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# Stand and Deliver

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# Stand and Deliver:

## WEBSITE ESSENTIALS

It's time to upgrade the mobile. The best my budget will buy. I want a large megapixel camera with expandable memory capacity, Bluetooth so I can download from my phone without fiddly cords, an MP3 player, internet access to download tunes straight onto my phone and of course, video calling. So who's got the package?

This is why we love the internet. From my computer, I can compare size, weight, features and benefits, prices and other people's comments on usability, at a time that suits me.

### **The plethora of information swimming around the ether means that brands need to really prove their worth in order to succeed.**

Good web brands provide us with accurate, well-written, and up-to-date content. To build the brand they also ensure ease of navigation, search and purchase processes. And they don't put anything in the way for us to trip over or slow us down while we're there.

It's because of this that companies are having to more heavily focus on their core product and re-address where their value lies. Consider Trade Me. Its inception saw an offering of free classified advertising. It is now New Zealand's leading auction site having received around 2.6 million unique visitors and served 747 million pages. (By comparison, the *Xtra* news website served 87 million pages, while the *New Zealand Herald* online served 24 million<sup>1</sup>.)

There are two key factors determining brand success. The first is that we are less gullible. Just because I have a Motorola phone today doesn't mean that when I upgrade my phone that I will only look at Motorola phones. I'll talk to my friends and I'll shop around. **With my increased access to information, consistently buying into a promise of the same brand is less likely to happen because I am asking a simple question: What's in it for me?**

The second is that the web is a very functional place to be. It's a self-service environment where people are focused on completing specific tasks. To be successful, your website needs to be relevant, convenient and fast.

Think first how I might come across your website. Initially it's most likely via a search of a subject word and probably not by your company's name. In visiting your home page I am not necessarily interested in reading about your company structure or why you are number one in the market. Instead, by identifying and clearly presenting the information I am looking for, you can provide me with an experience that rewards me for taking the time to visit your site. Let me know immediately what you do and why I should care. If I keep reading after that, then I'll find out who you are.

As users of your site, we also want to experience the unique business style or personality of your company. While simplicity is key to our ease of understanding, the way this is presented will reflect on our perception of you. A formal structure (as per [www.brrltd.com](http://www.brrltd.com)) will indicate targeting of a professional audience. In comparison, complete anarchy presented via use of brightly coloured, cartoon-style illustrations may indicate a younger audience (check out [www.mtv.com](http://www.mtv.com)). Both represent individual style and personality.

A site which is easy to use is also significant in determining our level of interaction with your brand online. People these days are used to instant gratification. Let's face it.. web brands get stronger every time a user succeeds in finding the information they're looking for or carrying out a task. Similarly the strength of the brand can be diminished each time the user is frustrated by not being able to complete their task on the website.

The focus of Trade Me developers has been predominantly around making the process for people to buy and sell better. They have simplified the functionality for users to interface with Trade Me, by making it work more like users would expect it to work.

Trade Me has a very clean and easy-to-use interface. It has simple graphics which means it doesn't take forever to load a page (even on dial-up), the well-recognised blue underlined words indicate to me there is a link with more information if I click on the words, I can add pictures to items I'm selling, and it doesn't take an entire ink cartridge to print a page should I need to do this.

### **So if you want to create a good brand online, the best - perhaps the only - investment to make is in empirical learning.**

This means learning from customers through direct observation, and crafting a strategy built from that customer input. Find out from them what they want to know, how they would go about searching for it and how to present your information so that it is easily accessed and used by them. The more functional and user-friendly your site is (from your customer's point of view) the stronger your brand online will become.

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<sup>1</sup> Nielsen Netratings