



Website Design Checklist

How to prepare for your next website design project

Target Audience

Content

Platform

Features

Before you decide to design a new website, there are several important considerations to be made.

First, what's your motivation?

1. Does your current website no longer appeal to your target audience?
2. Is it difficult to maintain or update with fresh content?
3. Does it contain information designed to convert visitors into customers?
4. Does it have a system in place for maintaining top of mind presence with leads and existing customers?

These are important questions that need to be answered before you embark on a website design project -- and part of the planning process that will help create a much more effective website.

So, why plan a website?

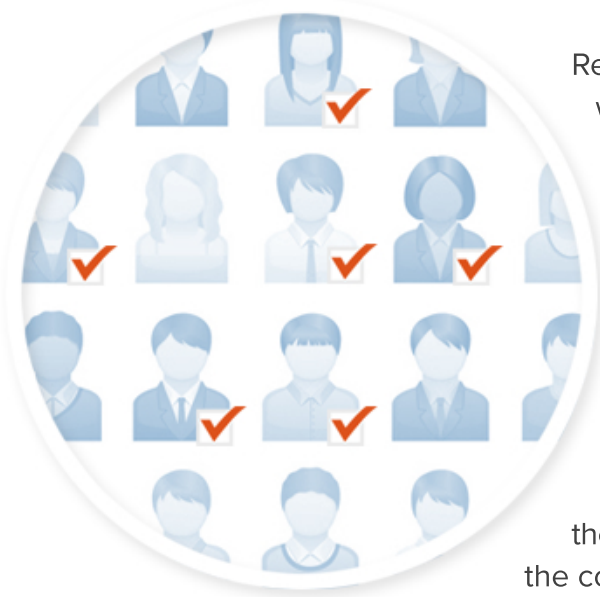
Planning is essential for most businesses and organizations. In reality, many people fail to plan their websites. Sometimes the ever-busy, dynamic nature of running a business is to blame; there are so many operational demands that proper time is not allocated to projects.

This often happens because people fail to recognize that planning for the Web is just as important as planning for anything else in a business. Without a plan, a website will generally fail to produce the desired results.



To aid your planning, follow these 5 important steps ▼

1. Understand Your Target Audience



Regardless of the reason you're designing a new website, one thing's for certain: You must understand your target audience. This is critical because everything from content organization to web page design is contingent upon how well you understand your target audience.

To begin to understand your target audience think about who they are, what problems they have, what solutions they are looking for, and how you can solve their problems. The answers to these questions will be very helpful when writing the content for your website. Use a spreadsheet to organize this information.

2. Who Will Provide the Content?

Ask any web designer what's the biggest bottleneck in a website design project and we guarantee you they will say collecting content. We've personally seen projects delayed for more than two years due to content. Avoid this delay by organizing your content ahead of time. Content includes text, images, links to other websites, and documents, just to name a few.

Begin collecting and organizing your website content into Word documents and files into folders on your pc. If you need to write the verbiage for the website, consider hiring a professional copywriter. They can save you a lot of time and effort, and the results are well worth the money.

After all, your prospects and customers will be reading your website so don't cut corners on the content. Your web design project will progress much faster and your website designer will love you!





3. What's the purpose of your website?

If you're designing a website to generate leads for your business, then you need to consider the following:

- Will you be **driving traffic** to your new website?
- Are you planning to **convert** the traffic into leads?
- Will you **nurture** those leads into paying customers?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then additional effort and systems will be required in order to accomplish these goals. Other factors to be considered are budget, time, and return on investment.

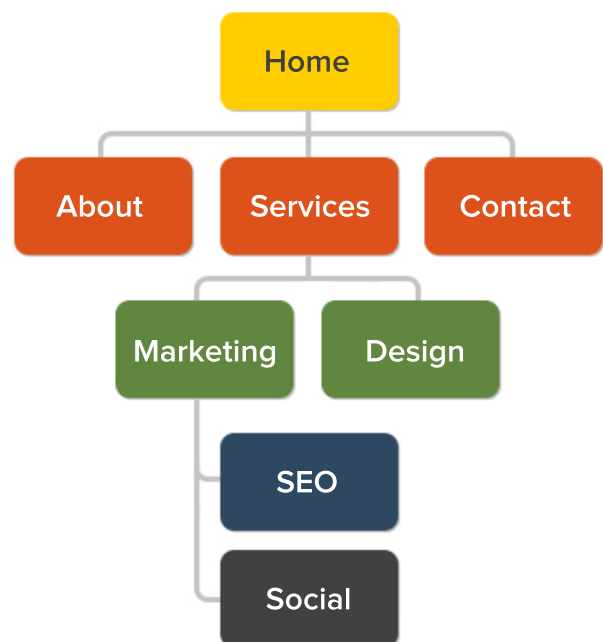
Converting web traffic into paying customers requires a long term commitment of testing and implementing. That's doesn't mean you'll be performing all the work as there are plenty of companies who provide internet marketing services. But either way you go, it will require a monetary investment over a period of time in order to see your return.

4. How many web pages do you need?

Begin brainstorming how many web pages should be included in your website. Some of the most common pages are:

- Home
- About Us
- Services
- Products
- Contact Us
- Testimonials

Depending on the nature of your business and goals, you may need many more pages than listed above. Once you've deciding on the pages required, it's easy to create a simple sitemap. A sitemap shows a hierarchical, top-down view of your site's overall structure. This will help determine any need for other pages.



(Example of web design company's sitemap)



5. What features should your website include?

Will you be adding and updating content on a regular basis? If so, then you will need a content management system (CMS). Not only does using a CMS make updating your site a breeze, they are dynamic and scalable; therefore, they can extend to meet your site requirements.

If you require specialized functionality such as e-commerce, document management, or custom programming, then a Content Management System is definitely the way to go. They are so valuable we wouldn't recommend building a website on any other platform -- you'll avoid major problems down the road.

Tip: As you think of features for your website, jot them down on paper so you can refer back when discussing your project with your web design company.

Getting started

Once you have a general idea of your target audience, how many pages and features you'll need, you'll be ready to talk with a web development specialist about your professional website. **Share your checklist with them** and they'll be better prepared to give you a recommended plan. With a little pre-planning and following this guide, you'll be well prepared for your next website project.

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