



HOW CAN WE SUCCEED ON THE WEB?

A practical guide to successfully taking the first steps on the Web

DOMAINS, THE TRANSFORMATION OF INTERNET AND FACTS AND FIGURES OF THE WEB



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The importance of having a domain and the aims of this booklet



The importance of having a domain and the aims of this booklet

Having a significant presence on the Web is now a fundamental requirement in order to effectively communicate the activities of a self-employed professional or a company.

Registering a domain is the first activity that we need to carry out in order to communicate our brand in commercial relations. A domain name with the name of your company transmits trust, solidity and differentiation to current and potential clients and partners, while a free email address with no personal extension may very well not ensure the same result. The website is almost always the first point of contact for a business relationship. Having a .it domain identifies your business in a distinctive and verifiable way, both on the Web and in email communication.

But once your domain is registered, how can you proceed to create an effective website that can bring about the right visibility and above all, obtain business and concrete results?

It is to give an answer to this question that we have produced a series of booklets that have the aim of analyzing and investigating in depth the various themes.

The aim is to provide a simple and practical tool to enable everyone to find a successful approach to assert their online presence.



How the digital
revolution has changed
the world



How the digital revolution has changed the world

Whether you're on the subway, sunbathing on the beach or waiting at the hair-dresser's, try this experiment. How many people are reading a newspaper or a magazine? How many, instead, are looking at their smartphone or tablet? You'll realize how most people are using an internet-connected tool. Even people of a certain age have become expert users of applications and it's now second nature for them to read the news online. An internet connection is now everywhere and ever-present and it's no longer just linked to the use of a desktop computer. Indeed, today more than 50% of Google searches, and 90% of the use of social media take place using a smartphone. Moreover, the message has become universal and widespread. In 2017 Whatsapp exceeded one and a half billion users.

What does all this mean? It means that from now on it is no longer possible to consider the promotion and management of a company regardless of the logic of digital technology. Knowing how to exploit the opportunities that come from the digital transformation process can enable us to emerge, to be noticed, to increase sales, to create new contacts, and to decrease promotional costs, provided we understand the implications.

The most radical change today lies in the relationship between those who produce information and those who consume it. Until a few years ago there was a so-called "top-down" relationship. TV, radio and the press produced the contents which were then used by the public, in a flow that was one-way, from mass media to the public.



The transformation from a web showcase, in which only companies published, to the Web as a global dialogue is well summarized by the initial sentence of the Cluetrain Manifesto, a set of 95 statements written in 1999 by Rick Levine, Christopher Locke, Doc Searls and David Weinberger.

These markets are conversations

The authors state that the Internet is different from the traditional media used for mass marketing because it enables people to have “person-to-person” conversations, and potentially these can radically transform traditional business practices.

Today each of us is a potential producer of content, testimonies, opinions and stories. We can all publish our reviews on products, photos online, comments, give our news, and express our vision of the world. It is therefore a “flat” model, in which each node, or each person, becomes both a producer and a consumer of information. Influencers have been born: those who have an active and loyal online community, able to move opinions and sales of products. For an analysis of the main influencers, see the site audisocial.it.

Large companies have already begun to master these new dynamics for some time now, while small and medium-sized enterprises are still in the middle of an adoption process, but it is never too late to start.



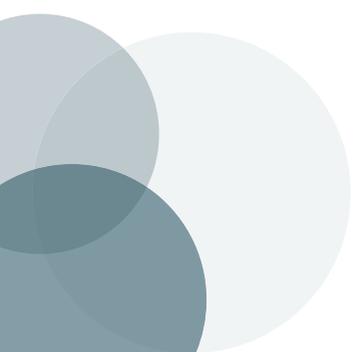
Some facts and
figures to understand
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Some facts and figures to understand the phenomenon

The number of people accessing the Internet is constantly growing. The number of activities that are carried out online at any time is striking. To get an idea of the “state of the Web” you can download the most well-known report, that of **KPCB**.

Also in Italy the phenomenon is constantly growing: above all as regards the social, digital and mobile aspects. To find out about internet numbers in Italy, you can start from the **Audiweb** site and from the **Netcomm** pages (with reference to e-commerce). To see the number of registered domains and other statistics, visit the **Registro.it** site. For an overview of social media, the annual **We Are Social** analysis makes interesting reading.



THE BASES



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How to create and manage a website with ease



How to create and manage a website with ease

Many believe that the management of a website is something complex, and that the support of specialists or external agencies is needed. While this may be true for complex sites, where maintenance by technicians and professionals is often necessary, it's a mistaken perception for most personal sites or corporate sites that have standard characteristics.

Today, in fact, we can have a totally independent management of a website, both as regards hosting and content updating.

Let's have a look in detail at each of these points.

Hosting

This means the virtual "place" where your site will be hosted. In simple terms, it is a matter of using a small space "rented" by specialized companies on a special computer called a "server". Your site will be "hosted" on this server.

Just do a simple search on the Web, typing the words "hosting" to find plenty of providers of this service.

It is likely that the company from which you purchased your domain has already provided the space. In fact "hosting + domain" packages are often sold to simplify the process for customers.



The good news is that the companies that provide the hosting service also provide you with ready-made solutions that allow you to have your site hosted with the server already set up for the solution you want to implement.

For example, you can buy a space already prepared to host a site solution like WordPress, or in many cases there are “website builder” services. This is a very simple tool, made to be used by non-professionals, with which we can build a site thanks to a simplified graphical interface. To find out more about these services you can search the internet for the words “website builder” and look for the solution that best suits your needs.

Content updating

Today also this activity is simple due to the so-called “CMS” (Content Management System).

Basically, the websites that use these solutions are made up of two main “souls”:

- **public site**: this is the site that all users see, the classic website.
- **admin**: this is a private section, which only the site owner can access with a password. In this private section various dynamics of the site can be managed.



For example, we can:

- add a **news** item
- add a **new webpage**
- manage users' **comments**
- upload **new photos and video** clips
- modify the **navigation menu**
- **check data and statistics** of access

There are CMSs for all budgets. These vary from the simplest and free versions to those best suited to the needs of large companies. They can be with open code (Open Source) and company ownership, which can provide the system both in “installed on your host” in “Software as a service” mode, which can be used immediately without any installation. Website builders usually fall in this second category. The best known system is WordPress, but there are many others. On the Giorgio Tave website (<http://liste.giorgiotave.it/cms/>) you can find a list of the most widespread CMSs.

There are endless possibilities to easily open and manage a website. The most complex aspect is the definition of a communication strategy and the production of quality content. We will discuss these topics in the next chapters.



The steps to follow in building your digital presence



The steps to follow in building your digital presence

If you have not yet opened an internet site and want to get going, here are the main steps to set off and be successful.

Step 1: Launch page

If you have bought your domain, but have not yet thought in detail how to exploit it, you can start by setting up a so-called launch page. This is a very simple page that contains basic information about you, your business or a new product you want to design. Its function is to start catalyzing the public's attention while waiting for the actual site to be put online.

You can use this first step to:

- **obtain contacts:** you can insert a box where persons can leave their email addresses for contact when the site is up and going
- receive **initial feedback and comments**
- understand if **the topic is potentially of interest**
- **study in detail** what your future site will be like

Step 2: The website

If you have developed your idea, and you know what you want to communicate, you are ready to publish the actual site. In this phase you have to worry about creating the “container” that will host the contents that you have to produce. There are many different types of website, such as:

- **personal blog**
- **professional presentation page**
- **site for promoting your activity/company**
- **e-commerce**

For each of these types there are different solutions and platforms that can be used autonomously and with ease.

The sites that will have the main function of e-commerce will have to provide themselves with their own specific CMS, such as WooCommerce, Prestashop, Magento (to be installed on your host) or Shopify or BigCartel These are “ready-to-use” by simply registering online. After activating the space - in some cases with a charge - you can always associate it with an .it domain, and then sell with your own brand.



Step 3: Creation of content

This is definitely the most important phase. Very often, in fact, it happens that a wonderful site is created, but then it remains free of interesting content for users. It's like having a lovely box, but with nothing of interest inside.

Content is king: this is one of the most famous maxims of web communication, already pronounced by Bill Gates in 1996. Things are just like that: on the Web, contents are at the core of everything. The content must be relevant, interesting, useful and original, meet information needs and solve your users' practical problems. This is in order to be relevant to your target and to ensure visitor loyalty.

It is also very important to create content regularly, which also has positive effects in terms of positioning on search engines. Via Google, it is much easier to find a site that often publishes new content. A frequent update means a live website that keeps its audience in mind.



Step 4: Promotion and widening the audience

After creating your site and preparing it with quality content, how can you increase your visibility on the Web? There are a range of possibilities, which can be classified according to the so-called “POE” model”:

Paid: this is using payment tools, such as Google Adwords, sponsored posts on Facebook and Instagram, and banners on other webpages. The advantage of these tools lies in the fact that they are measurable (I know how many people saw the ad, how many clicked and what actions they then performed on my site), and highly targetable. This means that we can send a specific message to small groups of people, such as “male, between 25 and 30 years, who lives in Bergamo and has a passion for football, videogames and Vasco Rossi”).

However, it is necessary to carefully verify that the investment has a corresponding return: that is, site visitors buy or contact you for information.

Owned: this indicates the aids we own and use, including of course the site, but also the social channels such as our Facebook page, Twitter channel, Instagram, Pinterest, or a newsletter. Everyone has a different audience and an appropriate tone of voice to use. The dissemination of content using these channels has the characteristic of being able to control what we want to transfer and communicate regarding us or our business.



Earned: this type of contribution is the most sought-after by those involved in digital communication strategies. It refers to contributions that are “earned”, that is, made by other users but which concern us, our business or our contents. The positive reviews, the “like” on Facebook”, the comments: in the forums, the evaluations in Google Maps, etc. are part of this category. These are all spontaneous actions that have the advantage of being able to profoundly influence other users, who consider these sources to be more authoritative than the paid media. The other advantage, not to be underestimated, is that they are apparently free. However, they usually require attention in reading, replying, and encouraging customers to leave them on the Web. But we should be careful, because there could also be problematic phenomena, like negative reviews. In this case we must manage carefully the situation to avoid being discredited and attempt to “mend” the relationship with the user, answering and solving the problem. Users consider companies that interact with clients, even if they are not fully satisfied, to be very positive.

A good communication strategy must foresee the right mix of these elements so that your presence can be successfully affirmed. How and how much to use them basically depends on two things:

- **how much I can spend (both money and time)**
- **which are my communication objectives: the next chapter answers these questions**



The main differences between a website and social media

The main differences between a website and social media

Today there is a lot of confusion about which tools are most suitable for communication. This often leads to long diatribes between the supporters of one channel rather than the other. The truth is that each channel has unique features and function that can enhance the message we want to communicate.

Here we see a list of the main differences:

- The substantial difference between a website and social networks lies in the individuality of the first. It is not necessary to be registered on any platform to consult a site, while to follow a person or a company on social networks we have to be registered.
- On the website we have full control of the contents. We can publish them in the format and with the dimensions we prefer without being constrained by the limits that each platform imposes. Furthermore, the content we produce is not subject to platform visibility algorithms, such as on Facebook.
- A website and a blog are also more suitable for indexing by search engines.
- Social networks have as their strong point the fact that they are designed to share content between users, and this helps to "viralize" or spread our contributions. In addition, more and more users spend most of their time online on social networks, so it is easier to intercept them where they usually live.

So to the question “better a site or a social network?”, the right answer is: “both!” The ideal, however, is to use the site and the .it domain as the central platform of our communication strategy. It is the pivot on which to base solid foundations that we can manage independently and with complete mastery. The social media will be used to enhance the message, spread it, find new fans and build loyalty.



Identifying your public



Identifying your public

Companies know that it is essential to have a clear target, that is the people to whom I want to address myself in order to sell my products and services. We need to know in depth the people we want to address, otherwise we risk producing actions and contents that prove useless and irrelevant to clients' needs. From a business point of view, when we talk about target analysis, we analyze these dimensions:

Breadth of our reference market: the target shows us how big our reference market is, giving a concrete estimate of the potential business and financial sustainability of the product/service offered.

A widely used tool to understand markets is Google Trends, where you can evaluate the trend of searches for a product or brand.

Another widely used tool for estimating the number of searches on a product is Semrush.

Direct competitors: among the various competing players, we can identify some in particular that aim at our own target. Outlining the competitor profile and analyzing the results can be useful to understand the difficulties of the market segment and how these have been faced, overcome or previously dealt with.

A useful tool for analyzing competitors and what actions they do is Similarweb.

Commercial policies: the target provides important information for determining the price and the commercial policies to be implemented in the different phases of the product life cycle. In particular it is important to understand how much the end customer is willing to pay for our product and how they make their purchase (online or in a specific type of store, without thinking too much or following a phase of comparison between the options of the offer, etc.).

By looking at the Google-sponsored ads that appear in particular research related to our products, you can see who invests more and then “keep them under observation”.

Finally, it is necessary to go beyond the numerical logic and to know the tastes, habits, aspirations and problems of the target audience. This means going beyond the purely numerical aspect and entering the qualitative and emotional sphere. In this way, we are able to propose contents that increasingly match our audience, increasing participation, degree of loyalty and involvement.

An excellent tool to define the sphere of the needs of your target and compare it with your service and product is the so-called Value Proposition Canvas (<https://strategyzer.com/canvas/value-proposition-canvas>) and the creation of User Personas. An excellent template can be found at <https://xtensio.com/user-persona/>

MEASUREMENT AND AIMS



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Control and analysis tools

Control and analysis tools

Every action that a user performs online can be traced in order to obtain detailed information on how people behave and use the content.

The best known platform is surely Google Analytics: it is free of charge and enables us to understand a wide range of things, such as those who visit our site, what actions they take, and how long they take to visit the various sections.

Here are the main data that we can extrapolate from the consultation of this platform:

Sessions: a session is the period of time in which a user is actively engaged on your website.

Viewed pages: the total number of pages viewed over a period of time. There can be comparison with the previous period, or the same period in previous years. It gives us an initial indicator of how optimal our site is for our targets.

Unique users: a unique user is a single visitor who visits a website or mobile application within a given time frame. This prevents multiple counting of repeated visits by the same visitor during the specified time interval.

Site bounce rate: this is the percentage of visits to a single page (for example, visits where the person leaves the site from the entry page without interacting with the page).

New sessions: this is an estimate of the percentage of users who visit your site for the first time in a period of time, for example in the last month.

Acquisitions: this allows us to understand how we have received new visitors. Are they coming through Google? Via social media? Through the newsletter? What are the differences in behavior between these segments?

Behaviors: thanks to the analysis of this dimension we can understand if we are supplying the right contents for our audience. Which are the exit pages? Which are the most visited pages?

So on the Web we can understand, know and provide more suitable solutions to our public thanks to the study of actions and behaviors. This amount of information must therefore be used and studied carefully, in order to fully exploit its potential. This is an activity that is not simple but that can be finely adjusted over time and that will enable us to understand if the objectives have been achieved.



Why am I setting
up a website?
Define your objectives



Why am I setting up a website? Define your objectives

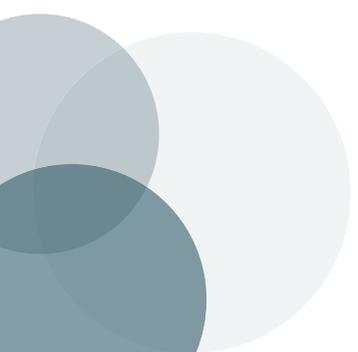
It often happens that persons, but also companies, decide to open a site without a real awareness of the reasons and expectations that they should have regarding this activity.

This is the main error that leads to being unable to gain a successful digital presence. If I do not know where I want to go, I will never be able to put into practice the right actions to give direction and possibly intervene to adjust my aim.

So it is essential to produce, preferably in written form, one's strategy. It may appear to be something very abstract and complicated, but if we look at the definition of strategy we understand that it is much simpler than it seems.

By strategy, in fact, we mean the set of actions which we wish to adopt in order to reach certain objectives. As Seneca famously said:

If one does not know to which port one is sailing, no wind is favorable



A preparatory phase to the strategy is therefore fundamental. This should include a profound self-analysis, attempting to answer the following questions:

- **why do I want to have an internet website?**
- **what do I expect as a return on my investment?**
- **which are my short-term objectives? And in the long-term?**
- **what are my competitors doing? Do I want to imitate them or create my own strategy?**
- **how many visits must I obtain to achieve those objectives?**
- **what are the objective actions I would like from users? (sign up to the newsletter, ask for information, book an appointment, buy a product, etc. ...)**
- **what do I want a user to perceive after having visited my website?**

Once the objectives are clear, it will be easier to define the rules and actions that we want to put in place in order to reach them. If this does not happen we will proceed through trial and error, often uncoordinated and without long-term logic, and we realize that this is ineffective and sometimes even counterproductive for the affirmation of our digital presence.



Establishing realistic objectives and budgets

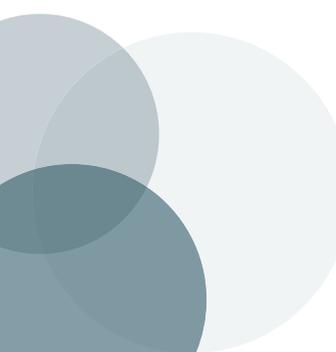
Establishing realistic objectives and budgets

What do I expect from my internet site?

How much time and money can I spend each month?

These are two fundamental questions to ask in order to set goals that are realistic and achievable. Many people open a website thinking of obtaining immediate results without investing time and money in the promotion. We have seen that to be successful, patience, constancy in content updating, dedication and care in the daily management of your digital presence are all necessary.

For these reasons, we suggest combining a long-term vision (what do I expect from my site in the next 2 years?). This means a more tactical vision that poses the simplest and easiest objectives to be reached immediately. The long-term vision enables us to maintain a course, not to go off track, while the short-term goals are need to be motivated and to always have the pulse of the situation up to date. In short, do not look for an immediate and unattainable success, but set simple steps to reach, such as:



- **obtain every week 2 new contacts via Web**
- **sell every week 100 euros of products via the website**
- **increase subscribers to the newsletter**
- **obtain a greater number of organic visits (unpaid) from search engines**

The important thing is not to be in a hurry, to work hard and continuously, respond to the requests of your audience, and understand which topics are most interesting to your public. Over time you can build a solid and effective digital strategy, starting from establishing a unique and distinctive presence on line through the domain, understanding how to feed it, and finally how to set yourself goals and measure the results.

