Let's get digital, digital!

Northumberland online marketing toolkit

Websites, email marketing, social media, video…There are loads of ways to market yourself onlline. If you are working with a web design company, they will be able to offer advice, but if not, here's a beginner's guide to digital marketing.

Before you start

Before getting started you will need to purchase a web address or domain name. Your domain name is the address people type into the browser to locate your website.

A few pointers when purchasing a domain name:

• Find a domain name that matches most closely to your company name or reflects the nature of your business. (e.g. lakesidehotel.co.uk).
• Try to keep it as short as possible, longer domain names can easily lead to spelling mistakes and can be hard to use on promotional material.
• Choosing a lead domain suffix (.co.uk or .com) really depends on your product, audience and market. .com tends to be used to target global users whereas .co.uk suggests the content is related to this country. For example, a small countryside B&B would be best to use .co.uk. There are many other domain name suffix's avaliable currently such as .net, .biz, .eu but it would be advisable to stick with .co.uk and .com unless your product or business gives you reason to consider other options.
• If you have the budget it would be worth buying both .co.uk and .com versions of the domain as this cuts the risk of any confusion. Imagine you have only bought lakesidehotel.co.uk and .com is owned buy a hotel in another location it could cause confusion to potential customers.
• If you do buy both, select one as the main domain suffix and use this across all promotional material and email.

You will also need to purchase some space on the internet which is called web hosting. This is where the files (html pages, images etc) are stored that allow your website to be shown in all its glory.

Several factors will determine what hosting is required. For instance, if you want to build in interactive features (such as enquiry forms or an online booking system) you will need to use a server side scripting language such as PHP or ASP which will impact your hosting requirement. Linux hosting is required when developing in PHP and ASP requires Windows based hosting.

If all this information is getting a little daunting it might be worth thinking about getting some help and use a web design company or freelancer. You can always ask them to take care of the web hosting for you.

Looking for a good hosting company?

Why not do a search for hosting companies and take a look round blogs and forums to get user feedback. Support and guidance are as important as price when making your decision.

Also make sure that the package allows for easy and free set-up for your email. The best thing to do is give them a call to discuss your needs.

Understanding the web

- Computer screens show information at 72dpi (dots or pixels per inch) This means that all dimensions used when designing your website are always in pixels.
- The web uses a 3 colour RGB (Red, green and blue) mode. When using colour on the web it is always referenced by a 6 character value called hexadecimal or hex colours. This defines the value of the amount of red, green and blue in the colour.
- When using graphics on your website there are 3 main file types — JPEGSs, GIFs and PNGs. JPEGS are best used for photos and complex graphics. GIFS are ideal for images with solid colour. PNGS are great for high quality graphics.
- Web pages are built using HTML and Cascading Style sheets (CSS). There are several types of web editing software that allow you to build HTML pages such as Dreamweaver and Frontpage. Dynamic pages that allow interactivity on web pages are built using server side scripting such as PHP or ASP.

Plan your content and structure

- Planning the structure of your website is key before starting to design or build your website. Consider what your key messages are and how you want to build relationships with your customers. List what you want your website to achieve and how you want to communicate then structure your website around these points.
- Split your site into key sections that people will understand and can instantly connect with. Remember to use plain English.
- Where possible use the '3 click rule', meaning all content can be accessed within three mouse clicks. But remember the most important thing is to concentrate on the quality and relevance of the content included on your website. Think quality over quantity!
- Think about the purpose of each page. Always ask yourselves these questions — What do you want the user to find out? Which page do you want them to visit next?

- Your home page should deliver key messages and give an overview of what your business offers. You usually have less then 10 seconds to attract visitors and keep them on your site so keep content interestng and inspiring.
- Think about a call to action or key message for each page. For example, a call to action on a page descibing accomodation could be a link to an availability calendar, an online booking area or an enquiry form.
- Use clear and consistent navigation on all your pages so users can access content easily and quickly.
- On larger sites think about using a breadcrumb trail that shows users exactly where they are within your site structure.
- Think about how accessible your website is to the visually impaired. By law all sites should pass Priority level 2 of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines drawn up by the World Wide Web Consortium (www.w3.org/). This relates to the design and build of your website so it's important that you understand this subject. More information can be found here - www.w3.org/WAI

Plan your design

- Design your website to fit modern day screen resolutions. The most common screen resolution is still 1024x768 pixels so it is important to use this as a guide to the width of your web pages. We would recommend using 960 pixels as a maximum width for your web page but find a width that best suits your content.
- Its important to remember the 'fold' of your webpage. The fold of the page is the height of the webpage the user will see before scrolling. If we are using 1024x768 as a base pixel resolution then it is essential that your top level or primary messages or call to action sits above 560 pixels so it can be viewed instantly.
- It also key that content is given space to breathe to make it easy to read and access. With this in mind don't be afraid of making users scroll to find second and third level information.

Website homepage
Max width 960 pixels

Your homepage is the most important page. It's what visitors first see when they visit your website and sets the tone for what they can expect from your business.

Think of it like the front cover of a magazine. It needs to look like there's a lot to see and do to keep people interested but always give content space to breathe so it can be scanned quickly by the visitor.

Think about showcasing your latest product or special offer to entice the visitor to find out more.

Using photography?
An interesting and engaging image can say a thousand words. We have a selection of images available for you to use to bring your website to life in the 'Things to use' section of the marketing toolkit.

Using video?
If you want to use video on your website think about using YouTube. Not only will this mean you don't have to worry about the costs or set up of streaming your video but your content has been opened up to a much bigger audience.

Your logo
Always keep your logo at the top so it's the first thing people see.

Navigation bar
Break up your site content into easy to differentiate sections.
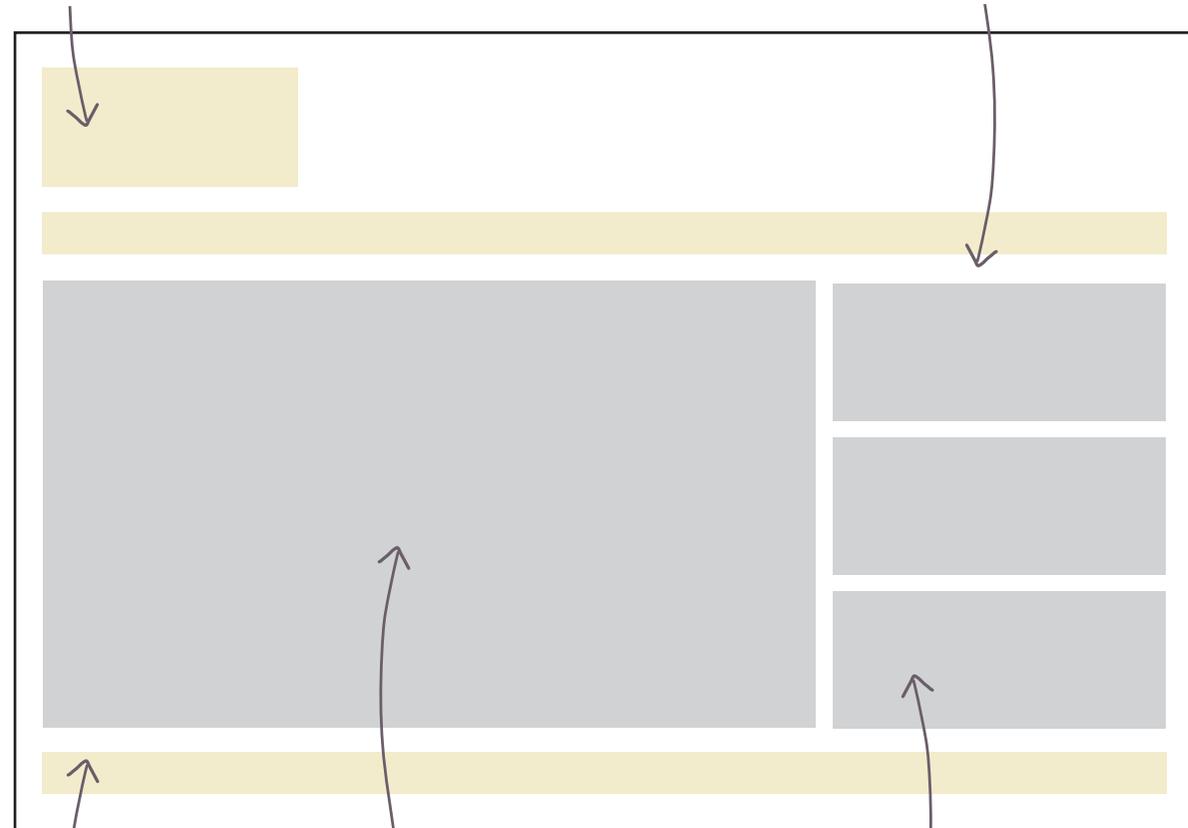
Footer
Put your contact details, copyright and legal information, such as Terms & conditions or a privacy policy.

Your main draw
Summarise your core message or product in an engaging way. Use inspiring photography and think about adding news stories to create extra interest.

Quick links/articles
What do you want people to do the next? See a recent article, get in touch, view a special offer, make a booking or even take a look at your Facebook fan page!

Website content page
Max width 960 pixels

Your website should keep people constantly interested and engaged. Think about offering related or suggested links to what they are viewing to make a visitor stay as long as possible. Always add a call to action on each page.

Remember to constantly update and refresh your website so there is something new and different for frequent visitors.
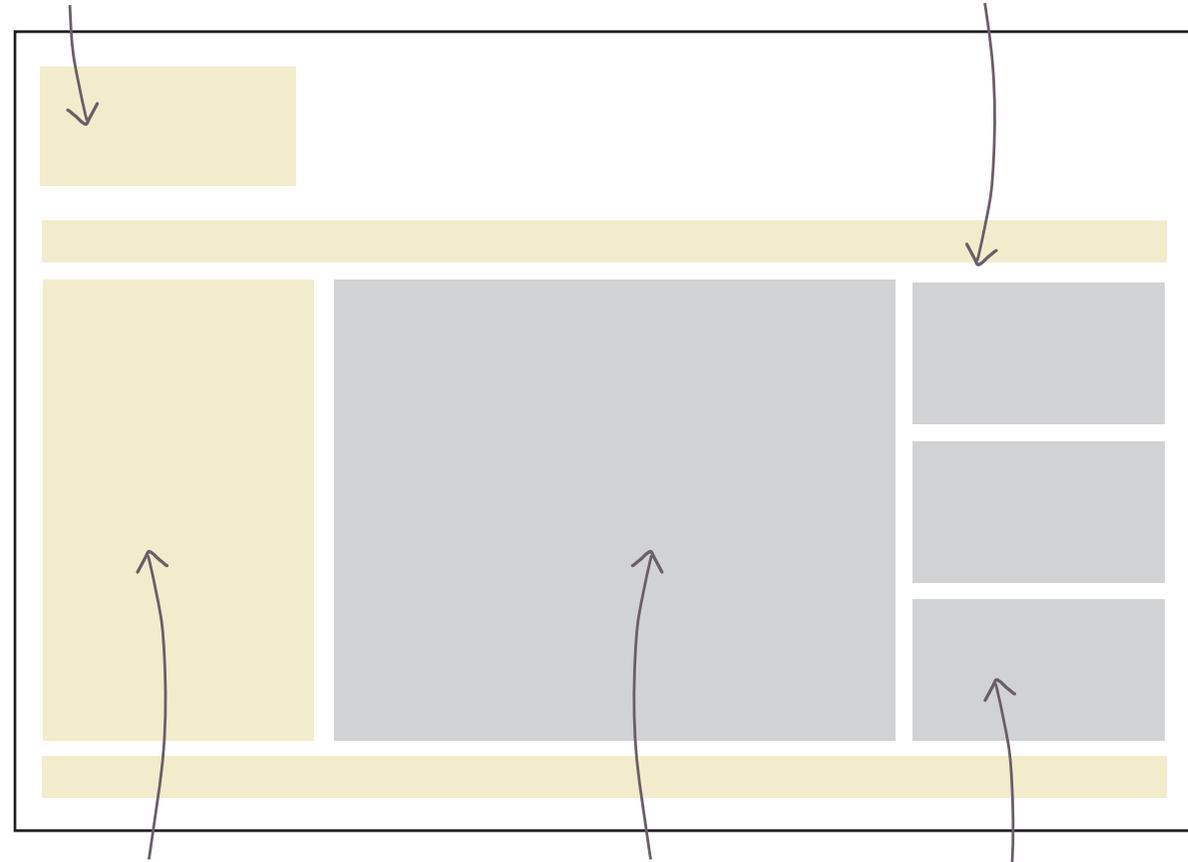
Also, keep your navigation bar a consistent feature, so visitors always know where to look for the site content.

Your logo
Make your logo a link back to the home page.

Navigation bar
Break up your site content into easy to differentiate sections

Sub navigation
Provide users with clear links to other sections of your website

Main page content
Think about using photography to add interest.

Related links/articles
Having clicked on a particular link, what similar articles might they be interested in?

Email marketing
550 pixels wide

Email marketing is a bit like a digital flyer, whether it be in the form of an Electronic Direct mail to sell a particular service or product or an enewsletter to keep your customers up to date.

It's key that any email campaign runs alongside your website, adding links and call to actions from the email through to relevant pages on your site.

Emails can be sent out using a variety of different software. From using Outlook and setting your HTML email up as stationery right through to free email marketing software to advanced Email systems which can allow you to build and manage your email campaigns and track usage.

Some online booking websites or Content Management Systems also offer free email software that can be used so its always worth checking any existing products you have.

More information can be found here www.iabuk.net/en/1/internetmarketing.html

Your logo here
Keep it at the top so it's the first thing you see.

Copy here
Keep emails short and to the point and focus in on one key message at the top of the page to give the campaign some focus and clear call to actions. Further down the page use sub messages to point customers to different parts of your website.

Where possible set your words in a HTML font. A lot of email software doesn't show images until you click so its important your key messages can be seen instantly.
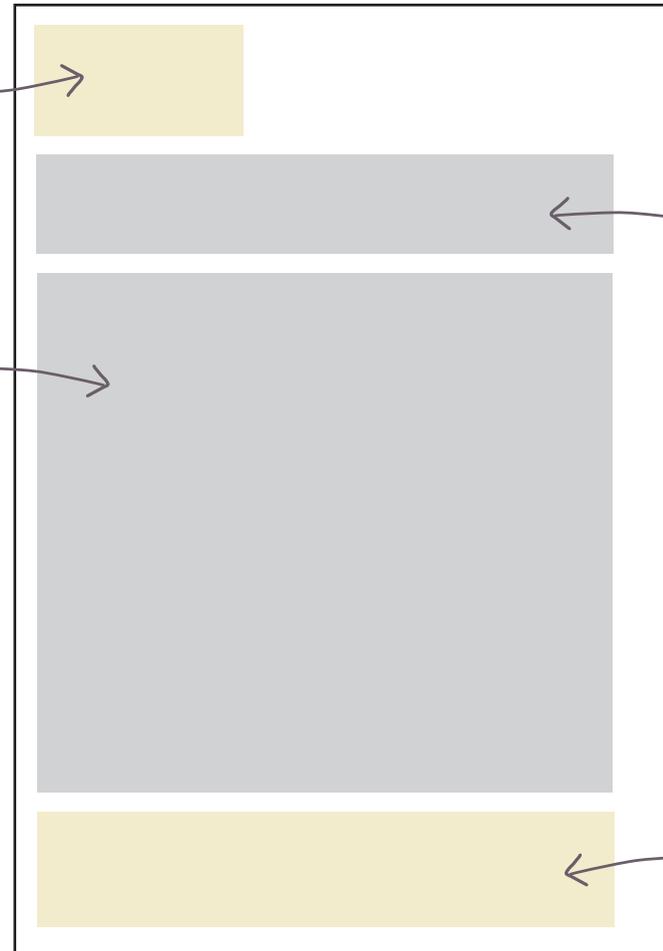
Your subject line
Keep the subject line of your email interesting and relevant to your customers.

Your title
Keep your title snappy as this headline needs to gain the attention and inspire the viewer to find out more.

Contact details
How and why to get in touch. Why not add in links to your Facebook or Twitter pages

Don't forget to include an unsubscribe link.

NORTHUMBERLAND
AN INDEPENDENT SPIRIT

Email signature

Your email signature is a consistent way of signing off your emails with your contact details and information about your business.

Don't overcomplicate your signature with images or attachments as they can display differently on different computers and increase the size of your emails.

What's a disclaimer?
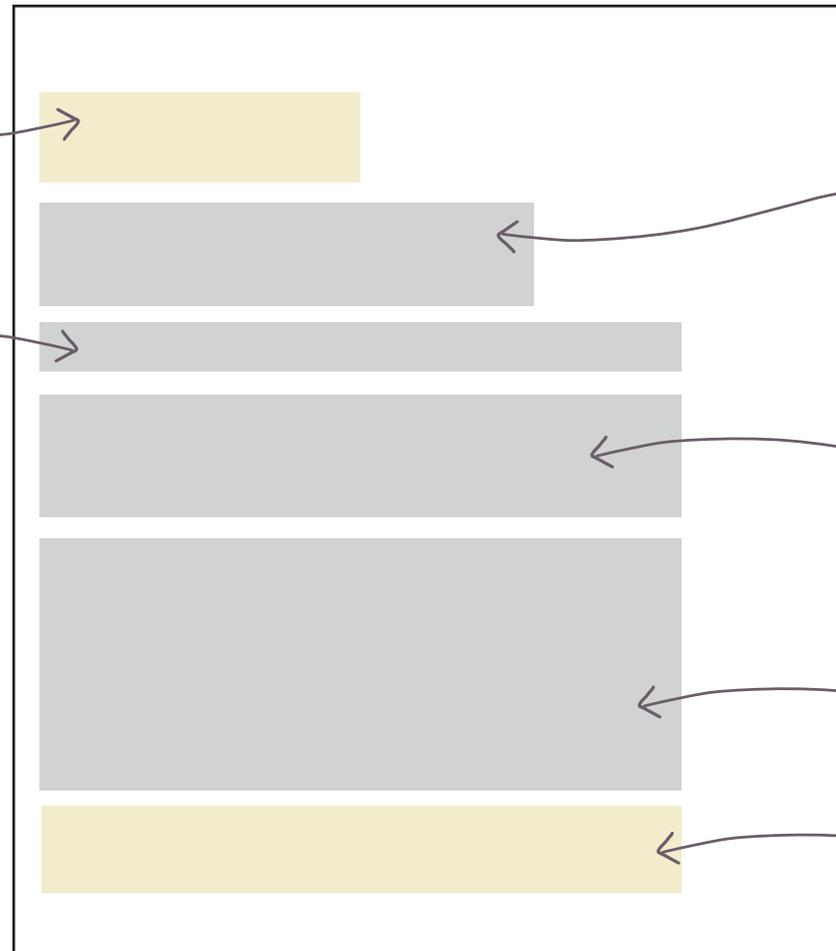Not sure what to put in your legal disclaimer?

We have created a best practice email disclaimer guide for you to use as reference. Visit our website at www.marketingnorthumberland.com for more information.

Who's it from
Put your name and job title here.

Divider
Break up your information with a divider bar.
This could contain your company name or strapline.

Your contact information
Put your telephone, mobile, fax and website details here. Include your Twitter, facebook or linkedin address here too.

Additional information
Think about including a environmental message suggesting people think before they print. You could even use your signature to promote key events or new products with links to you website.

Disclaimer
You may want to put a legal disclaimer at the bottom of your email signature.

Company information
Include your registered office address as well as registration, VAT registration and charity numbers.

Hints &tips

Remember!

- **Size does matter!** When sending emarketing campaigns or building a website, the size of the image and document files need to be kept relative small, otherwise they could take a long time to load, download, or may not send. Always check the file size of your images and documents.

- **Keep track of how your website is being used.** Why not add site analytics software to your website. This will allow you to check how many visitors are viewing your website and how they interact with it. The most popular, and free, service is Google Analytics - www.google.com/analytics.

- **Testing testing testing!** Remember to always double check your website. Check that links are working and get someone to proof read the website before launching. Make sure to test your website on different browsers and machines to make sure it works correctly.

Hints
&tips

Remember!

- **Think about using free services.** Hotel or B&B? Why not think about adding a profile to Trip Advisor. Your accommodation can then be viewed by a much larger audience who are using Trip Advisor to search. Use Google Maps to show your location instead of drawing your own map. There are loads of opportunities out there to tap into services and applications which can open your business up to new audiences.

- **Promoting your website.** There are so many ways to promote your website. Whether it be optimising your website to boost its position on search engines (Search engine optimisation) or purchasing pay per click adverts on Google or Facebook. Find a solution that fits within your budget and works for your business. Business Link offer some great advice and help guides on their website.