



Top Left Design

Not *loving* your website?

How to ignite **passion** and improve your
relationship with your website, so it feeds your soul
and makes you burst with **pride and happiness**.



The secrets of loving your website

Not loving your website so much?

How to create the passion and improve your relationship with your website, so it feeds your soul and makes you burst with pride and happiness.

Who is writing this book?

Hello – I am Keren Lerner, and I started my professional life as a website designer. I run my own small design agency since 2002 (we are a team of 6) called Top Left Design (based in Soho, London). See our website here:



www.topleftdesign.com

A big part of the process of making a successful website happens before we even start working on the designs. This involves getting to know the businesses and organisations that the website is for. And making sure the website is the right representation of that business online. Yes, I know it's strange to think that a mixture of pixels and code can be human – but businesses are run by humans, and then it's humans who are visiting websites, so we want to make sure the website is as human as possible. Humans!

So, this is what inspired me to write this e-book – to show you some of the things you MIGHT be feeling in relation to your website, and hopefully inspire you to put some time and effort into this all important relationship that you should be having with your website.

We at Top Left Design specialise in these types of websites (which our clients love):

1. Websites with personality
2. Websites you can be proud of
3. Websites which integrate social media and blogging (with all those humanising benefits those bring)
4. Websites that are effective in whatever their purpose is - raising awareness, building credibility, encouraging people to get in touch, encouraging visitors to buy products and services
5. Websites which show your “**Unique Greatness**”



We create an average of 50-60 new websites every year now, and I have worked with hundreds of clients who have all sorts of feelings about their marketing and their websites and their online presence. They have to admit – and so do you – that if you have a website, you’re in a relationship with that website.

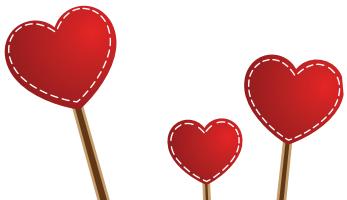
A relationship? With your website? Let me explain.

Welcome to this e-book. It’s about love. It’s about relationships. And it’s about websites. You would be surprised how many similarities I came up with when it comes to relationships between humans who are meant to be romantically linked, and the relationship people have with their website.

Think of your website as a part of your team. Whether you are part of a large company, with many people, or whether it’s a small one person enterprise.

The website should form the hub of your company’s marketing activities. Even if you do a lot of “offline marketing” – things like networking, seminars and events, or even (eek!) cold calling – your website has to support this.

- 1. Key Messages:** It has to have the right messages so when you talk to people about your business, and they look at the website, those things add up
- 2. Credibility:** It has to be professional, because people want to work with companies they can trust to do a good job
- 3. Design:** It has to be designed to not only stand out amongst your competitors but also appeal to your audience
- 4. Reach:** A website is not an island (anymore). Where possible and appropriate and relevant, consider how it can be to your communities and audiences. Think of the website as the hub of your business, and the blog as the hub of your website, and social media as the ways you have of pulling people back to your blog and website



Here are the problems you may be facing in this relationship with your website

Your website has really let itself go

Typical scenario. When you launched your website, in its day, it was “state of the art”. It looked fresh and modern. Now, it looks tired and dated. It needs to be revived and refreshed. And you just have to admit it, and then do something about it.

What can you do about this?

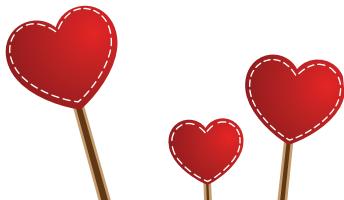
I have to be honest with you. And I am not just trying to sell you a website. Once you are looking at design changes, to refresh the look, you may as well be looking at a whole new website. Maybe this isn’t what you were after as a solution. I mean, you spent all that money on the website, and now I am saying – trade it in for a newer younger model? Well, of course the answer is “it depends” but anything that was designed and built more than 2 years ago is DEFINITELY going to be looking tired and out of date. And not only in the way it is designed – but also in the back-end code. There may be tweaks, but in the end it’s not going to make as much of a difference to your business as an entirely new and BETTER website would.

Can anything be salvaged?

Sure, there will potentially be copy or styling things that you created for the existing website which can be used as inspiration for the new website. Having this website for the time you have had it means you can see the statistics of what’s been working, which pages are most popular, and where you’re currently converting visitors into people who are getting in touch.

You’re embarrassed about your website

This is a bad one. If you are truly embarrassed about your website, it means when you meet people and they ask you about your website you say things like “oh, don’t look at my website, I haven’t updated it in a while” or “Here’s my info, I will send you some information – the website isn’t really quite right”.



Really – again – I am telling you – be honest with yourself. Come on. It's your website. The thing that's meant to make you look good online. If you are seriously embarrassed about your website, it's time to look at it.

You can do this in two ways:

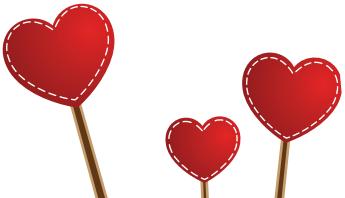
1. Sit and write a snagging list of the things that are bugging you about the website. Write it as if you are writing a brief. If there are big elements like design and layout then it's best to go for a new design. If it's small things like spelling, grammar, wording and images, then maybe they can be swapped for less embarrassing text and images – and that can be done in just a couple of days without costing a whole new site!
2. Have a meeting with me and we can do the snagging list together, if option one sounds like too much of a pain and a trauma!

There has been a breakdown in communication between you and your website and basically you are ignoring each other

There is a resentment building up. When you think of your website you feel a few niggling doubts, or a sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach, or like a man is standing on your chest. A big smelly man.

These feelings are usually down to one of the following:

1. It's not performing like it should
2. No one even knows it's there
3. It looks like someone else's website
4. It's lacking personality.
5. You feel your website is overly complicated - and aren't things meant to be simple?
6. Your eyes are wandering and you are looking at websites (it's not "cheating", but...)
7. You're getting obsessive about your website



Let's look at these 7 things in more detail

It's not really “performing” like it should

When it was launched, you had high expectations. Yet, you seem to be working just as hard on new business development, and not enough people are coming to you via the website, and doing what they need to be doing – filling out the forms, picking up the phones.

Here's what you can do:

1. Cover the obvious. Look at the site. Are there clear “calls to action”? Do you see a clear instruction to visitors to do what you want them to do, what they came there for? Things like “call us” (with a clear number), “Download our white paper”, “Read our case studies”. “meet the team” – what do you want people to do when they are on your website?
2. Consider the “landing pages” within the site. It’s not just about the homepage – each page has a purpose and there should be a call to action on each page – so people stay on the website longer because they keep being invited to do more
3. Is there a compelling reason for them to do what you want them to do? Is it inviting enough? For example, if you want people to sign up for your newsletter, you need to give them a clear reason – add “for monthly tips that will save you more time than you ever thought possible” or “to receive free advice which will create huge impact in your business”. I hope you are getting the gist – and if you are stuck with the words, ask a copywriter to help you (or ask me!)

No one even knows your website is there

So it's no wonder you are forgetting to look at it. There are many reasons why people aren't finding your site. But for the main part these are the ones:

It could be that your website isn't optimised for search engines. If you want to be found on search engines for specific keywords and phrases relating to your business, you need to make sure those keywords and phrases are on the pages of your site, and that different pages have a clear purpose which is related to the keyword or phrase you want to be found for.



Search Engine Optimisation takes time to learn about but you can learn so much online – see:

- www.seomoz.com
- www.searchenginejournal.com
- www.searchengineland.com

You may be missing out on the benefits of social media marketing. It's different from Search Engine Optimisation and Marketing but using social networks like Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook mean you can get "warm traffic" – that means visits from people who have already heard of you, followed you, read your blog, interacted with you – and after all this, looked at your website with curiosity. Maybe they just thought you were nice ad visited your site, to see what you are all about. Or maybe they actually want your services. Either way, it's pretty exciting. Make sure that you're not in any way embarrassed about your website – and that it's all up to date and correct! People are looking.

It looks like it's someone else's website

If your website isn't unique enough, it's a problem. You aren't going to differentiate yourself if your website looks like a template site, or has very obvious similarities to other websites in your industry.

Is this really the case?

Have a look. Be brave, and check it out. Is it looking unique enough? What are the obvious similarities? What can you do to make it different?

As always, I am here if you need me.

Your website is lacking “personality”

This is a common problem – and luckily, by adding “personality” you can actually make the website more unique and less “templatey”. You do need to have the advice and guidance of good designers and coders to help you make amendments to your existing site, to add the personality, but here is what you can do:



How to add personality

- 1. Look at the team page.** Is your team represented? Can you improve on the images of the team? The team pictures should be consistent with each other in the ways they are shot and cropped. Is this happening or is there a big mishmash, or worse, NO PICTURES? Of course it depends on the nature of your business but most people do like to see who they are dealing with. Have a look at some of the team pages we have designed:
 - www.snowbizz.co.uk/about-us/
 - www.gibsonlamb.co.uk/about/meet-the-team/
 - www.lewiscraig.co.uk/about-us/
 - www.carmelclothinguk.com/team
- 2. Do you have real case studies and stories on your website?** You know people love to read stories. It helps them believe that you could help them too with their problems. Here is a blog post we wrote about case studies which help you with this: [The case for case studies](#)
- 3. Don't be afraid to use testimonials.** They are “social proof” and show how other humans have had a positive experience with your company. You can put testimonials on your homepage, on the side bars of different pages of your website,
- 4. Write your own blog posts.** Tell stories about things you have done in your business. Give advice and tips. Answer FAQs. Give advice. Tell stories about your team. A well written and effective blog will add so much personality.
- 5. Be yourself on social media.** Review your social media channels and see where you can personalise things more. Put the effort in, and you will get so much more out of it. And you can read lots of [social media tips on our blog here](#) or come to one of my Social Media workshops! I have some coming up – [see the dates and book yourself in here](#).



You feel your website is overly complicated - and aren't things meant to be simple?

It is but often it isn't. Websites are built in so many ways, and sometimes the code is technical and complex, and this makes updating the website difficult. Each site is different and has different levels of complexity.

How can I find out if it's complicated or simple?

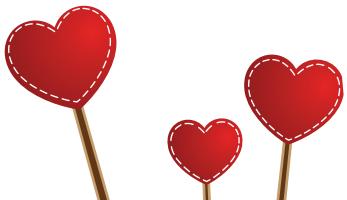
Generally WordPress websites are easy to use but if they have been over engineered they may not be. To get us to look at the site we need ideally the following:

- 1. FTP details for the site** (username, password and IP address) You can get these details from your existing website people or your hosting people)
- 2. Control panel details** for where you are hosting the website
- 3. A list of the changes that are really bugging you so we can have a look at how complex these changes are to make**

When we have these details we can more accurately quote for the time it takes. You need this information anyway to get an idea of what it takes to make changes!

Your eyes are wandering and you are looking at websites (it's not "cheating", but...)

Your website is for your business and you need to make sure it's unique to you and your needs. Looking at other sites is good for rest each but make sure you aren't tempted to copy another site completely or keep changing the brief for your site meaning you are constantly taking things "back to the drawing board". If you are looking at your website and not feeling sure then maybe get a second opinion.



You're getting obsessive about your website

This is not healthy. You need to sometimes realise “done is better than perfect”. This bit is hard for me to write as I myself am a “perfectionist” and being called a “control freak” doesn’t offend me.

But sometimes people keep fiddling and tweaking and fiddling and tweaking and years go by! Years! I know! That’s bad.

If your obsession is holding things up, ask yourself:

1. Is this version you are working on better than the one you have online? If so, launch it and carry on after
2. Can you do some small changes now and get them done and these small changes will be an improvement?
3. Is there a halfway point? Perhaps a better quicker way to get something done?

As always we are happy to help and give it a fresh eye. There’s even an offer coming right up – maybe that’s the solution?

Special eBook offer – an hour with me!

I have hinted enough. I am here to help. If you would like to meet for a 1 hour free session, here at my office, let’s book it. It’ll be fun! Email me with the words “I’m not in love with my website, but I want to be” in the subject and we will meet, face to face, for website relationship counselling!

Feedback please – and keep in touch!

Whether you want to take me up on my offer, please let me know in one of the following ways what you think:

Send me a tweet: my Twitter name is @topleftdesign – [and let me know your thoughts](#). You can use the hashtag #LoveMyWebsite

Facebook: [come to the Top Left Design Facebook page and leave me a message there](#) – and if you “like” us you can keep in touch with what we are doing at TLD as well.

Email: Just send me an email – keren@topleftdesign.com – and let me know if you spotted typos or felt confused as I can always improve and edit this for future readers!

