



How to Plan a Website That Works

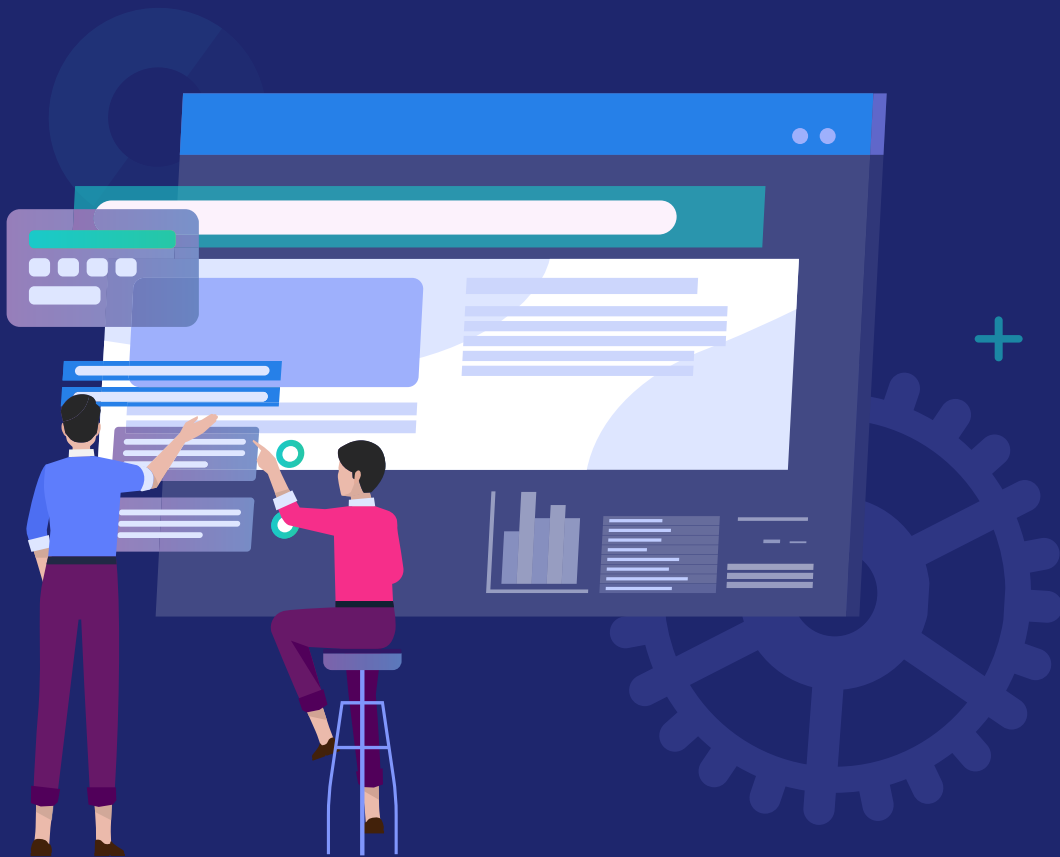


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Planning an effective website is much like planning the perfect house for your family...

When you plan a house you have to decide on many things like the overall style and layout, the number of bedrooms and bathrooms, room colors, flooring type and countless other items. Decisions made while planning your house will determine how functional and enjoyable your home will be in the years to come. A good builder will guide and advise you on proper strategy and planning for your home.



Think of your website as your digital home.

A place you must feel confident taking your customers to and comfortable living in as well.

Just as it requires time and seemingly countless decisions to plan a house, it takes time, focused effort, research, and decision making to properly plan a website. Like a good builder, a good website development partner will lead you through the proper strategy and planning for a successful website.



Your Digital Home Built Right

The best websites successfully align three key concepts – brand, goals, and user needs.



Brand

- What are your Colors, Logos, Imagery?
- What does your company stand for?
- What words are associated with your company?



Goals

- What are your revenue expectations in the next year?
- What kind of clients do you want to work with?
- What kind of talent do you want to attract?



User Needs

- Who is your customer?
- Are they going to be your typical customer going forward?
- How do you help your customer?

Planning Your Website At a Glance

How do you unify your brand, goals, and user needs?

A great deal of diligence, patience and organization are needed to fully understand how these three elements fit together. Here are some key steps in the planning process:

01 Evaluate Your Current Website

02 Talk to Your Team

03 Talk to Your Customer

04 Determine Your Message

05 Determine Your Look

06 Put it on Paper

01



Evaluate Your Current Website

We need to make sure we are always growing, always improving, always making strides to be better.

Your current website probably has sections that function well and some parts that are in definite need of improvement. Before starting it's important to know what works and what doesn't work on your website.

We need to assure that every change is a step forward, not backward.



Actions to Improve:

While we can guess based on personal preferences or experiences, the best option is **user testing**. Your website's success is dependent on your users' opinions and experiences. See what your users think about your current website. It's possible that your users regularly access or visit parts of your website you are seeking to change.

When evaluating and planning for your new site remember that your legacy content may need to be updated, cleaned up, or completely removed. This "spring cleaning" for your current website is known as a **content audit**. Go through your site page by page with a focus on usability and current business goals. A suggestion when doing this – the first time you go through make no changes - just take notes. Wait a day and then come back and make changes. Doing this will allow you to be focused and maintain consistency when improving the user experience.



Brand

You must know where your brand is now before you make plans for its future.



Goals

Building on what you have already done to accomplish your goals is easier than starting from scratch.



User Needs

Improve user experience by building a foundation to alleviate pain points.

02



Talk to Your Team

Help your team understand how a new website can better help them meet their sales, marketing, and revenue goals.

You will need buy-in. Buy-in from your boss, your assistant, your sales team, and your company as a whole. Speak to executives, managers, and long-term employees about your company's history, culture and future plans.



Questions to Ask Your Team:

- What outcomes will define a successful website redesign?
- Who is our ideal customer?
- What is our company's story?

Ways to Work with Your Team:

A **technology overview** is an audit of technology used within different departments in your company. How many different programs do you use over the course of the day? At Lynton our days typically include use of technical tools like Chrome, HubSpot, AffinityLive, Microsoft Dynamics, Google Docs, Gmail, Word, PowerPoint, and Trello. Think about all the CRM, marketing, organizational, and administrative tools you use over the course of a day. In planning a website it's important to understand how information flows within an organization and which technologies assist in this flow. Your new website will capture valuable information from potential customers that will need to be passed along to internal departments.





Brand

How do your employees view your company?



Goals

It is imperative to know where a company wants to go before developing a plan to get there.



User Needs

Put your stakeholder in the shoes of their target market. Ask them what is most important from that perspective. Not only will these questions provide valuable insight, but they will be a foundational reference when those same stakeholders want to use overly complicated industry jargon on their homepage.



03



Talk to Your Customer

The most important thing about your product or service is what your customer thinks.

The ideas your customers like will succeed. The ideas that your customers hate, no matter how clever they might be, will fail. Get to the root of user needs by speaking to the sources. Setup customer interviews.

These should be with people who are similar to your most typical customer – your primary buyer personas.

There will always be outliers who buy a product or service, but you should not focus on them. **A website built for all personas is built for no personas.**



Questions to Ask Your Customer:

- What outcomes will define a successful website redesign?
- Who is our ideal customer?
- What is our company's story?

Ways to Learn About Your Customer:

Card sorting is providing each customer index cards with titles you plan to use in your navigation or to describe your products and services. The customer is then instructed to put the cards in an order that makes sense to them. This allows you to see how the customer relates to and prioritizes items and also may indicate any copy that doesn't make sense to them. Maybe you are calling your ecommerce section 'Products', but what your customer is looking for is 'Store.'



Brand

It is easier to build on what people already believe about you than trying to change their minds. Learn the positives users see in your brand and accentuate them.



Goals

The better you know what your user hopes to accomplish, the better you can align this with company goals.



User Needs

Learning about your customers' experience first hand helps you put yourself in their shoes and allows you to design a site that is intuitive and delightful to your user

04



Determine Your Message

If your site is like most, some of the content is old, very old.

There are likely sections of your website that need to be cleaned up, rearranged, or thrown out completely because they are no longer focused on your current goals, brand, or user needs.



Actions to Improve:

Help Google find you with **keyword research**. Keyword research won't pay dividends for you the day you launch your site, but wait a couple months. You'll start to see which specific keywords your potential customers are searching for in Google Analytics. Then wait a year. Now you're starting to rank for some of the more competitive keywords because of your focused content. Before you know it, your traffic and customer base is growing in leaps and bounds.

A **content strategy** focuses on many elements of user needs. It answers questions like: Who is your target market? How are you going to use your calls-to-action? Do those offers make sense for that target market? Outside of this, you also want to make sure that your tone is consistent. Should your brand be playful, professional, sarcastic, or concise? Whatever you choose, much like your website's visual style, the key to a winning content strategy is consistency.



Brand

Consistency in your tone and word choice will help build recognition and familiarity with your brand.



Goals

Increased traffic and better conversions are typical results of a well developed website plan.



User Needs

Why should your user listen to you? Choosing content that is interesting and relevant to your user is the only thing that will keep them coming back. Without valuable content, everything else is useless.

05



Determine Your Look

Once you have everything else sorted out. It is time to circle back and make your website beautiful.

"Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." Make sure the choices you make here are beautiful not just to you, but make sense for your company and are appealing to current and future customers.



Actions to Improve Your Aesthetic:

The **style guide** is primarily focused on brand. The style guide dictates the exact colors, logos and fonts that your website will use. Consistency from your digital world to your real world is crucial for user experience.



Brand

Consistency across all mediums leads to recognition and familiarity.



Goals

A well developed visual image will help with recognition, talent acquisition, investor confidence, and building a cohesive company culture.



User Needs

A well planned visual strategy builds proper expectations for your user.



06



Put it on Paper

**Now that you've done all the hard work,
don't waste it by not documenting it.**

Priorities will change and stakeholders will forget what they agreed upon. Having well documented rationale for your planning decisions is crucial.



Have a Working Document

Our bosses, our teams, and we ourselves quickly forget the lessons we have learned.

Our plan needs to be presented, maintained, and updated regularly. Setup a process that makes sense for your business.



Brand

Putting it on paper is the only chance a brand has of building consistency over time.



Goals

Everyone will forget the plan if it is not written down.



User Needs

The end user will be pleased when everything you planned and documented for them is implemented.





What's a plan worth?

We believe that no website can ever be great without a proper plan.

While a detailed plan is always recommended, not everyone is lucky enough to have time or budget to engage in a thorough planning process. Sometimes it is necessary to prioritize activities.



Get Started Today!

Speak with an Expert About Your Inbound,
Web and Tech Goals



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