

Every business looking to establish and maintain a strong core audience needs an amazing website built by amazing web designers. From self-starters that rely on ecommerce sales to brands that want to strengthen their connection to their audiences and create a hub for their content, owning a central platform with a strong domain name will give your business presence and control. But building a website isn't as simple as buying a domain name and putting up a static page – you will also need a content strategy, creating blog posts to appear more prominently in Google Searches. Today, we're going to run through a website launch checklist to break down 21 essentials for a great web page.

A website is an intricate map of content and design, with each feature playing a small part towards the larger purpose. We've grouped the steps below according to their core function for your website to give you a better idea of what they are and why they're necessary.

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PRE-CHECK

Decide on a platform

There are plenty of website hosting options available, but as with any business decision, finding the right one for your needs is essential. Different web hosts have their own unique advantages, drawbacks and packages, so taking the time to run through them will prevent bottlenecks and issues down the line.

WordPress, Wix, and Squarespace remain the three most popular web hosting services available today. All three offer a similar range in hosting packages and customisation, but look to differentiate themselves from the competition in other ways.

WordPress has the largest plugin repository, with over 50 000 available plugins to help you customise and optimize your site. These plugins include ecommerce management tools for retail websites and SEO optimisation tools for sites that rely more heavily on content marketing to generate traffic. With WordPress' creation hub designed for plug and play functionality, its wide variety is paired with ease of installation.

Squarespace requires slightly more time to understand its creation hub, but what it lacks in easy installation it more than makes up for with clean design and template construction. Squarespace's more visual heavy design offers better integration of image use, gallery templates and striking brand composition.

Wix is very much the smallest host of the three but is built for ease. If web design is something you find intimidating, then Wix represents an accessible way to get your site off the ground, offering great troubleshooting support and fewer moving parts to reduce the risk of bugs and crashes.

Refine your brand

A website represents the clearest definition of a business. Not only is it where all the relevant information can be found, but it's also the clearest signal of the experience you want customers to have.

A clearly defined brand isn't just about striking colours and a sharp, witty slogan. It's about a message that's delivered effectively, whether that message is professionalism with heart, wanderlust and insight, or informative and funny.

Brand is split equally between the content you present, the visual tones of your design, and the composition of your platform. A website has all three of these. To make the most of this opportunity, you should have a clearly defined message for your brand, and look to curate a specific emotional experience with every aspect of your site design.

Research legal requirements for ecommerce

A simple blog site doesn't need much in the way of legal reading, but if you are looking to run a business through your website there are several laws and regulations you'll have to consider.

Any ecommerce or retail site is subject not only to international solicitation laws but also the state laws of any market it sells to. For example, while US federal law requires businesses to collect sales tax for internet transactions wherever the business has a physical presence, California state laws require larger e-retailers to collect sales tax in California even if they do not have a physical presence in the state.

Factoring in the market laws your website will operate under is an important part of any plan you may have for it. It sets you up with a better understanding of the regulations around your business and avoids legal fees and unseen expenses in the back end.

Review browser compatibility for plugins

Any plug-in you build into your website has the potential to function differently according to the browser it's been optimised for. A plug-in that's been optimised for Google Chrome might perform better there but slow down your site on, for example, Safari.

Slower loading speeds and clunky code lower your site's search engine optimisation (SEO) rankings, making it harder for browsers to recommend your site to the appropriate audiences.

One or two incompatible plugins may not make a significant difference, but half a dozen could affect not just your ranking but customer experience as well. WordPress offers a convenient compatibility tester called [LambdaTest](#) which helps you get a clearer idea around functionality for each plugin.

CONTENT

Create good landing page copy

The landing page is the first impression a visitor has of a website. As such, this is where they'll need to get all the necessary information to decide if your site is the right place for them right off the bat. Good landing page copy is concise, clear and engaging. It should be able to fit on the landing page without needing the viewer to scroll down or expand the text box.

The copy should include a clear message around what the site is about, and at least one keyword within the first two lines. A good content strategy is not only good for SEO rankings, but giving your viewer the relevant information as soon as possible will make it easier to feed them secondary information like the inspiration behind a product later on.

Pay attention to the tone of the landing page copy. It should represent the tone of your brand and speak directly to the audience you want to attract. Remember, the goal isn't to capture as wide an audience as possible, but to attract the people most likely to use the site.

It is also important to check your spelling and grammar as it is very important for search engine optimization and your ranking in google searches.

Draw up a content marketing strategy

Content marketing is the driving force behind traffic generation and a successful website. It offers several key advantages that are essential to keeping a website relevant to both its core audience and the algorithms that make it discoverable to new viewers.

A strong content marketing strategy usually means fitting a blog section into your website, so you appear in relevant google searches. This doesn't just have to be a space to talk about the site or its products – the point of content marketing strategy isn't to expand on available

information, it's to use the interests of your audience to create a new pathway for them to find your website.

Retail websites that focus on beauty products often have blogs around discussions and trends within the beauty industry, supplemented with product reviews. Be mindful not to implicate fellow competition in reviews, and keep the content general enough to apply broadly while using focused buzzwords to remain relevant.

A Content marketing strategy not only gives you an opportunity to regularly update your site for return visitors, but to pack your site with the keywords and metadata that the algorithm loves. This type of marketing strategy works best with easy to read, bite-sized content that can be updated weekly or biweekly.

PAGES

Home page

Your homepage is likely to be one of your first considerations when deciding on a web hosting platform and site design. Unless you consolidate your links to drive traffic to a specific page, your homepage will be the most visited page on your site. As such, it needs to be built with not just attractive visuals in mind, but functionality.

A taskbar should be fitted to the top of your website to allow viewers to easily toggle between all your main pages, but the homepage button should be differentiated so viewers can always come back to the centre point.

Contact page

While this may not be the most glamorous page on your website, it's one of the most important. Everything else about a website – from the landing page, to the content, construction and functionality – is designed to deepen engagement between a potential audience member and the brand.

Once that engagement has been established, a good site will have a means for the site visitor to contact the business directly, or keep up to date with it through various social media platforms. The contact page should include all available means of contact: social media, phone line, email address and physical address (where applicable).

About page

The about page is a curated space where your audience comes to hear about your story. From the inspiration behind the brand, to the purpose of the website or details about the product, this is where the personal stories take centre focus.

Creating an About page helps avoid cluttering all your other copy with irrelevant information. Not all viewers and customers will want the history or brand message woven into things like the landing page copy or product pages, but for those who have an interest, this page represents a chance to deliver a strong message that depends on understanding around the brand.

Product page

Every ecommerce website needs a product page. This page will function both as a gallery to display your range and the transaction point for any sales.

A strong product page will have clear pictures of each product, a brief description with the appropriate keywords to stack metadata, and links to the purchasing page. Out of every page, this is the one where a clear navigation flow from viewing to purchasing is strongest, so ensure that the purchase links are clearly visible, and embed them into the image of each product as well.

Blog page

This page isn't essential for all sites, but it is certainly helpful. Blogs provide an opportunity to create content stacked with SEO keywords, as well as a chance to update your site regularly, something algorithms favour when looking for sites with up to date information. You may also decide to [TA1](#) improve your content marketing strategy by submitting guest blogs to relevant blogging sites. This is great for search engine optimization, ensuring the site has a good domain authority score. If you do some Keyword research you should be able to know what the most searched blog titles are to find a gap in the content that you can exploit. Once you start your content marketing strategy, ensure you set up google search console and google analytics so you can see the traffic that you are getting onto your site.

Don't have time to finish the article now? No worries, we've compiled this checklist into a PDF for your convenience! [CLICK HERE](#) to download it and give your website the best possible start!

NAVIGATION

Mailing list

While your website represents a central hub for your business or brand, it still requires viewers to search for it in order to create engagement. Funnelling your most dedicated viewers onto a mailing list gives you direct access to their email inboxes, creating a form of communication that you control.

While social media followers are also within your ability to contact, platforms like Twitter and Instagram will have lots of similar voices competing alongside yours to be heard by your shared audience. An email list represents a group of people who choose to be directly contacted by you, in a quiet space where you have less pressure to be loud and more space to get the right message across.

An email signup tab should be installed somewhere on every page of your website. There are plugins that will create a mailing list pop up on your landing page, but the less intrusive option is to look for plugins that set up the sign up on the bottom of each page.

Be sure to include a brief message on why a viewer should sign up for your list. Include the frequency of your emails, the content and any perks to signing up like discount codes or exclusive content.

Clear page flow

Website navigation relies on being able to effectively move a viewer from one relevant page to another. The key word there is relevant. You don't want to overwhelm the viewer with links to everything all the time, but recognising where the natural progression from one page to another is creates page flow, which increases the time a unique viewer spends on your site, as well as the total number of page hits.

For example, the homepage should always make it easy to navigate to the product page, the blog or the mailing list. The About us page should focus on moving traffic to the contact page, blog or off-site platforms. The blog should circle back to the product page and include hyperlinks in the content that lead directly to the relevant products.

Robust navigation structures create an ecosystem that naturally moves your viewers through the website in ways that deepen engagement with each click.

TRACKING

Google Analytics

Fitting your page with the right tracking equipment will help you harvest the most important resource in the digital age: data. [Google Analytics](#) is free to use and allows you to not only track daily page visits and site demographics, but which streams are generating the most traffic.

Knowing, for example, whether a link in an Instagram bio is hauling good numbers to your site or failing is good information to have. Such information not only helps you track effective links, but gives a better idea of which traffic generating methods are creating the highest return on investment (ROI) and which ones should be refined or scrapped.

Google Analytics is especially important if you're going to make use of paid advertising services like Facebook Ads or pay-for-feature mass email lists. Without knowing if your investments and payments are paying off, you're either losing money or not making as much as you should.

Tracking plugins

Individual plugins like [MonsterInsights](#) and [Analytify](#) offer cost effective solutions for direct tracking of your page. By integrating these plugins directly into your website, you can check the statistics of individual pages and posts, optimising your analytics for your content marketing strategy as well.

Different add-ons offered through tracking plugins also help enhance functionality of your site by tracking campaigns as well as sales and transactions data.

The best plugins work on a freemium basis, meaning the most basic packages are free to use, but making the most of them will require investment on your part.

OPTIMISATION

Install SEO plugins

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is the bread and butter of site discoverability. All websites rely on browser search engines to recommend their pages whenever people search the appropriate terms. Making your website SEO friendly is the key to unlocking your target audience and ensuring site longevity through passive methods of traffic generation.

SEO plugins like [Yoast SEO](#) are great for optimising your site for Google and Bing search engines. Like any effective product, it comes with a subscription fee, but it is an essential part of your website's overall health.

SEO plugins make it easier to compile strong metadata and weave keywords into your static copy and blog posts, which has a knock-on effect of making individual pages better SEO generators too.

Accessibility

SEO isn't just about loading your site with the right keywords. At a time where tech companies are becoming more aware of the need to cater to marginalised audiences, search engines are beginning to prioritise sites that offer different accessibility features.

Font size and background colour adjustments are great tools to make your site more accessible for users who suffer from visual impairments, and making your site compatible with text-to-voice plugins gives hard of hearing users better accessibility too. Both of these are things search engines take into account when recommending sites.

Make sure you have a working SSL certificate so people don't get security warnings when they try to enter the site. Also, ensure you have optimised images and fonts so that site speed is as fast as possible. This will all help user experience

Mobile-friendliness

One of the biggest SEO boosters is making sure your site is mobile friendly. In 2019, 50.71% of all Google searches were made through a mobile device. Apple users in the US eclipsed this number, with 55% of all Safari searches in the US coming through Apple mobile devices.

POST-CHECK

Proofread copy

Before launching your site, proofread all copy on every page for spelling and grammatical errors, accuracy of information and duplicated content. You want your site's reading experience to be clean, up to date and flow well.

Double-check links

When it comes to launching your site it is really important to test every link on your site through multiple browsers to ensure that they work and lead to the appropriate webpages. Broken links can affect where you appear in google search and ruin user experience. It might even be worth

getting some friends to go onto the site to do some user research. They can test how the website runs, check signup forms and even look at your meta tags.

Test out sales process

If you are running an ecommerce site, it is of the utmost importance that you test your purchase and transaction process, as well as your refund system if you have one installed. Where money is involved, you don't want to experiment through trial and error, and this is the number one way to ensure a good customer experience.

Don't forget, your website represents the start and end point of your business. Functionality, good design, strong content, and efficiency are all hallmarks of a good website and reflect well on your brand.

Want to save this checklist for later? [CLICK HERE](#) to download the Website Launch Checklist as a PDF file.