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# Content is your weak link, goodbye

One year on from the dotcom bomb, the lesson for website owners who want to survive is blatantly obvious: Ignore content at your peril.

Online content consultant and website reviewer and trainer Yvette Nielsen said too many people had unrealistic expectations of the new medium.

"Everyone wants to know how to make money from their website, but the truth is many sites will never turn a profit, and that's okay," Nielsen said.

"A website should be an integral part of an overall business strategy, complementing the real-world parts of the organisation, not necessarily replacing them."

Nielsen, who owns brizcomm.com.au, said the most successful sites were those which made the most of the medium's unique features in order to differentiate themselves from their competitors.

"The web has created a level playing field, attracting players from all over the world, and many businesses have tried to compete on price alone, reducing their margins to the point where they're creating a noose around their own necks.

"The smart sites use the strengths of the web, interactivity, linkability and searchability, to make life easier for people and forge stronger relationships."

Nielsen said people surfed the web for one reason: Content. If that content failed to interest, help, educate or entertain, people clicked away.

"It's a totally different mindset from the traditional market-place where you sell first, then provide service.

"With the web, you have to give useful information and service first and make it easy for people to do business with you if they want to."

Nielsen said a website should not simply duplicate information in existing media, but offer fresh, original content to help distinguish the brand.

"What's the point in having generic, syndicated material or third-party applications if your competitors have them too?

"Focus on what you can do differently, or better, carve out a niche with distinctive, customised content."

Nielsen said every website was a publication and needed editorial guidance.