



The NO BULLSH#T Guide to Consulting Firm **websites**



ONE RABBIT™



I think we all accept that in this day and age every reputable firm needs a website but I suspect for many we haven't thought too deeply about why and what purpose it serves.

I make that assertion on the fact that most firm's sites are pretty much the same except they are a different colour.

Let me guess your site is something like this ...

About Us | Our Team | Our Services | Contact Us | Careers | Latest News

All good stuff no doubt, but primarily an electronic version of the old corporate brochure.

When we first wrote this guide in 2017 we built websites, and had been doing so since 1996. However from 2020 we got out of the website building business to focus more deeply on provide advice only. So this guide really is all about education... and not selling :-)

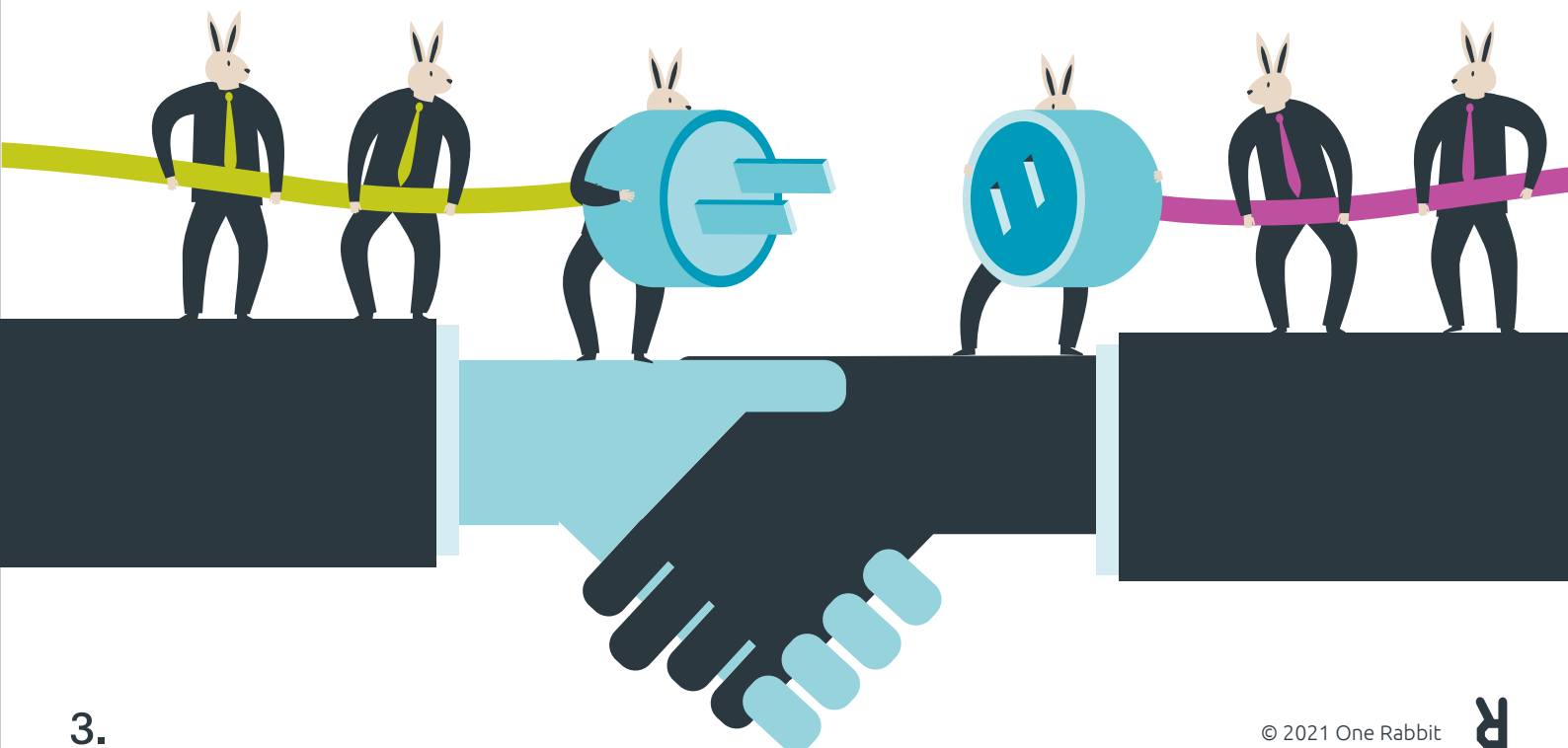
For those of us not old enough to remember what a corporate brochure is, it was something you gave to a prospective client so they had something to read and remember you by before they filed it away for another day or threw it in the bin.

They were typically very expensive and a pain to update because they were in hard copy but they along with some newsletters and fact sheets they were really our only available form of marketing collateral.

BANG!

Along comes the internet - you don't need a corporate brochure anymore!! You can put all the information from the brochure in electronic format, no printing and you can update it yourself!

You can also save money on printed newsletters and stamps by posting news articles on your website and emailing them to people - more money saved!



THERE IS NO GREATER TURN OFF THAN POOR HYGIENE!

At a minimum, your firm's website needs to meet an acceptable hygiene level. But it never ceases to amaze me how many actually don't.

I see firms that spend a fortune on their reception areas, meeting rooms and office fitouts, not to mention the address, but still have 2nd rate, outdated and unhygienic websites. Some struggle to even post a decent up-to-date image of their own people.

Everyone wants to make a good impression when someone visits their office; nice surroundings, maybe some flowers or plants, empty bins, good coffee and a dress standard.

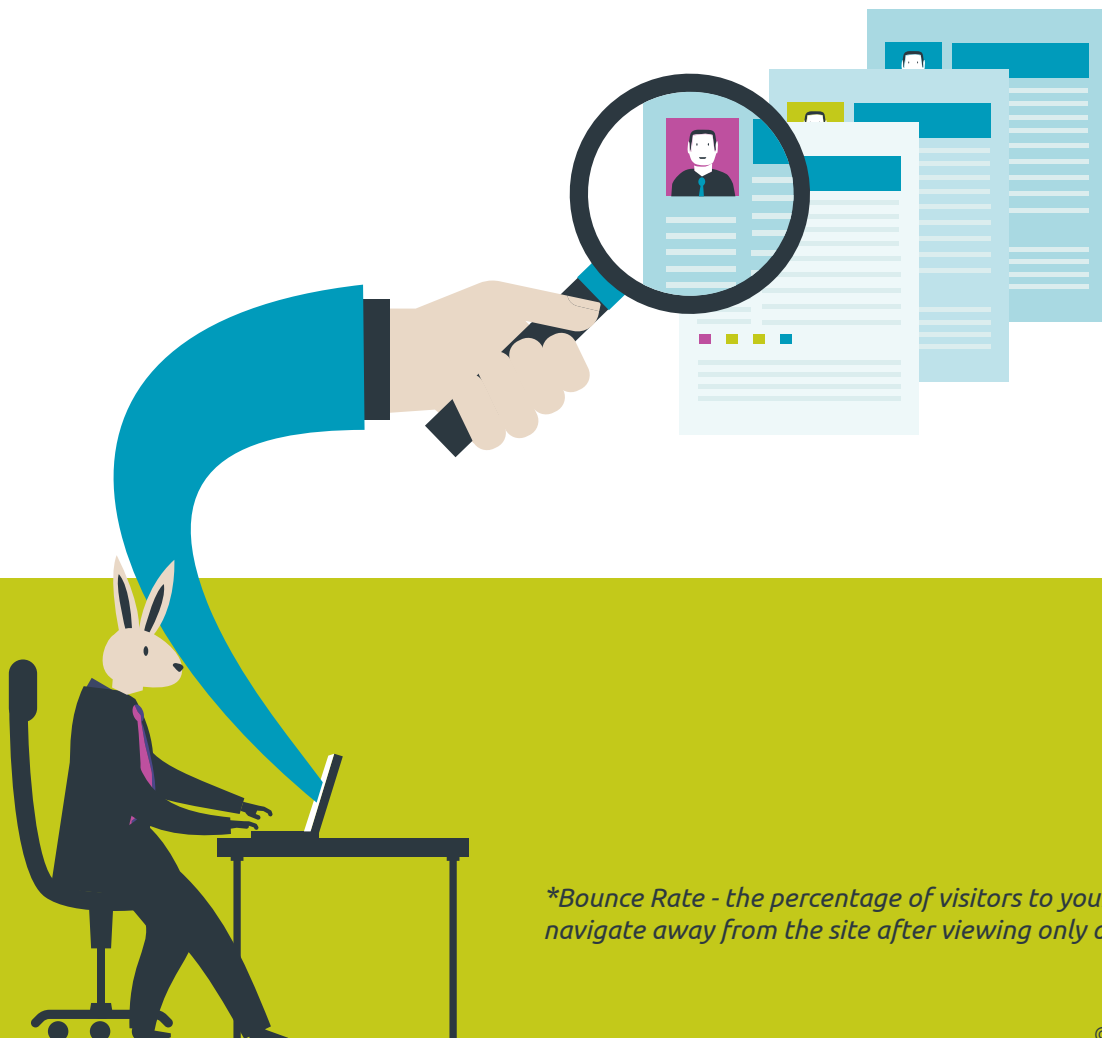


I think I can guarantee you that thousands more people visit your website than will ever visit your office and for most the website will be their 1st view of your business.

Compare what you spend on your facilities to your online presence - for a mid-sized firm I'm guessing a ratio of something like 20 to 1 or more.

Perhaps it's because you don't have to look at your website everyday, but your clients and more importantly prospects do have to look at it and from that they form an impression.

A hygienic website may not win you any clients but an unhygienic website will definitely cost you clients that you will probably never know about beyond lack of enquiry and some guess work from reviewing your bounce rate*.



**Bounce Rate - the percentage of visitors to your website who navigate away from the site after viewing only one page.*

Think about it; a non-referred ready to buy client will most likely start the process by doing some form of online research. Most will review a number of firms and as in dating - think Tinder - you want them to swipe right not left.

So from that perspective you have a very small window of time to make the right impression both visually and verbally. It's so easy for them to swipe left and say NO without you ever knowing.



Perhaps hygiene is not as important for the referred client, but at a minimum whatever the referrer told the prospect should match your website because chances are they are going to have a look before getting in touch and why would you in any way want to jeopardise that relationship or 1st impression.

So what constitutes good hygiene - I suspect I don't have to tell you as I don't have to tell you to wash your hair or wear deodorant - you just know.

But if you need some help here are some signs of poor hygiene.

- > You are embarrassed to send visitors to your website
- > Outdated, poor quality images particularly of staff
- > No staff profiles or pictures
- > Doesn't scale well or at all on a mobile device
- > You just haven't looked at it in a while
- > Out of date aesthetically
- > Out of date content

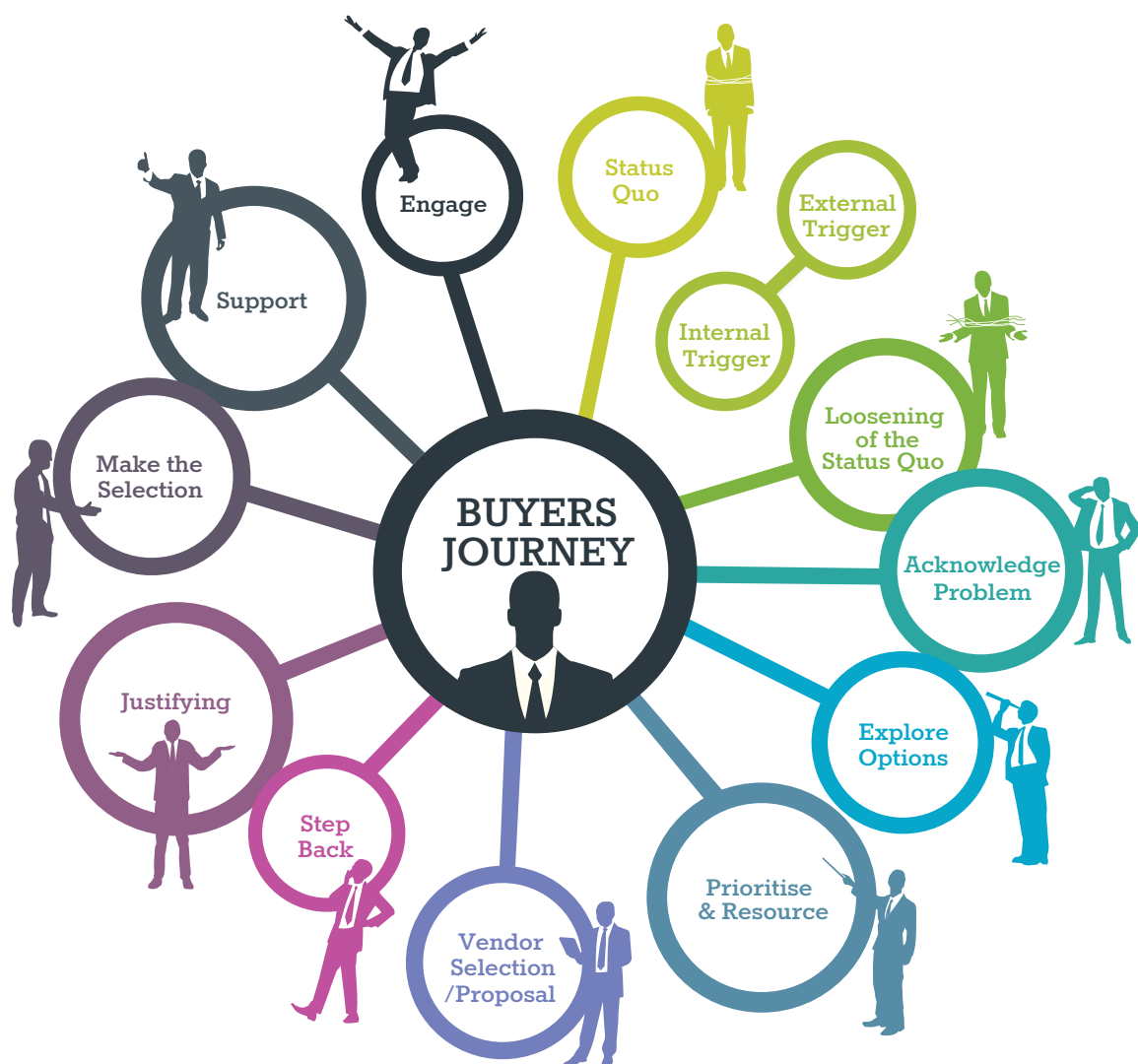
So, getting to the hygiene level is your minimum goal, it's not that hard to achieve and shouldn't cost you a fortune.

And it will be a hell of a lot less than what your office costs, but beyond being a nice home for your staff, no less important.



THE BUYER JOURNEY

The B2B Buyers Journey Map



It's important we understand our buyers journey before we attempt to move beyond the capability statement hygiene website. The typical buyer journey for a B2B engagement looks something like the above.

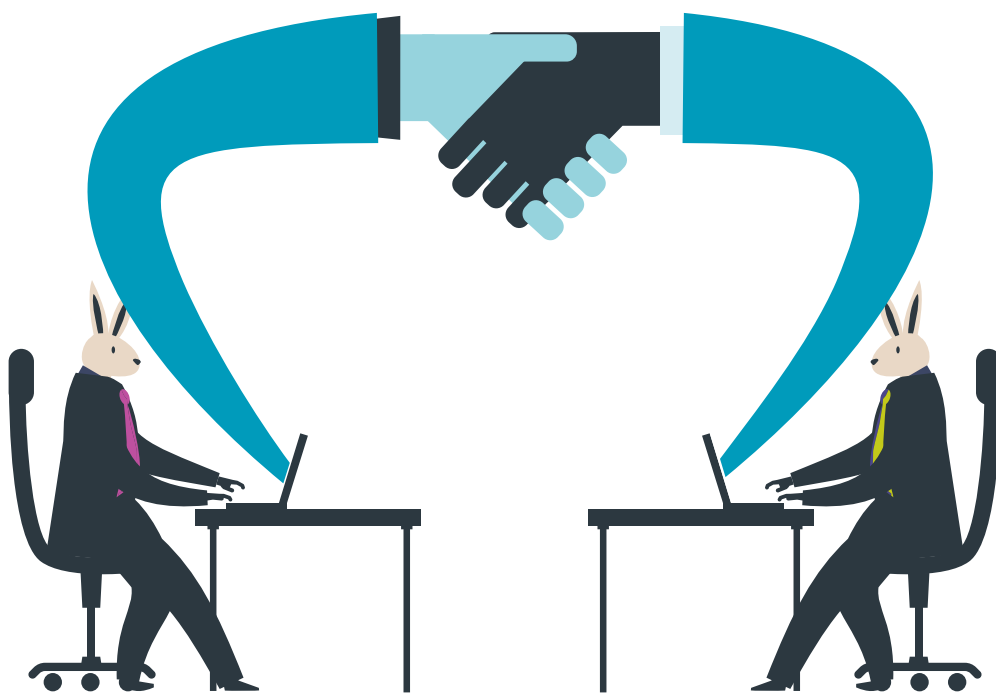
A capability statement website really only addresses and services one part of the journey (see page 9)
- Vendor Selection - there is a whole series of steps a client takes before and after this step that are either being ignored or being dealt with via traditional (offline) business development activities.

The vendor selection component is typically a hygiene test when the client is ready to buy, whether that client has been referred or not which is why hygiene is important but that's all it is, hygiene, and it doesn't really differentiate beyond the cosmetic.

Don't forget in most cases you won't even know if you've been put to the online hygiene test and failed.



A great website addresses every component of the buyer journey and even creates a problem in a client's mind that they may not have even known they had and helps them sell it to others internally.



True differentiation runs deeper than that but just addressing a client's needs before and after the hygiene test will significantly differentiate you from other vendors.

Overlay your current website to the buyer journey map above - how many steps does it address in your buyer's journey?



MOVING BEYOND THE HYGIENE LEVEL

You should expect to get 3 to 5 years maximum out of a hygiene site given no unforeseen changes in business or technology.

Staying up to the hygiene level or trying to get ahead of it really only gives you minor incremental improvements that are in most cases, aesthetic. It's not actually moving the needle very far and is easily replicable or out-done.

Have you ever met a designer that said they couldn't design a better-looking website?

Many clients say they want something “cutting edge” - what does that mean exactly anyway?

Some cosmetic design element that no one else has that will magically attract new clients or make them go WOW?

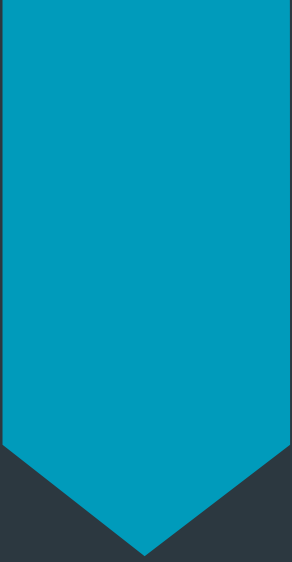
That’s music to a graphic designer’s ears, but in all honesty, would mean 2 tenths of bugger all to a potential client who wants to buy your expertise - and think about it, it should mean nothing as it’s deferring to subjective decision making.

You’re not selling funky clothes or cars - what you or a designer think looks good is just an opinion and nothing more.

So attempting to move beyond the hygiene level through aesthetics is typically a waste of money - why?

- > It has limited shelf life
- > It is easily improved upon
- > It relies on subjective decision making
- > It will cost you more
- > It won’t deliver you new clients in its own right
- > You’re selling expertise - which is not bought on emotion





From that perspective, if you only need a capability statement website to support referrals and the odd direct enquiry then build yourself a nice hygiene website but don't break the bank doing so.

Ok enough about hygiene - what lies beyond that?

- > True expertise based differentiation
- > Demonstrable thought leadership
- > Market positioning

SUBSTANCE OVER FORM!

And if you think that the average design/digital agency is going to somehow create this for you via a new website you're dreaming and/or they're either lying or incompetent.

This is not a wordsmithing or site design exercise it's about actually unpacking your market position and in many cases actually crafting yourself one that can be clearly articulated and demonstrated beyond the words and pretty pictures.

In other words, turning your business inside out and exposing it to the world so prospective clients can determine your expertise and fit to their needs without you having to tell them.

For some this is a difficult journey, for others it's a bridge too far and the more "generalist" a firm is (i.e. more services and potential clients) the more difficult it becomes.

Makes sense doesn't it, as its easier and cheaper to market to a niche than to everyone.

In reality and within reason if you will work with anyone with a chequebook you don't actually have a position.

A position identifies who you work with but just as importantly who you don't work with and in theory reinforces your expertise and in turn your value.

Think brain surgeons - they probably could but they don't operate on ingrown toe nails and you wouldn't want them to - you want them totally focussed on brains.



All well and good but how does that translate into a consulting firm website?

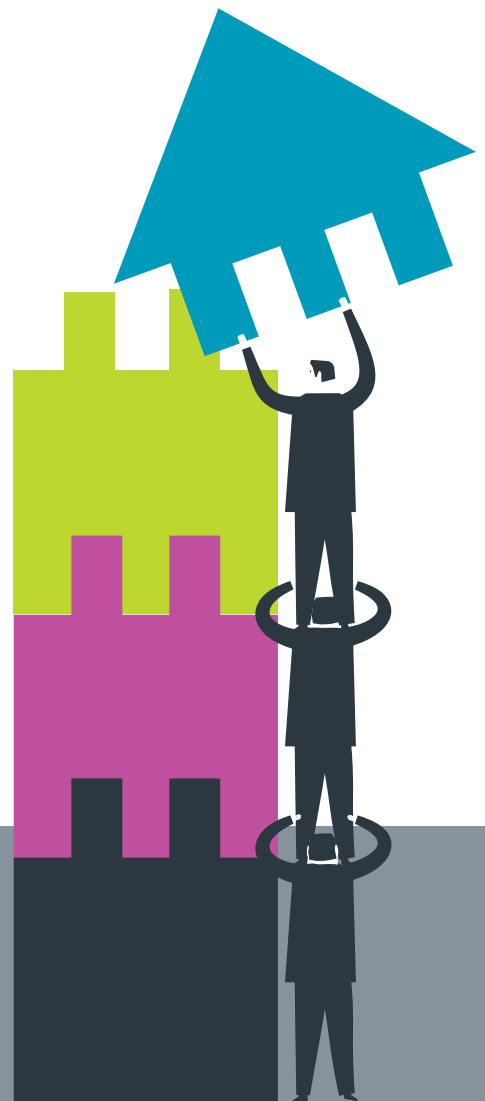
Good question!


And the answer is, that unless you are a specialist whether that be by industry sector or a unique service offering it doesn't.

Sadly, even if you are a specialist but work in a generalist firm it still makes it hard because you end up getting buried under everything else the firm does.

But don't worry it's not all doom and gloom
- the answer is quite simple and lies in breaking up your online presence into different components rather than trying to squash everything into one box.

Its horses for courses but conceptually you can maintain your generalist website, that we like to call the Mothership, and create one or several others specifically designed to target particular market segments
- we call these conversion sites.





A simple example is a law firm that acts for corporate clients as well as consumers.

Does it not make sense to have one website for consumer law and one for corporates because they are two totally different audiences with completely different needs?

A client looking for a divorce lawyer couldn't care less that you are experts in commercial property.

And if you only dedicate one page to family law versus a firm that's website only talks about family law - who has the better value proposition, who would you be drawn to particularly if you have not been referred?

Q.

What's the difference between having multiple office locations to service different geographical markets and having different websites to service different market segments?

A.

It's a hell of a lot cheaper!

Even if this is something you don't want to entertain we discuss our views on the Mothership website next.



THE MOTHERSHIP

After
r. Wave 2a

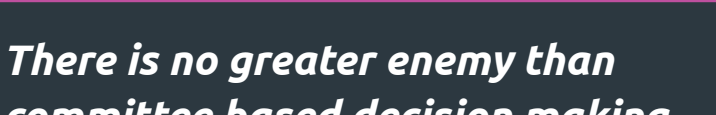
Whether or not you create a conversion site separate to your mothership, the philosophy discussed here still applies.

8 potential problems with Consulting Firms Motherships

1. They appeal only to the ready to buy



2. They are a battlefield of compromise



There is no greater enemy than committee based decision making.

3. They dumb down expertise into services

Motherships typically have endless lists of services because you don't want to leave something off that someone might be looking for. Problem is, by listing services you commoditise what you do and allow direct comparisons to everyone else.

***Services imply servant
- do you want to be
your client's servant?***

Clients want outcomes, they want problems solved - does it not make more sense to tell them what they get as opposed to what services you provide?

What sounds better - Self Managed Super Funds - or We help you gain control over your financial future?

The former assumes that you know that's what you need where the latter addresses the problem you have - lack of control, concern over your future etc.

4. They are full of fluffy motherhood statements

Here's a list of rubbish that permeates professional services websites:

- > We exceed expectations
- > We have more experience
- > We listen and are more understanding
- > Our customer service is superior
- > We are friendly and more accessible
- > Our price structure is more competitive
- > We have better people
- > We have a greater range of services
- > We focus more on results & growth
- > We really do care more than others
- > We provide better outcomes
- > We create a better client experience

They are attempts at differentiation but all they are the entry level qualifications for any good firm. You wouldn't engage a firm because they told you they were "innovative" so why would you expect anyone else to?

The only person that cares about your vision and mission statement is you.

5. They can rank poorly on Google

Again, let's use the family law example - you are a generalist law firm that has a family law division and you wanted to be found on Google via organic (unpaid) searches.

What do you think would be a better strategy creating a page or two in a site that has every other service you provide and want to optimise or one that was purely a family law website and that's all it spoke about?

6. They are chest beaters

WE do this, WE are that, WE'VE done this, this is how good WE are... Sound familiar? Most motherships tend to talk about the firm and not the client.

The typical number one and unspoken outcome for a new professional services mothership website is that the firm and its partners feels better about themselves.



7. They have latest news

When was the last time you went to an accountant or lawyer's website to see if they had a new news article on their home page?

What is news anyway?

Typically it's something about the firm but honestly who is actually going to read them, why and when?

Just have a think about that before someone asks you for a new news article for the website.



8. Measurement is an afterthought

Most firms build their mothership without working out what they want it to do, for who and when and after its built stick Google Analytics on and start measuring traffic. Some poor person then has to try and work out what it all means, and prepare some sort of report for review.

If you don't know first what action you want a visitor to take what are you measuring?

A good mothership website should ...

Be an accurate reflection of the quality of the firm - sounds obvious but I have visited thousands of firm's websites and visited hundreds of their offices and it never ceases to amaze me how different so many of them are from the impression I gained from their website.

Most are much better on the inside than what they portray themselves on their website!

Ironically some of the best sites are built by firms that need to portray themselves as bigger and better than they actually are.

Your website should clearly and succinctly articulate;

- > What you do
- > How you do it
- > Who you do it for
- > What the client actually gets as an outcome
- > Who you are - including profiles of key staff and their photographs!
- > Where you are

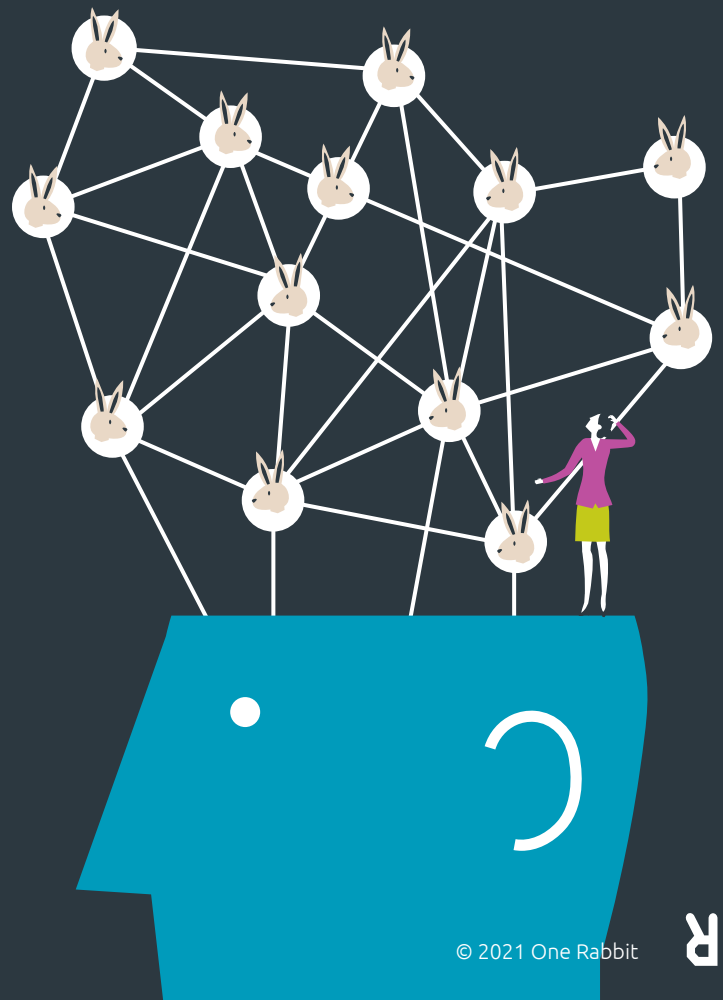
You should also very clearly understand what it is and why it exists.

“Why do you have a website?” is still a difficult question to answer for many and in fairness it’s a difficult for a mothership site because it’s trying to be everything to everyone.

It’s a catchall trying to appeal to a myriad of buyers all at different stages of the buying cycle, not to mention job seekers and other potential stakeholders.

Whatever it is doesn’t really matter as long as you understand what it is and what it isn’t.

It’s ok to be a capability statement if you understand that’s all it is.





THE WELL POSITIONED EXPERTISE BASED CONVERSION SITE

Ok, if you accept the fact that a mothership site is primarily a capability statement and best suited to the “ready to buy” and/or referred client it makes sense to take a different approach to the “non-referred” and the “not ready to buy” client.

The “non-referred and ready to buy” client is by nature researching firms best positioned to suit their needs or solve their problem.

The “not ready to buy” client is most likely going to find you indirectly while they are conducting research in something they are interested in or a problem they are trying to solve, diagnose and fix.

In other words, educating themselves.

Let's look at them separately.

Non-referred and ready to buy

This type of client is going to find you via their own means and compare you to others. If they land on your mothership site you're going to look pretty much the same as everyone else with little chance of them truly being able to differentiate you from the others.

If they put you into some sort of pitch process that's a sure sign that you HAVEN'T done a good job of that.

But if they landed on a website that spoke specifically to their need and problem and nothing else, then you have already differentiated yourself from all the other motherships that are trying to talk to everyone.



The not ready to buy

As discussed above this client is educating themselves and not looking to buy or be sold to.

So what should you give them?

EDUCATION!!!!

Yes, give them what they are looking for, help them, give away some of your expertise or sell it to them in exchange for their email address.

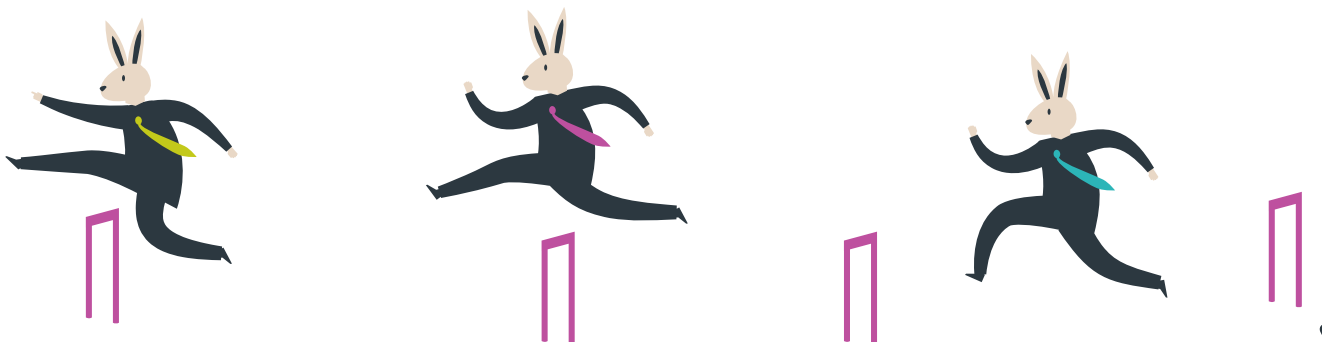
This is why you have a blog, this is thought leadership, this is marketing to the 'not ready to buy'. To this audience education is marketing - in fact it's the only marketing of any worth available to you.

Maybe they will never buy, but when they are ready at least you're a chance, where otherwise you probably never would have been unless they were referred or somehow stumbled over you when they were ready to buy.

Under this scenario, you've beaten everyone else to the game - you're ahead of the pack - they've heard of you!!

And what did it cost you?

Some of your time and perhaps a 2nd website, but it's still a hell of a lot cheaper and easier than trying to market to the ready to buy market with a mothership website or Adwords.





How We Help

Where do we go from here?

How do we start the process of differentiating and marketing.?

Action is required, because - as we all know - great ideas are worthless unless implemented.

We have developed a process to assist senior partners clearly understand the likelihood of success and where their firm is situated to take the most advantage of our approach.

Kick Starter Workshop: 'Making Your Firm Marketable'

Are you ready for a strategic rethink of how you approach the market?

Have a strong idea' of where you are and where you want to go? The route to market isn't clear and you're looking for that outside perspective to sharpen your approach.

This is a 3+ hour interactive session to get advice, direction and ideas into your hands as quickly as possible.

This is not a low-level tactical review of your current marketing.

Instead we'll lead you through a strategical rethink of how you are approaching your market designed to leave you questioning potentially everything you've been doing.

We bring the One Rabbit approach and perspective to give you a different angle to view the situation and provide an honest look at how marketable your positioning is and what to potentially do to improve it.

How We Help (cont...)

Here are some of the things we'll work through:

1. How the One Rabbit philosophy and approach could be applied to your business.
2. An honest look at how marketable your current positioning is and what to do to improve it.
3. Brainstorm ideas to help you reposition into your target market to articulate better the value you bring and be far more compelling.
4. Demonstrate how to use this to your advantage to develop a scalable new business development machine.

Here's feedback from a recent participant:

"I just wanted to say an absolute massive thank you for this morning's session. You achieved in one session what I have been struggling to crystallise for a very long time." Tim Sargeant, Growth Strategy Specialist

The Workshop is facilitated by Jim Thompson (Co-Founder) and an additional senior consultant. We also provide a video recording of the session (if delivered virtually)

I've priced the workshop very competitively and we provide a **100% Money Back Guarantee**: if you don't feel you've got at least our fee in real value I'll refund your money.

So that's it ... let me know if you're interested and we can discuss possible dates and times.

Jonathan Roberts

Director - Conversion



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