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Media Release

Financial Advisers Continue to Underestimate the Power of a Good Website

Friday September 6, 2013. President and Founder of US Based i-Impact Group Mr. Claudio O. Pannunzio sees too many websites of financial advisers just sitting there and doing nothing. What disturbs the communication professional and presenter is that whether a prospective client finds an adviser from a referral or Internet search, the bottom line is that a significant number of them will inevitably visit the website prior to making contact.

Pannunzio points to the KISSmetrics *'Infographic: How Mobile is Changing Business'* industry study in the USA that found Internet searches conducted by computers, Smartphones, iPads and tablets continues to be on the rise and will grow significantly in importance. Consequently, having a well-conceived and functional website increases the odds that an adviser's firm surfaces in Internet searches.

For this reason websites have become virtual storefronts, online business cards, and ultimately, a core element of the overall branding effort.

Regardless of whether the adviser based in the North America or Australia and considering investing in a new website or planning to revamp an existing one, Pannunzio offers **ten tips** to be considered before undertaking the project.

Firstly, determine the **objective** and don't have a website just for the sake of having one. Instead, clearly establish the chief scope of this critical tool by asking the following important questions: Will my website serve as a business-generating tool? A reference platform for my current clients? A medium to attract attention to the expertise and capabilities of my firm?

Attain an in-depth understanding of the **audience**, the issues and problems they're experiencing, and then clearly articulate how they can be helped to address such concern (s).

A visitor who learns that the adviser can provide a solution to their specific problem will be immediately engaged and compelled to read on for a better insight about the practice and its services.

Before design process is commenced the **message** needs to be established in order to cater for the following: A clear and unequivocal positioning of the practice and what it does for its clients including the key differentiators that set it apart from its direct competitors. The message should be clear, concise and in a language that everyone can understand.

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The **content** should endeavour to tell a story throughout the pages of the site, rather than just listing the products and services provided.

Pannunzio said, "Websites overflowing with information, links and tools can put off visitors. Hire a professional writer to craft a story for the site. Ensure that all core messages are woven into the story along with expertise and capabilities. Content should be focussed, concise and feature bullet format paragraphs to facilitate easy reading."

The **use-ability** factor plays a major role in a visitor's engagement on a website. In the Western world, the majority of people tend to follow a 'Z' pattern while browsing a website. They start across the top from the left and end in the bottom right corner of the screen. Pannunzio recommends that advisers ask their website designer to place the most important mark of their identity – the logo – at the top of the Z pattern. Visitors' eyes will naturally follow the path of the Z to its end where a '*call to action*' should be strategically placed.

The growing importance of **mobility** cannot be stressed more highly as several market researches project that by 2014 more users will access the Internet from their phones and tablets than from a computer. If the adviser's website is not accessible to mobile phone users, they significantly increase the odds of losing new business. The mobile version of the site must feature a limited number of pages and condensed content.

The scope of a website is to establish an immediate bond with a visitor. A professional photographer should be engaged to take photos of the team and post them on the site. Also, with the help of the web designer, carefully select **images** that help to amplify the message and capture visitors' attention.

Pannunzio continued, "Use a **video** to increase the time visitors spend on the website. A YouOnTV study revealed that web surfers spend an average of 48 seconds on a specific website. When a site features a video that time jumps to 5:50 minutes. Scientific evidence suggests that one minute of video equals 1.8 million words. Consequently, with a single video frame an adviser can deliver the same amount of information contained in three pages of text".

A **call-to-action** is something designed to induce a visitor to take action. The adviser's goal should be to establish a connection with as many visitors as possible, so give them a reason to remember the business. Offering the opportunity of signing up for a newsletter, downloading a white paper or a free ebook, will prompt visitors to take action and voluntarily give their email address and other valuable demographics. From there the adviser can begin to develop a relationship

In the game of baseball it's, **3 Strikes and You're Out**. The scope of a website is not only to provide good information, but to ensure that information can be accessed and consumed as swiftly as possible. On dated or poorly designed websites, information is accessible only after a string of clicks. On average, three clicks is the threshold visitors tolerate to access information.

Pannunzio concluded, "The website is an adviser's number one marketing tool and is essential for engaging with prospective and existing clients, demonstrating expertise, educating, nurturing relationships or providing potential new customers a solution to their financial or investment problems."

“A well designed and executed website delivers many valuable benefits for an adviser’s practice by keeping clients engaged and providing a steady stream of new business interest and opportunities”.

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Issued Joe Perri & Associates Pty Ltd

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