

Checklist for building a new website

Before building a new website there are lots of things you need to think about. Here are some tips and a checklist to keep you on track.

Define your website's purpose

Website design, navigation and content must be driven by a **purpose** that aligns with your audience and their goals. Defining your website's purpose is the starting point for all website development. Think deeply about the purpose of the website.

- What are your objectives?
- What are others doing?
- What is your point of difference?
- What are the calls to action?
- What is unique about you?

Who is the target audience?

The audience defines the look and feel of the website; how the content is written and presented and imagery used.

- What age groups are you targeting?
- Will people with a disability need to access your site?
- Will people with low literacy be accessing your site?

What functionality do you need?

It's basically impossible to list all the options you have in terms of website functionality. You will know best what you need but it's important to look at other sites to see what's out there and then develop some specifications for your website.

- Will there be online course enrolments?
- Do you need a blog?
- Will social media feeds be embedded or linked to?
- Will there be a payment gateway or shopping cart required?
- Do you need an image gallery?
- Do you need email accounts?

Bear in mind that too many bells and whistles is not necessarily a good thing; so you need to think about this when you enter into the design phase.

What are your design requirements?

Do some research online. Give your developer some examples of websites that meet your design/style requirements.

- Will your audience be accessing this site from desktops and mobile devices? If so, you will need to ensure that your website is using responsive design.
- What demographic are you targeting?
- Are there accessibility requirements?
- Do you have an organisational style guide that could be incorporated into site design?

Set your budget

Getting a website up can cost next to nothing. But if you intend to use photographers, designers and developers then costs can start to mount. You need to consider your website's purpose, your own budget and the capabilities of your staff before one bit of code can be written.

Know your limitations

It's important that you keep control of your own website. An out-of-date website sends a negative message about your organisation to users. To keep control, you need to understand what in-house capacity you have to keep your website current, fresh and updated.

This will have a big impact on the type of system you choose and the external parties you need to engage.

Checklist	
Choose and register your domain	Choose your domain name carefully. Your domain has a big impact on SEO.
Arrange payment merchant	This can take time so if your site includes ecommerce get started ASAP.
Choose a web host	Make sure you understand the difference between shared hosting, virtual private servers (VPS) and dedicated server hosting. Think about the security measures they have in place; the backup systems, whether they offer scalable solutions. Check out the online reviews.

	Ask colleagues and your developer for advice.
Create a Google analytics account	Google analytics will help you to monitor the performance of your website and track what is working and what isn't.
Develop a website wireframe	A website wireframe outline the size and placement of page elements, site features, conversion areas and navigation for your website. A wireframe is like a website blueprint.
Choose a developer	When choosing a developer, you need to consider the capabilities of your staff. What skills do they have that will ensure the website can easily be updated? Do you need to maintain a relationship with the developer after the design and implementation phase? Who will manage updates? Who will keep the system secure? Who will manage the hosting and domain arrangements? Who will manage patches and updates?
Browser compatibility and responsiveness	Work with your developer to ensure that your website loads and renders correctly on all major browsers and devices.
SEO friendly	Make sure your developer has optimised the site effectively for search engines so that your site can be easily found.
Time lines	Create realistic time lines for website development. Remember developing content takes time. Designing, developing, piloting and testing a website all takes time.
Build in flexibility	Good websites are dynamic. Designing a website is an ongoing process. You need to incorporate feedback from users and regularly refresh the content.

Need help?

Infographic on the things you need to consider when building a new website
<http://www.bitrebels.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/how-to-plan-website-development.jpg>