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## 5 Steps to a better tourism website

Inevitably, given Ireland's large tourism industry, many of our clients come from within this sector.

More often than not, prospective visitors to Ireland will conduct some form of online research for places to visit, activities, accommodation and flights. It is vital at this stage to try to attract to your web site. The important question is how?

While it would be impossible to guarantee success, here are some important pointers that should be addressed:

### *1) Your web and email address*

It is important to register your domain name and hold on to it. While .ie domain names are more expensive, they are synonymous with Ireland, and some search engines consider .ie addresses as being "more Irish" than .com domain names, so a search of "hotel Ireland" may rank your hotel above another one with a .com domain name. If available, you should register both the .com and .ie domain endings to cover all the bases. You can easily point the .com to your main site or vice versa.

Free hosting like that offered by eircom etc may be tempting to use, but a proper domain name looks more professional, and guarantees that you will not lose it if you ever change provider.

It is also important to use an email address such as info@yourdomainname.ie rather than an @eircom.net or @iol.ie etc, as you do not own these endings and they may be taken off you if you ever changed to another ISP. Imagine if your phone number changed every time you switched providers?

### *2) Site Design*

There are dozens of web design companies out there that will design a web site for you, or if you are adventurous, you can try it yourself.

We employ three golden rules when designing a website:

- Keep it simple: easy to use and not too flashy
- Easy to read: visitors want information, not graphics
- Up to date: No 2002 season prices on display!

When choosing a web designer, it is important to be able to review some previous work and agree a price in advance.

Pay particular attention to the text within the site, making sure to include lots of keywords such as hotel, Ireland, tourism, Galway etc (provided you are a hotel in Galway!).

### *3) Search Engines*

Of course, having a site designed is not the last task. In order to get visitors, you will need to submit your site to the various search engines and directories, Irish and International.

It will take some time (4-8) weeks for your site to show up in many search engines and directories, so be patient.

### *4) Generating Traffic*

Simply submitting your site to lots of search engines won't get you ahead of the competition. Try the following ideas to generate more traffic:

#### *- Links Page*

Have a links page with links to other websites, particularly local attractions etc, and make sure they link back to you. This will generate complementary traffic between your sites and help sell your local area as a place the tourist might want to visit.

#### *- Many Hands...*

Some localities organise their own sites to sell that particular area as a destination. This could be a simple co-operative between various tourism businesses in the area, or it could be a chamber of commerce project. [www.killarney.ie](http://www.killarney.ie) and [www.athlone.ie](http://www.athlone.ie) are both examples of such sites

#### *- Paid Advertising*

Have a look at services such as Google Adwords ([adwords.google.com](http://adwords.google.com)) or Overture ([www.overture.com](http://www.overture.com)) which allow you bid for your link to be placed in search results for certain keywords. This can generate a good return when used wisely.

### *5) Lies, Damned Lies and....*

Statistics! You can't measure the return you are receiving on your investment unless you have some sort of traffic reports for your web site. Many hosting companies like Cloch Internet provide these as a standard feature. Do not use free "counters" on your pages as they do not look professional and they do not provide a comprehensive report. These reports will also allow you determine what sites your visitors are finding you on (search engines, tourism board etc).

For a more detailed discussion of web statistics and an explanation of some of the key terms, see our separate article titled "Web Statistics" at <http://www.cloch.com/help.php>.

### *And finally....*

Don't forget to collect email addresses of customers and ask them if they would like to be sent an email newsletter for next season. Repeat customers are your best customers.

### *Prepared by:*

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