

What Is the Purpose of a Website?

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Your website is your business's most important digital asset. Everybody knows they need a website, but why exactly are websites so important, and what is their purpose?

Slide Where do people first go to learn about your business?

Your website is the first place people go to learn about your products or services and find information about your business.

What is the job of your website?

Although your other online presences like your social media profiles are important too, your website is your home base online. It's also your digital sales rep, working 24 hours a day, seven days a week to promote your offerings. For these reasons, your website is critical to not only your marketing, but to your business as a whole.

When you think about your website, whether you have one yet or not, the first question to ask is: What is the job of your website? You can use the "Jobs To Be Done" framework, otherwise known as the Jobs Theory, to help figure this out.

The Jobs Theory was developed by [Clay Christensen at Harvard Business School](#), and it's a helpful way to look at customer needs by focusing on their motivations.

Slide The Jobs Theory

The idea that people have jobs in their life that need to be done, and they "hire" the best product or service to do it.

What is an example of the Jobs Theory?

Think about the saying, "People don't buy a quarter-inch drill; they buy a quarter-inch hole." This is a perfect example of the Jobs Theory in action. When someone purchases a drill, they're hiring that drill to do the job of creating a hole in their wall.

Christensen's theory was written with products and services in mind, but it can also be applied to websites. Ask yourself, "What is the job people are hiring your website to do?" Your site will have several different jobs. Some people may be coming there to find out about your pricing, while others might want to speak with your sales team.

Regardless of why people are coming to your site, it needs to help them accomplish their goals easily and efficiently. If not, you risk losing them for good.

Slide Do consumers return to a site after a bad experience?

88% of online consumers are less likely to return to a website after a bad experience.

The “job-to-be-done” of your website

It’s important to determine the job your website is being hired to do and to execute on that job.

Remember that the “job-to-be-done” of your website is the one that your audience determines, not you. Focusing on your visitors’ experience and seeing your site through their eyes will ensure that your website accomplishes the job it’s been tasked to do.

Why the User Experience on Your Website Is Important

Your Website’s User Experience

Have you ever had an experience when you visited a store and couldn’t find what you needed? You searched everywhere, but everything was disorganized. You tried to get help, but no one was there to guide you. Eventually, you left the store empty-handed and frustrated.

This was probably a negative experience for you, and most likely you didn’t go back to that store again.

Now, think about a time when you went to a store and had a positive experience. When you walked in the door, you could immediately tell where products were located since they were organized logically by categories. You found what you needed, made your purchase, and left happy.

This is the difference between a good user experience and a bad user experience.

Slide What is a User Experience?

User Experience

How a person feels when interacting with a system.

User experience is about making decisions based on the user’s needs.

What does the experience of the user look like?

The system could be physical like a grocery store or the dashboard of a car, or it can be digital like an app or a website. For the purposes of this video, we’re going to talk about the user experience on your website.

Instead of thinking about what *you* want from your website, focus on the experience your website visitors are having. How do they feel when they interact with the site? How easy is it for them to find what they need? Did they come with questions and leave with answers? Will their experience be delightful or frustrating? These are essential questions to ask when designing the user experience of your website.

Slide How does a positive user experience affect your business?

Creating a positive experience for your website visitors can turn them from strangers to customers, and eventually evangelists for your brand.

Slide The Inbound User Experience

Attract visitors to your website, engage them with thoughtful content and design, and delight them with personal touches and an overall excellent experience.

A positive user experience is illustrated by the inbound methodology

An inbound focused user experience will not only create a better experience for your users, but it'll benefit your business as well.

For example, after incorporating suggestions from their community into their website, ESPN.com saw a 35% increase in revenue.

The experience people have will make or break their image of you within the first milliseconds, and it will decide whether they're going to do business with you or not.

Slide Your website is your number one digital asset.

You have a very limited amount of time to make a good first impression on your website visitors.

Slide How is your company judged by your website?

A Stanford study found that judgments on a company's credibility are 75% based on the company's website design.

Slide What does a good user experience do?

A website with a good user experience helps visitors accomplish their goals.

But a website's design isn't just about looks.

The interface is only one element of the overall user experience design of a website. It's the entire experience someone has when they land on your site, from your navigation, to your copy, to the images or videos you choose to include.

So, understanding your visitors' needs should be first and foremost when designing the user experience of your website. By keeping your user's goals in mind, you'll stay focused and have a set of guidelines to help you make decisions when it comes time to design your website.

What Are the Elements of a Good Website User Experience?

Designing a great user experience

Designing a great user experience is all about seeing your website through your users' eyes. Every decision you make should be based on their needs and goals.

Slide What are the key characteristics of a good website user experience?

Key characteristics of a good website user experience:

- Useful
- Intuitive
- Consistent
- Accessible
- Appealing

First, your website must be useful.

People are coming to your website for a reason. They might be looking for your pricing, trying to chat with someone on your customer support team, or searching for your blog. If your website doesn't help visitors achieve their goals, then it isn't useful, and they'll leave as quickly as they came.

Slide What are your user's goals?

Get clear on what your user goals are.

Conduct research and talk to your customers.

Slide Ask your users about their experience on your site

Surveys are a great way to get a large response from your audience about your website.

How should you ask your users about their experience?

Make sure to ask specific questions such as, "Why did you visit the site?" and "What were you trying to find?" Make things as straightforward as possible.

You can also invite your customers to chat with you by emailing them or posting on social media. You'd be surprised by how many people are willing to talk to you and share their experiences. But if you are struggling to get responses, offer an incentive like a coupon or an exclusive content offer.

Slide How do you get data indirectly from visitors?

To get data without reaching out to your customers directly, use heat mapping software.

How does heat mapping software work?

Programs like Hotjar or Lucky Orange analyze where people are spending time on your website and might be struggling.

There are countless ways to perform user research and it's a broad discipline, so if you want to learn more, check out the [resources](#) section.

Slide Is your site intuitive?

To create an intuitive website, make sure each page answers one question at a time and asks visitors to take one action at a time.

How do you make your site more intuitive?

Next, your website needs to be intuitive. If a visitor doesn't know where to look or what's relevant to them, it can result in a confusing or negative user experience.

Providing too much information or asking too much of your visitors will confuse them and cause them to take no action at all. Simplify the experience by keeping each page focused on one question and one call-to-action. What do people need to know on this page, and what do you want them to do once they know it?

Take the [pricing page](#) for Slack as an example. People are coming to this page to learn about the pricing options for Slack and what features are available at each level. The page answers this question in a well laid-out table, and then prompts the visitor to "Get started."

Slide What is the Mere-Exposure Effect?

The more familiar we are with something, the more we like it

How do you use the Mere-Exposure Effect?

Humans inherently like familiarity. Take advantage of the mere-exposure effect by creating consistency across your website. Aim for consistency in the design, page layouts, colors, and fonts, as well as in the content.

Slide How do you ensure consistency in your website?

To ensure consistency across your site, establish style guides for both your visual and written content.

Use a visual style guide

A visual style guide lays out the guidelines for things like logos, font choices, colors, and page layouts. A written style guide establishes your tone of voice, language to use when addressing your customers, and so on.

An important element of your website's user experience is accessibility. If you work with a web designer, they should manage web accessibility standards for things like readability for screen readers, color contrast, and font size. A quick Google search for "website accessibility checker" will come up with several options for evaluating your website.

Accessibility also refers to how visitors access your content.

Slide How easy is it to find information on your site?

In a HubSpot study, 76% of respondents said that the most important element in website design is how easy it is to find information.

Create good navigation

Help your visitors easily find the information they need by creating good navigation menus. Your navigation is a critical piece of the user experience of your website, so it's important to do research and prioritize what your users care about.

Perform a [card sort](#) to determine how your navigation should be structured.

Slide What is card sorting?

Card sorting is a research method used to help design or evaluate the [information architecture](#) of a website.

There are two types of card sorts: open and closed.

Slide How to perform an open card sort:

1. Write the names of your website pages on index cards.
2. Lay the cards out in front of your test participants.
3. Ask them to group the cards by similarity

How do you use open card sorting?

Repeat the card sort with each individual and notice any trends that emerge. How did people choose to group the pages on your site? Design your navigation to reflect these findings.

If you've already decided on categories for your navigation, you can perform a closed card sort instead.

Slide How to perform a closed card sort:

1. Give your test participants the categories you've decided on for your website navigation.
2. Ask them to organize the index cards with the names of your website pages into those categories.

Slide What is usability testing?

Usability testing is a way to evaluate your website by testing it with your users.

Performing usability testing

Whether you perform a closed or open card sort, document the results from each person by taking a picture or sketching the organization they've come up with.

If you already have a website and want to optimize your navigation to improve the user experience, conduct usability testing. Watch people use your website, either virtually or in-person, and note where they struggle. They might have trouble using your navigation or finding the information they need on a certain page. Then, make adjustments based on the results you find.

To learn more about user experience research methods, check out the [resources](#) section.

Slide How is your navigation?

Aim to have no more than seven menu items in your main navigation, and in most cases, have no more than three levels of sub-navigation.

Slide where should navigation be on a site?

Include your navigation menu in the header and footer of your website to simplify navigation and keep visitors engaged.

Is your website appealing?

Your website should be appealing. This doesn't mean your site has to be flashy or complicated. Simple can be appealing. When people can understand a page's purpose and content at a quick glance, it creates a positive user experience.

There are a few design elements to keep in mind to create an appealing website.

1. Use white space
2. Add a visual element
3. Keep your design simple
4. Focus on a single goal

Slide How do you use white space?

Use whitespace on your website pages to visually frame important information and shape the focus of the reader.

Slide add a visual element

A relevant image is a great way to convey a lot of information, give the page some visual interest, and support the page's purpose. You can also include a video, which is proven to increase engagement.

Slide Keep your website design simple and free of clutter.

Keeping your website design simple

Make sure your color and font choices are in line with your business's branding. Even if your brand is fun and whimsical, your website still needs to be usable, not overwhelming to the eye. Balance bright accent colors with neutrals or more muted colors. Try to stick to no more than two font families, and instead create variation using font size and weight.

Slide Your website page content should support a single goal.

When evaluating the appeal of your website, keep the intuitive principle in mind as well. You're solving one goal per page, so choose your layout and the elements on the page wisely.

Slide Keep your website current

Your users are always changing, so your website shouldn't be stagnant.

Why should you refresh your website often?

The last thing to keep in mind is that your website should be constantly evolving.

What worked yesterday might not work today. Always be looking at your website with a critical eye and ask yourself, “How can I simplify my website and help people achieve their goals quicker and easier?” Crafting a truly amazing user experience requires constant iteration, and it’s an ongoing process.

To learn more about iterative website design, check out the [Growth Driven Design Certification](#).