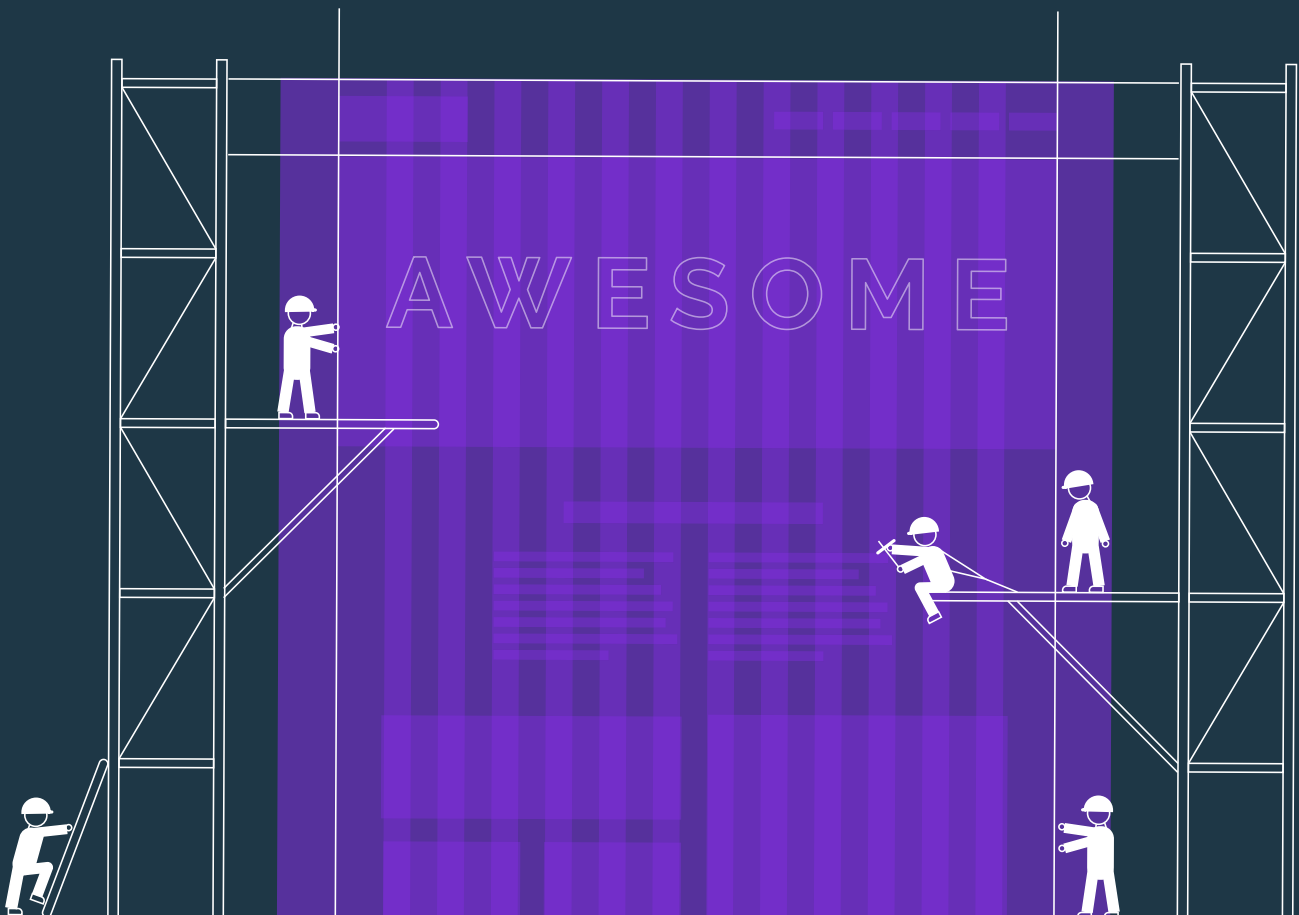




HOW TO CREATE A WEBSITE THAT DELIVERS LEADS: THE ULTIMATE GUIDE



Introduction

Regardless of the industry in which you operate, the days of regarding websites as luxuries are well and truly over.

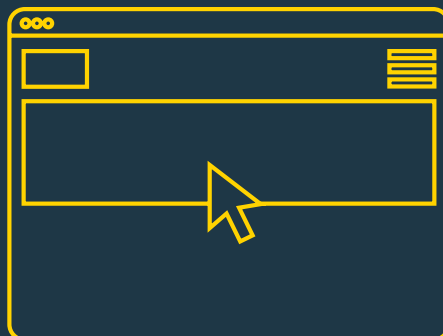
In what is often heralded as the digital age of business, there is no excuse for not investing in a website to act as your virtual storefront and, in the process, increase your brand's credibility.

At Catalyst, we understand that sometimes the creation and development of a new website can be a daunting task.

Where do you start? What do you need?

These questions can sometimes be so overwhelming that you are forced into yet another year of stagnation, missing out once more on the many benefits offered by investing in an awesome, responsive and optimised website.

To help you differentiate yourself from your competitors and avoid another year of stagnation, we have created this guide full of actionable insights and best practices for a brilliant website that will support your business, produce an ROI and deliver leads.



Overview

Step 1

Requirements Gathering and Analysis 4

- Develop Your Buyer Persona 5
- Understand the Purpose of Your Site 6
- Analyse Previous Websites 7
- Choose Your Platform 8

Step 2

User Experience 12

- Clear Navigation 13
- Think Mobile First 14
- Landing Pages 15
- Simplicity is Key 16
- Consider the Buyer Persona 17

Step 3

Design 19

- Brand Consistency 20
- Responsive or Adaptive Design 21
- Utilise Colour Theory 22
- Follow the Structure 23

Step 4

Copywriting 25

- Identify Key Word 26
- Quality and Relevance 27
- Utilise Blogs 28
- Avoid the Jargon 29

Step 5

Utilising SEO 31

- On-Page 32
- Off-Page 36
- .XML Maps 40
- Site Migration 41

Step 6

Development 43

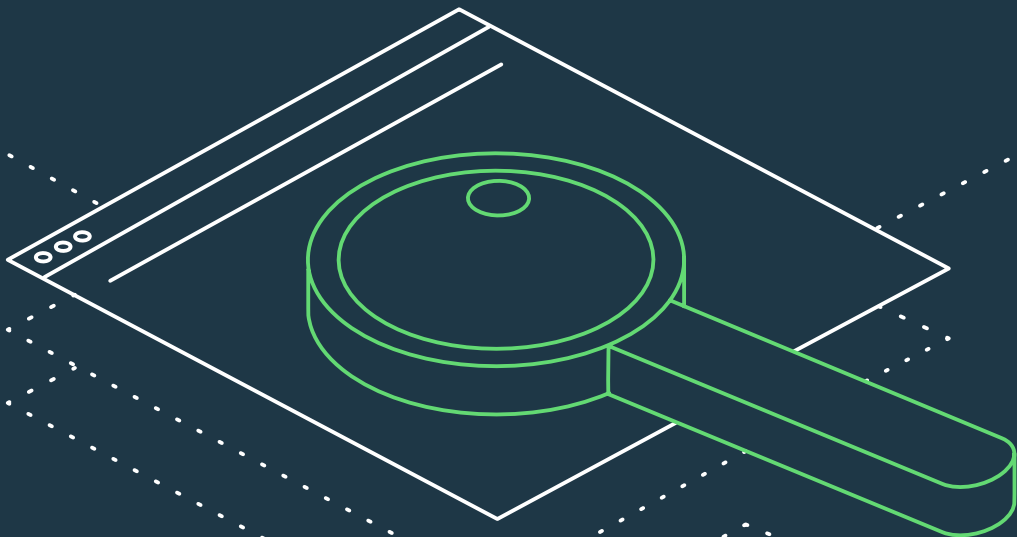
- Website Damaging Practices to Avoid 44
- Data Analysis 47
- Testing 48

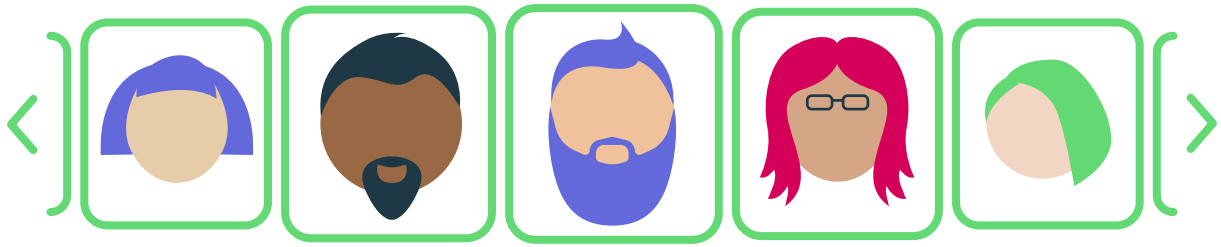
Conclusion

50

REQUIREMENTS GATHERING AND ANALYSIS

Before beginning work on any kind of marketing campaign you must conduct some research to avoid going in blind and it's no different when it comes to your website. You've got to understand who will be using your website, what is the goal of it, how have your previous websites performed (or your competitors) and which platform will be right for you.



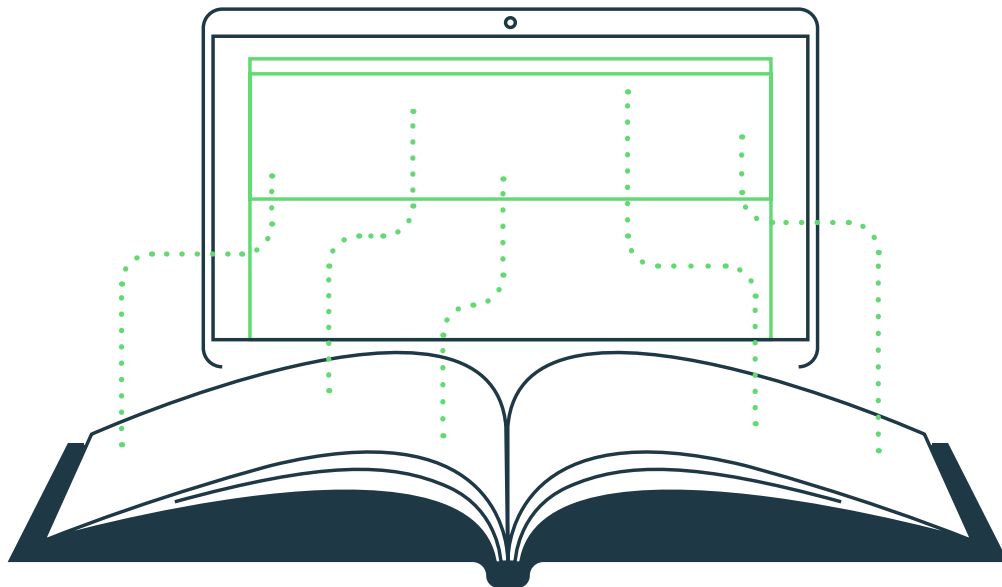


Develop Your Buyer Persona

Development of a buyer persona should be one of the first things you think about with an inbound marketing approach. This is something you may have already finalised before you considered setting up a website. The reason you have buyer personas is that they can guide most of the development of a website. You should always design, whether it is the homepage or a landing page, with the buyer persona in mind to make sure it suits them and adds value to their experience.

Buyer personas describe who your ideal customers are, what challenges they face and how they make decisions. It is common to have multiple buyer personas since businesses do not cater for one individual specifically unless it is an extremely niche product or service. These buyer personas help businesses to understand and empathise with their customers so that they can do a better job of acquiring and serving them.

To find your buyer personas, you need to first understand who your ideal customers are. The best place to start is with your existing customers, talk to them and find out why they chose you, what were the key pain points you addressed (you may already know this but they may be more honest when asked directly). Then speak to those customers you lost, reach out to who you think are ideal clients and conduct some interviews. It is important to interview prospects as well as customers to find out what they like and dislike about your business. Buyer personas can change over time and become more specific as your business grows.

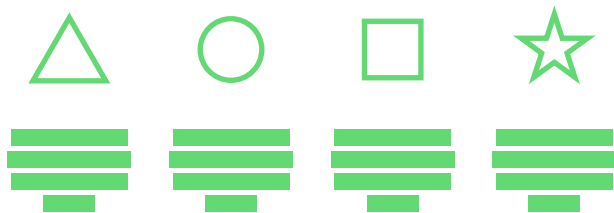


Understand the Purpose of Your Site

Once we know who the website is for, we then need to know what we're looking to achieve with it. "Leads and Sales" I hear you mumble to yourself. Of course that is what we want, but we need to think about what the visitors want, what value are you going to be offering them?

If you add value through your extensive knowledge around a subject, it would be beneficial to have a continuously updated blog that offers in-depth information around a topic that is related to your business. (Afterall, Content Is King - cheers Bill Gates). If you add value through your creativity, have examples of previous work that highlights the creativity of your work through case studies or testimonials.

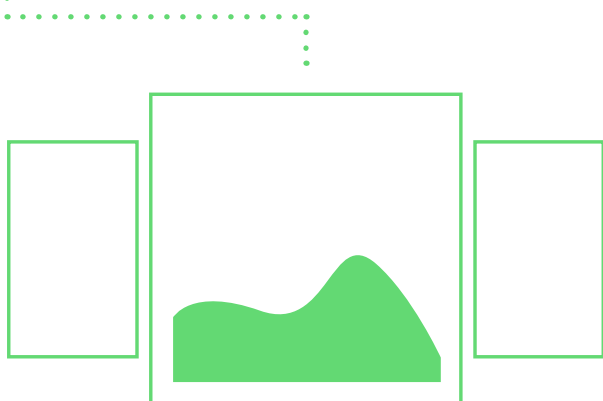
Make sure you know exactly what you want to achieve with your website and how you can measure it. This will help with updating your site if it is underperforming, or can help you improve areas of your site by reflecting the good aspects from the better performing areas. If you want more enquiries, then you can measure the effectiveness of your landing pages by seeing which ones result in a higher conversion rate.



Analyse Competitors or Previous Websites

If you're starting from scratch you'll have both competitor sites to review as well as sites outside of your industry for inspiration, however if you already have a site you can use the insights from there to help inform decisions moving forward.

With millions of websites on the internet, it is very difficult to produce completely unique content that no one has done before. But this gives you the opportunity to mix websites together and take advantage of interesting areas of other sites. For example, you may find a website with an automated chat that works perfectly for your new website that none of your competitors are directly using. It may not be unique to the internet, but would be a defining feature in your market that no one else is using. Perfect!



Choose Your Platform

When choosing a platform, you need to consider the purpose of your website, buyer personas and other websites previously discussed. This will help to determine which platform is best suited for you based on the features you require.





HubSpot

An all-in-one platform for inbound marketing with a dedicated hub for website building and management. HubSpot's CMS (content management system) gives you the tools for hosting a full website and the ability to add elements such as blog posts, landing pages, and full analytics. HubSpot also has other marketing tools that can be implemented alongside the website on one single platform for ease of use. If you are developing an e-commerce site, HubSpot is not the best since you can't easily produce an online store. Although, it can be used alongside an e-commerce platform to analyse data and use other marketing strategies.



WordPress

A website and blogging platform that is supported by thousands of developers with custom plugins, themes, and other tools to help you achieve your inbound marketing objectives. WordPress is basic by default, however using third party themes and plugins increase the creativity and potential of website development. e-commerce isn't a standard feature but can be introduced very easily with the varied amount of plugins that are rated and approved. WordPress has a lot of potential that is often difficult to unlock on your own.



Shopify

A website builder centered around e-commerce with features such as an online store, payment processing and shipping, and managing your inventory. These e-commerce features are all included, unlike Wordpress, without additional plugin downloads and setup. One of Shopify's unique selling points is it's simplicity. No prior coding knowledge is required and you can set up from scratch using one of their many templates. This will limit the unique aspect of your website since you are limited to a few free templates, however these templates are highly customisable. For a more hands-off, simple and dedicated e-commerce solution, shopify is the way to go.

After identifying the best platform to use for your business, you have another important decision to make. Do you tackle the enormous task of building a website on your own? Or do you hire an agency to help complete the work for you?

Agencies often have UX specialists, web designers, copywriters, SEO experts and marketing strategists. These specialised workers can get the most out of your website to achieve the goals set for website performance and best suit your buyer persona.

Going solo will save you some money, but will significantly take up more time and could reduce the quality of your website.



Checklist:

Stage 1

Develop personas



Purpose of your site



Analysis of existing websites



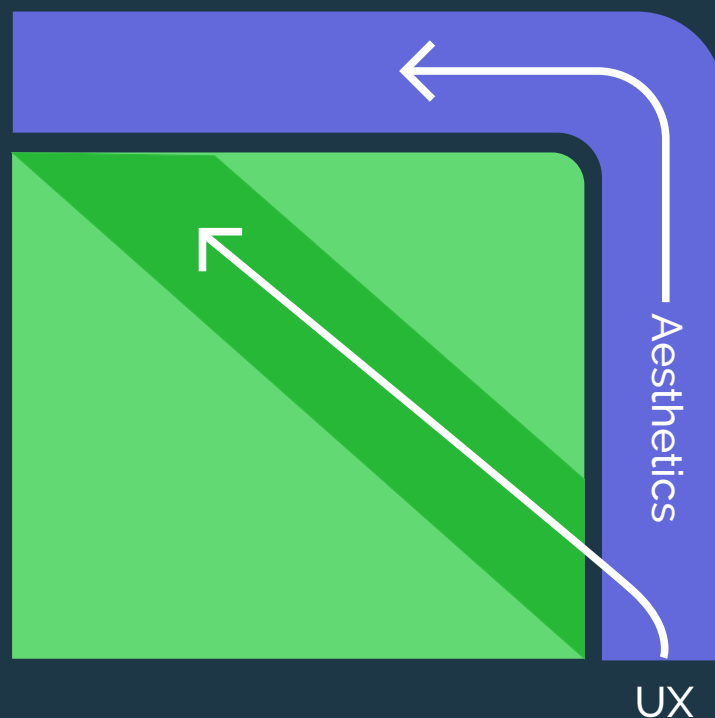
Chosen platform

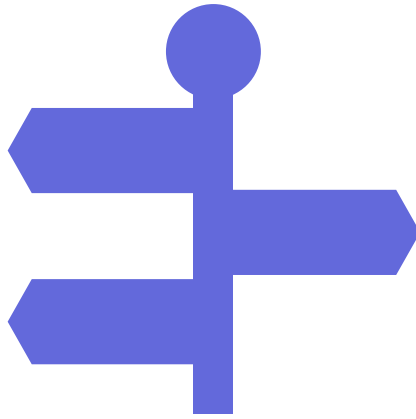


USER EXPERIENCE

The User Experience of a website has a significant impact on its ability to convert visitors into leads yet is often a step that is overlooked, with more focus being put on how the website should look.

Obviously, the aesthetics of the website are important, but before we get to that stage, we need to consider how to optimise the user experience.



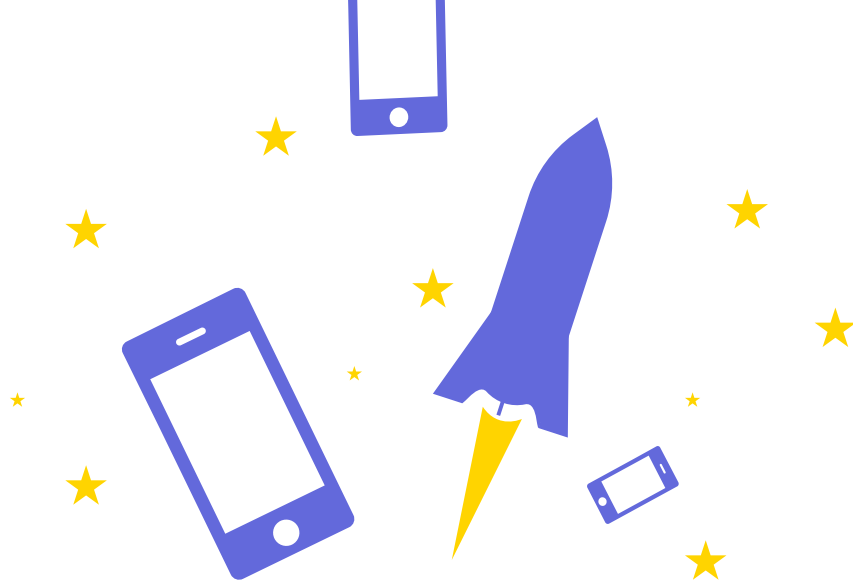


Clear Navigation

The ease with which information can be accessed is an integral factor in web visitors' decisions to continue navigating through a site. Your job is to make this navigation process and the location of relevant content, as simple as possible. A website with many images, call to actions, links and distracting content can lead to customers becoming overwhelmed, disrupting the buyer journey entirely.

Here are some tips to help you improve navigation around your website:

- Maintain a simple primary navigation structure at the top of your page
- Include navigation in the footer of your website (also helps with boosting SEO)
- Include a search box function at the top of your page if it suits the depth of the site - Very useful for product based sites, but other websites (such as B2B) it may not be needed
- Limit your navigation options with intuitive terms so that there is a clear path to be taken by the customer - less is more
- Include relevant internal links with keywords to help aid seamless navigation (and boost your SEO)
- Limit your navigation to no more than three levels
- Use breadcrumbs on every page except the homepage, this will allow visitors to trace their navigation trail



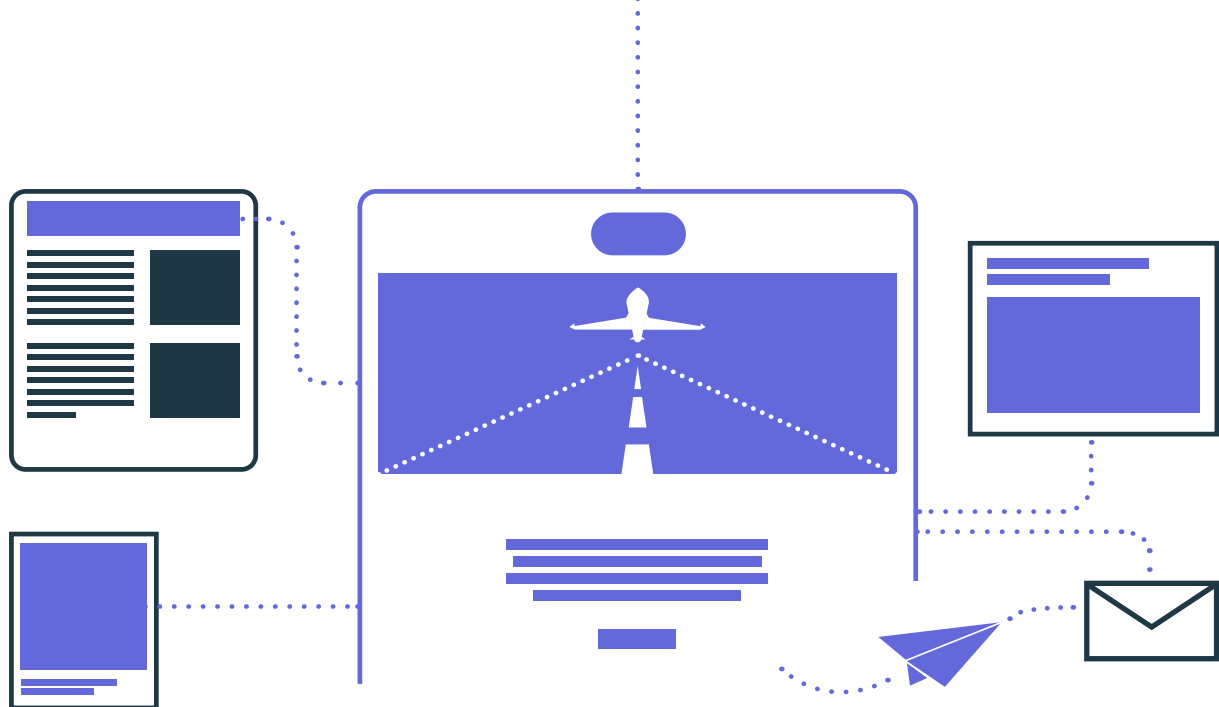
Think Mobile

With the growth of mobile usage skyrocketing in the last ten years, never has it been more important to have a website optimised for viewing on all devices, browsers and applications. This will not only demonstrate that you are aware of new digital trends and willing to follow their trajectory, but will also show that your brand is credible and aid user experience.

One key point to keep in mind is to ensure you no longer use Flash, especially as it does not work on iOS mobile devices, (as of October 2020). iOS also takes up 26.53% of the worldwide mobile OS market share. Sticking with JPEG, GIF and PNG image formats are a safer option when optimising for mobiles since the vast majority of web browsers support them.

As of the second quarter of 2020, mobile devices (excluding tablets) account for 51.53% of global website traffic. To keep up with the change in user habits, ensure that content including images, headings, and subheadings, suit any device that your customer could use. This can be achieved through adopting either a responsive or adaptive website in the design stage.





Landing Pages

Landing pages are an indispensable part of marketing and website design. A landing page is a standalone web page that is created specifically for a marketing or advertising campaign where the user 'lands' after they follow a link from an ad or email. A good landing page will target a particular audience and offer them something of value which in turn will cause a higher conversion rate of the desired action.

For instance, you may have downloaded this very guide from a landing page yourself.

Landing page visitors are arriving from a link on a specific advert, email or social media post, therefore, it is essential that you keep the content of the page relevant to where they have come from. That is why it is best practice to develop a dedicated landing page for each new campaign set up, to ensure the content is relevant and not confusing for the customer.

The structural layout of landing pages is very important for its success rate for visitors to perform a specific action. Too much information on the page can make it hard to keep the visitor focused on performing this action. Use a clear CTA (Call to Action) so that the visitor knows what to do next if they require more information or want to get in contact. The CTA should be the main focus of the landing page and require as few steps as possible to increase the conversion rate.



Simplicity is Key

Simplicity is one of the most important aspects of designing a website with an exceptional user experience. Too much page friction and too many options can make it too difficult for visitors to make a decision, turning them away. A simple website design can offer both benefits for the user and the designer.

Visitors to your site will not want to spend too much time looking for the value from each page. Therefore, more condensed content can make it easier for them to scan the design and pick out the desired information with less effort. A simple use of extra white space around an element can act as a subtle highlight and direct people towards it subconsciously. A simple design can give the impression of luxury. Cheap things need to make a hard sell and cram as much information in as possible, whereas a simple design suggests the opposite, convincing the viewer that it has quality.

Using a simple website design is beneficial for making amends to content and reduces the chance of aspects of the website from not working. Too many images, widgets and moving parts can result in the page not working properly and significantly slows down the loading time. A simple design also makes it easier to optimise the page for mobile whilst maintaining brand consistency.



Consider the Buyer Persona

Always consider, who is the website designed for. Look at the buyer personas that you have developed and cater for their experience since these will be the people you want viewing your website. A website design that directly addresses the wants and needs of these personas will make your website clearer and more personalised to them, contributing to much more success.

Including 'choose your own adventure' style links in your homepage can help visitors to self-select who they are to receive the most relevant content for them. Therefore, you want to make sure that the different pages cater for the different buyer personas you are targeting, otherwise there would be no point in the extra navigation. These links and paths allow you to channel your visitors and expose them to a certain type of content you want them to see, giving you more control over their actions.

A website designed with buyer personas in mind will generate much more enjoyable user experience, meaning they are more likely to return.



Checklist:

Stage 2

Clear Navigation



Think Mobile



Landing Pages

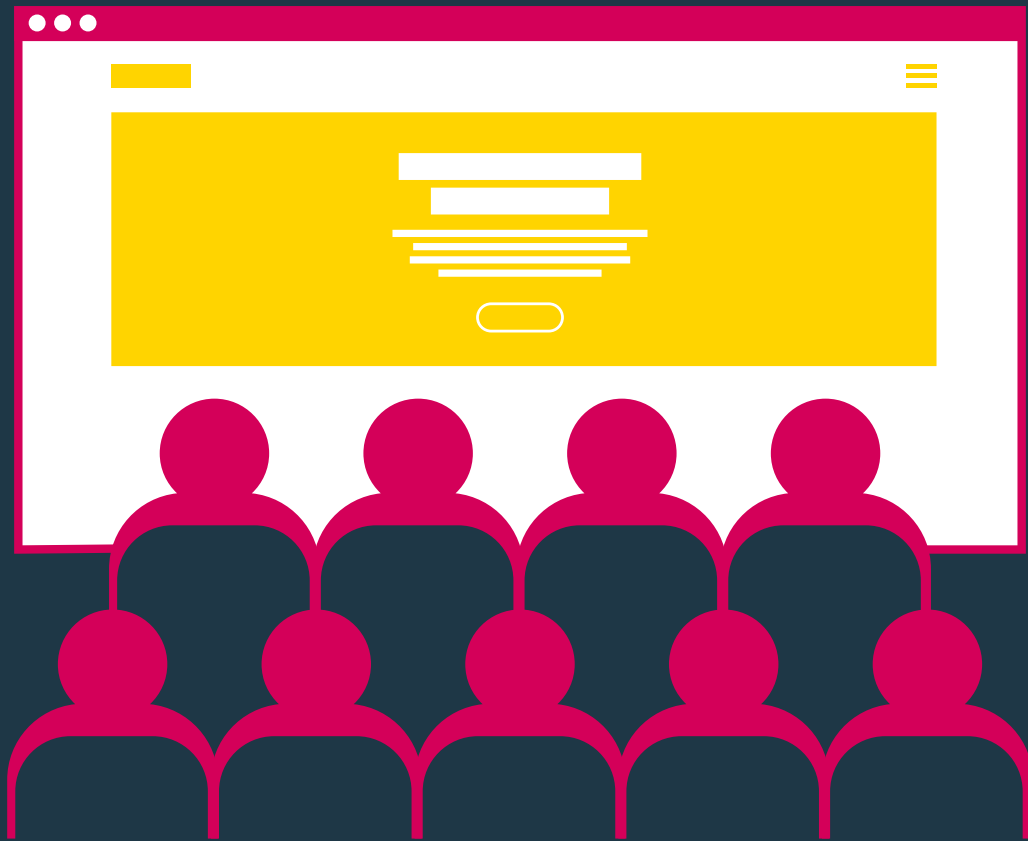


Simplicity is Key



Consider the Buyer Persona





DESIGN

Whilst the design of a website should be informed by the objectives, analysis and user experience requirements it's often the design of a website that creates the desire - which has a significant impact on conversion rates.

So although you may prefer the look and feel of one particular website you found in the earlier stages, the evidence gathered from the research may suggest that the direction isn't right for your target audience. Always keep your audience in mind.



Brand Consistency

Brand consistency is the pattern of visual expression (Logos, colour schemes, page layouts) that affects how and what people think about your business. Keeping a standardised message throughout your website will keep your branding consistent. This will result in an increase in building awareness and developing trust and loyalty with your customers.

When looking at the brand consistency of your website, you need to consider certain aspects of each page. Firstly, the logo. You need to be using up-to-date logos around your website in the styles that are relevant to each page. This includes high resolution images and low resolution icons such as favicons. Secondly, colour schemes. Ensure that your colour scheme compliments the logo and try to limit the amount of colour used.

The best practice for keeping the branding across your website consistent is to develop brand guidelines. Most organisations create a brand style and usage guidelines to make sure that all brand asset use and messaging is consistent and to a certain standard. These guides can be useful outside of web development as they can be used to align the company's vision and mission in other departments around the company.

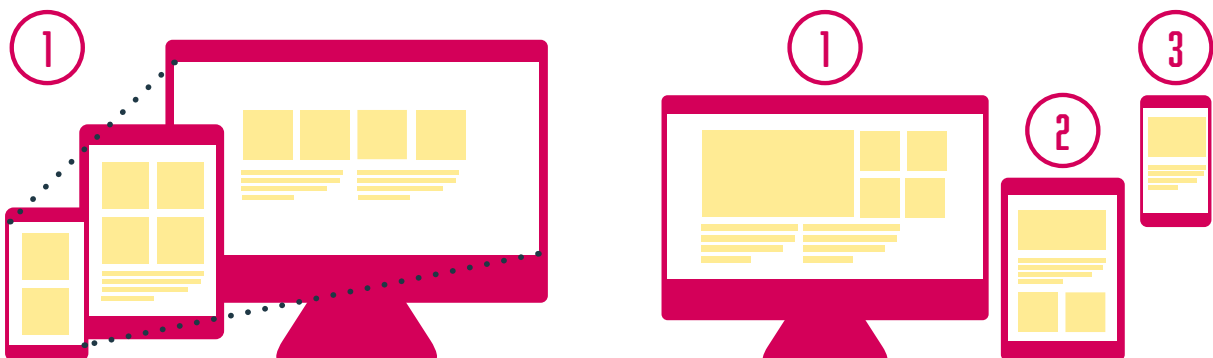


Responsive or Adaptive Design

There are two ways to design your website that makes it usable on mobiles, tablets and computers without looking awkward. These are either responsive or adaptive designs. They both have their pros and cons, but neither one is objectively better than the other. It all depends on the type of website you are building and the needs of your customers visiting your site.

Responsive design is fluid and adapts to the size of the screen, no matter what kind of device is being used when viewing your website. This affects the display type, width, height, etc., to make sure the content on the page is scaled to the correct size. Responsive design is generally used for new websites developed by less experienced designers. This has been made especially popular as a result of the availability of themes accessible through CMS systems such as Wordpress.

Adaptive design uses the static layouts based on breakpoints which do not respond once the webpage is initially loaded. Adaptive detects the screen size of the device being used and loads the appropriate layout that best fits. This style of design is better suited to retrofitting an existing site to make it more mobile friendly. The number of viewports that you choose is entirely up to you, and you can base this off market research analysing which devices your customers are more likely to use.

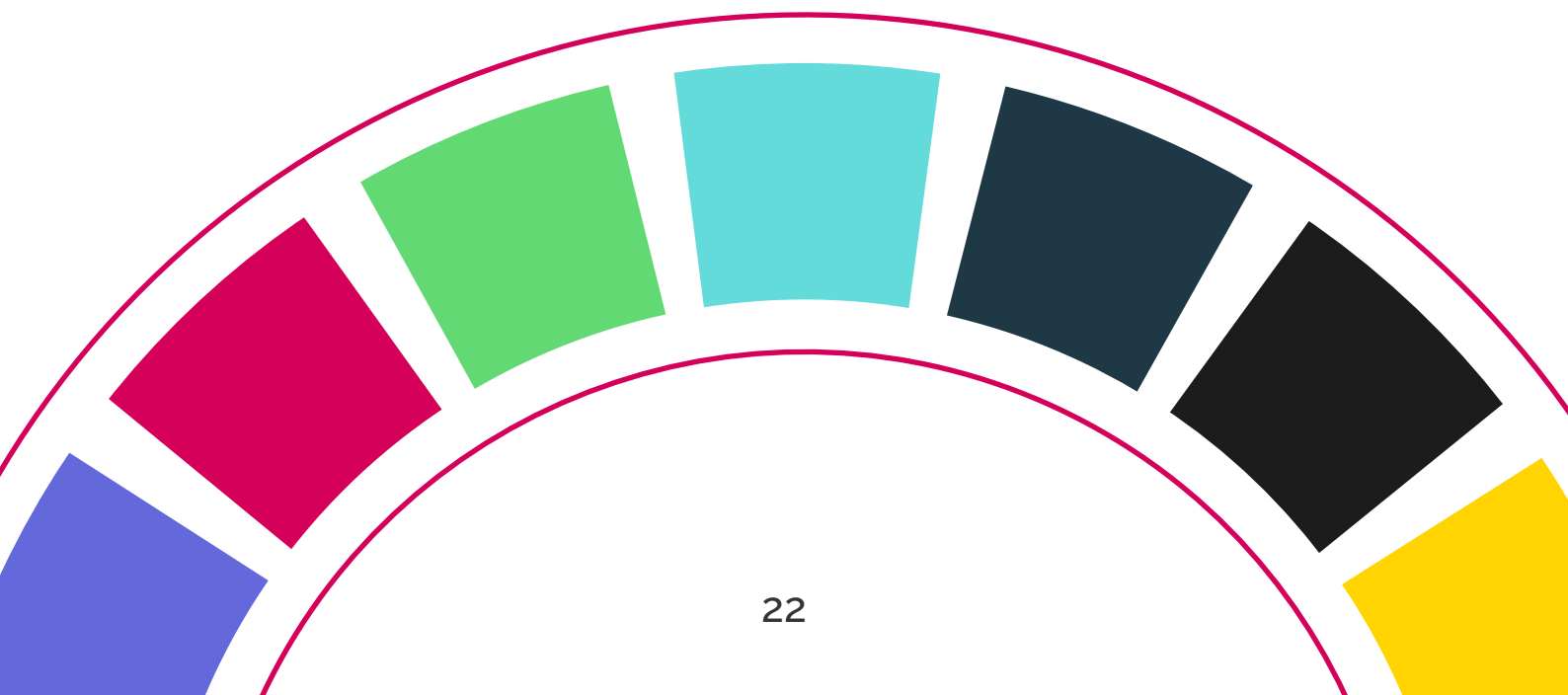


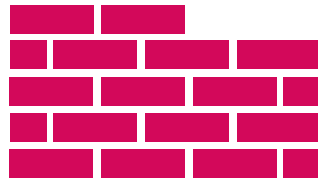


Utilise Colour Theory

Incorporate colour theory. A carefully considered colour scheme goes a long way in both cementing your brand and effectively highlighting specific elements of your pages. Ironically, in attempts to make everything stand out, your site will merge into something unforgettable, where nothing stands out. Most designers are aware and incorporate colour theory into their work since it is a widely accepted design process that is proven to be more appealing to the eye.

Defining the colour palette of your website early on will help with other aspects of the design process, mainly retaining brand consistency. If you use a variety of colours that are not complementary, you can end up creating a visually unappealing and jarring experience for your customers. Remember to embrace simplicity, letting the few colours of your brand dictate the basis of your website's colour scheme.

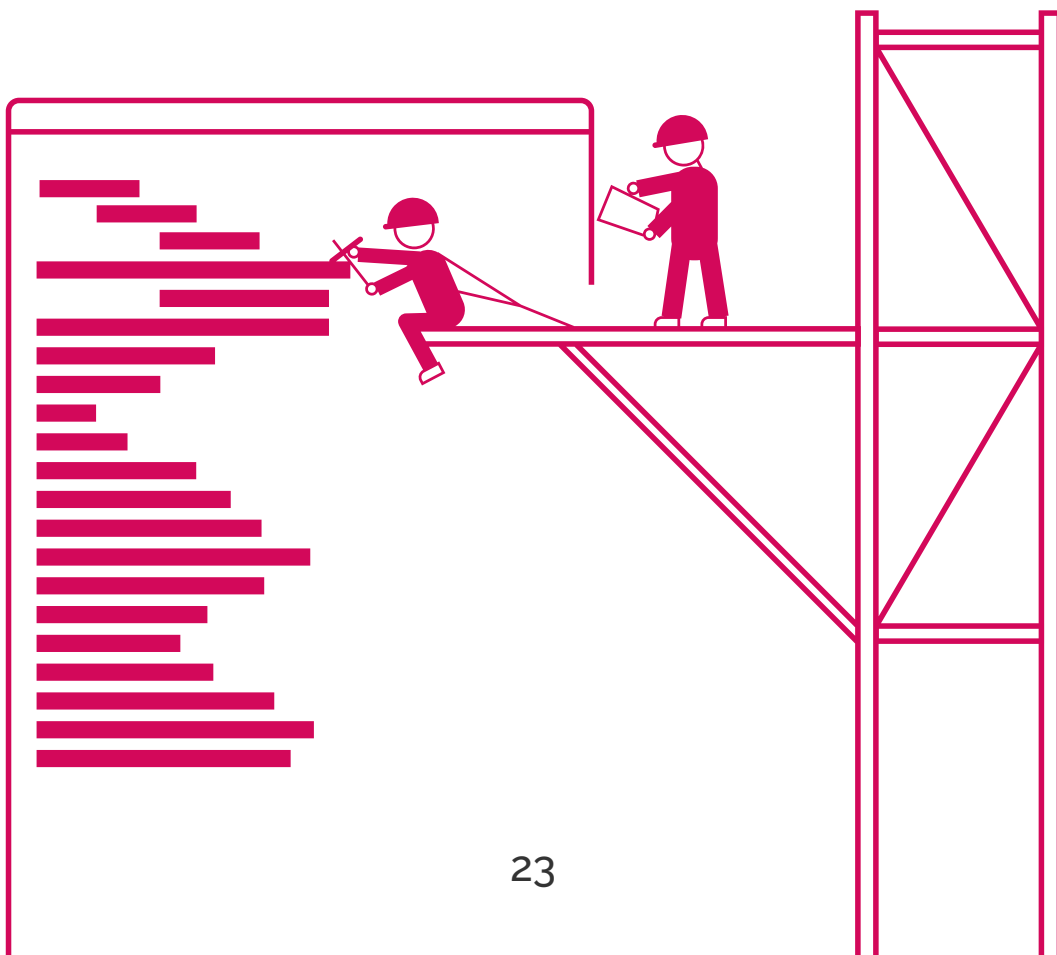




Follow the Structure

When it comes to the design you'll want your site to be planned and built so that it lasts for years to come, afterall a website is a significant investment so getting this right from the start will save you time and money in the long term. Following your structure will make the most of the previous time and effort put in and will ensure that any key aspects that make your website innovative and fresh won't be missed.

Your design should utilise the latest trends IF the benefits are confirmed in the research stage. Of course design is always subjective, so be certain that you're happy with the final creative before it goes to development. It can be easy to stray away from the plan noted in early stages, but avoid this where possible to keep your coding clean. With constant changes early on, coding can become very messy, creating issues in later development if you need to change core aspects of your website.



Checklist:

Stage 3

Brand Consistency



Responsive or Adaptive Design



Utilise Colour Theory



Follow the Structure



COPYWRITING

Imagine you land on a website that blows you away with its impressive, modern design. It has all the bells and whistles from the latest trends, and captures your attention immediately. However, as you start reading the copy you find it's bland, boring and perhaps mistimed (are they showing you prices on the homepage already?!).

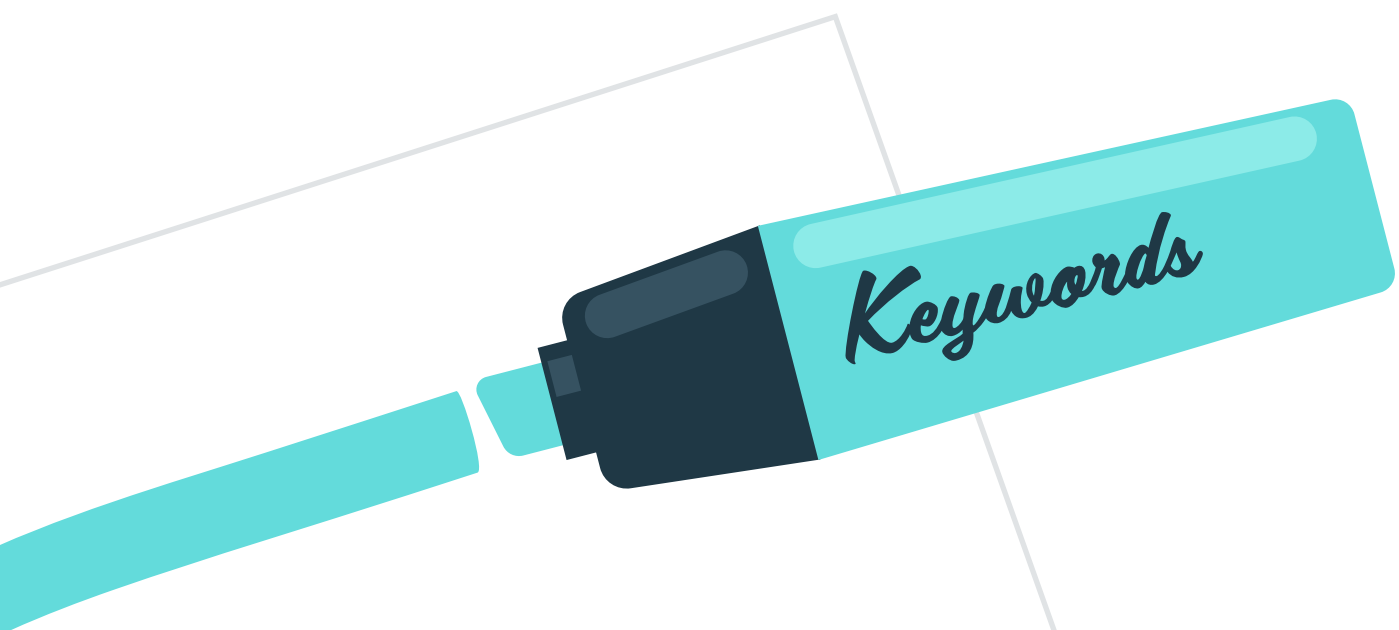
The words and copy you use on your website will be the make or break when it comes to conversions. Copywriting is an art in itself and isn't a stage that should be taken lightly.



Identify and Utilise **Keywords**

Before you even consider starting the copywriting process, you must identify the keywords that you are going to use throughout your website on main pages, landing pages and blog posts. This will help with keeping a consistent flow for the reader as well as providing SEO benefits. Nailing these keywords down first will save you time going back through after finishing all the copy for the website and will stop you deviating from the purpose of your site.

To identify your keywords, refer back to the buyer persona you have already created and try to put yourself into their shoes. Think about what they would type into search engines when looking for the service you are offering. Keywords help you to appear in front of the right kinds of people, however they also help keep those important viewers from leaving your website. If you arrive on a webpage looking for a specific service or product and that keyword doesn't appear in any headers or body of text, then the webpage will feel unrelated and untrustworthy. Make sure to use these keywords but don't go overboard and take away value.





Quality and Relevance (Texts and Images)

As the old adage suggests, pictures can sometimes speak louder and generate more of an impact than words alone. However, as with every other element of your site, images should be used in order to support content and supplement the delivery of specific messages your brand is trying to convey. As a result, it should be a deliberate, well considered process.

According to a test conducted by Marketing Experiments to assess the effect of stock photography and real imagery on lead generation, it was found that the real imagery outperformed the stock photos by 95%. This means where possible, use bespoke, real images to represent your brand. Given images convey subconscious messages about your business, the chances of mass produced, impersonal images accurately reflecting the very specific messages underpinning your brand are very slim.



Utilise Blogs

On most modern websites, there are blogs, insights or knowledge sections where the company will share valuable information on industry trends and news. The reason for this is it provides varied benefits such as, driving traffic to your website, converting that traffic into leads, build relationships with clients, boost social media efforts and drive long-term results. It is best practice to make sure the blog posts are related to the industry and interests of your buyer persona since these are the types of people you want visiting and spending time on your sites.

After you write a blog post, promote it on your social channels and hopefully get some shares, the page will now ranked in search engines. Just like the rest of the static pages on your website, a high performing blog may continue to be visited as long as it is public on the web. In fact, a website that has a substantial amount of blog content will continue to boost total traffic from old blog posts, which will provide a pretty substantial return on the few hours you invested in writing a post.

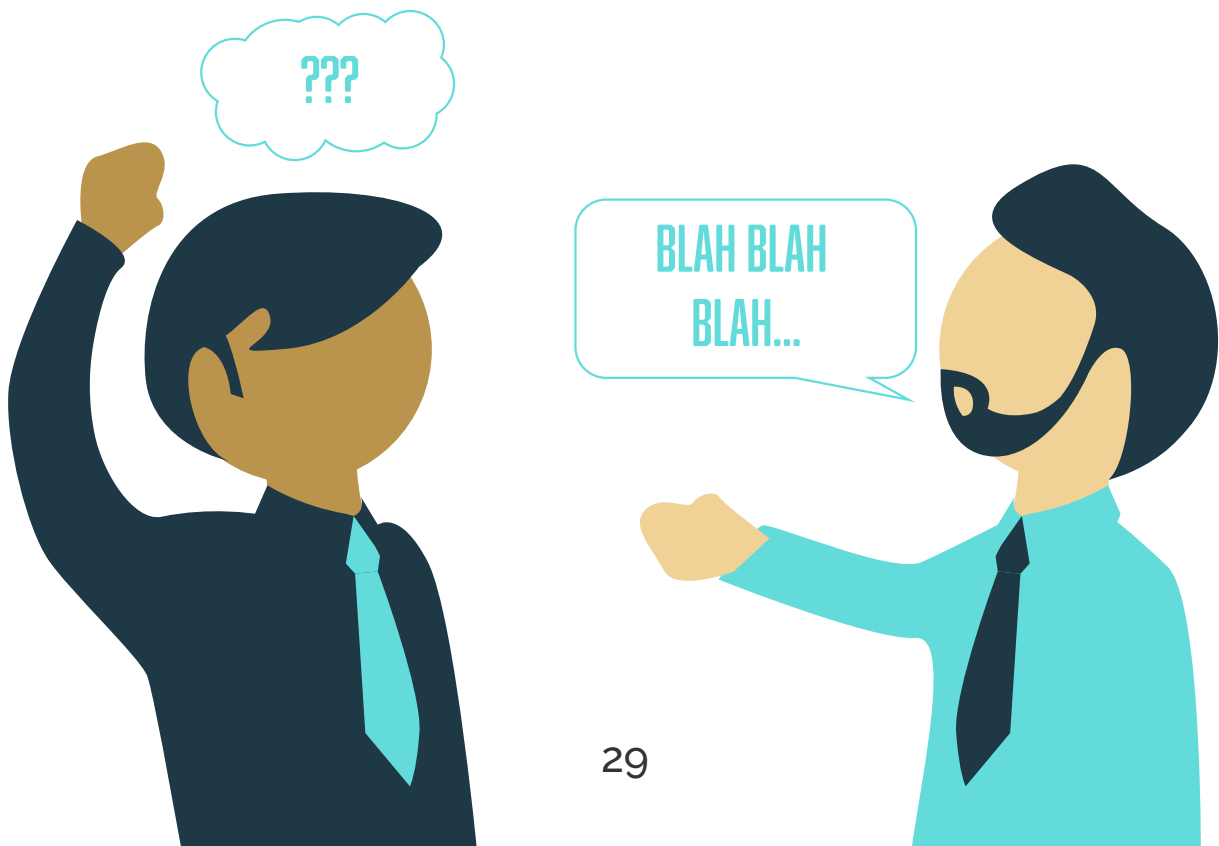


???

Control the Jargon

When you are in the swing of developing your written content for your website, you can very easily get carried away and forget who you are writing for. Not everyone who may be interested in your products or services will fully understand the industry language and could end up being put off by the amount of jargon that you could be using. The value that you have won't be clear to them causing them to leave your page resulting in a lost lead.

The best practice to balance the right amount of jargon in your text is to put yourself in the shoes of your buyer persona. If you are targeting industry leaders who are very knowledgeable, then you can use more jargon and technical terms. However, if you are targeting people who are new to your industry, such as first time buyers, then it is better to use more basic language. Finding the balance is tricky but showcasing the correct amount of knowledge will show your visitor that you are knowledgeable and a professional without scaring them away.



Checklist:

Stage 4

Identify and Utilise Keywords



Quality and Relevance (Text and Images)



Utilise Blogs



Control the Jargon



UTILISING SEO

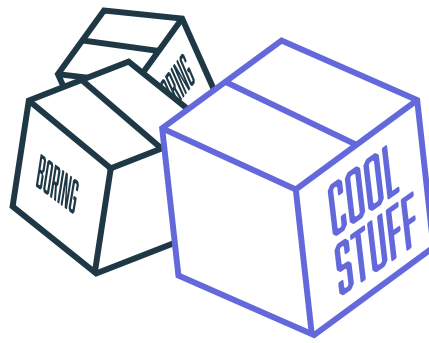
What good is a website if nobody can find it? There used to be an old mantra for digital marketers that was “*Where is the best place to hide a dead body? Page 2 of Google.*” While that still rings true today, it could be argued that even being at the bottom of page 1 can lead to missed opportunities.

SEO will ensure your website is found from organic searches, think of when you Google for a specific query and click on the first website you find. Now if your target audience are searching for solutions that you offer, wouldn't it be better if you appeared there right away?



Search...





On-Page SEO

Keywords & Content

As mentioned earlier, planning out and utilising keywords on your website can add value to those that visit your website. Now that you have planned out which keywords are relevant to your buyer personas and website, you need to use them to improve your search engine ranking. This is the foundation of your SEO strategy that should be completed first before moving onto other on-page SEO.

There are important areas where you should be positioning your keywords that make it easier for search engines to identify the purpose and relevance of your webpage. Writing valuable content that includes keywords is a surefire way to get people to visit your page and stay on for longer.

Using keywords in headings and subheadings is the first step when optimising your website. Using headings and subheadings help make your content scannable, giving the readers an opportunity to pause. These headings may appear as part of a featured snippet on google giving the reader crucial information when making a decision on which page to visit. When using keywords in your content, be sure to use them in the first couple of sentences or at least within the first paragraph. You want to make sure the keywords are there without going overboard, since poor keyword usage can actually hurt your search ranking.



On-Page SEO

Meta Tags, Alt Tags, and Meta Descriptions

As a line of background code designed to inform search engines of the purpose and subject matter of a page, Meta Tags (Titles and Descriptions) and Alt Tags are yet another contributor to effective SEO. Whilst they might not carry the same level of importance as other aspects such as inbound links, the relative ease with which well considered Meta and Alt Tags can be incorporated into websites makes them an easy win for improved SEO.

Meta Titles refer to the titles found both at the top of a web browser and within the main headlines displayed in search engine results. Meta Descriptions on the other hand, are quite simply a synopsis of the webpage's content. The descriptions also appear in search engine results underneath the titles. Alt tags are an HTML attribute that is applied to images to provide a text alternative for search engines to recognise.

In practical terms, even those with limited web experience and little to no coding knowledge can reap the benefits of meta-tagging through the various website editors and content management systems (CMS) available. In the absence of a website editor, you can simply open a web page file (those ending in .htm, .html, .asp or .php) in a plain text editor such as Notepad - the meta tags will appear toward the top of the document.



On-Page SEO

Mobile Optimisation

Having a website that is optimised for mobiles and tablets affects your search engine ranking. There has been an increase in mobile usage for people browsing the web in search of products and services. It severely damages your company reputation if people access your website from their mobile or tablet to be greeted with a jarring webpage where nothing fits or scales correctly. With a poor reputation, comes less clicks and a higher bounce rate on all of your pages with less time spent on your site.

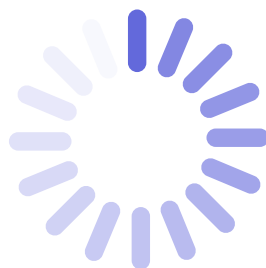
Google has also started using a mobile-first index, meaning that it is looking at the mobile content of a webpage to determine the search engine ranking. This is where the adaptive and responsive design we mentioned earlier comes into play making your website viewable for readers and search engines alike. Again, it is important to know which type of design is best suited for your website and implement it accordingly.

On-Page SEO

Website Load Speeds

A website with all the bells and whistles may look brilliant in theory, demonstrating that you are a forward thinking and innovative company. However, this can severely slow down your website load speed, which damages your search engine ranking. Google has indicated that page load speed is one of the signals that it uses for it's ranking. Not everyone can afford to host their site on the fastest servers in the world which can handle a large number of people at one time. Therefore, you need to find the balance between a high quality website and the overall speed that your site loads in.

To ensure that your website does not slow down, keep your design clean, tidy and concise. Keep all the information on the page relevant, as this will not only improve speed but also create a more enjoyable experience for the visitor. Make sure you do not use oversized images, they may look better in higher reso



Loading...

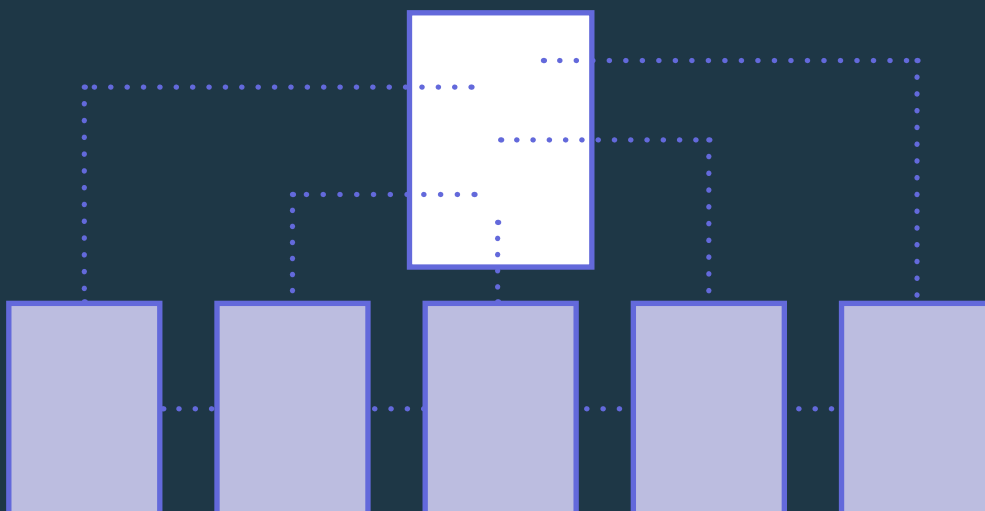
Off-Page SEO

Backlinks

Backlinks are links from outside domains that point to pages on your domain, essentially linking back from their domain to yours. These backlinks increase your credibility and raise your ranking as search engines can track the number of links to your site. Generating good quality backlinks from respected sites is normally quite tough but benefits you greatly. Avoid cheap wins buying backlinks as these can boost you in the short-term whilst damaging you in the long-term with severe penalties.

Here are some tips for generating backlinks for your site:

- **Quality Control:** If your content is valuable and enjoyed by visitors, this will act as an incentive for them to link to it.
- **Create Guest Content:** Writing blogs and other such content for other sites is mutually beneficial and, given your content is high quality, will encourage links to your site.
- **Online Directories:** A great way to begin is to simply submit your website to online directories.
- **Don't Cheat:** As a best practice, never do your brand the disservice of bartering, begging, bribing or buying inbound links - SEO should always be driven by quality.

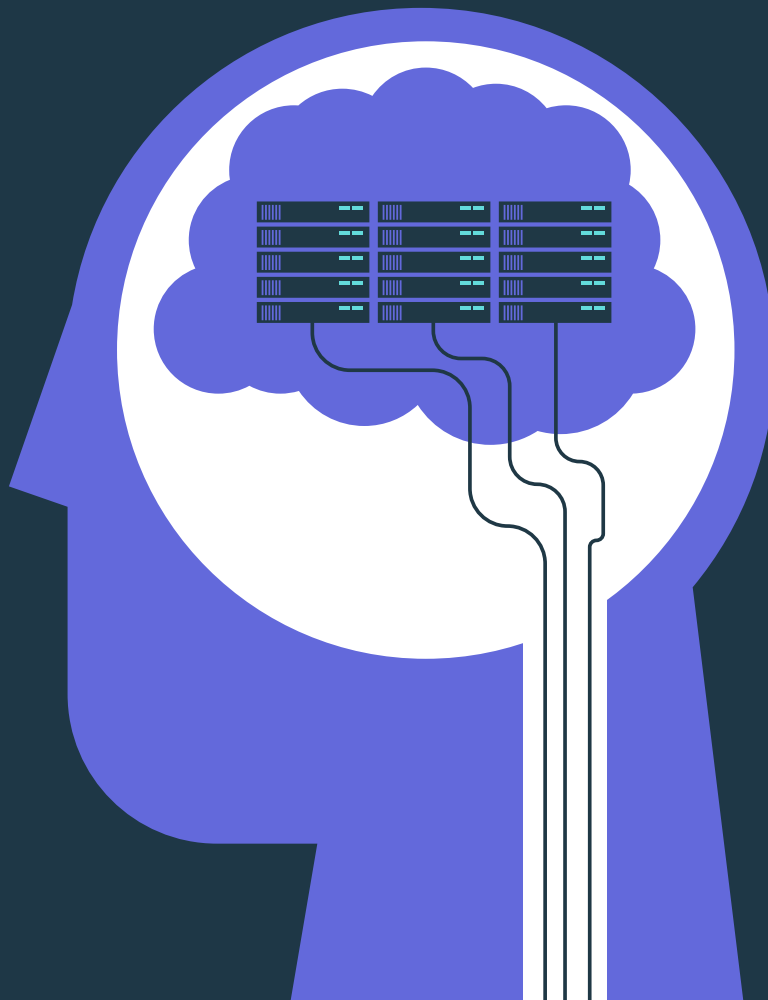


Off-Page SEO

RankBrain

Google uses machine learning to determine the most relevant results to search engine queries through its RankBrain algorithm. RankBrain helps users find information by looking at much more user data such as time of year, their geographical location and past searches. Essentially the algorithm constantly adapts to provide the user the most relevant page to them rather than just the website that has the most keywords, backlinks and solid content depth.

This all has a huge impact on how you formulate your SEO strategy, since the focus on traditional SEO tactics (Keywords, Backlinks, Load speeds) are becoming less important behind serving the users' needs. This relates back to always generating value for any visitors and tailoring your site directly to your buyer personas. You can no longer just fill your website with content that boosts your page, you must do this whilst generating relevant content that benefits everyone who visits your page.





Off-Page SEO

Trust (SSL, Positive Reviews)

Building trust among those that have previously used your business and visit your website can help boost your ranking. Setting up a google business page with detailed information give's Google more information since it will be linked to your website. Directing people to leave reviews about your business will increase your credibility to those who see your business and to Google's search engine directly, resulting in more clicks on your site.

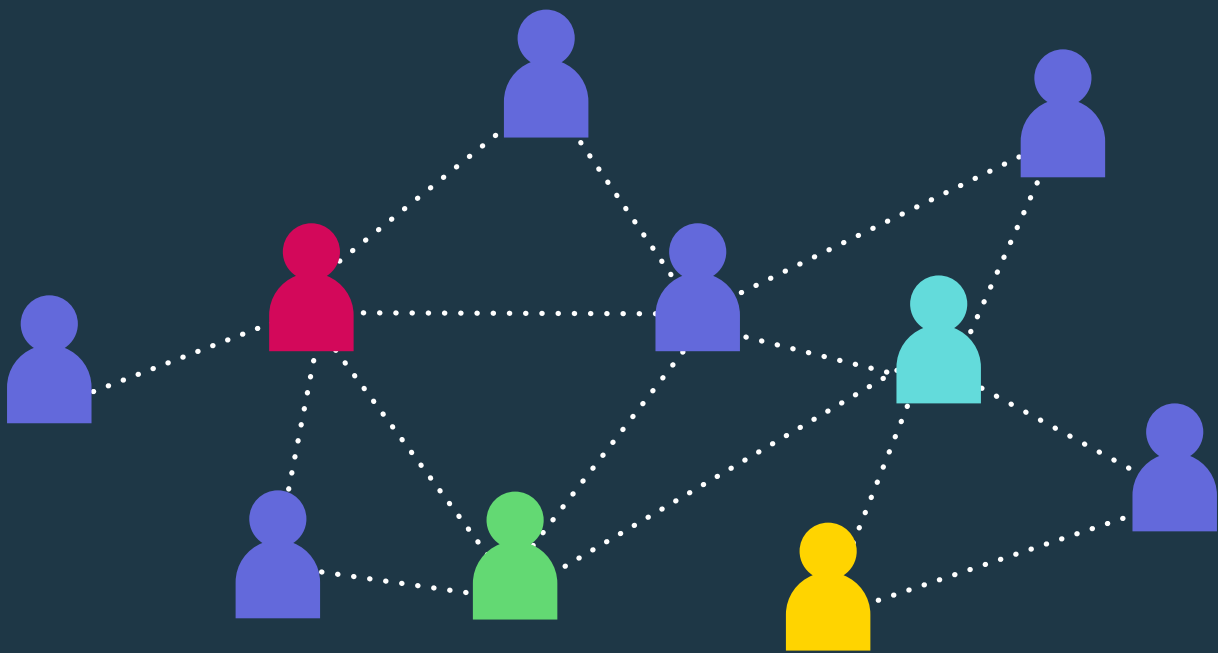
Alongside positive reviews, you can build trust on your website by installing a standard piece of security technology called Security Sockets Layer (SSL). This establishes an encrypted link between a server and a client, which is typically a web server and a browser. This is important if you need clients to sign into your website with sensitive information, to keep this data from being stolen. You can then add an SSL certificate to your site to show visitors that their information is safe.

Off-Page SEO

Social Networking

If you don't already have existing company social media pages, set them up in line within your brand guidelines. People visit social pages to see how active you are and to see whether you are trustworthy. A business page with loads of positive comments and likes are going to generate more business. Consumers will do their due diligence and check for social media accounts and will often make a judgment on your business prior to even visiting your website.

Social media can be useful for promoting your business and website whilst directing traffic to your page. New blog posts can be shared leading to more people clicking on your links and potentially backlinks from others being aware of the blog posts you make. Using social media increases your visibility, which in turn can increase your credibility if you are creating value. Make sure to target the correct audience on your socials so that the people visiting your site via links on social media are less likely to bounce off your page and stay on longer.





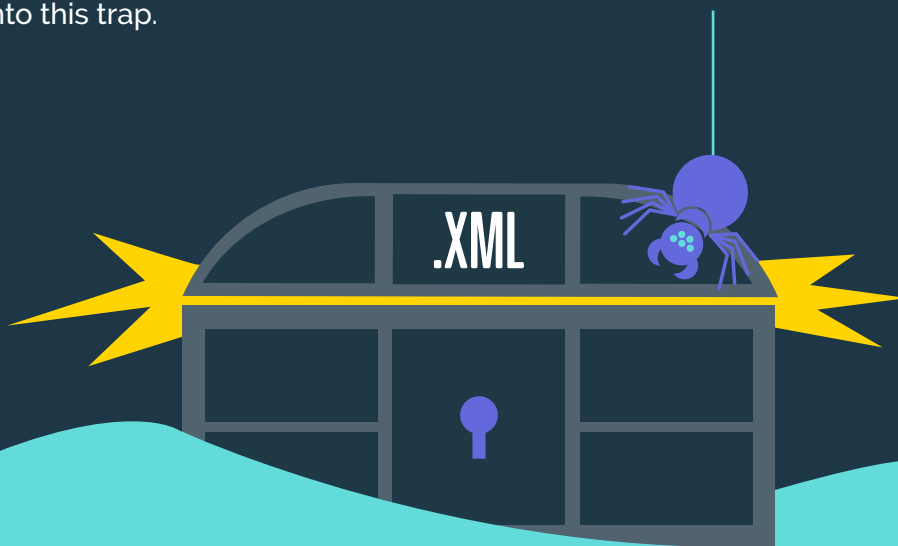
.XML Maps

XML sitemaps are composed of .xml files that contain a listing of all your pages and the dates at which they were each updated. They essentially help search engine crawlers (also known as "spiders") sift through your network of webpages more efficiently.

Courtesy of the various sitemap generators available online that can create .xml files on your behalf, the creation of XML sitemaps is not quite the daunting task many imagine it to be.



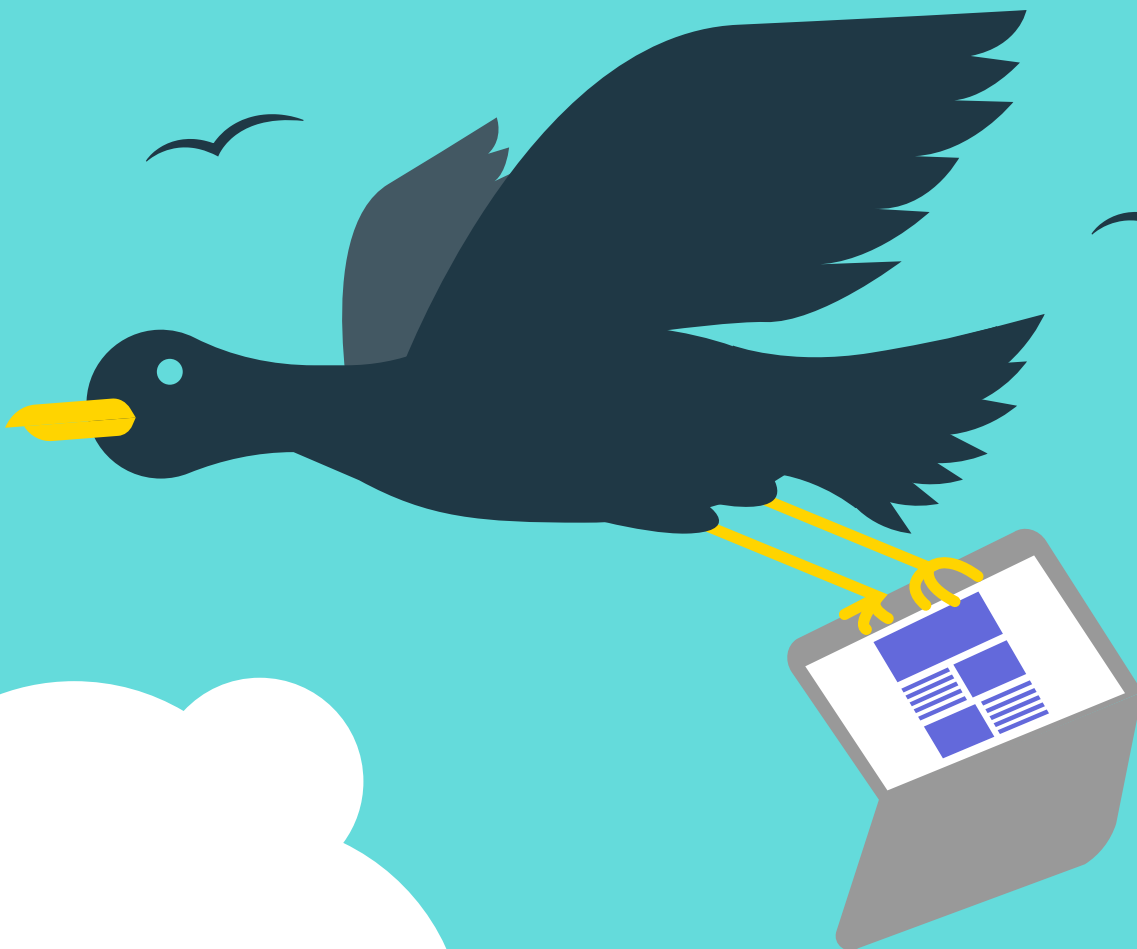
Once you have your .xml file, upload it to your website's directory (for instance, www.website.com/sitemap.xml). Best practices dictate that you should update your .xml file in accordance with how frequently you update your content; this will keep search engines updated with the most relevant data pertaining to your website. Despite being yet another contributor to stronger on-page optimisation, .XML sitemaps are often overlooked - don't fall into this trap.



Site Migration

Site migration refers to an event whereby a website undergoes substantial changes in areas that may affect its search engine optimisation. This includes location, platform, structure, content and design. The amount a migration affects SEO generally depends on how many different aspects of your website are being changed. To reduce the potentially negative impact, make sure you identify priority pages that are important to your SEO strategy, and use your previous search engine rankings as a benchmark.

Before starting any migration process, be sure to plan every step that you are going to take and allocate the necessary resources. Always continue to test changes to get the most out of your migration and don't underestimate the scale of your project. Finding a trusted partner to help you through the process will always be the best choice to make, since a second pair of eyes can pick up on some crucial information the first set may have missed.



Checklist:

Stage 5

On-Page SEO



Off-Page SEO



.XML Maps



Site Migration



DEVELOPMENT

You should find a partner who prides themselves on keeping the code clean, straightforward and adhering to best practices to ensure other developers can pick up and understand the structure - negating the need for expensive future redevelopments.



Website Damaging Practices to Avoid

As you continue developing your website after it is launched, you want to avoid using blackhat tactics that can end up damaging the quality of your website. It may become tempting to implement some of these tactics to increase short-term growth and boosts to search engine ranking. But in the long-term, your website will end up appearing lower down in the rankings and lower your customer's perception of your company.





Website Damaging Practices to Avoid

Duplication of Content

This involves repeating content from other areas of your website or from sources outside of your domain. Repeating content on your site can create a frustrating experience for visitors who want to find out more information about your company, only to find the same information on a different page. If you duplicate information from a separate domain, it makes it harder to rank above others that share the same content. Try to be creative with your content and avoid direct content copying.

Keyword Stuffing

Overusing keywords in your website can lower the perceived value of the written content. Yes, it will help boost your SEO in the first place, but those who visit your site will be more likely to bounce from the first page and spend less time there. This in turn would actually lower your ranking on Google and make conversions on your site less likely. Remember to use keywords without lowering the quality of the content for better SEO and conversion results.

KEYWORDS





Website Damaging Practices to Avoid

Cloaking

This involves changing content on your site to display different content to human visitors and search engine crawlers. If you are slightly changing content to different users for personalisation purposes, then you are likely to not receive a search engine ranking penalty. However, if you are changing large amounts of content per user or specifically for crawlers, then the penalties on your webpage can be severe.

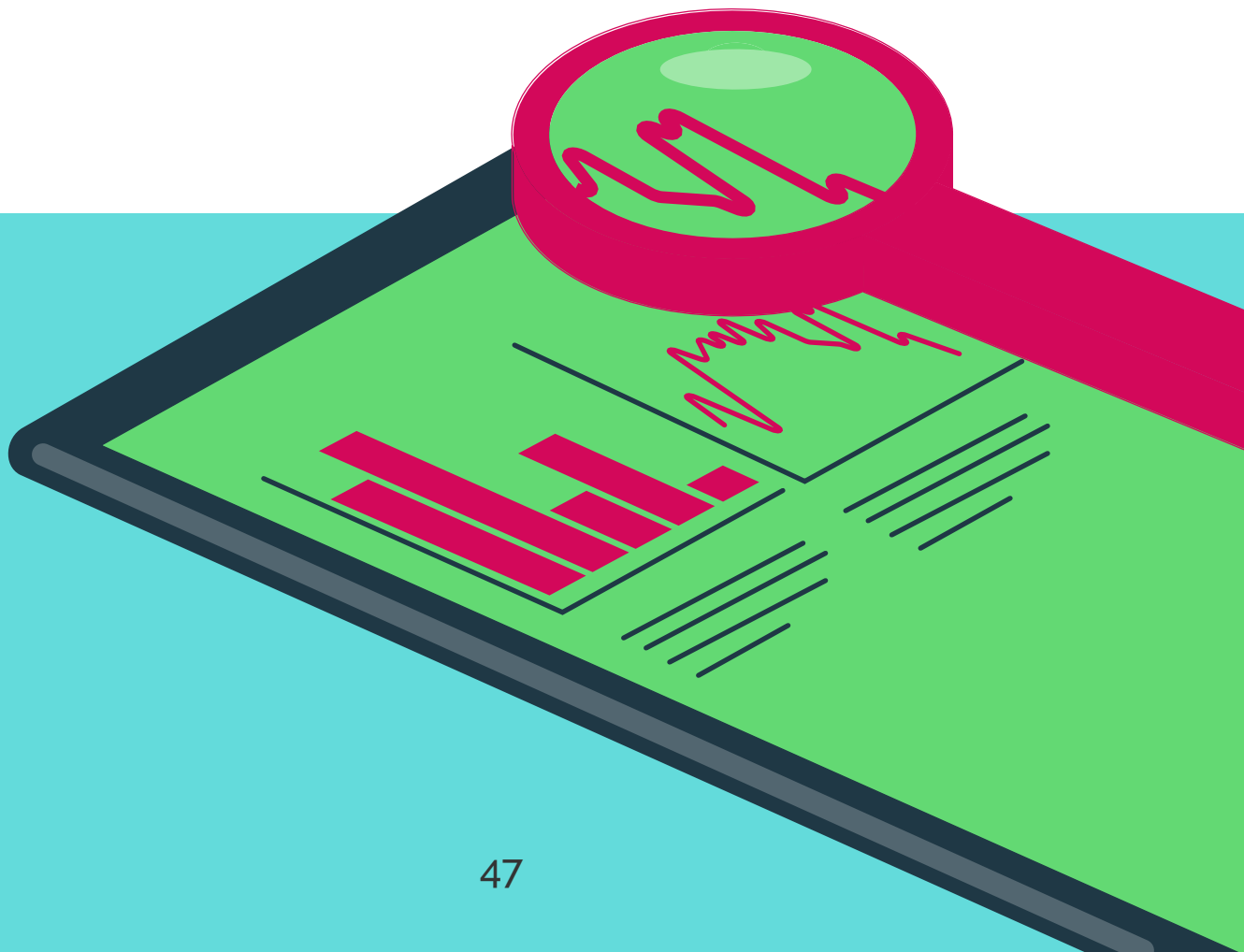
Bad Links

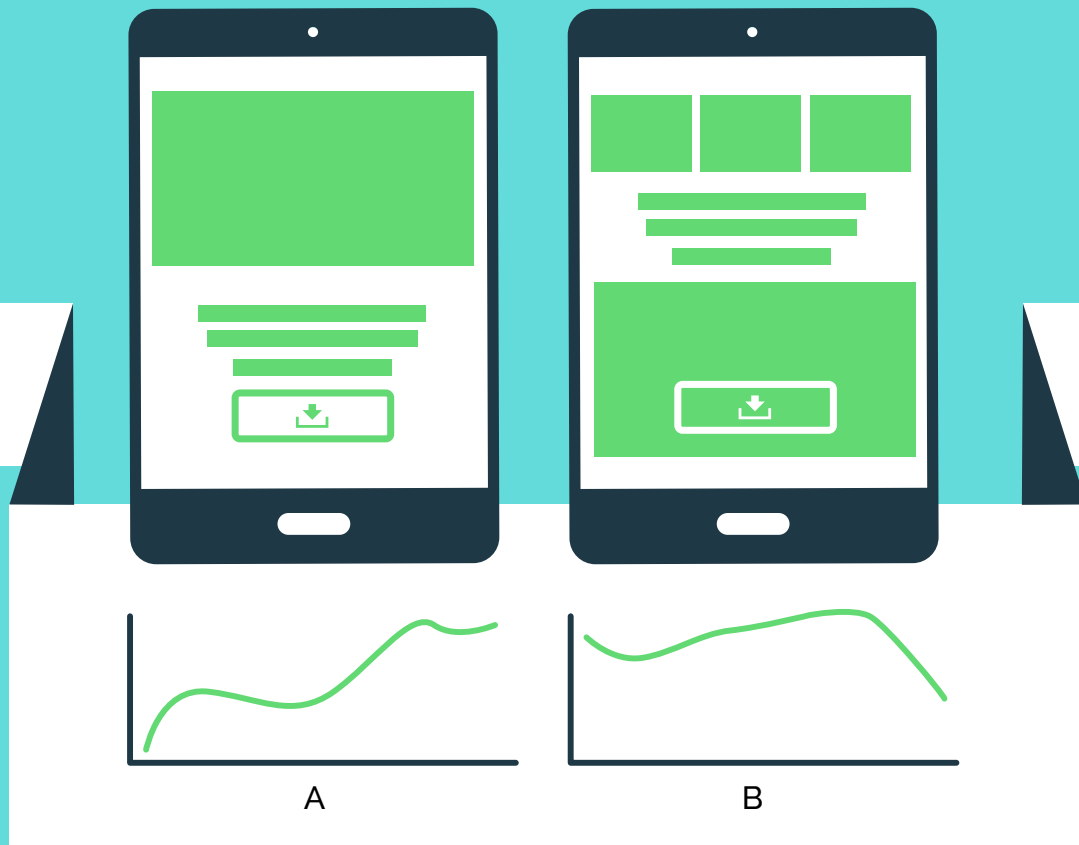
This refers to generating poor backlinks from non-reputable sites that may be obtained from unethical tactics. Buying or selling backlinks on your site are not flagged automatically from crawlers, but can be manually reported. There are penalties to both buyers and sellers where there will be a drop in organic traffic. These penalties can be rectified by removing these backlinks, but loss of organic traffic for a brief period of time will result in a drop in potential sales.

Data Analysis

The development stage doesn't end once your website has gone live. You now have a stream of users and data coming in which needs to be collected and analysed to keep your website fresh and functioning efficiently. Data has a number of benefits, one of them is that it shows you areas that need improvements alongside showing areas and aspects that are performing well. Alongside this assessment, you will be able to compare it to goals that have been set to better understand your website performance. Data analytics can be conducted on free services, such as Google analytics, and on CRM platforms, such as HubSpot.

Google analytics is a free service provided by Google as a platform to assess different aspects of your website using its data. All you need to do is attach a Google analytics tracker code to the back end of your website and let Google do the rest. On the platform, you can set different parameters to assess in detail individual aspects such as the performance of your blog posts. The data is displayed in the form of tables and graphs, and with a bit of training it can be easily managed and understood by yourself to help make key decisions on your website's future.





Testing

To continue improving your website for the foreseeable future, you need to see which areas are performing well and which areas are performing poorly. This can be done through testing various aspects of your websites to highlight these areas. Without testing, you may end up removing parts of your website that boosts its performance greatly.

There are many ways to test your website, but the most common technique used is A/B testing, which involves keeping the majority of a web page the same with only one aspect altered. This ensures that there is only one specific part being tested and no external factors will influence the result of the test. People often use this technique when testing email templates. They measure the effectiveness and engagement levels between two different templates about the same subject with each email sent to half of the email list. An example of an aspect that would be changed for testing would be the colour or text used for a CTA button.

Checklist:

Stage 6

Development

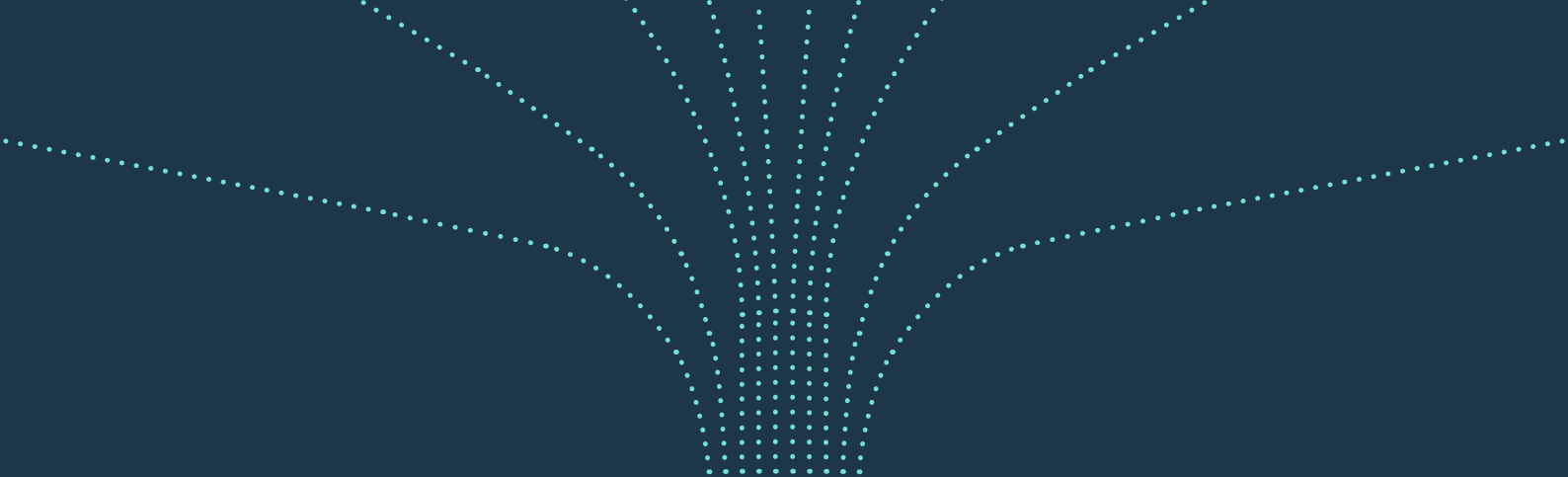


Data Analysis



Testing





CONCLUSION

Following this guide will give you a good foundation for your newly developed website. Make sure to follow all the steps to create the best value for your visitors with a website that suits their exact needs. The development process does not stop once your website is up and running, you can always test and analyse to see areas of improvement.

If there is one key aspect to take away from this, it is to develop your buyer persona first and then incorporate it into every decision you make in the website development process. This will make sure that you appeal to your desired audience and will keep the website from losing focus and going stagnant.

Whilst you may want to design and manage your website yourself, we at Catalyst are aware that often, the amount of time that you must invest to derive optimal results just isn't feasible. In such cases, we are here to arm you with a website that acts as an extension of your brand; an extension of you.

Now you're up to speed on the considerations you need to make before planning your website and how to go on to implement that plan - the only thing to do now is find the time!

Of course, there is another option. You could get on with your day job and outsource to Catalyst.

With countless sites delivered - we've got the experience and skillset to deliver a website that gets found by your target audience, engages with them and drives qualified leads.

BUILD ME A WEBSITE

Or you can contact us on:

0121 296 5275

GET IN TOUCH



www.wearecatalyst.co.uk

0121 296 5272