

What is the difference between designing and developing a website?

When it comes to website creation, there are a few different components that play a part in getting an entire website up and running. Whether it's an e-commerce store, an informative website for a local business, a news site or a blog, there will be front-end and back-end development required, as well as website planning and creation. One of the biggest differences between designing and developing a website is that development - the actual building of the website - requires coding knowledge and ability, while design requires knowledge around usability, functionality and aesthetics. Both disciplines benefit from an understanding of the other and go hand-in-hand in the website creation process.

Web Design

Web design is basically the planning of how a website will look, feel and function. It covers areas such as user experience and user interface, aka UX and UI. The general usability of the site and experience for the user needs to be considered, along with the layout, color scheme and overall aesthetic. Content may also fall under this area, depending on the type of website or business.

The process of planning a website requires various phases: research, ideation, execution, and technical assessment. Each phase is broken down into a series of steps. It is extremely beneficial for anyone working in this field to have at least a basic understanding of HTML, CSS and Javascript as it lets you communicate your ideas and vision more efficiently to anyone who will be building the website. Page load times and responsive design principles also play a large part in UX and UI, so a technical mindset and knowledge of usability and functionality principles are also important for anyone working in this area.

Aspects such as SEO and on-page content are also important for those working on website set-up and layout, though this will also be covered by content teams and online editors.

Web Development

Web development is the technical coding process behind a website. There are 3 different types of web developers - backend developers, frontend developers, and full-stack developers who can take care of both the frontend and backend. There are various coding languages and libraries used in web development and most developers will be proficient in a range of these. HTML, CSS and Javascript are the basics and the most commonly used codes, while the likes of Java, React js, Python and Ruby are also popular.

Web development generally involves the building of a website, rather than planning the look, feel and layout of it. Interactive features may need to be incorporated, for instance, a log in, videos, a contact form or other features where the user may input data. A developer needs to know the best way to insert these features seamlessly into the existing architecture of the website.

Although they are essentially separate disciplines, the two practices are heavily interconnected. Therefore, employees will generally need to collaborate in the actual creation or maintenance of any aspect of the website they are working on.

User Research

Building a website or app takes a lot of planning and research. Even considering the basic structure of the final product takes some thought and consideration and the perspective of the end user needs to be understood. A website should be easy to use and browse and visitors should have a seamless experience. The overall layout will have a big impact on UX, which is why many companies employ UX or UI professionals to work on the look and feel of the final product. A frontend developer will then write the code that will execute the interface or the pages that the user will be able to see and scroll between.

There are some actions and functions that the user should be able to perform on a website, for instance, use a search bar, place an item in their shopping cart, scroll through a menu and click on a button. It is the front-end developer that will code these features and while also executing the design. Front-end developers and web designers will often work with similar tools and be aware of usability principles. In some cases, the roles may even be performed by one person.

Technical vs. Creative

Overall, the difference between the two comes down to the technical side and the creative, planning side. Anyone working in UX or UI will need a creative mindset and strong problem-solving ability. It may be that a new feature cannot be implemented or developed exactly as intended, but finding ways around these types of issues is a large part of the role. Both designers and developers need to have strong communication skills in order to express how the final product should look and what functions it needs to have.

Working in Web Development

IT is a thriving industry with lots of opportunities across all areas of website creation. Jobs in UX and UI are generally very versatile with lots of variety. Once a website is built it needs to be constantly maintained and updated, perhaps with new features added, new content, or old features may need to be removed and replaced. Tech is a dynamic field with job opportunities in a broad range of industries, from e-commerce and retail, to health and nutrition, fitness, fashion, sport and social media. Tech also offers great opportunities for freelancers - developers, in particular, are currently in very high demand.