

Measure Twice and Cut Once

While most web projects are accomplished on time, relatively few projects are accomplished within the bounds of the original budget. The variance is usually manageable, but on occasion the results are disastrous.

This document will help you to avoid unexpected costs (and unexpected results) by assisting you in the planning process.

By the end of this document you will

- see your web site as an investment generating a measurable return.
- have completed the web site planning process.
- be prepared to communicate your business needs to IT personnel.

Getting a Return on your IT Investments (ROI)

Today, every company is expected to have a website. However, most companies view their website as an expense rather than an investment. Compounding this problem are the tech people – who rarely speak the language of business. Considering the cost of IT work and web development, all of your company's information technology should be generating a return.

This section will bring business owners and IT people together on business issues. We have written this section for both business owners and IT professionals.

ROI: Stands for "Return On Investment" and refers to the percentage of profit or revenue generated from a specific activity. This is a key figure in business. If you can show an ROI that is more than the standard interest rate - your boss will support your project.

Financially, planning a website is easy and there are very few issues to consider.

1. How will a website generate a return for the company? See next page...

2. Will the return justify and exceed the cost? See next page...

IT: Stands for "Information Technology" which includes all the hardware, software, data, people and policies which make up a functional information system. Generally speaking, IT is intended to support the operations of your business.

You can justify the development of a website (or any IT investment) by measuring the ROI using a simple calculation. The challenge is really to get your estimates and projections right. From the table below (See next page...), you can see that value models are focused on increasing your savings by reducing ongoing costs. Revenue models are focused on the creating different streams of revenue for your company without fundamentally changing general operations or the focus of the business. As a result, there are two different base formulas for measuring the ROI of investing in a website.

*Savings & Value Models	*Revenue Models
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply chain management can be streamlined by information technology. • Inefficiencies in the existing business process will be eliminated. • New lead-generation channels and sales channels will be developed online or through telecom. • Communication with stakeholders will improve to meet demand, or become more cost effective. <p>**Value Model ROI Calculation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selling advertising space on the pages of your website. • Selling your products online. • Selling the products of other companies for a commission. • Selling subscriptions to access password protected content. • Offering a pay-per-use service or online utility. • Conducting auctions, brokering sales or otherwise facilitating transactions. <p>**Revenue Model ROI Calculation</p>
<p>Value Models aim to improve existing activities, therefore we have the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Current Monthly Activity Costs B. Target Monthly Activity Costs C. Setup Cost of IT Project <div style="background-color: #e1f5fe; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> $\frac{A - B}{C} = \text{ROI}$ </div> <p>Observe that monthly savings = A - B.</p>	<p>Revenue Models open up new sources of cash, therefore we have the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. New monthly revenue B. New monthly costs C. Setup Cost of IT Project <div style="background-color: #e1f5fe; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> $\frac{A - B}{C} = \text{ROI}$ </div>
<p>*Important Note: Some companies have great success building hybrid models, while other companies flounder to find a model. Choose carefully which of these relate to your business strategy.</p> <p>**Note: The above formulas are drastic simplifications, however the point remains. IT work must generate a return. Visit www.GetClearSite.com/roi for more complete formulas and explanations.</p>	

Organizing your Information

In this section you will learn about *information design*, and how you can maximize your online communication efforts. At the end of this section we will look at some of the worlds best examples of information design. Here are some terms for you to consider:

Key Concepts

Supply of Information: Text, images, pictures, and anything else that you post on your website.

Demand for Information: What are people in your target market *actively* looking for?

Best Practice: Consider what people want to know, not just what you want to tell them. This will bring *active information seekers* to you.

- **Demand for Information**

Your online audience consists of only those persons who *want* to know about your topic. If members of your market are not actively seeking the information you supply on your website, then they will not become part of your online audience.

- **Supply of Information**

It is important that you consider two different kinds of information. First, there are certain things that you want your audience to know. We call this “*push information*”. Second, there is information which your audience is actively seeking. We call this “*pull information*”. This document is a fine example of mixing push-info and pull-info because Clear Site wants you to know that we offer great IT solutions. At the same time, you are only reading this because you want to know how to procure IT solutions cost effectively, make a return on your IT investment, and end up with a well-built website. By providing information which you are actively seeking, we have been able to establish a connection with you – and *hopefully* we will be helping you with your next website.

- **Purpose & Policy**

Your purpose is simple. You must meet the informational demands of your target market in order to make them your audience. For example, if your market wants cutting edge information – then large online archives are a bad idea. Depending on the size of your organization, the grand sum of your purposes and policies may fit on a napkin. The important thing is that the purpose is clear and supported.

The Challenge

Your information inventory consists of everything you’ve got written down or produced to communicate with your customers. Anything from a business plan to a photo album may be considered part of the information inventory. Your task in planning a website is to align your inventory with the demands of your audience as well as your communication objectives.

Building up an Audience

New website owners are often disappointed when few or no visitors come to their website in the first month. The owner and the developer have collectively failed to consider where the visitors will be coming from.

Beating the Search Engines

One of the first things you'll want to know once your site is launched is how to get to the top of the search engines. The trick is... that there is no trick. Search engines are designed to find relevant web sites, and the most relevant ones will show up at the top.

There are two main aspects of your search engine positioning – they are *category* and *rank*.

Category

Key words or meta tags tell the search engines what categories you would *like* your site listed under.

It is important to know that these “meta tags” are only *requests* made to the search engine by you, not commands. Better search engines will look first at your meta tag request and next at the actual content of your pages. If you are *actually* talking about the things you claim to be talking about in your meta tags – then you will be listed in your requested categories. However if you do not use your meta-key-words on your actual body of text, then the search engine will not list you in that category.

Rank

Next, you'll want to achieve and maintain a strong rank within your chosen categories so that your website is listed on the first page of the search results. Your websites rank within any given category is a function of...

How many sites within that category link TO your site?

How many sites within that category does your site link TO?

By counting incoming and outgoing links, the search engines determine whether your site is a traffic hub for that topic. Websites at the center of that category's traffic pattern will appear on the first page of search results.

Essentials for Building an Audience

- **“Meta-tags”**: code hidden in your web pages to assist the search engines in the listing process.
- **PR**: Write something each week and post it wherever you can.
 - Bulletin Boards
 - Blogs
 - Discussion Groups
 - News Papers
 - MagazinesThe key to good PR is participation.
- Many paper based publications have large online systems, so these are great places to advertise.
- Fortunately, the biggest thing that search engines pick up on – is the same thing that people pick up on. How well are you marketing & promoting yourself?

Websites that are powered by Clear Site Technology perform search engine optimization tasks automatically

Navigation Schemes

At the core of every website is the motion of going from page to page. This is also a place where visual elements can interfere with the information and purpose. So although your navigation scheme is a major visual element, it is not something that can be left up to the sole discretion of a designer.

In this section you will

- look at different navigational schemes.
- see the difference between navigation schemes and user interfaces.
- consider the best way to put information at your visitor's fingertips.

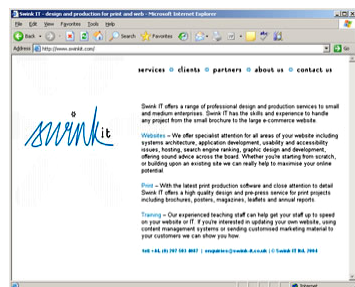


www.phonicscoach.com

Image Base Navigation

Using clickable images that represent the different sections of your website.

Effective when there are only a small number of major topics, or when you wish to divide your audience into a few major categories.

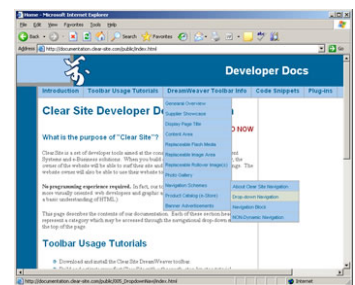


www.swinkit.com

Text Based Navigation

Having a block or list of clickable key words that are not embedded in sentences or paragraphs.

Effective for websites consisting of 10 to 15 pages.



www.documentation.clear-site.com

Menu Systems

A hierarchy of drop-down menus.

Effective for navigating large websites that cover numerous topics and sub-topics.

Navigation Schemes Part 2: User Interfaces

While most websites are held together by the navigation scheme, some websites consist of more complex user interfaces.

User interfaces are really only appropriate when your audience consists of only regular visitors or members. Simply stated, there is a learning curve that each member of your audience must go through in order to use the website effectively.

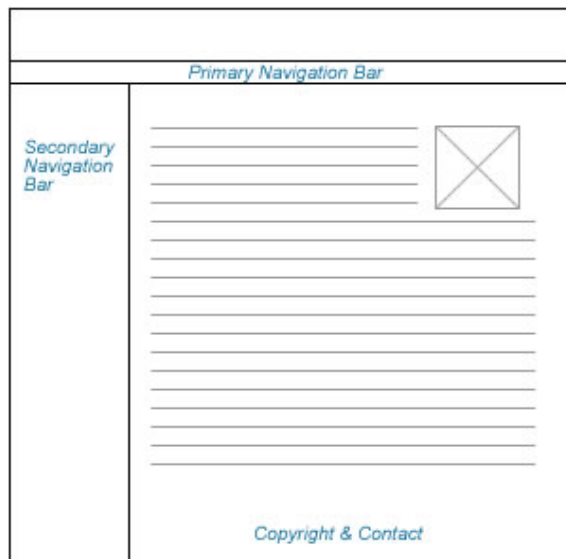
Navigation Schemes VS. User Interfaces

- Navigation Schemes are far simpler.
- User interfaces force the visitor to learn how to use the website.

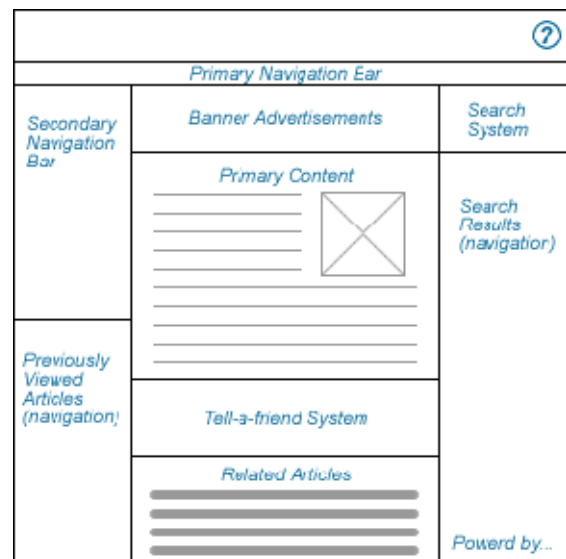
Rule of Thumb

User interfaces are great, but only for your regulars. New comers and in-frequent visitors will be overwhelmed.

Navigation Schemes VS. User Interfaces



Navigation Scheme



User Interface

Information at their Fingertips

Whether you choose to employ a navigation scheme or have a user interface developed, your final objective is the same. *Make life easy for your visitors.* Generally speaking, user interfaces are only useful after the visitor has completed the learning curve. In other words – they won't like the site until they know how to use it.

This can be a real dilemma for website owners because on one hand you want your site to stand out, but if it is too far outside of the norm – then it will not be intuitive for your visitors. Your designer should be able to assist you in this matter.

Some Assembly Required

This section describes the people, knowledge and IT essentials that you will need to find in order for you to procure a website. Everything appears (more-or-less) in the order of necessity.

www.Your_Domain_Name.com

Although you don't need to fully understand how domain names work – there are some important rules to be aware of.

- You must register (ie: purchase) your domain name. This prevents others from using the same name.
- The domain name system works on a first-come, first-served basis. You will not be able to register a name that is already taken.
- Do not let someone else register your domain name for you. You must ensure that you are the registered owner and to do that, you must register the name yourself.

To register a domain name, go to www.GetClearSite.com/planning and follow the instructions.

The Look and Feel of your Website: Design, Functionality, Content

For planning purposes it is important that you separate your thoughts into three categories.

- **Design:** How the website looks.
- **Functionality:** What the website does.
- **Content:** What appears on the pages.

A word of caution: Each of these items requires a very different skill set. Assembling the right team of writer(s), designer(s) and developer(s) can pay big dividends when compared to working with a digital “jack-of-all-trades”.

Choosing the Functional Components

Planning your functionality is a two fold process. First, you must consider what your audience will be doing on the site. (Reading, watching, shopping...) Second, you must consider what you will be doing on the site. (Changing text, posting presentations, updating prices...)

To complete the planning process rapidly, go to www.GetClearSite.com/planning. This will expedite the process and insure that you don't miss anything.

Key Pieces of Every Website

- Domain Name
- Graphics & Design
- Code and Functionality
- Text, images, and other content.

At www.GetClearSite.com you can

- Register a Domain Name
- Plan and Budget your e-Venture
- Choose from a Global Community of Designers & Artists
- Harness Functionality including Content Management & e-Revenue/e-Commerce quickly and cost effectively.

Finding the Right Graphic Artist

If you chose to use the Clear Site planning system mentioned above – then you may have noticed that we can assist you in finding the right designer.

Our membership base consists of designers from around the world and our “Request for Portfolios” system allows you to compare work, short-list individuals, and make contact – without revealing your own contact information until you have selected a designer.

To engage in this process, go to www.GetClearSite.com/planning and ensure that the option to “meet designers” is selected. This will begin an e-mail based process with Clear Site acting as the intermediary. Your e-mail address is not actually revealed to the general membership base of designers.

If you choose not to use the Clear Site planning system, then you may find a designer by reaching out into your community of personal and professional contacts.

Putting Your Content on the Pages

The most common problem with website ownership is content maintenance.

How do you get your text, pictures, presentations and products onto the pages of your website? How do you keep everything up-to-date?

In the old days this would all be done by the designer at an hourly rate. However, today’s website owners demand the efficiency and savings of a simple do-it-yourself system. To that end, Clear Site Technology gives website owners the ability to surf their site and change what they need to change – without having to learn html or some other computer language. Visit www.GetClearSite.com/ownership to learn more about this capability and other website ownership issues.

Congratulations

I know that this document is a lot to take in, so treat yourself to a cup of coffee if you haven’t already – and let your imagination wander through the material. Your ideas will soon begin to jell and as always your questions and comments are welcome at help@Clear-Site.com.

Important Links

- www.GetClearSite.com/planning
Structure your project in a way that can be communicated to IT professionals.
- www.GetClearSite.com/ownership
See how Clear Site Technology makes life website ownership simple!
- www.Clear-Site.com
Learn more about Clear Site at our corporate website.
- help@Clear-Site.com