

The FE College Homepage Best Practice Preview Report



This preview report gives an overview of the FE College Homepage Best Practice Report.

The full report contains over 300 pages of homepage design best practice and is specifically for all marketing and web development professionals working within the FE sector.

The goal of the FE College Homepage Best Practice Report is to offer you a resource that you can continually refer to when you are looking to test improvements or make changes to your College's homepage.

Every time you want to make changes the report can be your first point of reference. There are numerous strategies and examples of how colleges are promoting their provision and services to their target audiences.

You can use the Best Practice Report to demonstrate how other colleges are implementing specific strategies or how they are using their homepage to engage specific learners. Referring back to this report will ensure that you are never short of ideas on how to improve your homepage and website as a whole.

Marketing and Web Development Teams can use this report to consider layout and content ideas. If you are looking to redesign your homepage you can use these examples to pass to your designers to help them to create the look and feel you are striving for.

The College Homepage Best Practice Report shows you practical guidelines to continually improve your college's homepage without a costly redesign...

- 46 examples of FE and Sixth Form college home pages to benchmark against...
- 579 screenshots and examples of best practice from FE and Sixth Form college homepages...
- 24 homepage design best practice factors to help you improve your user's experience...
- Feedback from prospective full time learners, part time learners and employers on what they look for on college homepages...
- Answers to the 40 most frequently asked questions from FE college Marketing Managers and Web Developers about homepage design best practice...

Go to Page 25 to discover how your College can:

- **Receive up to 40% discount off the full report**
- **Receive bonus reports worth £588**
- **Benefit from FEmarketing's money back guarantee if you are not 100% satisfied with The FE College Homepage Best Practice Report...**

Section 1. The FE College Website Best Practice Research Project

The motivation for producing the College Website Best Practice Reports arose from FEmarketing's consultations with over fifty FE colleges on their current website design and online marketing strategies.

A number of college Marketing Managers and Website Developers expressed their frustration about the lack of quality research available to the FE sector on college website design and online marketing.

FEmarketing continually monitor how FE and Sixth Form colleges utilise their website to engage learners and employers. Our clients ask us to recommend other FE college websites that are implementing the strategies we advocate in our consultations.

This report is the first of a series of College Websites Best Practice Research Reports that will be published by FEmarketing.

FEmarketing reviewed over 441 FE and Sixth Form college websites across the UK (including microsites and employer websites) to benchmark how colleges are using their website to:

- Engage prospective school leavers and adult learners
- Engage Higher Education and International learners
- Promote training and consultancy to employers and organisations
- Promote their college restaurant, beauty salon and other revenue generating services to the general public

The core objective of this research is to demonstrate how every college could be continually improving their website to promote their provision and services by implementing tried, tested and proven online marketing strategies.

The research reports will be the most comprehensive analysis available to the FE sector on:

- How colleges are marketing themselves online
- What learners and employers are looking for on college websites.
- How to continually improve your college website

1.1 Who Is This Homepage Best Practice Report For?

As will be emphasised throughout this report the importance of your college's homepage cannot be underestimated.

In FEmarketing's opinion your homepage requires continual improvement and thus warrants a standalone report on best practice to help you achieve your college's online objectives.

The College Homepage Best Practice Report is specifically for all marketing and web development professionals working within the FE sector.

The objective of the report is to provide marketing and web development teams with an easily accessible reference about the best practices for homepage design and usability.

Whether you are managing or tasked with redesigning your college's website this best practice report will give you:

- A framework to benchmark your college's homepage against other FE college homepages
- Best Practice guidelines for all key aspects of homepage design
- Practical tips on how to improve your homepage including layout, navigation and course search functionality

The goal of the FE College Homepage Best Practice Report is to help you to further improve your homepage and user experience for your website visitors...

1.2 How The Homepage Best Practice Report Was Compiled

The research for this report commenced in August 2008 and was completed in June 2009.

Phase 1:

- Between August 2008 and April 2009 FEmarketing benchmarked 441 websites from FE colleges in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Phase 2:

- FEmarketing asked some prospective learners comprising of school leavers, adults returning to education and employers to offer feedback on fifty FE college homepages.
- The objectives were to observe how they navigated a college's homepage, the links they clicked on and which content they read or ignored.

Phase 3:

- FEmarketing newsletter subscribers were invited to submit their most burning questions about homepage design - over 100 colleges responded with the questions they wanted answering.

Phase 4:

- FEmarketing approached over 50 FE colleges to invite them to participate in the best practice report so that we could answer the most frequently asked questions using screenshots of their college's homepage to demonstrate best practice.

Phase 5:

- Participating colleges were surveyed on how their college managed their website and to evaluate how they decide on homepage content

1.3 How Is This Best Practice Report Structured?

Here is an overview of how this Best Practice Report is structured:

- ***Section 2: Why Your College Home Page Is So Important***

We examine why some web usability experts advocate that your homepage is arguably the most important page on your college's website.

You will discover:

- Your core objectives for your college's homepage
- Why your homepage can help your visitors to achieve their goals
- Why your homepage is the most valuable real estate in the world
- How Google Analytics can help you track your homepage performance
- Why some visitors may leave your website within seconds of landing on your homepage...
- The 3 homepage challenges every college website developer faces
- Four key criteria that your college's homepage MUST communicate to your visitors

- ***Section 3: What Your Visitors Want To See on Your Homepage***

The most frequently asked question FEmarketing received from FE Marketing Managers and Web Developers in compiling this report was

“What do visitors want to see on our homepage”

In this section we outline what prospective learners and employers told us when we asked them to review college homepages.

You will discover:

- The images that received the most negative feedback from school leavers
- Which content you should consider moving off your homepage
- What parents liked to see on a college homepage and what school leavers ignored
- How school leavers navigated college homepages
- What actions school leavers took upon landing on a college homepage
- The images that school leavers liked to see on homepages
- How this content can destroy a college's credibility with school leavers
- Why 63% of school leavers prefer watching videos on homepages
- The images that adult learners wanted to see on college homepages
- The navigation options that helped adult learners find the content they are seeking
- Why employers were critical of some college homepages
- Why employers did not use course search
- The 7 biggest homepage mistakes that colleges are making

You may be surprised at the content they look at but more importantly the content they tend to ignore on the homepage.

- ***Section 4: Factors To Consider In Homepage Design***

In this section we examine the factors that contribute towards an effective FE college homepage.

We explore the areas that you could consider integrating into any future homepage design.

You will discover:

- The one element that will guarantee your homepage continually improves over time
- Ten questions to ask before making changes to your college's homepage
- How to determine what content to include on your homepage
- What web developers hate to encounter and how to overcome it
- Two important considerations you must address on your homepage
- The actions you want your visitors to take when they land on your homepage
- One of the most critical aspects of web design and why so many colleges are getting it wrong...
- Five benchmarks to check that your homepage copy is effective
- How to check your images meet these three critical criteria
- Why your navigation is critical to helping your visitors achieve their objectives
- Why naming your target groups is essential
- The Google Analytics tool that several colleges ignore...and why it is a major mistake
- The two kinds of searchers that your homepage must cater for
- Five features to consider including in your graphic header
- The News items to feature on your homepage...
- The dilemma about promoting your job vacancies on your homepage
- Do you REALLY need to link to this area from your homepage?

- ***Section 5: Answers To Questions From FE Managers***

FEmarketing received questions from over one hundred FE colleges on their most burning questions about homepage design.

The most popular question by some distance was "what do visitors want to see on our college's homepage" which we address in Section 3.

We compiled the forty most frequently asked questions and used screenshots from participating FE colleges to answer their question or to demonstrate how colleges are implementing specific features on their homepage.

You will discover how FE and Sixth Form colleges are:

- Utilising Google Analytics data to improve their visitor's experience

- Offering navigation options to help direct visitors to the content they are seeking
- Using copy and welcome messages to sell the benefits of their college
- Promoting their provision via banner advertising
- Marketing their services to the public such as restaurants and beauty treatments
- Showcasing their academic achievements
- Promoting their apprenticeship provision
- Using course search to help visitors find the courses they are seeking
- Offering visitors the opportunity to download prospectuses
- Promoting their online enrolment procedures
- Targeting parents and schools on their homepage
- Offering training courses for the unemployed
- Engaging employers and promoting Train to Gain
- Promoting their Diplomas to prospective learners
- Marketing their Higher Education and International provision
- Using student testimonials to promote their college
- Displaying their Governance information
- Promoting their Latest News and Events
- Offering accessibility options on their homepage
- Displaying their Ofsted feedback
- Using video to promote their courses and facilities
- Promoting their social networking pages such as Facebook, MySpace, YouTube and Twitter

• ***Section 6: Feedback from FE & Sixth Form College Marketing Managers & Web Developers***

In this section we focus on the feedback received from College Marketing and Web Development Teams who participated in this research report.

We asked them eight questions ranging from when they last redesigned their website to how they would like to improve the visitor experience.

Our objective was to gain a thorough understanding of how colleges internally manage their website and how they determine their homepage content.

You will discover:

- How frequently colleges redesign their homepage
- The five core reasons why colleges redesign their website
- Which department tends to manage the college website
- What percentage of colleges have a web developer working within the marketing department
- The frequency changes are made to the homepage
- What percentage of colleges undertook ongoing testing of their homepage
- How often college evaluate their Google Analytics data
- How colleges have used Google Analytics to improve their homepage
- Who decides internally on the homepage content
- The improvements colleges would like to make to their homepage to increase online enquiries and improve the user experience

- **Section 7: Participating College Homepages**

In this section we analyse 46 FE and Sixth Form college homepages.

You will discover:

- How the colleges appears in the Google Search Engine Results Pages (critical for visitors using your college name as their search term)
- How much of the college homepages appear 'above the fold' (essential to ascertain what content can be viewed without scrolling the page)
- The 33 criteria FEmarketing uses to evaluate college homepages
- Numerous examples of best practice that you can test on your college's homepage

1.4 How To Use The Homepage Best Practice Report

If your college has recently redesigned your homepage:

- This report is ideal to help you test further improvements in the months ahead.
- One of the biggest mistakes that FE colleges make is to invest in the initial website design but not allocate resources to continually improve every aspect of the website
- We would urge you to always be testing your homepage to incrementally improve your clickthrough rates and reduce bounce rates.
- We recommend that you study Section 3 on what visitors want to see on your homepage and evaluate if your revised homepage meets the criteria outlined in the research
- If you would like support on testing elements of your homepage then FEmarketing can help you

If your college is planning to revamp your website in the coming months:

- This report will give you numerous ideas and inspiration to further improve your homepage
- We recommend that you
 - Study Section 3 on what visitors want to see on your website
 - Evaluate the suggestions in Section 4 on Homepage Design Factors To Consider
 - Check the responses to the most frequently asked questions in Section 5
 - Go through Section 7 and identify homepage layouts and designs that you like

If a redesign of your college website is not on the agenda:

- You can improve your college's home page without a costly web design - just observe how other colleges are implementing certain best practice strategies and them test them on your home page
- Study the report and look for ideas that are easy to implement and ideally can be undertaken in house at little or no cost.

Section 2. Why Your Colleges Homepage Is So Important

"The core objective of your college's homepage is to effectively communicate the learning opportunities your college offers prospective learners and employers."

Your homepage should be the welcoming first step to helping your visitors to achieve their learning outcomes"

Simon Connor of FEmarketing.co.uk speaking at the College Marketing Network Conference 2008

Jacob Nielsen, one of the world's leading web usability experts, calls the homepage

"The most valuable real estate in the world"

To Nielsen, the homepage is the most important page on any website because it is viewed by more people than any other page on your website.

"60 to 80% of your visitors will land on your home page"

This is backed up by FEmarketing's analysis of over forty FE college's Google Analytics data.

On average between 60% and 80% of colleges website visitors will land initially on the homepage.



Top Landing Page For One FE College

The graphic above for one FE college Google Analytics Report shows a combined total of 71.45% of the college's website traffic entered via the homepage (represented by '/home' and '/').

Even if visitors do land on interior pages then a significant number will naturally navigate back to the homepage if the initial landing page does not deliver the content they are seeking.

"Homepage offers the first impression of your college..."

Some web usability experts argue that the content promoting your provision and motivating your visitors to take a specific call to action (such as Apply Now / Enrol Now or Contact Us) are just as important as the homepage.

Certainly there is little to be gained from designing an effective homepage if the internal content does not generate enquiries for your college.

We would argue that your homepage is so important because for many of your first time website visitors it may be their first impression of your college.

FEmarketing's research has revealed that effective college homepages benefit naturally from higher clickthrough rates and lower bounce rates.

"Your homepage ...starts the online engagement process"

Your homepage may not be wholly responsible for instantly motivating your visitors to apply for courses or training but an effective homepage can initiate the online engagement process.

Or to put it another way, an ineffective homepage can hinder your chances of motivating visitors to fully investigate your provision.

"Your visitors can make instant judgements based on your homepage"

FEmarketing's research with prospective learners reinforced the belief that your website visitors can make instant judgements about your college based on their first impression of your homepage.

We have observed prospective learners and employers exiting college homepages in a matter of seconds because they did not feel it **instantly** met their needs. They did not even venture into the site to ascertain if that college offered the provision they were looking for because the homepage did not inspire confidence in the institution.

We observed that this was the case especially with employers looking on FE college websites – if the links to information on training programmes were not obvious then they assumed that college did not offer the provision and they exited the site.

2.1 FE College Homepage Objectives

You will discover:

- Your core objectives for your college's homepage
- The 3 homepage challenges every college website developer faces
- Four key criteria that your college's homepage **MUST** communicate to your visitors

Section 3. What Visitors Want To See On Your Homepage

The most frequently asked question FE colleges asked FEmarketing during research for this report was “what do visitors want to see on our homepage”.

In order to evaluate how visitors navigate FE college websites, FEmarketing undertook user testing with participants representing three core target groups:

- Year 11 secondary school pupils (15/16 years old)
- Adults who could be interested in returning to education
- Employers who use external training organisations

The research highlights some areas that your college should consider paying attention to when looking to improve your website.

3.1 How The Research Was Undertaken

The objective of the research was to observe how visitors navigate a wide range of FE college websites to identify which content they clicked on and which content they ignored.

A total of sixty individuals participated consisting of twenty from each of the target audiences:

- Year 11 secondary school pupils (15/16 years old)
- Adults who could be interested in returning to education
- Employers who use external training organisations

From experience we felt that this would give a representative sample and feedback to make general observations on user behaviour.

In order to duplicate this exercise for an individual college a much smaller sample group could suffice.

As facilitators we sat next to the participants to observe their behaviour as they navigated through the FE and Sixth Form college websites.

We asked the participants to think aloud as they were performing their tasks and to make observations and comments about why they clicked on specific links.

Each session lasted between sixty and ninety minutes, using a PC (with the screen resolution set at 1024 X 768) with broadband connection.

Over the course of the research a total of fifty FE college and Sixth Form college websites were viewed by the participants.

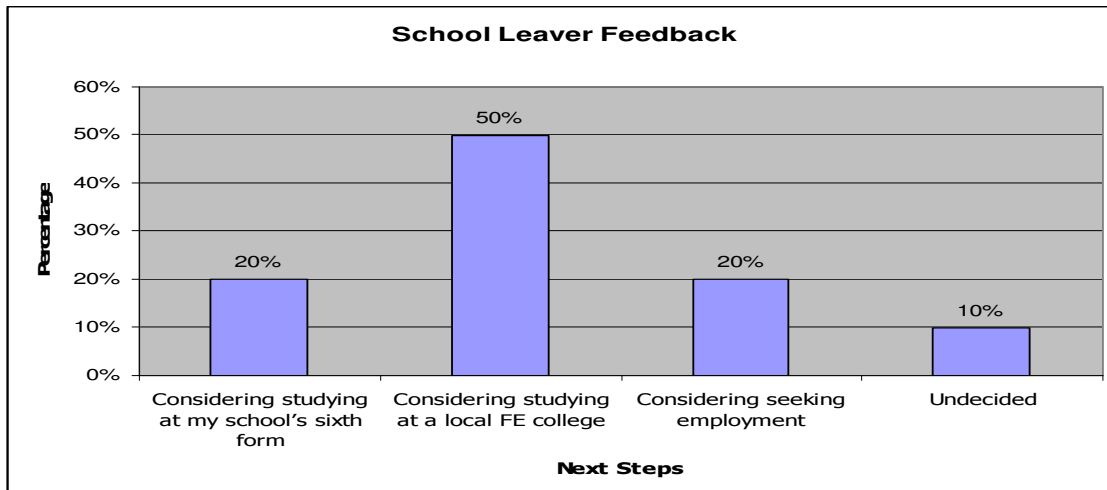
3.2 School Leavers Feedback

The twenty school leaver participants were all in Year 11 of their local school and in the process of reviewing their post GCSE options.

The participants consisted of twelve males and eight females.

The participants were asked to select one of the following statements which reflected their current situation:

- I am considering studying at my school's sixth form
- I am considering studying at a local FE college
- I am considering seeking employment
- I am undecided on my next steps



3.2.1 Tasks

The group were asked to visit FE and Sixth Form college websites as if they were interested in finding out more about their post 16 options.

We asked the participants to think of a qualification or vocational course they would like to pursue and to explore how effective the various college websites were in:

- Providing the relevant course information
- Promoting the benefits of studying at the college
- Outlining the next steps should they wish to request further information or to enrol

3.2.2 Homepage Content That School Leavers Considered Important

3.2.3 Homepage Content Disliked By School Leavers

3.2.4 Images of Principals On The Homepage

3.2.5 Images of College Facilities

3.2.6 Homepage Copy

3.2.7 Course Links & Course Search

3.2.8 Do School Leavers Scroll?

3.2.9 Latest News

3.2.10 Images of Learners

3.2.11 Videos

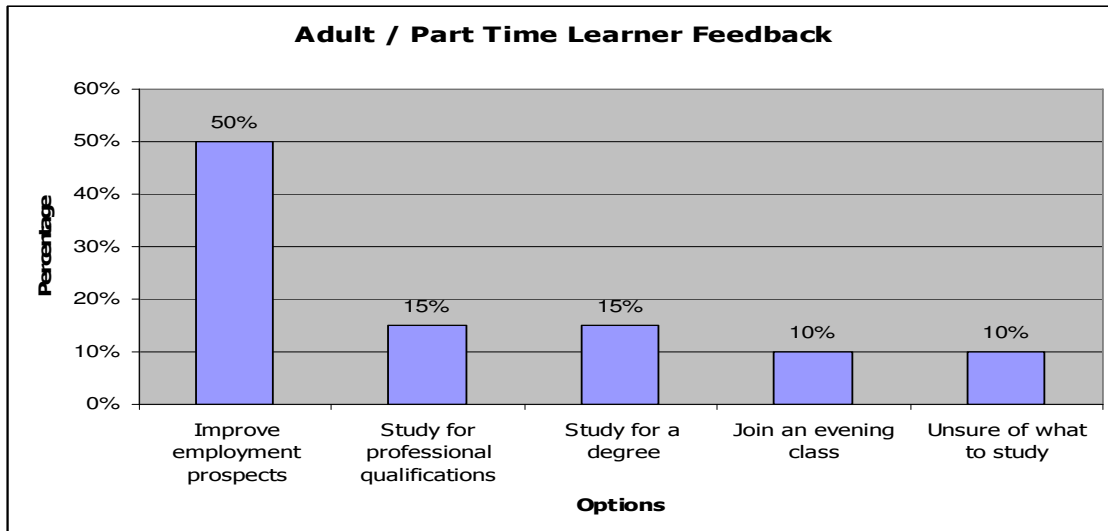
3.3 Adult / Part-Time Learners Feedback

The twenty potential adult learners were selected on the basis that they could be considering returning to education.

The participants consisted of thirteen females and seven males.

The participants were asked to select one of the following statements which reflected their current situation:

- I am considering returning to education to improve my employment prospects
- I am considering returning to education to study for a degree
- I am considering returning to education to join an evening class
- I am considering returning to education to study for professional qualifications
- I am considering returning to education but am unsure of what to study



3.3.1 Tasks

The group were asked to visit FE college websites as if they were interested in finding out more about their preferred subject of interest.

We asked the participants to think of a course they would like to pursue and to explore how effective the various college websites were in:

- Providing the relevant course information
- Promoting the benefits of studying at the college
- Outlining the next steps should they wish to request further information or to enrol.

3.3.2 Homepage Content That Adult Learners Considered Important

3.3.3 Homepage Content That Adult Learners Disliked

3.3.4 Homepage Images

3.3.5 Homepage Copy

3.3.6 Course Links & Course Search

3.3.7 Do Adult Learners Scroll?

3.3.8 Latest News

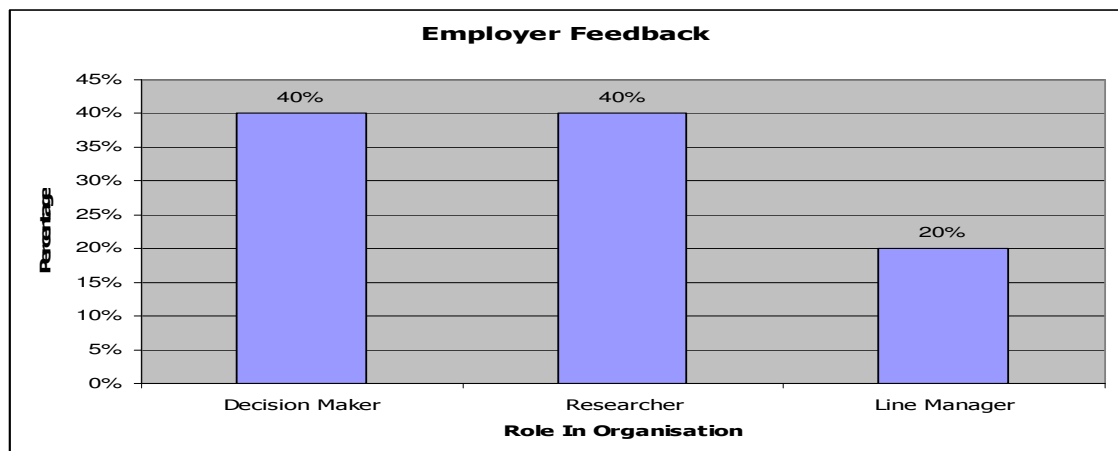
3.4 Employer Feedback

The twenty participants representing employers were invited to participate on the basis that they occasionally use external training organisations for staff development.

The participants consisted of twelve females and eight males.

The participants were asked to select one of the following statements which reflected their current situation:

- I am the decision maker responsible for selecting training organisations
- I work with the team of employees who would receive training
- I help identify relevant training organisations on behalf of colleagues



3.4.1 Tasks

The group were asked to visit FE college websites as if they were actually sourcing training on behalf of their organisation.

We asked the participants to think of training courses they would normally outsource to external providers and explore how effective the various college websites were in:

- Providing the relevant training course information
- Promoting the benefits of working with the college
- Outlining the next steps should they wish to request further information

3.4.2 Homepage Content That Employers Considered Important

3.4.3 Homepage Content That Employers Disliked

3.4.4 Homepage Images

3.4.5 Homepage Copy

3.4.6 Course Links & Course Search

3.4.7 Do Employers Scroll?

3.4.8 Latest News

3.5 The 7 Biggest Homepage Mistakes Colleges Are Making

The feedback from participants in this research highlighted:

- How they navigate college homepages
- What images they like and don't like
- What content they read and ignore

Here is a summary of the biggest homepage mistakes that colleges are making based on the feedback from participants....

3.5.1 Mistake 1: Homepage Too Confusing To Visitors

3.5.2 Mistake 2: Not Focusing On The Visitor

3.5.3 Mistake 3: Unclear Navigation

3.5.4 Mistake 4: Ineffective Search Options

3.5.5 Mistake 5: Irrelevant Content

3.5.6 Mistake 6: Hidden Content

3.5.7 Mistake 7: Irrelevant Latest News

Section 4. Homepage Design Factors To Consider

In this section we outline over 20 factors to consider when redesigning your college's homepage.

The mistake we see FE colleges make is to assume that once the homepage is signed off by the Marketing team or Senior Management that it is completed and that changes should not be made.

The goal should be to continually test improvements that can enhance the user experience and increase click throughs to specific content.

We strongly encourage you to consider using the design factors as a checklist when you are designing improvements to your homepage.

In this section you will discover:

- The one element that will guarantee your homepage continually improves over time
- Ten questions to ask before making changes to your college's homepage
- How to determine what content to include on your homepage
- What web developers hate to encounter and how to overcome it
- Two important considerations you must address on your homepage
- The actions you want your visitors to take when they land on your homepage
- One of the most critical aspects of web design and why so many colleges are getting it wrong...
- Five benchmarks to check that your homepage copy is effective
- How to check your images meet these three critical criteria
- Why your navigation is critical to helping your visitors achieve their objectives
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- The Google Analytics tool that several colleges ignore...and why it is a major mistake
- The two kinds of searchers that your homepage must cater for
- Five features to consider including in your graphic header
- The News items to feature on your homepage...
- The dilemma about promoting your job vacancies on your homepage
- Do you REALLY need to link to this area from your homepage?

Section 5. Questions From FE & Sixth Form Colleges

In this section we answer questions submitted to us from Marketing Managers and Web Developers working in FE and Sixth Form colleges.

Over 500 Marketing Managers, Business Development Managers and Web Developers from 200 FE and Sixth Form colleges subscribe to receive regular updates on online marketing best practice reports from FEmarketing.

We received responses from 104 FE and Sixth Form Colleges outlining the questions that they wanted this Report to address.

The report answers the forty most frequently asked questions from FE colleges.

We recommend that as you are reading through each question that you highlight the layouts and examples that you would like to incorporate or recommend for your homepage.

You will discover how FE and Sixth Form colleges are:

- Utilising Google Analytics data to improve their visitor's experience
- Offering navigation options to help direct visitors to the content they are seeking
- Using copy and welcome messages to sell the benefits of their college
- Promoting their provision via banner advertising
- Marketing their services to the public such as restaurants and beauty treatments
- Showcasing their academic achievements
- Promoting their apprenticeship provision
- Using course search to help visitors find the courses they are seeking
- Offering visitors the opportunity to download prospectuses
- Promoting their online enrolment procedures
- Targeting parents and schools on their homepage
- Offering training courses for the unemployed
- Engaging employers and promoting Train to Gain
- Promoting their Diplomas to prospective learners
- Marketing their Higher Education and International provision
- Using student testimonials to promote their college
- Displaying their Governance information
- Promoting their Latest News and Events
- Offering accessibility options on their homepage
- Displaying their Ofsted feedback
- Using video to promote their courses and facilities
- Promoting their social networking pages such as Facebook, MySpace, YouTube and Twitter

- 5.1 One Screen Home Pages – “We Want Our Home Page To Appear On One Screen – How Are Other Colleges Doing This?”**
- 5.2 Multiple Screens – “Visitors Have To Scroll To View All the Content On Our Home Page – How Are Other Colleges Dealing With This?”**
- 5.3 Drop Down Menus – “How Are Colleges Using Drop Down Menus?”**
- 5.4 Copy – “What Copy Should Our College Use On Our Homepage?”**
- 5.5 Banner Advertising – “How Are Colleges Promoting Their Latest Provision On Their Home Page?”**
- 5.6 Commercial Services – “How Are Colleges Promoting Their Services To The Public On Their Home Page?”**
- 5.7 Academic Successes – “How Are Colleges Promoting Their Academic Achievements On Their Home Page?”**
- 5.8 Apprenticeships – “How Are Colleges Promoting Their Apprenticeship Provision On Their Home Page?”**
- 5.9 Navigation – “How Are Colleges Using Navigation to Promote Their Provision On Their Homepage?”**
- 5.10 Quick Search – “Would Offering A Quick Search Option Help Our Visitors?”**

5.11 Course Search – “Should We Offer Course Search On Our Homepage?”

5.12 Prospectus – “Should We Offer Links To Our Prospectuses On Our Homepage?”

5.13 Apply – “How Are Colleges Displaying Their Application Process On Their Homepage?”

5.14 Parents – “How Are Colleges Targeting Parents On Their Homepage?”

5.15 Schools – “How Are Colleges Promoting Their School Links On Their Homepage?”

5.16 Training for the Unemployed – “How Are Colleges Promoting Training for Adults On Their Homepage?”

5.17 Part Time Learners – “How Are Colleges Engaging Adult Learners On Their Homepage?”

5.18 Employers – “How Are Colleges Engaging Employers On Their Homepage?”

5.19 Train to Gain – “How Are Colleges Promoting Train to Gain On Their Homepage?”

5.20 Diplomas – “How Are Colleges Promoting Diplomas On Their Homepage?”

5.21 Higher Education – “How Are Colleges Promoting Their HE Provision On Their Homepage?”

5.22 International Learners – “How Are Colleges Promoting Their International Provision On Their Homepage?”

5.23 Sixth Form College – “How Are Sixth Form Colleges Promoting Their Provision On Their Homepage?”

5.24 Testimonials – “How Are Colleges Displaying Student Testimonials On Their Homepage?”

5.25 Governors – “How Are Colleges Displaying Information About Governance On Their Homepage?”

5.26 Latest News – “How Are Colleges Displaying Their Latest News On Their Homepage?”

5.27 College Policies – “Should Colleges Display Their Equality and Diversity Policies On Their Homepage?”

5.28 Accessibility – “How Are Colleges Displaying Their Accessibility Help Or Statements On Their Homepage?”

5.29 Footer Navigation – “How Are Colleges Using Their Footer Navigation?”

5.30 Awards & Accreditations – “How Are Colleges Displaying Their Awards On Their Homepage?”

5.31 Ofsted – “Should We Display Our Ofsted Results On Our Homepage?”

5.32 Straplines – “Should We Display Our College’s Strapline On Our Homepage?”

5.33 Video – “How Are Colleges Using Video On Their Homepage?”

5.34 Images – “How Are Colleges Using Images On Their Homepage?”

5.35 Contact Details – “Should We Display Our Contact Details On Our Homepage?”

5.36 Student & Staff Access – “How Are Colleges Displaying Information For Existing Students And Staff?”

5.37 Social Networking – “Should We Be Promoting Our Facebook page On Our Homepage?”

5.38 Header Graphic – “How Are Colleges Using Their Header Graphic?”

5.39 Newsletter – “How Are Colleges Using Their Homepage To Motivate Visitors To Join Their Mailing List?”

5.40 Visitor Feedback – “How Are Colleges Asking For Feedback About Their Website?”

Section 6. Feedback From College Marketing Managers & Web Developers

In this section we focus on the feedback received from College Marketing and Web Development Teams who participated in this research report.

We asked eight questions:

1. When was the last time you redesigned the college's website / homepage (such as changed the layout or navigation etc)?
2. What was the main reason for the redesign?
3. Who manages the website internally at the college? Do they work within Marketing or IT?
4. How often do you make changes to your homepage?
5. Do you do any testing on your homepage? Do you test different versions of the homepage and evaluate the results?
6. How often do you study your Google Analytics statistics? Has the data motivated you to improve any aspect of your homepage?
7. Who decides internally which content goes on the homepage (such as content, new stories, images, testimonials, navigation etc)?
8. If you had the budget, what improvements would you like to make to your homepage which may help increase enquiries or improve the user experience?

Our objective was to gain a thorough understanding of how colleges internally manage their website and how they determine their homepage content.

You will discover:

- How frequently colleges redesign their homepage
- The five core reasons why colleges redesign their website
- What percentage of colleges have a web developer working within the marketing department
- The frequency changes are made to the homepage
- What percentage of colleges undertook ongoing testing of their homepage
- How colleges have used Google Analytics to improve their homepage
- Who decides internally on the homepage content
- The improvements colleges would like to make to their homepage to increase online enquiries and improve the user experience


Section 7. FE & Sixth Form College Homepages

In this section we analyse 46 FE and Sixth Form College homepages.

If you are looking for ideas to improve your homepage then you can acquire numerous ideas just from studying these 46 examples.

We have listed 33 of the factors that FEmarketing look for when we are evaluating college homepages.

As previously outlined we viewed all the college homepages in 1024 X 768 so some homepages do appear on multiple screens.

The thick red dotted line, , identifies the content that can be viewed by visitors (using a resolution of 1024 X 768) without having to scroll the page.

This will help you evaluate which of your content you want to be visible above the fold and which content can be assigned further down the homepage.

You will also observe that we have included how each college appears in the Google search engine results pages.

As a significant proportion of your visitors will have used your college name in their initial search it is critical that you monitor how your college appears in Google.

It is recommended that you monitor how the colleges are utilising their meta title and the meta description tags:

As you go through the pages we recommend that you:

- Identity layouts and designs that are appealing to you
- Evaluate the navigation options that the colleges are using
- Monitor how colleges are displaying images of their learners and facilities
- Check the college's current homepages and evaluate any improvements they have made to their design and content since publication of this report.

Claim Your 40% Discount Off The FE College Homepage Design Best Practice Report When You Reserve Your Copy By Friday 11th December 2009...

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Reserve Your Copy Of The FE College Homepage Best Practice Report & Bonuses..

Telephone: Jason Ball on 01844 355679 (please leave your name and telephone number if the lines are busy)

Email: Jason Ball at info@femarketing.co.uk

About FEmarketing

FEmarketing deliver online marketing strategies, research and consultancy services designed to meet the needs of the FE sector.

Over 500 Marketing Managers, Business Development Managers and Web Developers from 200+ FE and Sixth Form colleges subscribe to receive regular updates on online marketing best practice reports from FEmarketing.

To subscribe to our FREE monthly newsletter and to receive our latest research reports go to <http://www.femarketing.co.uk>

FEmarketing.co.uk was launched to specifically help FE and Sixth Form colleges to engage more learners and employers and develop additional revenue streams via their website.

FEmarketing.co.uk have developed a curriculum of online marketing coaching programmes to help college marketing, website development and employer engagement teams to significantly increase their return on their investment from their website activities.

We are not a web design agency – so we will NOT be offering you web design and content management services.

You will receive the best advice available on helping you to drive more visitors to your college's website, increase your online visibility and your online enquiries BUT we will NOT be offering to design or build your college website for you.

We can however work alongside you to help you manage your web development projects and ensure your team are implementing the latest tried, tested and proven online marketing strategies to help you engage even more learners and employers.

Go to <http://www.femarketing.co.uk/services> to read about how we can help your college.

Contact Simon Connor, Director of Marketing on 01844 355682 or by email: simon@femarketing.co.uk

What Colleges Say About FEmarketing

"FEmarketing play a crucial role in developing our college's online marketing strategy. They helped clarify what our new website needed to help us achieve our business objectives. Working alongside both the marketing team and the design company, FEmarketing ensured solutions to problems could be found. FEmarketing continues to partner with the college to ensure the new website is optimised effectively and continually improved."

Dave Cooper
Director of Marketing
Solihull College



"An excellent review of our website with clear, practical recommendations to improve our online marketing to businesses. An honest and straightforward report on the effectiveness of our online marketing. The recommendations from this Health Check will inform our future planning."

Gillian Donald
Director of Business Enterprises
Bournemouth & Poole College



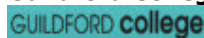
"The College is extremely pleased with the detailed report received from FEmarketing with regard to the Website Health Check. The detailed analysis highlighted some very interesting issues which could have otherwise been overlooked. The report has vastly contributed to the decision to re-design the entire website and in the way the College analyses its data in future. The benefits of purchasing the report have well outweighed the investment! Many Thanks"

Lisa Edge
Business Systems Manager - Employer Responsiveness
Blackburn College



"A big thank you for your Website Optimisation Health Check Report. It was packed with brilliant ideas on how to engage learners and employers. Not only did you give us a comprehensive analysis of our college's search engine rankings and comparisons with our main competitors, you also outlined recommendations on how to make SEO and online marketing work better for us."

Amila Moslimani
Web Services Manager
Guildford College



Read more testimonials by going to
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