



Website Content Creation

Using the News System Effectively

There are two ways of adding 'news' to your website, these are Blogs and News. We are often asked what the differences are between a News system on a site and a Blog. The main difference between the two is the formality of the conversation each has with the viewer.

News items tend to be formal and fact based, whereas blogs are more casual. News on websites is an important thing to do. A blog is a little more specialised, and you will have to 'blog' almost daily, so unless you have a vibrant industry, or a lot of information to pass on, a blog needs careful consideration before you commit to doing it. Once you write a blog and start to get followers, you will need to keep it up. A blog is forever, not for the faint of heart. If you want to talk about doing a blog, please call the office, and we will explain the process. Let us continue with News.



Posting developments regarding your company, products, orders and customers are great for your website. It allows potential customers to see that you are an active company and it allows Google to see that you are changing content (which it likes) and that you are posting relevant information (which it loves).

For the launch of the site, we recommend that you populate the News section with four interesting articles. Blogs are a different animal, you need to write consistently, and have an audience that want to read the blog, you also need a goal for the blog. We have never had a customer in 12 years of working who has created a blog that has led to more sales. Even we only use news as we understand the 'special' nature of a blog.

What is News?

What do you post on your News page? Do you post every little detail of everything that happens? Well, probably not. You need to take a structured approach to it and plan a series of posts over the next year.

Step One: Working Out your 'Features List.'

If you have ever worked with magazine publishers, they create a 'Features List' each year to let advertisers know what they will be writing in their magazine. This allows advertisers to target the issues that will appeal to their target customers.

Putting together a 'Features List' is a terrific way of planning your news. This doesn't mean you can't add news that 'happens', like interesting orders or events that happen during the year, but the list will give you a **structure to work with** each month so that you are regularly editing your site.

The first part of writing a 'Features List' is deciding what information you are going to use and how you are going to add it as news. Things like new products you know are coming, attendance at things like 'The Home Show', orders completed and new customers are great ways to show your business activity in the news section. Even if you do not know the new order or customer you will get in the next 12 months; you can still plan to write about them.

Whatever your choice of what you are going to cover, the structure and discipline to plan, write, check and publish the items will make this part of your site a success.

Step Two: Planning

On a piece of paper or in a word document using the following as a guide to planning. Put the months in order and then jot ideas about what you will cover. How much you do is to be decided by your available time and talent resources (more about that below). The outline plan below is for a painter, but as you can see it would be a blueprint for most companies with a little adaptation.

Month	Topic	Who
January	Finished Job Feature New Products Review	John
February	Mould Removal & Repaint Feature Painting Doors	David
March	Finished Job Feature Painting Garage Floors	John
April	Bedroom Make Over New Products Review	John
May	Finished Job Feature Feature Walls	John
June	Seasonal Paint Care Tips Colour Matching	David
July	Kitchen Make Over New Products Review	John
August	Children's Bedroom Décor Bathroom Decoration	John
September	Home Show Stand Seasonal Colour Ideas	John
October	Finished Job Feature Painting Windows	David
November	Home Show Review	John
December	Outside Painting New Product	John

As you can see, the list is not filled with complex issues, but it will give the viewer a series of interesting things to read. The trick is that most of the items are just going to be versions of the service items the painter will already have on their website. This will make them easier for the writer too.

This list / structure will mean that new news is posted on the website every other week. It is not as if the world of painting changes so fast that it needs updating daily, but it does need keeping up to date and the 'Features List' helps you to do this.

Time and Talent

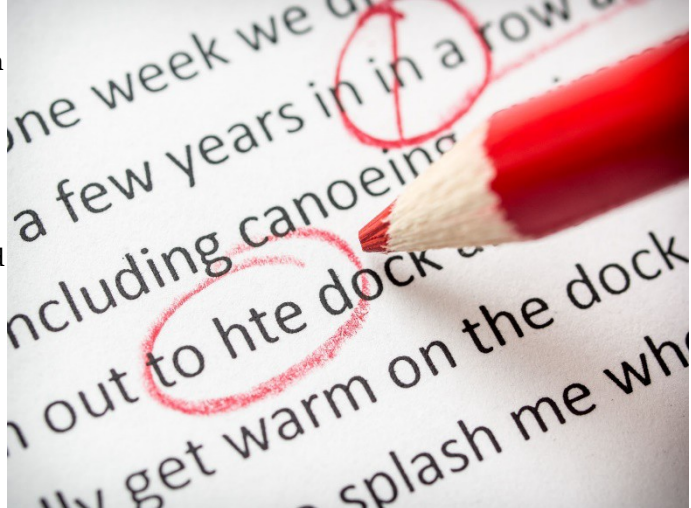
Websites are never finished. Websites are always in need of changing and updating as they are the online representation of the life of your business. So in order to keep it up to date, you need to work out who is going to do the work. Do you have someone (probably you) who is able to write the news items? It may not be rocket science, but it does take a little skill, knowledge and time to do. Each news item will take about an hour and a half by the time you sketch out ideas, write the text, source the images and get it onto the site.

This time needs to be allowed for to be done properly; it is not something you can do quickly. Plan the time into the work week, and this means you know you will get it done. If you are not able or don't have

the time to write news items yourself we do offer a service to work with you to create and post news for you under the many services offered by our 'Website Angels' service. Call the office if you think this might be the solution for you.

Proofreading

It is essential that you get someone else to read and check your items **BEFORE** you post them on your website. You cannot proofread your own work; you will miss things. Get a co-worker, friend, spouse to do the checking. They can also give you feedback on the relevance and interest of the writing, which is very useful. There are also numerous proofreading services online and locally.



Coordinated Dual Use of Material

Once you start creating news for your website, you can use it in other places to get more 'bang for your buck'.

For example, you can post summaries of the news item on your social media outlets as a way of bringing people back to the website. You can post the items on forums and other news sites, you can use them in email newsletters to customers, or even a real world printed newsletter. Again, you need to plan and coordinate this activity, but a single news item can be used in various 'outlets' to reach different types of customer.

Our Use Flow for news items is as follows

1. Added to the news on the website – For New Visitors
2. Added in timed releases to our Facebook Page – To spread the word widely
3. Added and used into our monthly mass email – To speak to our existing customers

Images

The images you use with the news items need to be interesting and informative. You want an image that will reinforce the message of the news item. Remember, make sure you have the 'rights' to use an image and ensure that you prepare it correctly.

It is completely okay to use the same image in the news, social media and your newsletters, this helps to reinforce the uniformity of the message.

Summary

You need to commit to planning and implementing your news as a programmed system. It is a great way to build a loyal customer base and to get the interest of potential customers. Regular activity on your news is a very positive thing for your website and your company. Sometimes we all get so busy in the day to day running of our businesses that we forget to stop and look back at what we have done.

News Worksheet

Who will be responsible for the creation / sourcing of news items?

Are there any industry news sources you can get permission from to reproduce their articles?

Do you have a plan for the features list?

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December