

## Taxi website checklist: the 9 ultimate must-haves for your website project

So your taxi business needs a new website, or you already have one and you feel it could perform better. Developing a website can be an overwhelming undertaking but before you put pen to paper and sign up a web development company there are several crucial features you should include (and a few you could do without! see below) that will help your business achieve its commercial goals.

The following 9 guidelines will help make any website development project a success.

### **1. Set clear project objectives**

This brings us straight to the most important question you will have to address your mind to... what are your business's top goals? Your website will help you to achieve them so ask yourself: do you want to establish a brand identity, gain customer awareness, automate more bookings, bring in more work for drivers, provide offers and discounts, and offer secure online payments? All of the above, right? What about being easily searchable by the main search engines like Google and Yahoo, or having the ability to edit the text and images on your website yourself, or ensuring your site looks as good on a mobile phone as it does on a desktop PC? The list goes on... So, without a clear understanding of what your passengers need from a taxi company website, and what your business's ultimate objectives are it is unfeasible to then expect a web development company to deliver a digital solution (for that is what a website is) to you.

### **2. Don't become over-obsessed by 'design'**

This may sound counterintuitive for a 'design project' but there are a lot more features that are paramount in a successful websites than the aesthetics of colour scheme and imagery. In fact, research has shown that appropriate targeting and relevance are 6 times more important than creative considerations of visual imagery and branding in generating a response.

However, do aim to sit down with your website company at the beginning of the project and mock up a design for your taxi company site —what designers call "wireframing" — and then run it by friends and customers to make sure it makes sense and is intuitive.

### **3. Be Search Engine friendly**

Your web design company will advise you on core on-site Search Engine Optimisation principles and build these into the technical architecture of your site. Artistic influence needs to be balanced with a search engine friendly structure. There are a host of technical specifications that will need to be present if your site is to rank in the SERPs (Search Engine Results Pages) that you ought to be

speaking to your agency about, including: URL structure, HTML and XML site maps, image ALT tags, H1, H2 and H3 tags, relevant keywords, clean HTML code and internal links to name a few.

Search engines such as Google and Yahoo will rank websites they see as well organised and logical better because they are said to offer a superior user experience - another good reason to really get the design right. Keep in mind that some people will be viewing your website from their Smartphone or tablet, where easy navigation is crucial. Search engines are known to prefer, and therefore rank higher, websites that also perform well on mobile devices.

#### **4. Make it simple and easy to navigate**

Do invest time thinking about navigation; it can be a frustrating experience as a user trying to figure out where to go next or where you are. Navigation buttons should be well described and clear as to where they lead. Remember, if the purpose of your website is to make it easy for a visitor to book a taxi make the "Book Now!" button prominent – and this 'call to action' should be on every page.

#### **5. Have a clear call-to-action**

Position your main booking line phone number in the top right (postage stamp) position and place a booking webform just below. A simple and effective call-to-action for the phone number and booking form will boost response rates. Customers are even more likely to phone or click if you can imply a benefit in the wording such as 'Call Us Any Time' and 'Quick Booking'.

#### **6. Make a brand promise**

Tagline, strapline, slogan... whatever you call it, it helps to identify your brand and the tangible benefit that makes your private hire service desirable. Brand promise captures your business's essence within a simplified statement that encapsulates your mission, what it is you do; your promise, the reason your business exists and therefore, what benefits the customer can expect to derive from using your service; and your brand, that extra bit of personality that makes your business stand out from the competition. Coming up with a brand promise is easier said than done but can provide a competitive advantage.

#### **7. Build Trust**

Building trust is crucial when promoting your services online. You need to replicate the offline cues that consumers pick up to identify a business as trustworthy and, therefore, likely to deliver on its promise to provide a good service. Guarantees, certifications, business awards and, most important of all, customer advocacy in the form of testimonials, when featured on your website will serve to add validity to your brand promise (see above).

## 8. Write organised copy

The messages you communicate will help your website visitors to understand what you offer and, if it is relevant to them, decide to place their booking with your company. A useful mnemonic when structuring the words on your site (known as 'copy') is AIDA (Attention, Interest, Decision, Action) which is a way to structure your overall message. Quickly grab the reader's **attention** with an impactful opening heading so much so that they choose to read more; build on this by focusing on their **interest** and needs; understand your customers' fears and expectations to really create an 'emotional connection' so they develop a **desire** for your service; and finally, make it really easy for your customers to move to take **action**, the next step being completing a booking form or making a phone call.

## 9. Integrate website and booking engine

Especially for a taxi website, your ability to take bookings and then automatically transfer them to your booking and dispatch software will allow you to do a number of really exciting things: you'll be giving customers a seamless experience day or night with minimal or no human involvement; with the right system you'll be able to provide on-demand and scheduled bookings and immediate price quotations. In addition, you can customise the booking form to ask for the data you need, handle cancellations, modifications and set up automatic confirmations – all this, along with many other benefits, means you can scale up your operations using the power of the Internet.

Those are the Dos but what about the Don'ts?

### Don't:

1. **Don't... Do it yourself.** Use a credible website design agency – it's worth the investment – and trust their judgement too.
2. **Don't... Make visitors work.** You have 5 seconds to get your message across and prevent visitors from clicking the back button and navigate to your competition. The combination of the 9 Dos will help.
3. **Don't... Use Flash.** It is best to avoid using Flash – a software used to stream and view video, audio and multimedia files - if you can, given mobile compatibility issues, slow load times and search engine unfriendly-ness. You can still have a great looking site that can handle video and audio without it.
4. **Don't... Assume "If you build it, they will come".** It takes time and investment for a website to establish itself and grow traffic.
5. **Don't... Spend your entire budget.** Save some budget for marketing and search engine optimisation work.
6. **Don't... Add a blog.** Unless you are going to commit to writing a post every few days forget the blog. There are few worse things – digitally speaking – than a poorly maintained and updated website.

## **Summary**

You will want to have a well-developed presence on the Internet in order to gain the most customers and earn repeat business from people who frequently use taxis. If you get your website right, it could become your best booking channel!

If you would like to learn more about Autocab's taxi website service, request a demonstration at [sales@autocab.com](mailto:sales@autocab.com).