

Web Site Design and Development Process

There are numerous steps in our web site design and development process. From gathering initial information, to the creation of your web site, and finally to the maintenance that keeps your web site up to date.

Your project may vary slightly but this is the general process that we follow. Adhering to this process as closely as possible puts your website on the road to a successful completion.

6 Phases of the Web Site Design and Development Process

1. Information Gathering
2. Planning
3. Design
4. Development
5. Testing and Delivery
6. Maintenance

Phase One: Information Gathering

The first step in designing a successful web site is to gather information. Many things need to be taken into consideration when the look and feel of your site is created.

This first step is actually the most important one, as it involves a solid understanding of the company it is created for. It involves a good understanding of you – what your business goals and dreams are, and how the web can be utilized to help you achieve those goals.

It is important that your web designer start off by asking a lot of questions to help them understand your business and your needs in a web site.

Certain things to consider are:

Purpose

What is the purpose of the site? Do you want to provide information, promote a service, sell a product... ?

Goals

What do you hope to accomplish by building this web site? Two of the more common goals are either to make money or share information.

Target Audience

Is there a specific group of people that will help you reach your goals? It is helpful to picture the “ideal” person you want to visit your web site. Consider their age, sex or interests – this will later help determine the best design style for your site.

Content

What kind of information will the target audience be looking for on your site? Are they looking for specific information, a particular product or service, online ordering...?

Phase Two: Planning

Using the information gathered from phase one, it is time to put together a plan for your web site. This is the point where a site map is developed.

The site map is a list of all main topic areas of the site, as well as sub-topics, if applicable. This serves as a guide as to what content will be on the site, and is essential to developing a consistent, easy to understand navigational system. The end-user of the web site – aka your customer – must be kept in mind when designing your site. These are, after all, the people who will be learning about your service or buying your product. A good user interface creates an easy to navigate web site, and is the basis for this.

During the planning phase, your web designer will also help you decide what technologies should be implemented. Elements such as interactive forms, ecommerce, animations, etc. are discussed when planning your web site.

Phase Three: Design

Drawing from the information gathered up to this point, it's time to determine the look and feel of your site.

Target audience is one of the key factors taken into consideration. A site aimed at teenagers, for example, will look much different than one meant for a financial institution. As part of the design phase, it is also important to incorporate elements such as your company logo or colors to help strengthen the identity of your company on the web site.

Your web designer will create two different prototype designs for your web site. This is will be a Adobe .PDF file of what the final design will look like. Your designer will then send an e-mail with the mock-ups for your web site to you for approval.

In this phase, communication between both you and your designer is crucial to ensure that the final web site will match your needs and taste. It is important that you work closely with your designer, exchanging ideas, until you arrive at the final design for your web site.

Once you have approved the design of your website, then development can begin...

Phase Four: Development

The developmental stage is the point where the web site itself is created. At this time, your web designer will take all of the individual graphic elements from the prototype and use them to create the actual, functional site.

This is typically done by first developing the home page, followed by a “shell” for the interior pages. The shell serves as a template for the content pages of your site, as it contains the main navigational structure for the web site. Once the shell has been created, your designer will take your content and distribute it throughout the site, in the appropriate areas.

Elements such as interactive contact forms, animations or e-commerce shopping carts are implemented and made functional during this phase, as well.

At a certain point during this phase your designer will make your in-progress web site available to you for viewing, so that you can suggest any additional changes or corrections you would like to have done. Please keep in mind that any changes to the actual structure or layout of your web site can slow down the development process and may delay the expected Launch date. Also excessive changes to the layout during the development phase may be outside of your contract agreement and may cost you extra.

On the technical front, a successful web site requires an understanding of front-end web development. This involves writing valid HTML5 / CSS3 code that complies to current web standards, maximizing functionality, as well as accessibility for as large an audience as possible.

This is tested in the next phase...

Phase Five: Testing and Delivery

At this point, your web designer will attend to the final details and test your web site. They will test things such as the complete functionality of forms or other scripts, as well as testing for last minute compatibility issues (viewing differences between different web browsers), ensuring that your web site is optimized to be viewed properly in the most recent browser versions.

Our web designers are well versed in current standards for web site design and development. The basic technologies currently used are HTML5 and CSS3 (Cascading Style Sheets). As part of testing, your designer will check to be sure that all of the code written for your web site validates. Valid code means that your site meets the current web development standards – this is helpful when checking for issues such as cross-browser compatibility as mentioned above.

Once you give your web designer final approval, it is time to launch the site. Your web site is then uploaded to the live server, and will be put through one last run-through. This is just precautionary, to confirm that all files have been uploaded correctly, and that the site continues to be fully functional.

This marks the official launch of your site, as it is now viewable to the public.

Phase Six: Maintenance

The development of your web site is not necessarily over, though. One way to bring repeat visitors to your site is to offer new content or products on a regular basis. We will be more than happy to continue working together with you, to update the information on your web site. We offer update packages in the form of blocks of time, so the more often you anticipate making changes or additions to your web site, you may want to consider larger blocks of time which provide larger discounts.

If you prefer to be more hands on, and update your own content, there is something called a CMS (Content Management System) that can be implemented to your web site. This is something that would be decided upon during the Planning stage. With a CMS, your designer will utilize online software to develop a database driven site for you.

A web site driven by a CMS gives you the ability to edit the content areas of the web site yourself. You are given access to a back-end administrative area, where you can use an online text editor (similar to a mini version of Microsoft Word). You'll be able to edit existing content this way, or if you are feeling more adventurous, you can even add new pages and content yourself. The possibilities are endless!

It's really up to you as far as how comfortable you feel as far as updating your own web site. Some people prefer to have all the control so that they can make updates to their own web site the minute they decide to do so. Others prefer to hand off the web site entirely, as they have enough tasks on-hand that are more important for them to handle directly.

That's where the help of a your web designer comes in, once again, as they can take over the web site maintenance for you – one less thing for you to do is always a good thing in these busy times!

If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.