



The Website Planning Guide

Everything you need to
know for your next website
build or redesign.

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Rome wasn't built in a day. Neither are websites. The planning and crafting of a website takes a considerable amount of time and thought before you even start to design and develop it.

I've put together a comprehensive guide of what you should know before you hire someone to develop your vision or tinker away on it yourself. This cheatsheet takes you through every aspect you'll want to know.

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01 Knowing The Lingo

SEO

Search Engine Optimisation. Increasing the rank of your website on search engine such as Google so that you appear higher up and more likely to get organic (not paid) traffic.

UI

User Interface. The visual design and layout of an app, website, game interface, etc. A great UI looks beautiful, and clearly shows the user, for example, what is clickable and what isn't.

UX

User Experience. The flow and ease of use of a digital product or website. A great UX makes to easy to find information or complete tasks because it knows how a user will interact with it.

CMS

Content Management System. Software that helps users create, manage, and modify content (such as blog posts) on a website without the need for specialized technical knowledge.

02 Understanding Your Goals

What are your website goals?

This might sound obvious, but unless you have written down what you want a website to do for your business, you can end up with a website that simply doesn't make sense.

If all you currently have is a laundry list of all the features or pages you want to see on your website, you need to start back from square one.

Once you define your goals, it becomes crystal clear how you need to focus your website, what's pages and features are important to include, and what you should leave out.

Here are some questions to ask yourself that will help you understand your goals:

- What will a successful outcome be?
- What should this website do for my business?
- What do I want more of (sales, customers, etc.)?
- What do I want less of (complaints, service calls, etc.)?
- What will happen if I don't have a website for my business?

I want this website to:

eg. Generate a more consistent revenue stream
for my business by detailing and promoting my
online courses.

eg. Be an e-commerce store that I can use to
generate a full time income selling my prints.

1.

2.

3.

Website strategies to achieve your goals

Now that you have clear goals you want to achieve through your website, you can translate those goals into strategies that you are going to implement through your website.

Some common strategies include:

- A blog to show that you are an authority figure in your job field and generate organic interest.
- Resource downloads to acquire potential customer emails.
- Videos or tutorials explaining what you do and how you can help your customer.
- Product discounts to acquire potential customer emails.

Always ask yourself “why?” over and over again. If you don’t, you will end up spending time, money, and energy on things that don’t help to move your business forward.

03 Customers & Competition

Knowing your customers

Your customers are the most important stakeholders for your website. Every design choice you make should be in favour of making it a smarter, better, and smoother experience for them.

Some questions that help to define your customers include:

- Who are your customers?
- Where will your customers find your website?
- What does your audience care about?
- What is your customers' problems?
- How do you fix their problems?
- What steps does your audience go through before buying?
- What products and services do they already buy?

As you answer these questions, you will begin to build up a picture of your customers, and that definition will be extremely useful when you are deciding what content your website will have.

Researching your competition

Understanding who your competitors are, what their unique selling point is, and how they convey their brand is extremely important for knowing the kind of website you want to have.

It can help you get a better idea of how you can leverage yourself and your business to have a better chance at winning customers over the others in your industry. It also can help you get an idea about what customers are already used to so you can either know how to fit in or stand out to get the upper hand.

In saying this, the goal is not to copy your competitor's site, only to use this information to inform how you tackle the same challenges they have and better meet your customers' needs.

The goal of this research is to understand:

- Who your competitors are.
- How your business differs from your competitors.
- Why customers should choose you.
- Where your product or service sits in the market.
- What is good and bad about your competitor's websites.

04 Website Content & Design

Determining what content you'll need for your website

Many businesses will completely skip planning content and focus more on the list of items or features they want to see on their website.

Most of a websites' design is based around its content, and simply thinking you will fill out the content later is a dangerous plan.

Here's what you will want to know:

- What pages do you need for this website?
- Why are these pages important?
- What content will be needed for these pages?
- Is there any content that you already have that you can reuse?
- What other services or apps do you want to connect to your website?

Knowing the content types

You need to have a good idea of what kinds of content you have already or want to have longer down the track. This content should help to either; strengthen the story you are telling, show that you're an authority figure, provide value or interest to your customers, or make it easier for customers to make a buying decision.

Here's a list of the most common content types you might want to have on your website:

- Inspirational content
- Updates
- Case studies
- Interviews
- infographics
- Q&A
- Blog posts or articles
- Videos or tutorials
- Reviews
- A podcast feed
- Product pages

It's always better to have quality rather than quantity. Having a lot of blog posts accounts for nothing if all of them are unhelpful and boring.

Your branding

Your branding should be consistent through every interaction a customer has with you, whether that be on your website, your social media profiles, or all of your advertising.

This not only includes the design style, but also the language you use across platforms, and how you approach communication.

It's essential to know what you want customers to think about your brand through your brand style. Do you want your businesses to look confident? High-end? Trustable? This can be portrayed through using the right language, colours, icons and imagery, but first, you must understand how you want to come across.

- Is there a branding style that is common to your industry?
- How would you describe the style your businesses in a few words?
- Do you have a company brand or style guide that you need to adhere to in the design?
- How will your audience access your site, ie. mostly desktop, or on mobile devices?
- Are there any colours or styles that you want to ensure you include or avoid?

Assets you'll need

There will be a number of assets outside of your core content you'll want to consider from the start.

Some are cheaper or more expensive to have, but most of your assets you can bootstrap yourself through finding websites or services that provide assets for cheap or for free. whatever you do, you want to make sure it comes together as a consistent look and feel throughout your website.

Here's a list of assets you might need to think about:

- Logo
- Brand colors
- Brand fonts
- eBooks
- Videos
- About content
- Iconography
- Photography
- Illustrations
- Customer testimonials
- Customer reviews

05 Conversion, Budget, & Marketing

Understanding how to convert

Having a beautiful website means nothing if you haven't set up the process of why customers want to come to you, and how you will convert them into a sale or to becoming a client.

It's not enough to think that throwing content at your website will be enough to convince your customer. Instead, you want to understand the steps that your customer will go through before they make a buying decision, and how you can effectively guide them through that process through an effective sales funnel.

Here's what you will want to know:

- What are you offering your customers?
- How do you provide value to your customer?
- What do you want your customers to do on your website?
- How are you going to make your offer irresistible?
- What are the steps you are going to take your customer through before they end up buying?
- How are you going to convince your customers that you are worth spending their money on?

Marketing & Advertising

Aside from your website, it's great to have other places where your customer will come across your businesses that helps to strengthen your brand in the minds of your audience.

Keep in mind the social channels you are currently on, and why each one is important for your businesses. It's better to focus on a couple of avenues than to get lost trying feeling like you have to be on every new social media platform that comes up.

Here's what you will want to know:

- What social channels are important to your business?
- Why are each of these channels important?
- Do you currently do any advertising?
- How are you going to measure your return on investment for the amount of money and time you spend on marketing and advertising?
- How will you know when to change or stop your advertising?

Social Channels

Though it can be tempting to pursue every platform to ensure you're not missing out on any opportunities, it's much better to focus your effort on only a couple. This way, you can ensure the quality of the content you are posting is of great quality and is being consistently posted and updated.

I recommend picking 2 - 3 channels and ensure you are keeping them up to up to date with new content at least twice a week.

Here's a list of the most common social channels to choose from:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- Dribbble
- LinkedIn
- Periscope
- Vimeo
- YouTube
- Snapchat
- TikTok
- Medium
- Pinterest
- Flickr

Budget & Timeline

If you go into a website project without a budget, you're setting yourself up for a website that doesn't make sense for you or your business. Because of this, it's important to set a budget and understand when the website will pay itself off from the return of investment.

A \$15,000 website might sound expensive, but if it results in \$150,000 more in sales in the first year, it's now a great return on investment.

- What is your budget?
- What is this budget based on?
- Does this budget account for monthly website maintenance expenses?
- Do you have a deadline for your website to be up?
- Ideally, how long would the website design process take?

It's better to account for the fact that your project might end up taking longer than you think.



**Ready to start building
your business through
your website?**

Let's Get Started