

So your PA is a web specialist?

By [Donna Stephen](#)

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Have you seen the kind of job ad looking for a PA/web co-ordinator, including secretarial duties and running the company web strategy/SEO/social media? I have - too many times. These same companies use their poor results obtained by their junior PA for their website traffic, as justification for why it's not worth investing in a "qualified" or "expensive" web specialist.

Well, it's a catch-22 isn't it? If you are too cheap to invest in qualified skills, is it any surprise that you're not getting results? If your PA is using a four-year old "SEO manual" (There's a manual? What is that anyway?) to learn how to run content strategy on your site, in between fetching the boss' laundry from the dry-cleaners, is it any surprise that your website is performing poorly?

The web has matured. It has become the arena of many different kinds of specialists, and that's a good thing. Expensive at times, but good for the interweb, as a whole.

Big local companies are beginning to see that. The local South African banks, for example, are beginning to see the value of employing specialists, as is demonstrated by the flood of ads for online specialists, online marketing managers and digital or campaign managers, by all the major banks in the last six months.

Web is a unique medium

Perhaps asking for people who have ten years experience working for a major financial institution is the wrong way to go, though. How you can be a digital specialist in all things web, if you've been sitting in a cubicle at a bank head office for ten years, I don't know. And I don't understand how their HR departments couldn't think their way out of that little inconsistency. That aside, the point I'm making is that the web is a unique medium, and companies who have websites that need to perform must recognise this if their online presence is to help their business succeed, by any measure.

And no, the secretary CAN'T do it, even if they can spell, or he/she would be a web specialist, not a secretary; sending them on a course for a day isn't going to cut it either. Nor, in my honest opinion, can someone who has been running personal banking for ten years.

Would you ask the brick-layer to design your house as well? Or the architect to lay the bricks? The reason there are so many successful digital agencies (and traditional agencies converting to digital) is because it is a specialist arena, not everybody can do it, and, like any other investment you make in your business, it costs money.

So how do you go about making your online presence something to be noticed?

Quick tips for a successful web operation

Ok, that heading may be a bit of a mis-representation - there is no "quick" way to get it right, but you can start the journey sensibly:

- Assess your business requirements.
- Make a list of your online business goals.
- Do some research to find out how these digital end-results can be met.
- If you're not sure of the kind of skills or specialist you need, outsource it.
- Test your results against your goals.
- Hire the right kind of skills permanently, or contract in the skills.

It all seems very logical, until you see the next job ad for office manager/web person.

ABOUT DONNA STEPHEN

Donna Stephen is the founder of specialist web optimisation, development and strategy agency, Urge Media. She has been working in the internet industry for over 12 years and brings a plethora of strategy and web content skills to her company, having worked online for some of South Africa's major brands like MIH, Media24, Ooba and Truworths.

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