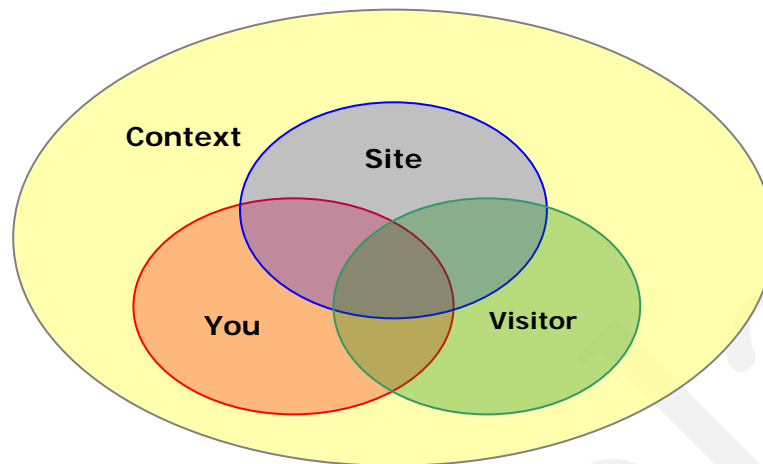


The Four Factors of a Website



Planning and building a website is about much more than lining up hosting and technical assistance. There are four interacting factors that affect the success of a website, which should all be acknowledged and addressed in its planning, designing, implementation and ongoing maintenance.

Site: The website itself is just one of four factors and includes all its features and limitations and the people involved in building it, whether it's an agency designing from scratch or a company providing a DIY kit you customise yourself. This factor also includes all the technical aspects (hosting, security, scripting, platforms, accessibility, etc.) as well as the overall design and the way the design and content work together. The site is the *thing*, the vehicle that makes possible that all-important communication between your business and the visitor/customer.

You / Your Company: Of major importance is the impression that your website conveys about you. It's about the branding and company image that infuse the site and allow the visitor to get the right idea about your company's professionalism, style, values and integrity. This is conveyed through the visual design, but also through the choice and organisation of *content*: the written text, documents, images, links to other sites, and the reliability of the site to do what it claims to do (i.e., all communication, ordering and payment systems in good order).

Visitor / Your Customer: The most important factor is the visitor, or more specifically the appeal the site makes to the visitor's needs. These are abstract ideals like values and emotions and also more pragmatic concerns like the way the navigation works and how well the site satisfies the visitor's expectations. If you have done research about your market, this information should help you target your site to the appropriate visitor.

Context: Context is the final factor, which you have no control over but which you need to be aware of and respond to in order to keep your site relevant. Context is the world in which your site -- and your business -- exists. This includes the internet itself and how it works, your competition and the way they use their websites, market forces and economic factors and local/national trends.