

Radio Days – 2013-07-20

Tip of the Week – Is Your Website Up-To-Date?

During the week I was asked by a client to help him update his website. He had originally asked a website designer to create a website which he could then keep up-to-date. This was all going well until his website designer suggested that he add a few new words to the meta tags in his website. The reason for this suggestion was that he wanted to make his website rise higher in the search engine results page.

He, like so many other people, had no idea what his web designer was talking about!

Meta data (which is what meta tags display) is data about data. This is useful for when you want to help your pages rise to the top of the search engine listings. The two most common meta tags are *description* and *keywords*, and they are used like this in my website:

- `<meta name="description" content="Toby Bainbridge teaches you how to use your computer more skilfully from Maryborough in Central Victoria, Australia" />`
- `<meta name="keywords" content="computer training, maryborough, windows, microsoft office, quickbooks, myob, internet connection, internet training" />`

There are a number of meta tags which give search engines information about what is on your web page. Each page should have meta tags describing the contents of that page, but his website only had meta tags on the first page. This meant that, for many search engines like Google, only the first page of a website will be indexed.

This is not the way to come at the top of the search engine listings!

I showed him how to change his meta tags using the program which his web designer had provided. Hopefully his website will be shown higher in the rankings after it has been indexed by all the search engines. Please do not forget that this process can, at times, take more than a month!

Yes, computers often work their quick magic very slowly!

Excelling with Excel

A client recently asked me to help her with the collation of some figures. The main purpose was to see if the business was making money by looking at each day's transactions for each employee. This was easy to do because each employee filled in a timesheet at the end of each day detailing what they had done and how much they had cost the company in expenses.

The first draft of the spreadsheet was good for a starting point but not much more. There were two reasons for this: I did not understand what she wanted and she did not understand what Excel could do. As the old computing proverb goes: all good complex systems start as good simple systems.

The next iteration of the process changed one of the basic details of the first draft: everything should be shown on the one page. This was not working so the next step was to create a page for each employee and use the front page to show the totals for each employee and for the company as a whole.

This resulted in a much more useful spreadsheet and worked well for a few days.

The next step was to add some more details to each employee's page and mirror that new information on the front, total, page. This also worked well until some of the pages became corrupted as information was typed where it should not have been.

The fix was simple: just correct each sheet then make sure that it was locked so that only the needed parts could be changed. This meant that some figures on the front page could be changed so that the rates carried through to all the other pages and only the details which could be changed on each employee's page were able to be changed.

The totals on the front page were displayed automatically as data was entered into each of the employee's sheets. This meant that there was no need for a calculator to enter the totals, with the obvious possibility of error in addition.

Could Excel Work For You?

Excel is a tool which most people do not understand. Because they do not understand how a program like Excel works most people do not even consider it as a useful tool. For this reason I would like to like to give you some reasons to use Excel in your home of business.

Making Lists

One of the most popular reason for using Excel is for making lists. These lists can be anything from a list of friends' birthdates so that you can send cards on time. You can also sort the list into date order so that you can see whose birthday is next. Another useful list is keeping track of friends' addresses. If you have ever seen a worn and tattered address book being pulled out you will realise the value of a list which can be sorted in name order (or address order, if needed) and printed on demand.

To make this address book you could have a column headed *Name*, another column headed *Street*, another headed *Suburb*, another headed *Postcode*. You could also add columns like *Home Phone*, *Work Phone* and *Mobile* to make this list more useful. Please remember that you can also make each column just as wide or narrow as you need it to be.

A list which is best made with pen and paper is your shopping list.

Calendar

Everybody has things which happen regularly: things like monthly bills (telephone and gas) and yearly bills (car insurance and registration). These reminders are easily stored in Excel and printed for your fridge so that you do not forget these important events.

Planning Events

If you are planning an event (perhaps a wedding or a new house) you can use Excel to organise when every task has to be started and completed, and whose responsibility it is to perform each task.

Rain Gauge

Use Excel to record rainfall by day, by month and by year. This will allow you to keep track of when it has rained in the past and, perhaps, enable you to produce a forecast of when it will rain in the future. If you are good enough you will even be able to sell your forecasts!

As you can see, Excel is not a frightening beast to run from but a really useful tool for all sorts of tasks. It is just a small matter of opening it up and seeing what you can achieve with your copy. You probably have a copy of Excel on your computer if you bought a copy of Microsoft Office Home and Student.

Be brave and take the plunge! You cannot ruin anything.

Further Information

Nothing this week.