

## 4 CRUCIAL DECISIONS BEFORE BUILDING YOUR WEBSITE

Building a website is a tough gig, especially if you're new to online marketing.

If you've ever tried to build a website you'll know what we're talking about. It's a project that can spiral out of control taking up your time, money and possibly your sanity.

We've seen hundreds of website projects and, although we're not developers, we've seen what works well and what doesn't.

In this article, we'll discuss a few key decisions that you should be making BEFORE building or reviewing your website. We want to ensure that your next website project goes smoothly and that your online marketing starts with a strong foundation.

### DECISION ONE: WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR WEBSITE?

For some, this question is easy, more leads or more sales. If that's the case, we would recommend making those goals SMART ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART\\_criteria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART_criteria))

For others, it might be a little more complicated. Some examples include:

- An online portfolio of work
- A sales support website
- Personal or professional blog
- An online showcase of products

Each business is different, your website can cater to almost any purpose, any goal. And this is the trap. People try to do too much and the resulting project starts getting bigger and bigger.

A website should have one overriding purpose that is simple and clear.

Every decision you make about your website should then be measured against it. Anything that is not helping your website achieve that purpose should be discarded.

### DECISION TWO: WHO IS YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE?

This is a question that you'll likely know the answer to already. You can also find resources on finding your target audience here (<https://moz.com/blog/whiteboard-friday-creating-marketing-personas>)

It's important that you know who you're speaking to BEFORE you begin building your website because:

- Good designers/developers will adapt your website to match your target audience
- Your website copy will be more targeted to the people you want to talk to
- Your online marketing will be more effective talking to your most valuable niche

Be specific, almost personal with defining your website audience. Have a crystal clear idea of who it's designed for.

### DECISION 3: WHAT ARE YOUR KEY SELLING POINTS?

This is another classic marketing question and a relevant one when building a website. It will be critical when you're deciding what you want to write on each page.

Imagine this: You're looking for a lawyer. There might be 10 that are close so you take a look at their websites. You might have all 10 websites open and you're scanning through them all. What could help you choose? What makes one lawyer different from another?

The answer is key messaging or selling points that you want your target audience to know about your business.

Key messages should be specific and clear.

For example, "good customer service" is no longer enough. It's a vague general comment. On your website, we can be more specific. Something better would be:

- "We reply to all queries within 24 hours" or
- "Our products are backed by a 30 day money back guarantee" or
- "We've been voted the best XXX by XXX three years in a row"

Additionally, you could have testimonials and case studies that talk about your selling points as well.

The purpose of a key message is to give a potential customer a reason to choose you over a competitor.

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## DECISION 4: WEBSITE PLANNING

Finally, the geeky stuff. We're going hi-tech now.

**Step One:** Get a paper and a pen.

**Step Two:** Write down all the pages that you think should go on the website. Leave a few lines between each page. Here are some of the more common pages:

- a) Homepage
- b) About Us
- c) Contact us
- d) Our Clients/Customers
- e) Our services page summary
- l) Individual service pages
- f) Our Products summary
- l) Individual product pages

**Step Three:** For each page, write down its job and content needed to do that job. Each of these pages has a purpose that contributes to your goal. We've listed some of the most common pages and their purpose below. You can create any type of page you want, but the purpose and content should be clear.

- **Homepage:** The job of the homepage is to make three things clear to a visitor in the first 3-5 seconds.
  - o Who are you?
  - o What do you do?
  - o Why should I do business with you? (Key messages)
- **About Us:** People want to know who they are doing business with, so tell them. They want something real. A good About Us page builds rapport, trust and credibility. Speaking in a more personal voice and images of the team are also great to have on here.
- **Contact Us:** Ok so this one is easy. How to get in touch with you. Perhaps opening times, location, emails, contact form.
- **Our Clients/Our Customers:** These pages are about building credibility and trust. You can do this by naming past clients, including testimonials or case studies.

- **Our service page summary:** The purpose of the page can change but if you have a lot of services, this page will help visitors determine what service they need. It helps people to compare and contrast your services. Content on this page should include a summary of your services and their benefits.
  - o Individual service pages: Sells the particular service. Examples of content could include persuasive copy, relevant testimonials and case studies.
- **Our products page summary:** Same idea as the services page. It should provide an overview of your products so that your visitors will know which product they need. You should provide some way to compare and contrast your products. This could be through a selection of images or descriptions of different product lines.
  - o Individual product pages: Sells the product. Sharp images of your product, relevant testimonials if possible, what problems your product solves.

Phew! So now you've got:

- o A goal for your website
- o Your target audience
- o Your key messages
- o A draft plan of your web pages and their purpose

**CONGRATULATIONS! You have come a long way.**

**Remember that your website is not about you but about your customers.**

What would they want to see? What questions would they ask?

Building or re-designing a website isn't easy. It's a costly and time consuming exercise and you need to give yourself the best chance of success.

A little bit of planning will go a long way to ensure you create a powerful marketing asset that will help your business for years.

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