

TH NK!

What *exactly* is web design?

Designing *an online* *presence* that converts customers

Done well, it is more than designing a pretty interface or building pages. It is the planning, designing and categorising of your business' content online, by putting your customers needs first.

It involves designing a website that is easy to use, presents your business offer succinctly and clearly, and accurately reflects your business values. Ultimately it's about designing an experience that will leave your customers so satisfied they reward you with a lead, a sale or at the very least, a return visit.

And it can make or break your brand. Did you know that you have less than a second to make a great first impression? More often than not, your website is the first point of contact between you and your potential customers, and a whopping 88% of your website visitors won't come back following a poor experience with your website.

This can be from a number of reasons such as:

- slow to load;
- confused menu;
- broken links and contact forms;
- outdated design;
- irrelevant content.

Let's start with the basics...

The question we always start with is your website underperforming?

From the low budget Wix, Squarespace or an off-the-shelf WordPress Template, to custom built websites—not all websites are built the same and will perform as much as you invest them.

Many small businesses will opt for the lower budget websites, because:

- they think they can do it themselves;
- they think they don't need a website for new business or leads;
- or because it's seen as a cost to the business, not an investment.

The most common reason to look at a new web design is to create leads and increase revenue for your business. They can also be used to inform potential customers that you know what you're doing.

The best performing websites are quick to load, have genuinely helpful information, that is easy to find, and allow customers to be able to make an enquiry quickly.

By informing and assisting them at different stages of their decision-making journey, you aim to become their preferred choice over the competition when the time comes to make a purchase or enquiry.

Google also rewards websites that load quickly across all devices, and that are well maintained and secure.

An incredible *21%* of business owners report *low traffic issues* with their website and *43% plan to invest* in their website design and performance in the next 12 months. This is because a *staggering 88% of users* won't return to a site after a bad experience.

There are 6 main reasons to redesign your website...

How to identify if you need to redesign your website.

It all starts with understanding two things. Your business goals and your target audience needs. Do you want more leads or sales? Or is the website just to showcase your expertise? What are your customers looking for when they land on your website?

Once you know these, the business case for investing in a new website can be a relatively simple one and is usually backed up by one of the following reasons.

- 1. Your website isn't generating enough enquiries.** You need to look at two factors - can you be found? And can your customers find what they are looking for once they get to you?
- 2. You've updated your brand.** Of course you need to update your website look and feel, but the website experience itself must reflect the ambitions of the brand.
- 3. You want to reach new audiences.** How does the overall tone, messaging and content need to change to appeal to these new audiences?
- 4. You need to keep up with the competition.** If your competitors have a slick-looking website – it's time for yours to get an upgrade too.
- 5. You've changed your business strategy.** More than a simple product update, a fundamental change in how you do business must be reflected in the experience of the website.
- 6. Your website looks older than the dot.com bubble.** Internet users are savvy enough to spot when a website hasn't been updated in years and it's easy to make assumptions about a company as a result.

...and

10

things you
should
consider for
your new
website

1 An achievable timeline

First things first. There's no point in doing all of your homework if you're going to rush the final execution. Ensure you have enough time to research, plan, design, build, and populate with content, which often needs writing from scratch.

2 Different skills

A designer is not the same as a developer. If they say they are, then one skill will be sorely lacking: A typical website development team will include a graphic or UX designer, a web developer, a copywriter, SEO manager, project manager, and IT support.

3 A plan

Every business will have their own expectations and needs when it comes to a new website. Your plan should include the timings for each stage and any milestones, such as a product launch or tradeshow, the associated budget to make sure you don't overspend, the functional and content requirements, the technical specifications (such as an integration with your database) and the roles and responsibilities of the team, such as sign off or content production.

4 A sitemap

This is the very first step in designing a website. It involves the sorting, labeling and categorising of your content in a way that makes sense to your customers. The end result is a visual representation of the new website's structure, mapped out onto one page.

5 Wireframes

Wireframes are a loose outline of each page's content and hierarchy. They don't usually contain any design or images. They are a simple and cost-effective way to sketch out which elements will be added to the pages and where. It will inform content production, demonstrating rough word counts, functionality and media, such as video.

6 Content

Your content should meet the needs of your customers. Good content will help drive them to get in touch with you and also help the website rank in search engines. Ideally you will start any website design process by reviewing the performance of your existing content, what works and what doesn't? Where are the gaps? This will give you a good idea of what to keep, ditch, rewrite or write from scratch.

7 Keywords

The content you produce should include the keywords or phrases your customers type in search engines to find your business. Start by typing the services you offer in the search bar to see recommended searches, for example 'what is keyword research' or 'how to plan content using keywords'. But be careful, Google rewards websites with content that is genuinely helpful and penalises keyword 'stuffing'.

8 Design

How it looks plays an important role in establishing trust with your customer. It's important to ensure every element of your website reflects your business and what it stands for. Avoiding stock photography suggests a personal touch, and don't use colours and graphics that are incongruous with your logo. A consistent, polished and professional look and feel across all of your marketing touch points will communicate that you are a business worth engaging with.

9 Development

Before embarking on any website design project you need to ask yourself what the future holds and how will your requirements for the website change during the next 5 years? (an industry standard for the lifespan of a website). This may inform how the website is built. Many clients want the flexibility to build pages themselves so the website can grow and be managed internally. Security, data and future integrations with new company software should also be considered.

10 Test and launch

Once all the content has been migrated or populated on the new website, it is time to test. This involves reviewing the site page by page and logging any errors. Some standard issues at this stage could include too much copy breaking the design, a form submits to the wrong place or a link is broken. Once all parties are happy, the website can go live. Lastly, on launch there are some final technical considerations to ensure the site can be crawled by search engines and website visits tracked by software such as Google Analytics.

There's nothing worse
than an underperforming
website.

*And it really isn't rocket
science to get it right.*



How to ensure the success of your new website

Perform an audit on your old site

When discussing history, you may have heard the quote “Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” This is also true in the world of website design. Website audits allow you to analyse the performance of your old website and determine what went wrong and which elements benefited you. Without knowing what to change and what to keep, you are sure to make the same mistakes on your new site.

Set realistic goals

Everyone wants to reach for the stars, but there were 31 US lunar missions before man landed on the moon. Website design is a process that makes use of input from many people and takes compromise from every side. The goal is to develop a final product that engages audiences, showcases branding and generates leads. Take a step back and focus on achieving the essentials before you take on more than you can handle.

Look for inspiration

By looking for inspiration from other websites and taking note of the features and design elements that work best. Mood boards can give you an idea of what techniques you can incorporate into each website redesign. By taking the time to plan ahead and research various options, you can ensure a successful website redesign that will meet your objectives.

Future proof your new website

Technology changes all the time, but by investing properly and building a website that's done using best practice, the website should last you a few years before you need to update it.

Terminology

SEO

Search engine optimisation is where you include popular search terms and keywords in your website and content in order to increase the page's position in search results. SEO can help your website show up across a higher range of possible searches.

PPC

Paid Per Click such as Google Ads allow you to craft paid ads that instantly rank on top of Google with headlines and descriptions, adapting to searches. Being able to cover a lot of ground in searches related to your business can be a safety net for finding new customers.

Organic

Whether through search or social, organic marketing is unpaid and you are rewarded by hard work rather than paying advertisers for your work to be seen by your target audience.

UX

To put things simply, user experience is the term used to how a user interacts with your website, app or any other platform. From beginning to end, user experience influences every step of the customer journey, from clicking the first link, to the 'confirm payment' button.

Case studies

Or success stories from your clients are in-depth reports of successful converted customers.

Off-the-shelf template

A cheaper option if budget is limited, but your website will end up being a version of someone else's website.

Readability

The readability index helps you stay engaging. The renowned Flesch Kincaid readability score gives you the ideal reading score for your target audience. It is measured by the number of words and syllables within a sentence.

Accessibility

Web accessibility means that websites, tools, and technologies are designed and developed so that people with disabilities can use them.

Font and image licensing

It's important that any visual assets you use are legal and do not break copyright law. Ensure you have the correct licenses for anything you are using.

Hosting

Hosting is where your website lives. There are many options available but the cheaper the option the less control you will have.

Website security

It's vital your website is secure from hackers. Plugins or a CMS system that isn't update leaves gaps in the security that will allow this and then they will access to your data. Ensure you don't fall foul of this is a proper hosting and maintenance plan.

SSL

Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) is an encryption security protocol and ensure privacy, authentication, and data integrity in Internet communications

Tips & terminology

Don't forget- a new website *needs* content.

How can a new website fit in with other activities you're doing?

As a business you may be already engaging in activities such as outbound sales, advertising, PR, and posting on social media. By having a website that compliments your other activities can ensure your customers have a destination to go to.

But a new website needs content.

Here are the possible options of content on your new website:

1. Blogging:

Blogging has long been a powerhouse in marketing your website. By creating valuable articles, you can position your company as a trusted resource, provide industry insights, and drive traffic to your website. It's the perfect method for businesses and those aiming to establish themselves as thought leaders.

2. Video and animation:

Harness the power of video content to connect with your audience on an emotional level, drive engagement, and ultimately increase awareness. From product demos to testimonials and educational content, videos are incredibly effective for growing your social media following, boosting brand awareness and driving traffic to your website.

3. Infographics:

Convey complex information in an appealing and shareable way through infographics. These visually engaging tools allow you to present data in a digestible format, perfect to share on your website.

4. Guides and eBooks:

Offer your audience in-depth insights into your products or services through guides and eBooks. These valuable resources can serve as lead magnets, capturing contact information while positioning you as an industry expert. Share your knowledge and educate your target audience with high-quality educational content.

5. Landing pages

A landing page can be defined as a stand alone page on your website that has a specific purpose. Most often, it is created as part of a marketing campaign, with a single call to action to ensure visitors convert. They differ from standard website pages in their single mindedness. Your website pages are designed to support exploration and onward journeys. A landing page is purposely designed to keep visitors in the sales funnel.

6. Case Studies

To put things simply, a case study is a write-up of the process and result of your work. Informative analysis of a marketing case study allows clients to envision your past work that is similar to theirs. Showing your hand to clients allows them to know what you may have in store.

7. Reviews

5-stars. Do we need to say anything more?

Get ahead

of

the crowd

At Think, we are industry award winning experts in WordPress development—the world's leading content management system. We develop websites that can continually evolve and update when necessary. We are able to create a completely customisable experience, giving you control over your website.

We hope you have found this guide useful and we'd love to talk about this with a brew and a biscuit (or even a pint). After all, our studio is above a pub.



(See, we made you look.)

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**The Drum.
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Design**

Agency of the Year 2022
Nominated



**The Drum.
Roses Awards**

The Drum Recommends Agency
of the Year 2022 | Nominated



**The Drum
Recommends
Digital Awards**



**Grand Prix Winner
Best Agency
2021**



**The Drum.
Recommends
Awards**

Best Design Agency 2021



**The Drum.
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