Planning Your Website Redesign: 10 Essential Steps For Success

Your website redesign is one of the most important investments your company will make. Learn how to avoid the most common pitfalls and risks.

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Getting started on your website redesign

If you're in the early phases of a website redesign, this ebook will assist you in laying a foundation that will help define the scope and requirements of your project, before you get too far along in the process.

Because changes can be very expensive when made at the end of a project instead of at the beginning, it's important to establish your needs upfront.

Launching a new digital experience generally involves multiple stakeholders, from senior executives to middle-managers and often an external agency. That means you're going to hear a lot of opinions and receive a barrage of suggestions throughout the process.

Their input will be helpful at times, but you don't want politics or minutiae to obscure the ultimate goal or, worse, derail the entire project. So before selecting a vendor or hiring a digital agency that may influence your decision-making, take some time to clearly define your objectives.

The advance planning and research you do will also pave the way for making better decisions when you're evaluating web content management solutions, vendors, and designers.

1. Align goals with your organization's objectives

Kick off your website planning with an overarching goal of building a new website that supports the business objectives of your organization.

It's not only the most effective way to get buy-in from your executive team; it positions the project for success right out of the gate.

Start by making a two-column list. In the left column, bullet point your organization's objectives. In the right column, list website features that can help achieve them. Here's a simple example to get you started:

Company Objective	Website Features
Increase Lead Generation	Landing pages with forms Personalized offers
Show Thought Leadership	Blog Webinars Podcasts Chatbot White paper and ebook downloads Search
Support New Employee Recruitment	Secure portal for candidates to complete application Secure portal for human resources to manage applicant submissions Form for uploading resume and cover letter Automated email sent to applicant Automated email sent to HR after application is submitted
Cross-Sell to Existing Customers	Personalized product suggestions on return visits to site

2. Conduct an audit of your current site

Only by understanding the strengths, shortcomings, and risks of your current website can you champion a new site that will perform as well or better than its current incarnation.

Ask the following questions:
1. What current problems exist on your site?
2. What does your site do well?
3. What could your site do better?
4. How do customers currently use your website?
5. How do they want to use it?

> **Tip**: Install a heat map to better understand where your users are clicking and reveal usage patterns.

Assign an analytics colleague to take a deep dive into the metrics of your site's current performance, and ask:
- What are the most popular pages?
- What are the highest converting pages?
- What devices do visitors most use when accessing your site?
- What is the percentage of mobile to desktop visitors?
- What are the demographics of your visitors?
- At what point are people dropping out of the funnel?
- Do certain pages have higher than average bounce rates?

> **Tip**: Write an elevator pitch on why the website needs a redesign. You'll be asked this question repeatedly by colleagues and vendors, so be prepared to answer it succinctly. A redesign should translate into better marketing performance, but you need to quantify what that means in terms of features and benefits.

3. Start a feature list

Decide which existing features you want to keep, which ones need to be improved upon, and what can be ditched entirely.

Consider each of the following:
- Functionality
- Third-Party Integrations
- Content

Remember to bear in mind the data from your analyst. You don't want to get rid of a page that your visitors find valuable. You also don't want to let go of a sidebar widget that's captured thousands of email addresses.

Now consider what you'd like to add to your new site. At this stage, don't rule anything out. This is your laundry list, and there's room for everything on it. Later you'll need to edit it, but for now jot down whatever might enhance the user experience.

Organize the list

Create a simple master list that indicates whether each feature already exists or needs to be developed, and classify each as one of the following:

1. Need
2. Nice to Have
3. Non-Essential

Feature Wish List

Feature	New or Existing	Need	Nice to Have	Non-Essential
Responsive Design	New	x		
Customer Testimonials	Existing	x		
User Help Forum	New			x
Search	New		x	
Marketo Integration	Existing	x		
Custom Widget	Existing		x	
CRM Integration	New	x		
Privacy and Consent Management	Existing	x		
Digital Quality Management	New	x		
Chatbot	New		x	
Localized sites	New	x		
Personalization	New		x	

4. Define your user groups

Creating an above par user experience requires understanding the behavior of your visitors. If you don't know your target audience's needs or preferences, you can't possibly know how they think, or more pointedly, how they make buying decisions.

Divide your users into the following groups:

- Prospects
- Customers
- Internal team members

To take this exercise a step further, define your target customer audience through the utilization of basic persona-development templates. For each of the three groups above, identify a typical user and formulate a fictional character, or persona, to represent them.

Now ask, how would each of these personas use your website. This will help you think about who you're designing the website for, and how to tailor the site to meet their needs.

> **Tip**: Talk to your customers and partners rather than trying to read their minds. Use a survey builder like Survey Monkey to query a subset of your email database about what features they'd like to see.

5. Start planning your information architecture

There's nothing more disheartening to a website visitor than not being able to find what they're looking for due to poor site organization, confusing navigation, or unclear nomenclature.

After all, your site exists for your customers, so it's crucial that you spend significant time thinking through your information architecture and navigation.

Although you may plan to enlist an information architect to help you, get a head start on the process since it will be one of the first things you'll need to tackle once your project gets off the ground.

Aim to divide and connect your content in ways that match the users' needs and expectations.

Tip: One commonly used approach is to take sticky notes and jot down the main discrete elements you plan to include on your website. You can then easily arrange and rearrange them as you think through the most intuitive way of presenting them.

6. Develop your content strategy

Your content strategy lays the groundwork for everything that lives on your site. We recommend mapping out your content needs and designing your website around them, rather than the other way around.

Identify existing assets
Inventory the content on your current site in order to help determine where your content gaps are. Keep in mind that photography, video, and images are all considered content.

Make a list of content types you'll need
Develop some content ideas first. Then determine the ideal way to communicate them to your audience. This will help inform the types of content you'll need to produce.

Line up your content resources
One of the most common reasons for a site launch delay relates to content. The required time and resources for writing, editing, approving, translating, and publishing content is often underestimated.

Depending on the content you're looking to produce you'll need some combination of the roles below. Make sure you assess the skill level and availability of each individual to ensure they'll be able to make the deadlines you set. You'll likely need the following roles:

- Writers
- Producers
- Publishers
- Editor
- Content Strategist/Designer

Define a workflow
Determining the new content you need, the existing content that needs to be refreshed, and who will be responsible for what, and by when, are all aspects of managing content production.

7. Check out the competition and seek inspiration

Using some of the same criteria you used to audit your site, evaluate each of your competitors' websites. Look at the design, functionality, features, and content. You'll not only identify strengths and weaknesses of other companies in your sector, but you may notice some industry trends you weren't aware of previously.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What are they doing that you could be doing?
- What functionality do you need to compete?

Tip: For inspiration, visit websites outside of your industry. To see the latest in web design trends and functionality, we recommend browsing professional web design resources like Smashing Magazine. Keep a list of sites to share with your design team. Make sure you take notes on what you like about each one.

8. Set yourself up for success

A website redesign for an enterprise company is a massive, pressure-fueled undertaking. However, there are some steps that can ease the pain points.

Identify key stakeholders
Establish who needs input and who should be included in the approval process. Conduct interviews with key people to understand their desires and expectations for the final product.

Establish the approval process
To avoid missed deadlines and standstills, establish an internal approval process, document and distribute it before you begin the bulk of work.

Build your team

- **Owner** - The person responsible for the overall website strategy and who will be held accountable for the entirety of the project and final deliverables.
- **Project Manager** - Acts as liaison between the business division and the technical team, managing project lifecycle deliverables, resource availability, and upstream aspects.
- **Executive Sponsor** - Secures buy-in and drives things through the approval process.
- **Developers** - Handles frontend and/or backend development depending on the complexity of your CMS.
- **Designers** (Agency or Internal) - Leads overall site design and drives brand consistency.
- **Content Writers** - Creates new and updates existing content from headlines to captions to web page copy.
- **Web Editor** - Secures and manages the content and images.
- **Information Architect** - Organizes the information hierarchy and suggests design strategies based on how users interact with the website.
- **Analytics Specialist** - Builds and maintains metrics dashboards and summarizes data insights.
- **Usability Specialist** - Provides context, structure, and direction that helps inform UI.
- **SEO Strategist** - Makes coding, structure, content, social, and linking recommendations to tech team prior to and during site development phase.

9. Create or update your digital style guide

Your website is the hub of your company's digital presence, and its aesthetic sets the tone for your brand. That's why before you engage a designer, you need to create a style guide that details your vision for the look and feel of your website. This will serve as a resource that can be shared during the design planning phase.

Your digital brand guide should include the following:

Brand Overview
- Describes your brand personality and attributes.
- States the current perception of your brand. What would you like it to be?

Style
- Defines all of the design, layout, interactive, and type elements you want used throughout the website.
- Dictates how brand assets are to be used/ displayed under various scenarios.

Content
- Provides guidance regarding the length of content, grammatical style, and use of vocabulary.
- Includes acceptable variations of how to refer to your company, brand names, taglines, and products.
- Describes the tone of voice that should be used – casual, friendly, formal, or conversational.
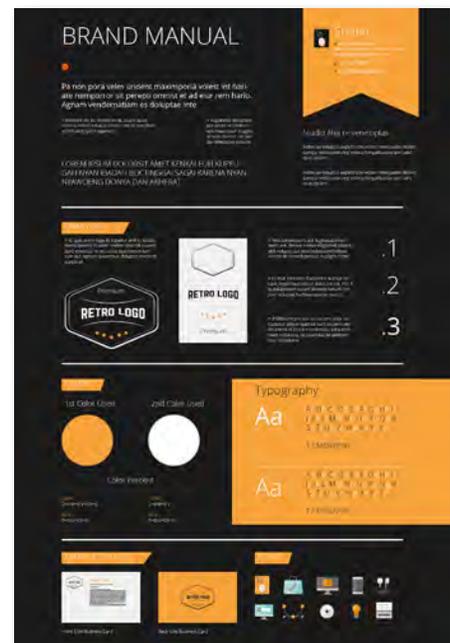
10. Make SEO a priority

A redesign can have a catastrophic impact on your rankings and future traffic if it's not done right. The only way to ensure this doesn't happen is to build an SEO strategy into your planning before you begin the redesign.

Hammer out a list of keywords you'd like to rank for (and how you rank for them now) to help maintain your rankings and pinpoint areas that will need to be optimized.

Standardize your content optimization practices (page title tags, descriptions, image alt tags, internal links, etc.) and ensure they are consistently applied to the new site.

Bring the following lists of URLs to your dev team and reinforce their importance (often also done by your SEO strategist):

- **The most visited pages on your website.** We recommend crawling your site and exporting a report of all the pages that currently receive search traffic. Make sure the URLs are either migrated or assigned 301 redirects. If you don't protect these pages, your rankings, organic search traffic, lead volume, and revenue could suffer.

- **Pages with inbound links.** Inbound links are a heavily weighted factor in search engine ranking algorithms. Pages with authoritative inbound links typically rank well. Perform an inbound link analysis using a tool like Moz's Link Explorer to identify any links from external websites. Pages receiving significant link juice should be migrated to your new site.

> **Tip**: According to HubSpot, the most common website redesign pitfalls are:
> - Removing valuable content
> - Losing SEO rankings
> - Changing good conversion points
> - Losing value of inbound links
> - Losing social media mojo

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About Crownpeak

Crownpeak provides the leading, enterprise-grade, cloud-first Digital Experience Management (DXM) platform. The Crownpeak DXM platform empowers Fortune 2000 companies to quickly and easily create, deploy, and optimize customer experiences across global digital touchpoints at scale. Besides featuring content management, personalization, search, and delivery, it is the only digital experience platform that includes built-in Digital Quality Management (DQM) to ensure brand integrity, best practices, and web accessibility compliance. In 2017, Crownpeak acquired Evidon, the leading provider of simple technical solutions to complex Digital Governance, Risk & Compliance (GRC) challenges. These solutions, including the Universal Consent Platform and TagControl, are designed to help companies comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA), and other privacy regulations.

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