

# sportsground.co.nz

funding kiwi sports

It's been said that, "If you're not in Google, you don't exist". Although this statement isn't factually correct, this article explains why it is absolutely necessary for clubs and organisations to have a website, preferably one that is regularly updated.

All sports clubs want to be found by their community. Prior to the world wide web, clubs made themselves known by word of mouth along with signage, posters and flyers, and possibly radio or newspaper advertising if they could afford it. The web doesn't replace these traditional marketing tools, but it does offer benefits that provide a massive leap forward in helping a club to be found by, and communicate with, its community. Here are 5 benefits that a website offers:

- 1. Comprehensive information.** Think of the enormous volume of information that relates to your club. For example, subscription fees, club history, contact details, important dates, draws & results, newsletters, photos, or simply how to participate. A website can communicate information easily, and where visitors browse only to the areas they are interested in.
- 2. Open 24/7.** Unlike your clubrooms, your website is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Importantly, your website lets people learn about your club at a time that is convenient for them.
- 3. Professionalism.** Whether you like it or not, some people will judge your organisation poorly if you don't have a website. There is a growing expectation that all well managed clubs should have an up-to-date website. Importantly, your website can also answer many of your frequently asked questions, saving your club hours of telephone time.
- 4. Marketing.** Clubs that fail to attract enough members will eventually die. Your club is competing not just for members, but also for volunteers, coaches, sponsors and others. If you fail to reach these stakeholders as effectively as other clubs do, you are doing a disservice to your club. A website is an important marketing tool that can sell participation in your club.
- 5. Financial.** Your website offers a way to recognise your sponsors or raise additional funds by displaying sponsors or advertising.

So, you've decided to have a website... but which system should you use? Firstly, there is no such thing as a perfect website. There's also no such thing as a *finished* website. This is because the things that are important for your club to communicate will inevitably change over time, whether the names of your new committee or simply photos of a recent event. Five years ago you would have required a web designer to build your website and make any ongoing changes for you. Nowadays you can obtain a self-edit website for free.

Not all website *systems* are created equal though. Some systems are highly restrictive or expensive to change. It is vital that you choose a website platform that is easy to use and limited only by your imagination. So here are 5 tips for how to pick an effective website system:

- 1. Easy to use.** You shouldn't need a web designer to change your content for you. Modern websites make it easy even for non-technical people to login and update their own text and photos from any computer, and without needing any software to do so.
- 2. Fast & reliable.** Your website is physically hosted on a web server somewhere. Some small website hosts have poor bandwidth, low levels of uptime and non-existent redundancy for when a server fails. Larger website providers tend to have invested in their systems to ensure your website is very fast and highly reliable. Websites that are hosted in New Zealand will generally be faster to browse locally than websites hosted overseas.

**3. Supports multiple editors.** Keeping your website up to date is much easier to achieve if the task is shared by more than one person. This also ensures your website doesn't languish simply because one person is ill or has left the club. All good website systems should support multiple editors.

**4. Well organised.** It should be easy for people to find what they're looking for. Your website should make it easy for you to organise your content onto separate pages and easily change their order to whatever suits you.

**5. Discoverable.** There are a number of things that help your website rank with Google and other search engines. Ensure the website system you chose lets you add your own Meta description and keywords. See the section later in this article about getting your site found on Google.

**What about content?** If you've ticked all the boxes above, you should have chosen an easy-edit website from a Kiwi provider with a reputation of reliability, such as [Sportsground.co.nz](http://Sportsground.co.nz). Now all you need to decide is what information your website should display. The answer is simply whatever you feel the majority of people are going to want to know about your club or organisation. Visit other websites for ideas. Resist the temptation to include too much detail or information that has lost relevance because it is very old. At the very least, you should include an overview of who your club is for and how people can participate.

**How do you measure the effectiveness of your website content?** Although you can obtain detailed site traffic analysis from free solutions such as Google Analytics, the only truly important measurement of effectiveness is the feedback you get from your community. So ask your members. Do they use your website? Is there other content they would like to see? Is it easy to find the information they need? This sort of information is generally much more important to learn than the number of page impressions your site receives, or the average time your visitors spend online. If your website is serving its purpose for your members, stakeholders and community, then it has become an effective component of your marketing mix.

**Will my site be noticed by Google?** Google and other search engines have automated processes that constantly crawl the internet to find new and changed websites to include in their search results. It may take a number of weeks before your site is found. Google does not publish the techniques it uses to rank websites in search results. This is to try to thwart people who deliberately design their site to mislead Google in an attempt to increase their site ranking. However, it is generally agreed that one of the most important things you can do to improve your rankings with Google and other search engines is to obtain links to your site from *other people's* websites. This is because Google uses a 'trust' system that improves the ranking of your site based upon the number of other sites that provide links to yours. It is recommended that you take some time to get your site listed in as many online directories and other websites as possible.

Note that you can also submit your web address (URL) to Google at [www.google.com/addurl](http://www.google.com/addurl) to try to accelerate it being found by a Google search but this may not improve its ranking. Your website should allow you to add a Meta Description and Meta Keywords. The Meta Description is a short summary that will be displayed in Google search results for your site. The Meta Keywords are words that best describe your site and are used by some search engines to categorise your site.

It may not happen overnight, but your website will grow to become an essential communication tool. To see what other Kiwi sports clubs and organisations are doing, visit [www.sportsground.co.nz](http://www.sportsground.co.nz)