

Scientific Acoustics

www.scientific-acoustics.com.au

March 2002

Scientific Acoustics is a privately owned acoustic consultancy business that specialises in electro-acoustics. The business activities include PA and loud speaker design, computer modelling, repairs, testing and measurement, training, installation, modifications, trouble shooting and PA hire.

The core operation is the provision of acoustic consultancy for all types of auditoriums, churches, lecture theatres, music and recording studios, halls, meeting rooms and outdoor facilities such as sporting ovals.

Scientific Acoustics maintains an office in Toowoomba and is a one person operation. It has been operating since 1998.

We talked to Peter Patrick, owner at his office in Harth St, Toowoomba, QLD.

Who are your customers?

Architects, building owners and other acoustic consultants around Australia. Most of my customers are not local and I also have some international customers in South East Asia. I have provided advice on the proposed second airport for Bangkok and I may be doing some work in Kuala Lumpur in the near future.

Do you have an established customer base?

Yes.

Are you trying to attract new customers?

Yes.

How does your product / service differ from others?

I take a holistic approach to room acoustics and sound system design.

Who are your competitors?

There are maybe two competitors in Sydney.

How have you been successful?

By delivering a better result.

How do you use digital technology in your business?

I make good use of a digital mobile telephone as I am a one-person operation and am often out on the road. I have 3 computers and one laptop running Microsoft Windows 95 and 98 and Microsoft Office 95 and 97. The computers are not networked. I use MYOB for invoicing, GST and income tax preparation.

I am connected to the Internet via a 56K modem and at least 50% of my business communication is via e-mail. I often send and receive AutoCAD file attachments. I share my modem line with my fax and do not feel the necessity of broadband yet. However some of the downloads I require can be as large as 30Mbyte and so broadband connection would be desirable at times.

The main software I use is Ease that allows me to recreate a 3D virtual room based on the parameters of any building or space I am working on. Ease analyses the acoustics of the space and has a huge database of loudspeakers allowing detailed analysis of any proposed sound system applied to the space.

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The Ease software provides predictive results only and does not make any suggestions regarding a proposed setup. There are probably only 5 full versions of this software in use in Australia. It is expensive with the full version costing about \$US7,000

In addition to Ease, I use a range of specialist software, all of which are orientated towards all aspects of acoustics.

I have had a Web site for 2 to 3 years and have only recently registered a domain name. My son set the Web site up for me. The Web site is basically an on-line brochure.

Who is your on-line audience?

Customers

If it is a development, how is it supposed to help?

The only value of the Web site is as a reference point. I am able to initially get prospective clients to review my Web site so that they can readily understand the services I offer. I have no knowledge of actually securing a client through the Web site but I have had enquiries from people that have found me via the Web site.

Do you have an existing customer database?

Only in the database automatically created in MYOB.

What is your main use of e-mail?

Communicating with clients and colleagues.

Did you write a business plan before you started?

No.

How much time did it take you to get up and running?

I feel that I am still in the process of getting the business up and running.

Where did you go for advice?

I spent some time talking to the Queensland Department of Development.

What were the main risks you took?

Financial.

What advice would you give someone else?

Market research is very important and from market research I knew that my acoustic consultancy service would be in high demand. However I overlooked one major point. It is one thing providing a necessary and hard to come by service, but it is another thing being accepted in the industry.

Until I had earned recognition and acceptance, it was difficult to break into the field. For example, almost every church congregation has a resident sound specialist. Small budgets and group loyalty usually means the resident offers the best advice they can for free. I can tell you free advice on sound & acoustics is on a par with any other kind of free advice.

How do you promote your site?

The Web site is promoted on all printed material and through conversation.

How much does it cost to promote your site?

The cost is negligible.

Case study courtesy of Digital Business Insights Pty Ltd

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Do you ask your customers how to improve your site?

Yes.

Do you host internally or externally?

Externally.

Do you allow transactions on your site?

No.

Do you collect information with forms / surveys?

No.

Can you access the site from anywhere?

Yes.

Is capacity a problem?

Yes.

How many upgrades?

The current Web site is the first version.

Any virus problems?

No.

Any other equipment?

I have a scanner and I would like to purchase a digital camera, but a digital camera to the specifications I need would cost in the vicinity of \$10,000

How did you decide which technology to use?

An IT consultant advised me on the computers and basic system but basically I sort it all out myself.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?

I hope the Web site will assist in getting new clients however the Web site is not a major way of obtaining new clients. If I get meta-tags placed on the new Web site it will assist prospective customers in accessing the Web site.

When I recently registered the domain name and transferred the Web site to the new domain name, the Web site could no longer be found by the on-line search engines. I will need to reregister the new Web site with the search engines.

What are you planning to do next?

My highest priority is to purchase a new state of the art laptop computer for the new Windows version of an old DOS based acoustic program. This would also allow me to have Ease on the laptop. Currently I have to travel with my desktop PC to access Ease on the road, as my current laptop's specifications are inadequate for Ease.

I would also like to purchase a specialist sound level meter for measuring background noise. If I get a new digital camera it will replace my 35mm camera. With the 35mm camera, once the film is developed I must scan the photographs. The digital camera would facilitate the transfer of digital images to reports and records. Finally I would like to update the Web site with a greater focus placed on the acoustic consultancy.

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