

## 7 Steps to a Website That Produces Optimum Results

Your website is the primary gateway to you, your brand and your products and services. A well-designed, easy-to-navigate site can increase your traffic, bring more opt-ins, build trust with your potential clients and customers and ultimately lead to more sales. A bad website can sabotage even the best product or smartest launch campaign.

Whether you already have a website in place or you need to build your site from scratch, these seven steps will help you create an effective website that will engage your customers and sell more stuff.

### Step 1: Decide on Your Website's Outcomes and Priorities

The most common outcomes for a website are:

1. *Opt-in/conversion: capturing qualified leads so you can build a relationship with potential customers for your products and services.* It's amazing how many websites fail to do this. If you don't have an opt-in on your site, make it your first priority.
2. *E-commerce: selling your products and services to people who visit your site.* Unless your website is strictly informational and/or promotional, you should have a sales page and shopping cart that's easily accessible by your customers. If you're just starting out, your shopping cart/sales pages may not be the first things that visitors to your site see. Instead, your website may lead prospects through a sales sequence of email autoresponders/videos/webinars that finally takes them to a sales page and shopping cart.
3. *Customer engagement and brand enhancement: giving site visitors great tools and lots of valuable, free content.* This will build a relationship of trust with your prospects, making them more likely to buy your products and services while building the reputation of your brand.

You must decide which of these three outcomes are most important—and focus in on meeting that objective. Especially if you're building a website from scratch, choosing a focus will help you keep from getting overwhelmed. If you don't have a website at all, you should probably start with capturing leads so you can build your list.

If you already have a website, ask yourself how you do in each one of these categories. Ultimately, you want to excel in each of these three. But if it comes down to a question of priority, go for quality, not quantity. It's better to do exceptionally well in one of these categories than provide a mediocre experience across all three.

## **Step 2: Model What Already Works, and Use It to Create Your Site Map**

Review the websites of your top three competitors. (Don't obsess over this—60-90 minutes total should be more than enough time.)

Make a list of:

- (1) What you like about their websites and could use on your own site.
- (2) What you don't like or doesn't work.

Is the site hard to navigate? Does the landing page seem cluttered or unclear? Are the product or service choices too prominent or not prominent enough? Is the sales funnel clear or is it confusing as to what customers should do first?

Make notes of the website designs, features, and styles you like and want to use for your site.

*Time-Saving Tip:* If you can use WordPress and an existing theme for your design, you'll save yourself a great deal of time and money. Google "free WordPress themes" to find a theme that has the look and feel you're after and supports your content.

## **Step 3: Collect or Create the Content**

These might include:

- Your bio, focusing in on the highlights with the most impact
- At least two headshots, especially if you do any public speaking
- Other compelling pictures (you on stage, interacting with customers, product shots, etc.)
- Your logo and any other branding elements
- Videos (added-value videos, sales videos, etc.)

- Testimonials, ideally in video format. Include text and photos as well—and make sure you have on file releases granting you permission to use each testimonial
- Copy (remember, less is more!)

As you assemble your content, think about how your site will add value to your customers. What do they care about? What will bring them back to your site over and over again? Make sure you balance sales information with added-value content to provide a meaty experience that your customers will want to repeat.

At the same time, remember to balance your priorities appropriately. Don't create a blog unless you can reliably post to it at least once a month—and preferably more. In the same token, don't be afraid to repurpose content across channels. That video of you speaking at a live event last month can find a great home on your website.

Assemble all these elements in a [DropBox](#) or [YouSendIt](#) folder so you and your web designer can access them easily.

#### **Step 4: Finalize the Specs and Layout for Your Site**

You'll need to let your web designer/programmer know what goes where on your website pages. This takes two forms:

1. A list of specs, i.e., what you want each page to do, what buttons should lead where, etc. (This is a summary of what you want to model from other websites, which you created in Step 2).
2. A wireframe: pictorial layouts of each page, showing roughly what you might want where. There's a good wireframe mock-up tool available at [axure.com](#).

#### **Step 5: Hire a Designer to Create a Brand and/or Look and Feel for Your Site**

You already may have a logo and brand style that you are using on your current materials. If so, you can go directly to step 6. However, if you're starting from scratch—or if you're not happy with your current look—it's worth it to have a professional take a crack at it.

You might try a crowdsourcing contest on [99designs.com](#) or [Crowdspring.com](#), or just hire a designer outright. One of the best ways to

find a designer is to ask for a referral from a friend or colleague whose material you like.

### **Step 6: Hire a Web Programmer**

The programmer you will hire will take care of all the back-end coding to create your website, including setting up the template and loading content within the pages. You may find a programmer who has design skills—or a firm who does it all—but often the two skills will come separately. What's most important is finding a designer and a programmer who "get" you and how you work.

*A web designer and web programmer are often two different skill sets. While you may find a web programmer who can create nice designs for you, if you're starting from scratch, chances are you need a designer to create your logo and branding style (design and user interface) and then a programmer to load everything and make the functionality work.*

A couple of checkpoints to discuss with your programmer:

- **Analytics** - There's no excuse for not gathering metrics. Google Analytics is easy to use—and it's free. You can track page traffic flow, conversion of squeeze pages, ad results within the dashboard. Just remember: the biggest problem most people have with website metrics is that they don't use them.
- **Platform** - Content management systems like WordPress have a friendly user interface, allowing people with more limited skills to make easy updates to their site. Discuss what platform your programmer wants to use and don't be shy to ask for a session to learn how to do the easy things, like text edits and simple page updates.

### **Step 7: Find the Site's Optimum Flow and Test, Test, Test**

Be proactive throughout the design and programming process. Give feedback to ensure you get the site to flow how you want. You can use screencasting software (i.e. Screenflow, Camtasia or the tool of the month, Jing - see below!) to visually show your web programmer/designer how you want the site to flow from one page to another.

And since there's nothing worse than having your website crash or freeze on its opening day, make sure to test the site thoroughly before it goes live. Test it on multiple browsers and multiple computers. Does everything look like it should? Then you're ready to launch.

But don't think you're done! The best websites continually evolve, so be sure to keep your content fresh, with an eye toward your ultimate goals for your website.

Keeping your goals - and these 7 steps in mind - will bring you leaps and bounds closer to a website that produces an income stream all its own.

(Source: Traffic Geyser Blog)

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