

Understanding Web Standards...

...the key to good websites

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Passion for effective websites



Web Standards are a set of best-practice guidelines to build better websites. The guidelines focus on getting the best from the coding, to build cleaner, lighter websites that do the job you want them to.

There are many benefits to build a site the Web Standards way.

Cross-compatibility: In the past there has always been the necessity to design and build a website for one or more browsers. There were a lot of issues between different browsers and even different versions of the same browser. By following Web Standards it is easy to get a better level of cross-compatibility across all browsers, so more people get to see the website the way you want them to.

Forward-compatibility: Newer web browsers are designed on the principals of Web Standards because of the benefits and a recognition that it's the best way forward. By adopting the Web Standards way of thinking when a site is built now, it should save on needless alterations at a later date and help to future-proof your website.

Centralised control of presentation: At the core of Web Standards is the idea that presentation should be separated from content. The content of the site, the important information you want to tell people about, is handled using HTML and XHTML. For the look of the website, we use CSS (Cascading Style Sheets). By separating the parts like this you immediately gain much more control over the whole presentation of your site, enabling site-wide changes to be made much easier whilst freeing up the HTML to do the job it was meant to.

Device independence: Not everyone will see the website you build on the same computer system as you. There are now so many types of monitor, system, browser and hand held device. Again, this is where CSS can help out. Instead of having to rebuild your website for each device, by making new style sheets you can manipulate the existing pages accordingly and offer many different viewing options.

Search Engine optimisation: A properly set up Web Standards page is far more likely to achieve good web searching results than a poor one. The main reason being that the computer itself is a vital part in the viewer website chain. If the computer your viewer is using cannot see your website properly, then there is no way the viewer will see it properly. Computers like information laid out a certain way, they also assign importance to the content of your site in different ways, ways that are not necessarily obvious to a viewer. A properly built page, that follows Web Standards guidelines is much more attractive to the search engines than a badly put together page.

Lightweight pages: By separating content from presentation and letting the HTML do the job it was designed to do, you instantly reduce the amount of code in your page, because you can remove a lot of the HTML that was only there for presentation. This gives you lighter pages that have less memory, load faster and are easier to update.

Accessibility: Web Standards allows you to make your website more accessible to everyone, not just people with disabilities, but everyone, no matter what computer or device they view it on, this opens your site to a wider market.

Expectations: All of these examples are very important reasons why Web Standards is the way to go, but these final points probably sum up better than the rest why Web Standards is the best option. Millions of sites now conform to Web Standards guidelines and in order to compete, you need to as well. If you are only just thinking about a website, or your site is several years old and needs updating, or your site may have been built recently and does not conform, Web Standards is now the way forward.

squarefox understands the need to get both the design and build right to compete in ever more competitive markets. With extensive design and marketing expertise we will provide advice and support from start to completion.

To see how we can help please contact **Peter Hadley** on **01886 884810** or **peter@squarefox.co.uk**