



Opening Page

Content Creation and workbook

Your Opening Page

Of all the pages on your website, the opening or home page is the one that instantly makes a good impression or, causes the potential customer to hit the 'back' button and leave.

Returning to the magazine cover analogy, the opening page of your website needs to summarise your business and tempt the viewer into the inner pages, where the detail can be displayed.

What are the three most important reasons that a potential customer has come to your site?

These three things need to be the three products or services that you would like a customer to buy/enquire about. They could be your most profitable services, something new you want to promote or something unique that only you offer. Whatever you choose you need to avoid trying to put absolutely everything you do on the home page. Too much information will cause 'Info Overload' in the viewer and may cause them to look for a more simplistic website that is easy to understand.

Above the fold

There is an old newspaper printing phrase 'above the fold'. This relates back to the folding of newspapers and how only a half to a third of the paper would show when stacked on the newsstand. As a result, the area above the fold was a prime real estate for headlines and adverts.

In screen terms, the 'fold' is the bottom of the screen, and you need to focus on making sure your important messages and ideas are seen in this first screen area. People will scroll down, but only if they are interested in what you have said above the fold.



The above image is the W3 website opening page. As you can see, we have limited information, but in less than 50 words people can see we want to help them, we build websites and online shops, and we want to give them free information to help them.

You need to ensure your 'Above the fold' content is as relevant and interesting as you can. This is crucial.

I do believe that you should have some text on your opening page that in two simple sentences (and ONLY two sentences) introduce your business.

For example:

'At Bob's window cleaning, we have been providing services to the Wellington area for over 25 years. In this time, we have built a reputation for safe, clean and effective workmanship. Call our office today for an obligation free meeting.'

Or

'Cake making is not just a craft, for all the staff here at Cakes4you it is our passion. Let us create the perfect cake.'

To help you celebrate your occasion in style. From our Hamilton based kitchen, we bake and ship nationwide. Look at our cake display page to see our satisfied customers.'

Each of these examples explains who the company is, what they do and where they do in a statement that can be read easily in less than 15 seconds. Be brief, be accurate, be clear.

You do not want to pack too much into the opening page. Look at the covers of magazines; they have headlines, tempting titbits and summaries that entice the reader to open the magazine. It is the same with the opening page of your site.



As a rule of thumb, you should include no more than five key messages or decisions on your front page.

Call to Action

The number one thing you MUST, I repeat MUST, include on your front page is an invitation for people to call you. [This](#) can be done in the text or as part of a graphic. Read the item 'Calls to Action' to see how essential they are if you want people to contact you.

Company Intro

The second 'must have' on the opening page is a quick way to get off this page and to find out about your company. People buy from people, not corporations, especially on a local level. Your visitors want to find out about the people in your company; this allows them to see if your ethics and reasons for being in business fit with their way of thinking. The two-sentence intro helps with this, but you can link this to go to your 'about page' for them to find out more about the company or read the staff biographies.

Products or Services

Next, consider your products or services. Do you put a full summary or feature individual items? One well-used method is to have two specific links and one general. The specific links go to the products and services you want to feature or are your 'bread and butter' work. The general link would typically link to a summary of all your product and service areas.

The other three key features vary from company to company. However, the beauty of the Anytime system is that you can change the content, so you can experiment with different content to see what works best. Yes, 'experiment' is the right word as no one has yet come up with the perfect formula for website content, or they would all look the same.

Image Rotator

The image rotator feature allows you to present a series of ideas on the opening page and link these to more detail. We recommend that you have no more than five images or messages in the rotator. These messages should be brief, to the point, introducing the key services or features of your company quickly and in an interesting way.

So to summarise, the key things to put on the front page are quick and interesting pieces of information

- a link to no more than three products or services
- a brief introduction to your company
- a link to your 'About Us' page
- some interesting and informative images in the image rotator
- a 'Call to Action'

Keep the opening page interesting and allow the visitor to know they have found the right company for their needs. You can tell them the detail on the other pages.

Once live you should review your opening page monthly, in the same way, a magazine editor will create a new cover for each edition, you need to make sure the links and content on the opening page are relevant for the next four weeks. You need to include any special offers you have running or anything notable that has happen in the business.

Opening Page - Notes and ideas

First Impressions Count!

What is the primary reason for your website?

What do you do for the customer?

How does this help them?

Who are the target market for your company?

What are the three main areas, services or products you want to feature on the website?

Would a map to your location useful to help people come to you (on the home page)?

What are your opening/trading hours?

What telephone number needs to be on the website?

Describe your company and its benefits to its customers with just 20 words.

If you were writing a newspaper article to describe your company what would the headline be?

After the home page, which do you consider to be the next most important page and what will the visitor gain by going there?

Calls to Action

What actions do you want the visitors to your site to take?

How would you write this (these) in four different ways?

Copyright Notice

Protect your hard work and DON'T Steal!

Let's put it in simple terms. If you did not write the text or take the image you want to use on your website, then chances are you risk breaching copyright law. There are some exceptions, which we will explain below, but you need to remember that just because something is on the Internet doesn't mean you are free to use it on your site.

If you use information or images that you do not have the right to use it is plain and simple theft.

Supplier Information and Images

If you sell products from another manufacturer, you will probably find they are happy to supply high-quality images to you to help you sell more of their products. If not, then you need to take your images. It isn't hard, and if you can't do it yourself, there are many local photographers that offer great service at very affordable prices.

The same is true for the text to describe your products. Most suppliers have standard text that they have spent money to write that they make available for you to use. All you have to do is email and ask them.

Competitors

Do not in any way shape or form steal either text content or images from competitor sites. This WILL leave you open to being sued. I will repeat that in case you missed it, it leaves you open to being sued.

Theft of Images – do not 'save image as'

As there are a large number of low-cost image libraries from which you (we) can get great images and because most suppliers are happy to give high-quality images to help you sell, there is no justifiable reason that you would ever steal an image from another website.

That almost ends the desk banging lecture about copyright but if you need a mental image think about this. Imagine you have spent money getting an image of each of your products taken, the photographer costs a lot, but the results were worth it. The images make your products sell. Now imagine that someone has copied those images from your site and is using them to sell their versions of the same thing. How would you feel?

Intellectual Property rights (IP) are being debated all over the Internet and everyone has their own opinion of it. We like to keep it simple, no grey areas. Do not steal other people's work.

There is a government website about this, it is very complex, but take a look at this page and you will understand why people are confused by what is and isn't allowed to be used.

<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1994/0143/latest/DLM345914.html>

Please Note: If you ignore the above warning (which we will repeat several times during the website building process) then you are the one who will be responsible for facing the fines and public scrutiny. Various countries have laws that can force us to turn sites off if there is suspected IP theft, not just take down the material, but turn off the website.

The responsibility of W3 Design Limited is also covered here:

<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1994/0143/latest/DLM1704693.html>

The last words to say on the issue of copyright are - **be cautious, be prudent and be responsible.**