WEBSITE DESIGN IN 2019

BY AMIT VYAS

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GETTING STARTED

There's no denying that every business today needs a website not just to showcase their business, their products or services but to also help the company generate new sales opportunities and to drive sales.

But where do you start?

There are a multitude of options available to business owners and marketers when looking to create a new website that the information available can often be intimidating and sometimes confusing.

That's why we've created this E-Guide. To help you understand everything you need to know when creating a new website for your business.

AMIT VYAS
CEO
NEXA

THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF A NEWLY DESIGNED WEBSITE FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Before you start on your new website project, it's important to note down your goals for the website.

"Setting clear goals for your new website will help you understand your successes and areas of improvement"

It's therefore important that you ask yourself (or your team) what you are looking to achieve from your new website.

Here are some common answers that we hear from the majority of companies that we speak to at this stage of the website design process:

EXAMPLE GOALS

- Greater business visibility
- More sales leads or enquiries
- Direct sales revenue
- Build trust and credibility in your business
- Increased confidence in your business by those looking to do business with you

It's completely plausible that more than one of the above applies to your business. And that's absolutely fine. The most important thing to ensure at this stage is that whatever your goals and objectives are, these need to be 100% relevant for your business.

If you already have a existing website design that's live and are looking to replace it with a new site, your goals and objectives can be much more accurate and metrics based.

For example, if you're aware of your existing website's performance, the following goals may be more applicable:

- Increase organic traffic to the website by 20% in the first 12 months
- Increase website enquiries (for B2B businesses) by 50% in the first 12 months

- Increase sales (B2C) customers by 10% within 6 months of launch
- Increase website subscriptions to 25% in the first 12 months
- Decrease the bounce rate of website visitors by 20%
- Increase average page views by website visitors by 10%

"If you're unsure about the types of goals you should set for your new website, consult colleagues and create a list of benefits the new website can bring to your business"

If you do have the ability to look at existing data and use this to define new goals and objectives for your new website design, this will help you make better decisions relating to the new website's design, functionality, content requirements and marketing budgets.

TARGET WEBSITE AUDIENCE:

WHO WILL VISIT YOUR NEW WEBSITE?

Before launching into the design and development of a new website, it's absolutely vital that you have a deep understanding of (a) who you want to attract to your website and (b) what you want them to do once they arrive on your site

"Creating a new website without consideration of who your target audience is, could be the biggest mistake you can make"

We call this 'persona development' and it's likely that you've already identified your website audience and documented this somewhere in your business or marketing plans.

PERSONA DEVELOPMENT

It's possible that your business has more than one persona group (or target audience) that you will target for your website. It's therefore important to list these out and at the same time attempt to understand the objectives of that persona group when they visit your website. What is it that they are looking for on your website?

Here's an example that may help.

In this scenario, we'll use a new school website as the example website:

- Business type: School X
- Target Audience (Persona groups): Parents of school-age children; Teachers searching for a job
- What would a parent look for on the website? Information about the school, curriculum, teaching team, school location, school fees, enrolment criteria and process, school brochures, images and videos of the school and facilities etc
- What would a teacher look for on the website? General information about the school, Careers page and contact information, teaching team.

Once you have a clear understanding of your website's intended audience, you should also have a outline list of the type of content that your website will need.

It's important to employ a 'customer-first' approach to this process to ensure that your website caters to the needs of those who you want to target to the new website. One recommendation here is to engage a existing customer (or group of customers) and ask them what type of information they would look for on your website to help them.

"Remember, your website is built for your customer (not you). Think about the problems that your business solves and make that clear and easy to understand"

TIP: ENGAGE EXISTING CUSTOMERS

If you're unsure about the type of content that potential customers would find helpful, think about engaging a existing customer and ask them what type of information influenced their decision to work with your company.

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DESIGNING YOUR NEW WEBSITE:

WHAT TO THINK ABOUT & WHY

How your website looks is often the major determinant of whether your new website is deemed a success or not inside a company.

But that can be a dangerous approach. While it's tempting to have a visually stunning website that looks beautiful, it's also important that your website functions properly in order to help you achieve the goals and objectives outlined previously.

"A beautiful website may gain admirers, but will it pay the bills?"

DESIGN TIPS

While functionality and features may not be as important if your sole goal is to impress visitors this may not be the case if performance metrics such as sales leads and revenue growth is your prime objective.

It's clearly important to get your balance right, so here are some tips that will help you define some of the design considerations of your new website:

- Navigation (Menu): Keep your navigation as simple and as relevant to your audience as possible. The more complex your navigation, the more you are likely to confuse website visitors, so it's important not only to keep your navigation menu simple but also ensure that the naming of each menu option is clear and easy to understand by your intended website audience.
- Website Structure: Website design and usability will impact whether your new website is a success or not, so it's important that the website is structured in a way that allows visitors to find the information they are looking for quickly, efficiently and without frustration. Try to map out your typical visitors website journey not just from your home page but from other pages on your website.

- Search Engine Visibility: From a sustainable marketing perspective, it's important that your website is visible on search engines such as Google so that organic traffic can be driven to your website. Therefore, think carefully about the content that you will have on your new website. You need to ensure that informative content, perhaps the type of content that prospective customers would search for and find interesting, is contained within your new website.
- Type of content: Also important to consider is the type of content that your new website should contain and should be influenced by your knowledge of your customer. Would they relate more to text based content or would they prefer videos about your business, product or services? It's important that you use this information to map out the type of content that your website needs, during the design process.
- Lead Generation: Will you use your new website to help generate new sales opportunities for your business? If so, it's important that you create as many lead generation opportunities for your business, across your website, so that website visitors (and potential customers) can connect with your business easily and efficiently. Think about placing enquiry forms, or even pop-ups (also know as lead flows) in strategic parts of your website to maximise lead generation opportunities.

THE PAGE COUNT:

HOW MANY PAGES WILL YOUR NEW WEBSITE NEED?

There's no right or wrong answer to this question, but it's important that you have a clear understanding of approximately how many pages your website will need for a number of reasons:

- This will help you plan your project more accurately
- This will help you to understand the size and scale of your new website
- Knowing how many pages will help you understand your content requirements.

"Try not to obsess about the number of pages your website needs. Obsess more about the user experience of those who visit your website"

SITEMAP CREATION

Create a visual sitemap before you engage with a website builder or even better, create one with them to make sure that each page of your website is clearly defined and has a purpose.

Whoever you work with to build out your website design, make sure that all parties have a clear, understandable and logical site map for your new website that details each section, sub-page and page on your website.

Ensuring this is in place will help you launch your website on time and within budget. It also gives you an opportunity to reduce the scope of work should the initial site map require more pages, content, design and development work than your budget allows.

Sitemap Creation Tools

The following tools can be used to create visual sitemaps:

www.slickplan.com
www.dynomapper.com
www.writemaps.com
www.mindnode.com
www.powermapper.com

Most of the tools above provide free of cost sitemaps so test each of these until you find one that works for your purpose.

TO BLOG OR NOT TO BLOG:

DO YOU NEED A BLOG FOR YOUR NEW WEBSITE?

A blog may not be relevant for every website or business but if you're unsure if your company website needs a blog, ask yourself two very simple questions:

1) Does your business have competitors who are ranking well on search engines such as Google?

2) Is it important for your business to rank amongst the top positions on a search engine?

"If you want a website that has the ability to answer the questions a prospective customer will ask, then you most certainly need a blog on your website"

YES OR NO?

If you answered "yes" to both of the questions above, then simply put, your business does need a blog.

If you answered "no" to any or both of the questions above, then we'd recommend that you research competitors and then decide if having the ability to add regular content on your new website will help website visitors learn more about your company.

Anyway, back to those who answered "yes". From as early back as 2008, Google has been providing tips and advice to website owners about website design, blogging and the benefits of this for a new website. Google themselves suggest the following:

"Make your site interesting and useful

Creating compelling and useful content will likely influence your website more than any of the other factors discussed here. Users know good content when they see it and will likely want to direct other users to it. This could be through blog posts, social media services, email, forums, or other means.

Organic or word-of-mouth buzz is what helps build your site's reputation with both users and Google, and it rarely comes without quality content."

"Your blog provides you with the opportunity to create fresh new content on a regular basis"

Google have long advocated the use of a blog on a website and have consistently advised businesses to upload quality new and unique content to a website as regularly as possible. By doing so, and as Google mention above, a website's reputation not just with website users, but with Google themselves positively increases.

For businesses in highly competitive industries, we would strongly recommend creating and updating a blog on a regular basis by adding fresh, new and highly useful content that will help potential customers trust your business.

Many businesses are unsure about the type of content that they should include in a blog but this doesn't necessarily need to be a challenge.

For example, think about the types of sales questions potential customers ask you or your sales team. More often than not, that prospect may be asking you because they couldn't find answers to their question online. By answering this question in a blog article, not only are you helping solve problems that your website visitors may be having, but you're also helping Google fill a search void!

TECH TIME:

WHAT TECHNOLOGY WILL YOUR NEW WEBSITE DESIGN NEED?

When we discuss website technology, there are two main areas of concern when creating a new website.

The first of these is the 'front-end' technology, in other words, the areas of your website that your website visitors will see and engage with.

It's therefore important to ensure that your website performs well in terms of speed, page rendering and content accessibility.

"Most website platforms available today are of a high standard. But choose carefully as not all platforms are suitable for every business"

TIP: LOOK AHEAD

Before deciding on your website's CMS, think about how your website will need to adapt for the future needs of your business. While this may be difficult to predict, thinking ahead can save you time and money in the future.

It's also vital that your website design displays perfectly on all types of devices and not just desktop machines or laptops.

Over 50% of web traffic today comes from mobile devices, which come in many shapes and sizes.

When speaking to your website design vendor, ask them to explain their recommended approach in terms of front-end technology, once they have a clear understanding of your business and the goals of your new website.

The second is your website's design's 'back-end technology'.

Many people will refer to this as a 'content management system' or 'CMS' and again there are many technologies available (Eg Wordpress, Drupal, Custom etc).

It's important that you explain your specific requirements to a website design vendor in order for them to be able to suggest the most appropriate CMS for your business. For example, is your website design likely to scale in the future? Will you be adding more products and services in the future? Will you be adding e-commerce features to your website design in the future?

This type of information will help determine the most appropriate solution for your new website and save you money in the long run.

TIP: NEW TECH

Lead generation tools and platforms are plentiful so it's important not to complicate the process. That said, think about using new tools such as automated Chat Bots or Live Chat if you believe your prospects will engage with these channels.

- Driving quality traffic to your website. Without traffic, there can be no leads, so it's important that you drive qualified traffic to your website.
- Look after your guests! What happens when a user visits your website? You need to make sure that their experience is positive, that they have access to the information they are looking for and can easily connect with your business.
- Easy to connect without distraction. Your website's sole purpose may be to generate qualifies sales leads so don't overload prospects with too much content, information and navigation options!

- Keep your ask simple and make sure you're asking in the right place! It's amazing how many websites don't have lead generation forms on key pages of their website. Ensure that you make it easy for a prospect to engage with you without having to search for a contact form.
- Optimise and start again. It's important that you track the effectiveness of your lead generation strategy by measuring visitor-to-lead metrics and optimising these wherever possible. Once you do that, start measuring again. Rinse and repeat until you're satisfied with your results.

WEBSITE CONTENT:

CREATING THE RIGHT TYPE OF CONTENT FOR YOUR WEBSITE

We've touched on this previously, but such is it importance, we'll look at this in a little more detail here.

Whenever you're trying to determine the type of content your website visitors will respond to most, it's important to have a clear vision of who your target audience is likely to be. Once you have a clear understanding of our target audience, think about the type of content that they will relate to.

For example, if your business is highly technical, perhaps a 45 second explainer video would help. Alternatively, if your target audience is likely to want more written content during the research stage, think about offering blog articles, e-guides and white papers.

Whichever direction you go in, once your new website design is live, make sure that you user test the website and implement any critical feedback to achieve strong results for your business.

WEBSITE ROI:

HOW DO YOU GENERATE SALES LEADS ON YOUR NEW WEBSITE?

As more and more businesses start to understand the value of their website from a lead generation perspective, the more we are asked this question!

Fortunately, as website design and development technology has evolved, so too has the availability and use of digital lead generation tools.

While lead generation in some respects is easier than ever, there is still a science behind generating high quality, sales-ready leads and there needs to be a clear strategic approach to this.

Here are some of the elements that business owners need to consider when designing a lead generation strategy:

"For B2B businesses, design your new site to be a lead generating machine!"

COST:

HOW MUCH DOES A NEW WEBSITE DESIGN COST?

Easily the most frequently asked question that we face! The cost of website design can be determined by many different factors and we've already discussed many of these above but here are a few of the main cost determining factors:

- Number of pages on your new website.
- Size and complexity of your new website.
- Features and functionality.
- Choice of CMS or website framework.
- Number of languages.
- Type of content that will be hosted on your website.
- Types of tracking tools or integrations required.
- Additional services required. Eg content creation, photography, videography etc

Looking for more information on cost? Visit: https://blog.digitalnexa.com/how-much-does-a-new-website-cost

POST DELIVERY:

WILL YOU NEED A MAINTENANCE CONTRACT FOR YOUR NEW WEBSITE?

In short, website maintenance offers peace of mind for business owners in the event of website breakdowns but also to ensure priority support for website design or content updates.

Your maintenance provider may also be the first point of contact if your server fails causing your website to go down and in those instances, it's always important to ensure that your website is up and running as quickly as possible especially if your website is important from a sales, marketing or even business reputation perspective.

In addition, there may be occasions where a website needs urgent updating or fixes due to situations outside the control of the website vendor. For example, in July 2018, Google updated the policy regarding the use of customised Google Maps. Whereas customised map functionality, in the main, was previously provided free of charge Google launched a new $200 per month license fee. Any website using this feature without a valid license would show a error on the map, with all map functionality limited.

WEB DOMAIN:

HOW DO I PURCHASE A DOMAIN & HOW SHOULD I HOST MY NEW WEBSITE?

When speaking to potential website design vendors about your new website, domain registration and website hosting may have been raised as a topic of discussion.

Domain registration is the process of registering a domain name, which identifies one or more IP addresses with a name that is easier to remember and use in URLs to identify particular Web pages. The person or business that registers domain name is called the domain name registrant.

In order to get a website active and live on the internet, you need to host a website. If you are seeking to build a website without taking web hosting services, registering domain names will serve no purpose. When you buy website hosting, you're basically renting server space on a server where your web files will be placed and accessible.

If you're unsure about website hosting, here are a few pointers that will help:

- When registering and securing your website domain, it's important to stick to high quality and reputable vendors. It's also important that you are the registered owner of the domain and not the domain vendor, website design, host or the development company. To register your domain, we recommend companies such as GoDaddy.com for general .com, .net or .co domains or 101Domain.com for more localised and country specific domains.
- Try to avoid hosting your website with your domain provider. In case that provider's business fails and collapses, you don't want your domain and website to be stuck in any 3rd party bankruptcy issues.
- When purchasing website hosting services, make sure that you take the advice of your website designer / developer and select a host that provides the correct server specification that complies with the requirements of the website platform that your new site design will be built on.

- It's always important to check bandwidth and disk space when selecting a server. If you're unsure of how much disk space or bandwidth your new website design will require once developed, again it may be best to ask your website design vendor. Also, it's important to consider what may happen if your new website design becomes popular and attracts high-levels of traffic. You need to ensure that your server and hosting environment can manage increased level of traffic without your website crashing.
- Check the backup capabilities of the hosting provider and select a backup package that suits the requirements of your business and website. If you're likely to add new content to your website on a regular basis, you may need to backup your site more regularly. Contract terms for website hosting are often for a minimum of one year although some providers do charge monthly and do so often for a small premium.

BE FOUND ON GOOGLE:

HOW DO YOU GET YOUR NEW WEBSITE DESIGN TO SHOW ON GOOGLE SEARCHES?

Unfortunately, the 'build it and they will come' principle doesn't apply to new websites when we talk about organic website traffic.

Instead, businesses that are launching a new website need to have a clear traffic strategy that includes the following:

- Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)
- Search Engine Marketing (SEM)

We'll look at each of these in more detail.

"Website's that don't engage in any form of search marketing, whether it be SEO or SEM are likely to underachieve or fail"

TIP: ANSWER QUESTIONS

If your website has a blog, use this platform to create content that helps potential customers make buying decisions. Tackle questions that prospects will be asking. Topics such as price, service, timelines and technical advice is often valuable and tends to rank well on Google!

- Search Engine Optimisation (SEO): The process that positions your website in a way that is compliant to the recommendations made by the major search engines (Eg Google, Bing & Yahoo) in order to drive organic (free of cost) traffic to your website.
- Search Engine Marketing: Often referred to as 'PPC' or 'Pay per click advertising', websites use search engine marketing by placing adverts (either text based or banners) on search engines and other websites to capitalise on a individual user's specific searches. For example, if you are a Printing company located in Manchester, England, you'd want your advert to be seen whenever a prospective customer is searching for Printers in Manchester or Printing companies in Manchester.

- Social Media Marketing: Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest and Snapchat contain vast amounts of consumer data and allow businesses to tap into this by placing targeted adverts and communication to those most likely to be interested in your business. Each advert can contain a link directly back to your website.
- If you want to learn more about SEO and how you can start driving traffic to your website, we'd recommend that you watch this video:

REPLACING A OLD WEBSITE:

WHAT IF I HAVE A WEBSITE ALREADY? WILL MY NEW WEBSITE REPLACE THE OLD ONE?

If you already have a website, it would be a mistake to simply switch off your old website and switch on the new one and this is a common mistake that many, many businesses make.

The reason for this is that search engines such as Google will already have indexed (or listed) your website on its search engine. It does this by remembering your website URLs (or links) and then references your website within its search engines results pages whenever a user searches for information that exists on your website.

If you suddenly change your website design, the URL structure or any links without 'telling' Google, the search engine may continue to send users to your old website links. If your old website no longer exists, your users will likely end up on a error page or at best a 404 page, which tells the user that this page is no longer valid.

To avoid this, you need to speak to a SEO specialist that will help you migrate your new site into a live environment who will also take care of the process required to alert the search engines of your website design update.

WEBSITE TRAFFIC:

# HOW DO YOU MEASURE THE TRAFFIC ON YOUR NEW WEBSITE?

Web traffic is the amount of data sent and received by visitors to a website. This necessarily does not include the traffic generated by bots.

Since the mid-1990s,web traffic has been the largest portion of Internet traffic. This is determined by the number of visitors and the number of pages they visit.

There are numerous tools that can be installed on your website in order to monitor web traffic. Google Analytics is the most common tool and is available free of cost to any website owner. Though tools like Google Analytics, you will be in a position to collect and analyse important website analytics that can help you understand the performance of your new website.

Web analytics is the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of web data for purposes of understanding and optimising web usage. Web analytics provides information about the number of visitors to a website and the number of page views.
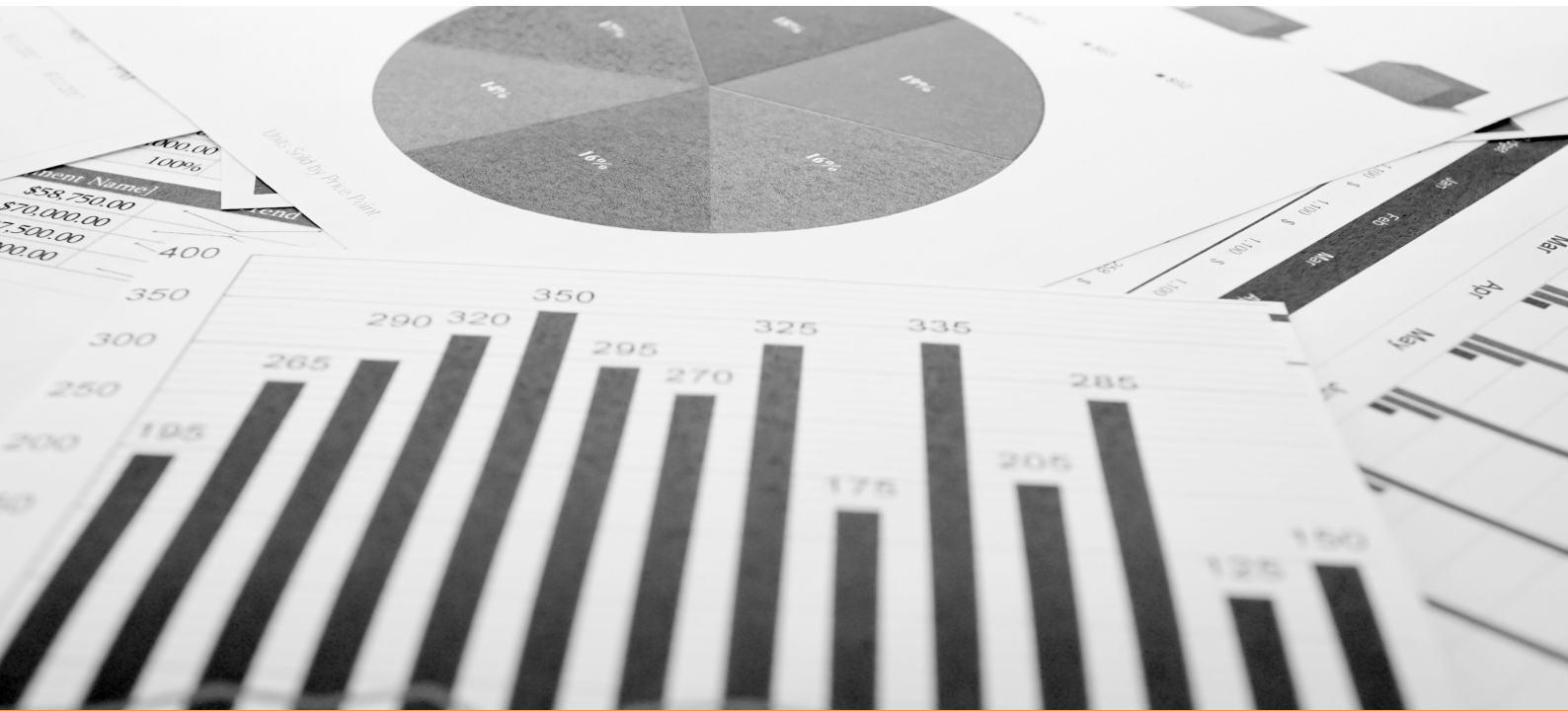
78%

of Internet users conduct product or service research online. If your website isn't visible, you will lose out on revenue opportunities!

57%

of businesses have acquired a customer through their company blog. Blogging is good. Intrusive ads are bad. See how simple it is?

55%

Companies that blog get 55% more web traffic. The more you blog, the more pages Google has to index, and the more inbound links you're likely to have. The more pages and inbound links you have, the higher you rank on search engines like Google—thus the greater amount of traffic to your website.

79%

Mobile devices are projected to reach 79% of global internet use by the end of 2018. Make sure your mobile experience is optimal!

ABOUT NEXA

Established in Dubai in 2005, and with additional offices in London and New York, Nexa is an independent digital marketing specialist which has worked with over 700 clients across a wide range industry sectors, providing high quality, effective and measurable digital marketing campaigns.

Nexa has built a strong track record and in-house capabilities to support clients through a comprehensive portfolio of services including website design, Search Engine Optimization, Social Media Management, Content Marketing and a fully integrated and creative digital marketing strategy. Nexa's in-house team of specialists have both the experience and expertise to manage a client's total digital marketing needs. From website design and build services, to ensuring clients' websites rank at the top of Google using Nexa's Search Engine Optimization (SEO) techniques, and creating unparalleled visibility using Social Media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat and Pinterest, Nexa can help any business flourish online. Nexa clients include some of the best-known companies in the automotive, education, travel, hospitality and other industry sectors.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amit co-founded Nexa in 2005 and has been the strategic driving force for the business during this time. Amit has a wealth of experience in the hospitality industry and together with the team at Nexa, has helped brands such as Microsoft, Hilton, Ferrari & Invisalign create and organize their digital presence for the Middle East and Africa regions.

Amit has successfully guided the growth of the business through technology investments, acquisitions, new product lines and strategic partnerships in line with the overall strategy of developing proprietary technology and intellectual property.