10 MAKE-OR-BREAK FACTORS

To Consider When Rebuilding Your Website

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01. Content & Structure Dictates Design

The temptation to just dive in and start seeing exciting new visuals makes a lot of sense, but it doesn't serve you well. Don't rush into design too early in the process. Content and site structure should dictate your design, not the other way around.

Before you actually start designing the website, make sure you have all your ducks in a row. Start by auditing your existing website and checking out your competition's online activities to pinpoint their goals, strategies, UX emphases and more. Make sure to craft, test and perfect your value proposition, since this concept should drive every decision you make on the new design. Start preparing all of your website content and gather images and video. Then sketch out an outline for an inbound marketing plan and build your website in accordance with that plan.

02. Don't Stifle Creativity

While content and structure should precede design, it's still important to make sure your business strategy doesn't gain a monopoly on the design of the project.

How many websites do you visit over the course of a day that leave you with a weak impression? Don't be one of them!

Make sure your website creative team has the freedom to create a product that inspires. After all, it's your site visitors' emotional reactions that will make them most likely to convert into customers.

Executives should be involved in specifying the site's structure, messaging, goals and requirements. When it comes to the actual design, they should leave it in the hands of visual creative experts. It can be tempting to "help" the designers out by "fixing" their work. But all too often, this results in a website that lacks professional polish.

Remember: You only have a few seconds to wow people and spark their curiosity about your brand's values and value proposition. Make sure visiting your site is an experience worth remembering and remarking about. If you succeed, your company does not get ignored.
No matter how much you invest into the graphical design and layout of your site, if your content is flawed, your design is flawed. Your user experience will suffer and you'll lose leads and customers. Putting design before content is the #1 a website redesign will not help you.

03. Visitor-Minded Functionality

The functionality of the site is vitally important. This is how people practically use your site. Functionality ranges from technical functionality, as in "is everything functioning as its supposed to?", to practical functionality, as in "is my site a enjoyable and intuitive user experience?".

Are there loading issues or broken links? Are the contact forms, surveys, and customer feedback sections of your site working properly? Is the navigation and site content laid out in an intuitive way that guides the user deeper through the site, or does it make them leaved, confused and irritated.

Your site has an opportunity to be your biggest selling tool, or just a bunch of pixels that do nothing for your bottom line. Unfortunately, the users'- AKA the customers'- opinion is often overlooked during the website redesign process, leading to the latter situation.

You want your new site to resonate with your ideal customers. The people who are most capable of evaluating your new design's chances of success are the customers who use it. These people are huge benefit to you in this regard, and you might want to get them involved from the get-go.

In order to make sure a redesign will improve your existing website's visitor experience, imagine that you are a potential customer and ask yourself what you'd be looking for in a website. You can take it a step further and ask some of your current customers with whom you have strong relationships, what they like and don't like about your current website. Ask them to send you some suggestions for improving the site – what would make them come more often and stay for longer?

04. Clean Design

One of the most important things to remember during the process of website development is to create a clean, appealing design. A quality design is attractive and easy to read.

Most importantly, a clean design helps viewers focus on the value of your brand and content instead of distracting graphics and large amounts of text. Often, customers associate website designs with the quality of a particular company or product. Hence, a clean design is vital to providing a positive user experience that encourages customers to return.

05. Standards-Based, SEO-Friendly Code

Whether you're developing new webpages or optimizing existing ones, it's critical to have clean, SEO-friendly code. By taking the time to improve your site's code, you can increase the overall return on investment. SEO-friendly code acts as a guide for search engine spiders by providing a clear picture of your site's content.

Many people turn to DIY website builders like Wix or Squarespace, but the biggest problem with those drag-and-drop type sites is that they do not produced standards-based, SEO-friendly code. While that may not seem like a big issue at the time of development, it can have a significant impact on your bottom line due to the way it affects your traffic from poor search engine rankings.

06. Calls-to-Action

The number one rule of a website call-to-action (CTA) is this: MAKE SURE YOU ACTUALLY HAVE A CALL-TO-ACTION! One of the biggest mistakes we see companies consistently make, is not providing a CTA to which their prospect can respond.

Placing CTAs on your website encourages prospects to contact your business, or respond to specific campaigns. A friendly suggestion, such as "Contact us today!" demonstrates that your business wants to develop a relationship with its users. It's important that CTAs are appropriate for a visitor's level of engagement with your company. If they're just discovering your brand, invite them to subscribe to your email newsletter. If they're already a loyal customer, perhaps they'll enjoy participating in your brand's loyalty rewards program.

Regardless of what you're asking visitors to do at your site, always include a CTA at least once on each page.

07. Short Loading Times

When looking for information online, nothing aggravates visitors more than slow loading times. Prospects can be turned away completely due to this issue. Testing your website ahead of time will help you pinpoint any loading time issues, and these can be fixed before your site's official release. To increase customer retention and provide a positive user experience, periodically evaluate your website's loading time once it has launched. Short load times give customers the information they want when they want it. If your site can't deliver, a competitor's site will.

There are dozens of factors that can ensure high site speed, including optimizing photos, removing render-blocking javascript, using a content distribution network (CDN), hosting on appropriate servers, building on a lightweight and bloat-free content management system (CMS), and much more.

08. Mobile Responsive Design

Having a responsive design is no longer just a really good idea; it's a must. And not just because it creates a better user experience; search engines ranks websites that have a strong mobile responsive design more favorably over those that don't.

Statistics indicate that the use of mobile devices to conduct online searches has increased significantly in the past two years. In fact, approximately 95% of mobile device users count on their devices to search for local products and services. To effectively reach this growing population of mobile users, businesses need to be sure that their websites are available from any device. For a large company with an existing web presence, it makes sense to develop a separate, mobile-friendly website designed to perform well on any device. On the other hand, a business planning the launch of a website would be better served by choosing a responsive design capable of adapting to any device.

09. Effective Security

With the evolution of technology, newer and more advanced security risks threaten to compromise your website's integrity. From malware and viruses to malicious apps and the threat of hackers, websites must prevent security breaches on both the front ends and back ends. Websites built to conduct online transactions, such as ecommerce sites, need additional security measures to protect customer information. To reduce the potential for browser-based threats, businesses must add SSL certificates to their websites.

During development, it's critical to review the security features included in your site's framework and design. Businesses also need to conduct regular security checks or work with a provider who offers this service.

10. Analytic Tracking

Between Google Analytics, Google Webmaster Tools and bing Webmaster Tools, web developers have the mechanisms necessary to accurately and efficiently calculate return on investment. For both traditional and mobile websites, these instruments can be used together to monitor traffic, engagement, and conversion rates.

After digging deep into the data, it's possible to uncover which marketing campaigns work best and which are underperforming. These valuable insights into why customers come to, stay on, and leave your website help your team perfect marketing strategies and adjust engagement techniques to maximize results. Since your branded online presence acts as a 24/7 storefront, it's essential to simplify the outcomes measurement process by using Google Analytics along with Google and Bing's Webmaster Tools.

Thanks for reading our PDF!

Schedule a 15-minute phone consultation to learn more about how Scale can partner with you to crush your website build.

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