

AWAY FROM THE CUTTING EDGE

Improving your site is likely to be more a matter of back to basics than vanguard technology

While a growing number of sites are edging closer to the current cutting edge of website practice, very, very many more – including, amazingly, plenty of the biggest companies – are still making fundamental errors out of Lesson 1, Book 1 of How To Build Websites.

In so doing, they are losing out on solid commercial opportunities contributing to the bottom line.

Common mistakes

Mistakes come in three fundamental shades:

- Omission of basic things that virtually all good websites should incorporate: a short 'about us section' on, or directly leading from, the home page; home page link, search engine, a 'contact us' section are all primary examples
- Basic things there, but done badly (the most common examples are poor search engines, confusing navigation, slow page loading, poor font usage, poor writing that takes no account of the special requirements of websites)
- Even when the standard devices are there and working, a failure somehow effectively to convey what the organisation's really about, to provide obviously relevant content, to give a feel for what it stands for. It's perfectly possible to score highly in standard benchmarking exercises but still finish up with a site that doesn't really *communicate* – other than the message that the organisation hasn't got it's act together

If ever there was an orchard of low hanging fruit, it's in these areas. Very often, we see sites where a few quite simple changes would make a big difference to their effectiveness.

No rocket science, no storm-trooping, new technology necessary. Just the simple following of basic, established best practice.

So – look both ways

Our strong advice to those in charge of the Company's website, and who are looking to make improvements: don't be tempted by the siren songs of 'new things' to overlook a review of the basics, too. You will very often find this is much the most fruitful and cost-effective way to make your site better serve your Company's ends.