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> biographies of senior management | _____ |

Should this content be:

fixed / up-datable

detailed / basic

produced in-house / commissioned?

Stickiness

Do you have any ideas to encourage users to explore the website and return again in the future?

Design

Do you think the website should: mirror the current corporate image / have its own image?

Please suggest:

colours _____

images (if any) _____

graphics _____

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Teacher's Notes

Aim:

To expand and practise the vocabulary associated with corporate websites.

Level:

Pre-Intermediate to Upper-Intermediate (individuals and groups).

Pre-lesson:

This works especially well with anyone who has already been involved in the re-design of a website or is likely to be in the future or who uses their company's website on a regular basis and has opinions about its strengths and weaknesses. Marketing and sales people will have a very different view of the subject compared to people from IT departments. Since the World Wide Web is now such an important part of business life there are very few people in a company who do not have an opinion about how that company presents itself on the Web. This activity works well with groups in which all the learners are from the same company.

Procedure:

- Ask the learners whether they use their company's website regularly and whether they have had any hand in its design or decisions about its content.
- Brainstorm what makes a good website that draws users further in and what makes a website difficult to use. Make sure every member of the group has a chance to give their opinion. Put the results on the board. It is not necessary to use any specialist Web language at this stage although any terms that do come up can be used in the later vocabulary brainstorming.
- If computer facilities are available, give the learners time to examine their companies' websites. This can be done in pairs with each learner introducing her/his company's website to the other.
- Put the headings from the questionnaire on the board. Check that the learners are familiar with the words and the concepts behind them.
 - *Functionality* – the set of features that allow a user to do something with the website.
 - *Usability* – the measurement of how easy or difficult a website is to use.
 - *Content* – any material such as text, pictures or other information that appears on a website.
 - *Stickiness* – anything about a website that encourages a visitor to stay longer and visit again.
 - *Design* – the way the website looks.

It might also be useful to brainstorm other common Web vocabulary such as *links*, *menu*, *homepage*, *cookies*, etc. (See Tips below.)

- Distribute the questionnaire and give the learners time to fill it in. This can be done in pairs with the teacher monitoring or as part of a self-study period during which the learners work without a teacher.
- The conclusions from the questionnaires can be given as impromptu presentations. If all the learners are from the same company the choices of each learner or pair of learners can be compared and a group decision reached. This activity can be conducted as a meeting role-play. One learner is appointed as chairman and leads the rest of the group through the following agenda.

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the last meeting
2. Ideas for re-designing the company website
 - Functionality
 - Usability
 - Content
 - Stickiness
 - Design
3. Summary
4. Any other business

- If the learners are very enthusiastic about the activity (especially if they have both time and the necessary expertise) mock-ups of homepages can be created and presented in a more formal manner using OHTs or, better still, PowerPoint. It can be suggested to the group that senior management tends to be very conservative about marketing strategy so the purpose of the presentation is to sell their ideas to those at the top of the company who control the budget. This becomes more of a challenge if the proposal contains any radical or unusual ideas.
- At each or any of these final, fluency stages the teacher should monitor and give language feedback at the end. This feedback should give particular focus to how much and how accurately the target vocabulary was used.

Tips:

- It is very useful to be able to visit and examine the existing websites of the companies the learners work for. You need time and the computer facilities to do this of course. It is also useful to find examples in advance of some of the items on the questionnaire such as an office finder or videos of advertisements. These do not necessarily have to be on the website of the companies in question.
- If you intend to use the Web regularly for lessons it is a good idea to start to build up a list of favourite websites that you can refer to quickly to save you from having to do extensive searching before every lesson.
- There are many on-line glossaries that will provide useful lists of Web vocabulary. It may be useful to have something up your sleeve if the brainstorming simply reveals your learners lack of vocabulary.

Try:

<http://www.thinkingit.com.au/glossary-of-website-terminology>

<https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2009/05/web-design-industry-jargon-glossary-and-resources/>

<http://techterms.com/category/internet>

Remember, you do not have to be an expert on this subject. If you have Web-enabled computers available and there is doubt or disagreement about a term, send your learners to one of the websites above or get them to use a search engine such as:

<http://www.yahoo.com>

<http://www.google.com>

to answer the question themselves.