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website**criteria**

Website benchmarking report

For [client name]

[date]

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1. What this report tells you

This website benchmarking report tells you how well your website compares with all websites in our database or with a new sub-set of websites of your choosing – eg your direct competitors. The report tells you if users will find your website intuitive and easy to use and whether it is likely to please or disappoint them.

Your website users will have their own benchmark in mind: what everyone else's website looks and behaves like. This is because users of your website spend most of their time in everyone else's website.

But what do most other websites look and behave like?

Our database collates data on over one hundred features of websites and for each one our reviewers assess its appeal, ease of use and accessibility. We have amassed data on over three hundred websites... and growing.

The database gives us a unique picture of what is common practice in website design and features for all websites and for particular categories – eg an industry sector. This enables us to rank websites and measure trends in website design and features.

By looking at the websites that rank in the top 10%, we can also draw a picture of what makes for a great website. Armed with this knowledge you can brief your Web designer on what works and what does not.

This website benchmarking database report ranks your website and indicates where it does not comply with common practice and best practice across:

- all websites in the database
- websites in a particular industry sector
- websites of similar-sized organisations.

Some websites are purposely designed to buck convention, to do something new and innovative. That is fine, so long as the intended audiences are happy with that.

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2. The benchmarking method

Having received a commission to benchmark a website or range of websites, one of our trained reviewers is assigned to undertake the benchmarking. The reviewer accesses the website and logs in to the benchmarking database server and commences the review. A review can take up to 45 minutes.

On first sight of the home page, the reviewer gives the website a 'wow factor' rating of 1 – 10. The next one hundred or so factors mostly require observing the website, not judging it. But the final five factors require the reviewer to make a judgement about the overall look and feel, ease of use and clarity of the content.

Having spent about 30 minutes in the website a trained reviewer is in a good position to judge how easy it is to use and the content to understand.

Once the review is complete, the database program generates the data which is sent to the consultant for confirmation and analysis.

The report and an image of the home page are archived on our server as a backup, for our research and for comparative purposes should subsequent benchmarking reports be requested – eg before the redevelopment of a website, then at six month intervals thereafter.

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3. Key to the comparative table

The report presents each factor about the website observed or judged by the reviewer in accordance with the benchmarking database.

Explanation of the columns in the benchmark results table.

For each factor assessed the columns, left to right are:

Category

The major categories of aspects of the website reviewed.

- First impression
- Look and feel
- Information architecture
- Navigation
- Content
- Search
- Functionality
- Multimedia
- Marketing
- E-commerce
- Accessibility
- Accessibility
- Technical
- Summary

Feature

The individual aspects of the website reviewed under each category.

Your website

The observation, score or rating for each aspect of your website.

Most common practice

The average score or rating, or that which is most commonly found in all websites in the database.

Your industry sector

The average score or rating, or that which is most commonly found in websites in your industry sector in this database. We use the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Code (see www.abs.gov.au) for the classification.

- Accommodation, Cafes & Restaurants
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting
- Communication Services
- Construction
- Cultural and Recreational Services
- Electricity, Gas & Water Supply
- Education
- Finance and Insurance
- Government, Admin & Defence
- Health and Community Services
- Manufacturing
- Mining
- Personal & other services
- Property & business services
- Retail Trade
- Transport & Storage
- Wholesale Trade

Your organisation size

The average score or rating, or that which is most commonly found in websites in your industry sector in this database.

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4. The benchmarking comparative results table

Category	Feature	Your current website	Your new website	Most common practice	Your sector	
First impression	Wow Factor	5	7	7	7	
	Look and feel	Clinical	Professional	Professional	Professional	
	Identifiable Target Audience	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	Identifiable Chief aim	Inform	Inform	Inform	Inform	
Look & feel	Home page fits within 1024 x 768	Yes	No	No	No	
	Liquid or frozen	Liquid	Liquid	Frozen	Frozen	
	Content in prime position	Navigation Menu	Navigation Menu	Feel-good graphic	Feel-good graphic	
	No. of columns	3	4	3 - 4	3 - 4	
	Logo placement	Top Left	Top Left	Top Left	Top Left	
	Body text font	Sans Serif	Sans Serif	Sans Serif	Sans Serif	
	Body text colour	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	
	Background colour	White	White	White	White	
	% of free space on the home page	40	48	40 - 50	30 - 40	
	Information architecture	User-centric headings	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		Number of menu groups	6	5	3 - 4	3 - 4
Menu items listing order		Random	A - Z	Random	Random	
Consistency of IA		Always	Always	Always	Always	
Navigation	Primary Menu Format	Click-through	Fully Exposed	Click-through	Click-through	
	Primary Menu Position	Left	Middle	Top	Top	
	Secondary Menu Position	Middle	Top	Top	Left	
	Tertiary Menu Position	Right Top	Left	None	Bottom	
	Splash/routing page	No	No	No	No	
	Means of getting to top of page	None	None	None	Top of Page function	
	Sitemap	No	No	Yes	Yes	
	Breadcrumbs	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	
	Home page button visible on every page	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	Browser back button remains active	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	Logo used as home page button	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	New browser window opens	Yes	No	No	No	
	Contact us	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	No. of clicks to Contact Us	1	1	1 - 2	1 - 2	
No. of clicks to product/service details	1	1	1 - 2	1 - 2		

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Category	Feature	Your current website	Your new website	Most common practice	Your sector	
Content	Organisation purpose clear on home page	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	No. images visible on home page	3	8	1 - 2	1 - 2	
	Readability - Flesch reading ease	42.86	n/a	41 - 47	31 - 36	
	Readability - Years of schooling (Gunning-Fog Index)	13.52	n/a	13 - 14	11 - 12.39	
	URL used for readability	n/a	n/a	N/A	N/A	
	Explanation of products/services	7	7	7	7	
	Evidence of outdated content	No	No	No	No	
	Evidence of poor grammar, punctuation, spelling	No	No	No	No	
	Diagrams, flow charts used	No	No	No	No	
	Tutorials, demo	No	No	No	No	
	FAQ Section	Yes	Yes	No	No	
	Useful links section	No	No	No	Yes	
	Privacy policy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	Disclaimer	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	
	Date stamp on critical content	Last Updated Stamp	Today's Date	No	No	
	Evidence of philanthropy	No	No	No	No	
	Support of Global Issues	Social	Social	None	Environmental	
	Search	Search	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		Search placement	Upper Right	Upper Left	Upper Right	Upper Right
		Type of search button	Search Text	Search Text	Go Text	Go Text
Advanced search option		No		No	Yes	
Display of search results		Contextual		Contextual	Contextual	
Functionality	Features require broadband	No	No	No	No	
	Password protected section	Yes	Yes	No	No	
	Online form(s)	No	No	No	No	
	PDFs/Word/Excel Downloads	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	Download file size indication	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	Printer-friendly version	Yes	No	No	Yes	
	Email subscription	No	No	No	No	
	Online polls (one question only)	No	No	No	No	
	Online surveys (several questions)	No	Yes	No	No	
	Help using site features	Good	Adequate	None	None	
	Web page prints properly	Yes	No	Yes	No	
	Multilingual	Part of site	Part of site	No	No	
	No. languages other than English	8	8	1 - 2	9 - 10	

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Category	Feature	Your current website	Your new website	Most common practice	Your sector
Multimedia	Music	No	No	No	No
	Voice	No	No	No	No
	Animation	No	No	No	No
	Video	No	No	No	No
Marketing	Domain name appropriateness	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Tag line	Yes	No	No	No
	Website appropriate to the brand	5	9	8	8
	Provides prices/rates	No	No	No	No
	Ads for products / services	No	No	No	No
	Ads for other companies	No	No	No	No
	Pop-up ads	No	No	No	No
	Contains RSS feeds from external sites	No	Yes	No	No
	Offers RSS feeds to external sites	No	Yes	No	No
	Offers blogs for users to post	No	No	No	No
	Google rating for key product/service	1st Page	n/a	1st Page	1st Page
	Google ad for key product/service	No	n/a	No	No
	Search Term being used	housing services	n/a	N/A	N/A
	E-commerce	Selling products or services	No	No	No
Scope		n/a	n/a	Order AND Pay Online	Order AND Pay Online
Shopping cart		n/a	n/a	No	No
Requires registration - login		n/a	n/a	No	No
Secure function		n/a	n/a	Insite	Insite
Pay by credit card		n/a	n/a	Yes	Yes
Secure server		n/a	n/a	Yes and advised	Yes and NOT advised
Terms and conditions stated clearly				No	No
Accessibility	How many font types	1	1	1	1
	Body text justification	left	left	left	left
	Limited text column width	No	No	Yes	No
	Are links visually distinct	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Clear & Accurate Headings	6	8	8	7
	Colour contrast - home page	pass	n/a	partial pass	partial pass
	hyperlinks change colour if visited	No	No	No	No
	Link underlining	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Technical	Site malfunctions	No	No	No	No

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Category	Feature	Your current website	Your new website	Most common practice	Your sector
Summary	Navigation	6	8	7	7
	Ease of Interaction	6	7	6	7
	Appropriateness of depth of content	7	7	6	5
	Appropriateness of language	7	8	6	6
	Appropriateness of Design	5	8	7	7
	Favourable Impression	5	8	6	7
	Industry Sector	G	G	G	G
	Industry Sector Level 2	Health and Community Services	Health and Community Services	N/A	N/A
	Type of Organisation	Government	Government	Company	Government
	Size of Organisation	Medium (20 - 199)	Medium (20 - 199)	Large (200+)	Medium (20 - 199)

Ranking of the **site** against all websites in the database



Or... 19% of sites in the database rank more highly than this website

Ranking of the site for **your industry sector**



Or... 51% of sites in your industry sector rank more highly than this website

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5. Interpreting the results

We were not able to rank the new test website as a number of elements could not be determined. **However, by comparing the findings of the key elements for which we have data from both sites, it is reasonable to assert that new design is a considerable improvement on the current design.** The table below indicates that the new design gives a more favourable first impression, is less cluttered, is more appropriate to the DFC brand, the headings are easier to understand, the information is easier to find and easier to understand and **the new site design leaves the user with a far more favourable impression than does the current site.**

Highlights from the complete table

	Current site	New site
Wow Factor	5	7
% of free space	40	48
Number of menu groups	6	5
Website appropriate to the brand	5	9
Clear & Accurate Headings	6	8
Navigation	6	8
Ease of Interaction	6	7
Appropriateness of depth of content	7	7
Appropriateness of language	7	8
Appropriateness of Design	5	8
Favourable Impression	5	8

Facts and feelings

Our benchmarking database reviews the facts and feelings about a website.

Most website features we examine do not require the reviewer to make a judgement. They are quantitative elements. Mostly the editor observes whether a feature is present and if so, how it is presented – eg does it have a search feature, if yes, where is it located on the page?

However, ranking a websites isn't all about facts and figures. It is also about the look and feel and how easy it is to navigate. vital to gain the reviewer's opinion of elements of the website that cannot be quantified but that impact on the quality of the site. The editor's judgment of such things as a site's look and feel and appropriateness of the contents, is recorded in the database. This is done both at the very beginning of the review to get the editor's first impression (just as every user will have a first impression) and at the end of the review. We separate opinion from fact when reporting on a website.

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6. Weighting the features

The database produces percentages for each element showing how the majority of websites treat that element. But not all elements are equal. Each element is weighted according to a formula we have devised using the results of a pilot study. We won't reveal the formula but we can say that it's based on the idea that it is very important to conform to any element that the vast majority of websites treat in one particular way.

For example, currently the database shows that for all websites that have a search function, 84% place the feature in the top right of the screen. Because the vast majority place it in the top right, users will have become very used to seeing it there and will expect it to be there. Place it somewhere else and you risk confusing them or risk users not even seeing the feature.

However, having a site map or not on a website is not as critical as having a search feature. Currently, the database shows that 46% of all websites have a site map and 54% don't. So users have not become particularly used to seeing a site map and are quite used to using websites without one. Consequently, it is less critical to conform to this element than to conform to placing the search function in the top right of the screen.

Conforming to all elements of all websites is not necessarily valid for some websites. For some, conforming to the relevant industry sector and to companies of the same size may be more valid. Therefore, we have multiple weighting regimes: the whole database, the industry sector, the company size.

The benchmarking will provide a valuable yardstick by which to assess the effectiveness of successive redevelopments of the website.

7. Contact details

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