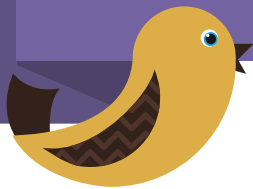


# FOURTH DAY

CONTENT SERVICES



## THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTENT TO YOUR NEW WEBSITE



Human beings are visual creatures so it is not surprising that when organisations approach a website project they often think of imagery first. This consideration often comes before the most important thing, the message the brand is trying to communicate.

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A good designer will always want to know what the message is before they begin work on a website project. This will act as their guide to ensure that the visuals are saying the right thing to the right people.

The onus is on a business to know what they are trying to say before they engage the designer, and to think about the content that is going to populate the website from the outset. Our survey, conducted with 50 UK web design agencies, found that just 8% of designers would be prepared to start a website project without having content to work with.

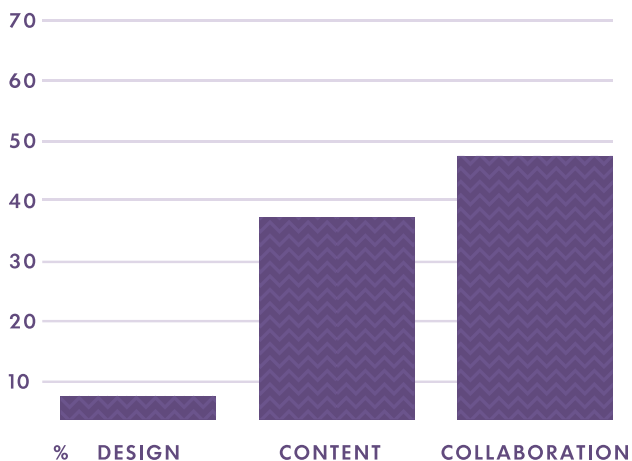
The research aimed to sample sentiment around content and evaluate its importance to a website project. It has revealed that not only is content a vital component in website development, lack of content was also the second biggest cause of delays in website projects.



# CONTENT OR DESIGN FIRST?

When we asked web design agencies whether content or design should come first in a website project, the main response we received was actually neither. Instead, the majority of agencies (58%) believed that web projects should be initiated with content and design working together in collaboration.

A third (34%) thought that it would be preferable to have the content first, while just 8% thought a project should begin with the design alone.



This is not surprising as designers need to be able to marry the design to the content.

It can be jarring for visitors if the visual and written messages conflict. Their gut instinct will tell them something isn't right here – and this will undermine their faith in the website.

“People notice very quickly if the content does not match the design – it's obvious that something is wrong,” said Dave Newton, creative director at design agency Ahoy.

“As a designer you need to have the whole story, otherwise it is like trying to bake a cake without having all the ingredients. Having all the content ready is a great help. If you don't, it creates roadblocks and it can be difficult to make progress.”

## THE ROLE OF THE CONTENT MARKETER

Content marketers operate in the same way as designers. Both consider the organisation's objectives and the key messages the brand is trying to convey. They will also look at the target audience and tailor their text, or imagery, to match visitor expectations.

However, where a designer will concentrate on first impressions and navigation, a content marketer will look at whether the website also contains the correct depth of information that customers need.

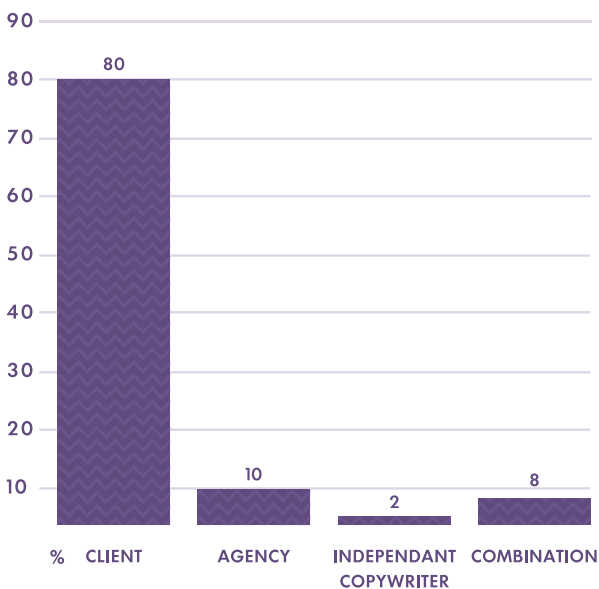
Does the website meet the requirements of all customers at each stage of the buying cycle? Is the most important information clearly accessible, is it nurturing interest and helping to convince and convert prospects?

Design is crucial in that it provides instant appeal but it will be the content that potential customers rely on through to the point of sale.



# CONTENT IS NOT THE EASY PART

Despite the importance of content to website projects, our survey revealed that very few businesses employ an independent copy writer or content marketer to produce their marketing collateral.



Instead the design agencies claimed that 80% of content is supplied directly by the client. Our sample survey does not provide detailed analysis on how clients are producing this content. It may be that they are enlisting the help of a content producer without the knowledge of the design agencies. But this does not appear to be the case.

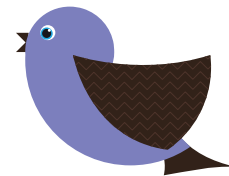
“Clients usually produce content themselves. There is an assumption that this will be straight forward but in reality extra guidance and expertise is often needed,” said Adam Slater, director of Tangent Design.

“During the recession a lot of marketing budgets were cut and content writing ended up falling on internal people with very little writing experience – unfortunately this has not really changed.”

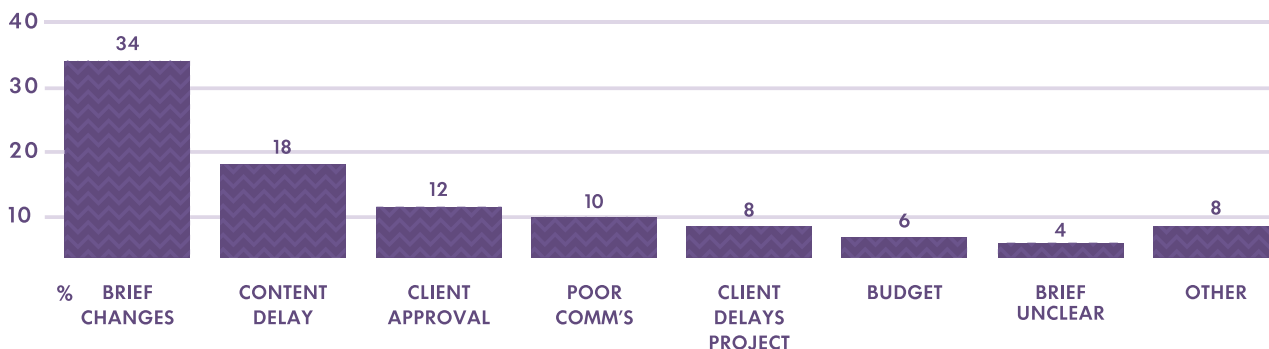
Quality content is absolutely critical if businesses want to convey the right messages to prospective customers. Inexperienced copywriters will often miss some of the subtleties required to connect with potential buyers. For example, it is common to see websites focus on the ‘what the company does?’ question and neglect to answer the ‘why a customer would want to buy?’ question. When in fact, it is the latter that is much more likely to drive buying behaviour.

An experienced writer will, however, consider the target audience first and write in a tone of voice that resonates and prompts them to act in the appropriate manner.

# A KEY CAUSE OF WEBSITE PROJECT DELAYS



Our survey revealed that slow production of content was also the second biggest cause of website project delays – with almost a fifth of design agencies claiming they were held-up by content not being supplied on time



A new website launch often prompts a raft of marketing initiatives that can provide a company's communications strategy with a huge shot in the arm. Project delays can, therefore, become a huge source of frustration for businesses eager to project a new or updated brand image to potential customers.

By taking on the job of providing the content themselves, organisations can often unintentionally hold their own projects back. It is common to see the burden of producing this content also fall on staff members whose primary role is not marketing.

While these people may see the value of producing good content, it is often not the primary focus of their job and thus the task can get pushed down the priority list. This can cause unnecessary delays which has a knock-on effect for the web development agency - which is forced to postpone the project and turn its attention to other work until the issue is resolved.

# CONCLUSION

Organisations should view their website content as key marketing collateral. A company's website is the digital shop window and it is the content that will ultimately guide visitors to the point of sale.

First impressions are important and the value of design should not be forgotten, but getting the visuals right requires a clear understanding of what the messages a company is trying to convey.

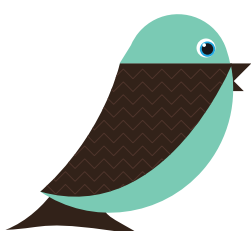
Therefore, content should be produced in collaboration with designers during a website project to ensure messaging is consistent.

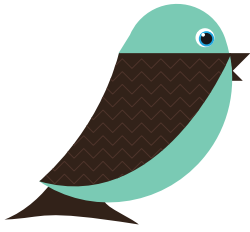
Leaving this vital communications role to someone whose main focus is on things other than marketing could be a mistake. The content producer needs to: connect with the target audience, convey the right messages, write in a consistent tone and style, portray the company in the right light and do all this to a deadline.

When you consider the importance of content as a marketing tool, it would be advisable to enlist professional writing support in order to achieve this and ensure your website project is a success.

## TOP TIPS BEFORE STARTING A WEBSITE PROJECT:

- Understand your website's primary objective
- Clearly identify your target audience
- Agree the key brand messages that you are trying to convey
- Ensure the person responsible for content understands all the above
- Remember, websites should be a living thing – you'll need the ability to update & amend





## METHODOLOGY

Fourth Day conducted telephone interviews with 50 UK web design agencies of various sizes – 42% had less than 10 staff, 46% had between 11-50 staff and 12% had more than 50 staff. Of these agencies 46% said web design constituted more than two thirds of their workload, 34% claimed that it constituted more than third, while 20% claimed it constituted less than a third.

### ABOUT FOURTH DAY CONTENT SERVICES

Fourth Day Content Services provides tailor-made content specific to the needs of our clients and their customers. Our team of former journalists and experienced copywriters are focused on producing content that will connect with the target audience.

We can work with organisations on a long and short term basis, devising ongoing content strategies or working on one-off projects – such as websites, whitepapers, e-books or print magazines.

## FOURTH DAY CONTENT SERVICES



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