☰ Website Launch Checklist

☐ Content

　☐ Spelling: Check and check again. Run a spell check. Better still, get others involved. You can never have enough people making sure copy is correct. Look out for grammatical errors as well as checking for widows or orphaned words in important paragraphs.

　☐ Copy: Make sure real copy is in place and all placeholder text is removed. There is nothing worse than seeing lorem ipsum in a mission statement.

　☐ Contact Details: It seems obvious but make sure these are correct. Without them how do you expect people to get in touch? Check phone numbers, check email addresses and test that these are working, make a call or send an email and check they are received.

　☐ Copyright: If you plan on using a date in the copyright info make sure it is set to automatically refresh from the time stamp on the server, and that the copyright owner is correct.

　☐ Terms: If you are providing a service or are involved in promotions then you will need terms available for visitors to read. If you are unsure as to how these should be written then consult a lawyer for best advice.

　☐ Privacy: If you use cookies, capture data, or distribute data, then you need a privacy policy. Keep these simple and be clear on what data you collect and provide details of how you can be contacted for further information.

☐ Functionality

　☐ Compatability: Check the site works across all browsers and platforms. Specify at the beginning of a project to the client what platforms you will build and test to and stick to these.

　☐ Favicon: Obvious, but this can be missed. Look at creating an iOS home screen icon too.

　☐ Logo: Does the logo link to the index page?

　☐ 404 Pages: Check you have these in place, make sure they signpost ways for a user to get back into the site or direct them to pages of interest with relevant links.

　☐ Redirects: If you are redirecting pages use suitable 301 re-directs over 302.

　☐ Forms: Make sure they aren't sending to spam mail boxes, or returning an error once submitted and include a thank you state once a form is submitted so a visitor knows it is sent. Above all else make sure the clients email address is specified.

　☐ Links: Do internal page links work? Do all external links work and do they open in a new tab if so intended?

　☐ RSS Feeds: Feeds can be useful. You don't have to limit these to articles, you can have feeds for most pages for example new work or case studies added to a site.

☐ Standards & Validation

　☐ Accessibility: It's easy to forget how inaccessible a webpage is for some users. Have you considered how assistive technologies such as screenreaders will navigate your site?

　☐ Contrast: This follows on from our point about accessibility. Using the very latest monitors it's easy to see subtle differences in color, be sure to test your site on multiple devices and laptops to make sure the design has clarity and text can be read.

　☐ Text Size: Make text clear and easy to read, adjust line spacing and allow plenty of white space. Bigger, can mean better, when it comes to text on the web.

　☐ Alt Tags: Make sure all images have clear descriptive ALT tags for the visually impaired. Not only that but without them they can't be found in search engines.

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- [ ] Consistency: Make sure common elements across the site are consistent to avoid confusing your users. Make buttons look like buttons, links look like links, and titles and text should be the consistent in size and color.
- [ ] Device Compatibility: Consider how the website will be used across multiple devices, responsive or not your website should work for desktop and mobile web users.
- [ ] Validation: Always aim for 100% validity. If your site fails to validate fully don't get too upset, but be sure to understand any errors in order to to eliminate any unwanted issues.
- [ ] JavaScript: Many people browsing the web have JavaScript turned off for security reasons. Make sure your site is fully functional and forms still perform server-side validation checks without it.
- [ ] Flash: Yeah, we know, nobody uses Flash anymore right? If Flash has to be used, be sure to include an alternative backup image should Flash Player not be installed.

- [ ] Sitemaps
  - [ ] HTML Sitemaps: Although not as common practice as they were, this form of sitemap can have its benefits in helping visitors see a complete overview of the sites pages. Links for these are normally found in the footer of a site.
  - [ ] XML Sitemaps: These are only ever used by search engines such as Google, Bing and Yahoo. Create an XML Sitemap easily and submit it via Webmaster Tools. These will then be used to inform search engines about the pages you have published.

- [ ] Performance
  - [ ] Check site speed: You can use services such as Google Page Speed or Blame Stella to check the load times of your site's pages.
  - [ ] Image sizes: Keep your images as small as possible. Although network speeds are better than ever, no one wants to wait for a 10Mb page to load. Compressing images will only improve page load times.

- [ ] SEO
  - [ ] Keyword Research: Make sure you are targeting the right demographic and market. It's important to get this right in order to attract relevant traffic to your site.
  - [ ] Page Titles & Descriptions: Do all the templates have the necessary page titles and meta data based on your keyword research?
  - [ ] Image Alt-tags: Do the main images of the site contain relevant and descriptive alt-tags? Using short descriptions will help. And remember try and choose a descriptive file name instead of random words and numbers for these images.
  - [ ] Keywords: Embed these in titles, descriptions and copy.
  - [ ] Content: If the content is good it will work to optimize and compliment the SEO. Good keyword density within the copy works well so use both singular and plural forms of keywords in your text.
  - [ ] URLs: Make sure the site's URLs are clean. Using a descriptive URL instead of ones that are made up of random numbers or words will help with SEO and visitors finding a page they may want to return to.

- [ ] Analytics

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- [ ] Monitoring: With good SEO in place use tracking codes to measure this. Tools such as Google Analytics (free) or services such as Hubspot, GoSquared or KISSmetrics (paid) will give valuable feedback.

- [ ] Security
  - [ ] Protect Sensitive Pages: Protect any sensitive pages or folders from being indexed on search engines by putting in place robots.txt files and by excluding them from within Webmaster Tools.
  - [ ] Security Certificates: When developing an eCommerce website, or a site that handles sensitive visitor information, the level of security will be paramount. Make sure to use protocols such as SSL encryption to protect against unwanted information theft.

- [ ] Hosting & Backups
  - [ ] Types: Shared Hosting, Reseller Hosting, Cloud Hosting, VPS Hosting and Dedicated Servers.
  - [ ] Backups: Make sure you use a provider who can provide daily and weekly backups of your server and make sure to take local backups as well.
  - [ ] Monitoring: Setup services such as Pingdom or other server monitoring tools to monitor the health of your server.

- [ ] Legal
  - [ ] Image/Content Rights: Clearly state that any supplied content or imagery that is handled by you remains the clients responsibility. Make clear that you will not be held liable for publishing content and images that they do not have the rights to use.
  - [ ] Payment Terms: Set fair and staged payment terms at clearly defined milestones of a project (at the end of the design phase - before any development starts for example), never move on to the next phase of a project until the agreed payment is in.
  - [ ] Timelines: Set reasonable timelines that are fair to your client as well as manageable for you and your team. Clearly state that you will not be held responsible for any loss or damages as a result of a delay in the schedule caused by the client.
  - [ ] Intellectual Property Rights: This will be different depending on who you are, what you're offering, or the project in question. Clearly state what is owned by you and the client once the project is complete and payment has been made in full.

- [ ] Deliverables
  - [ ] Live Website: This is the bare minimum. Make sure their website is up and live and fully functioning as intended.
  - [ ] Style Guide: A simple style guide is extremely beneficial for any website owner, points to consider include:Font Styles, Image Sizes, Tone of Voice, Colours, Imagery Style, Colours.
  - [ ] Assets & Icons: Any icons, illustrations, or infographics design and created for the website may be helpful to your client going forward. Supply them the files in different formats so they can use them in presentations or future design work.
  - [ ] Offline Copy: If requested by the client provide a copy of the site. Remember websites are a living document that should be continually updated and improved, so unless the site is static you will have to be making regular offline backups for the client.

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- ☐ Ongoing Maintenance
    - ☐ Backups: Always, always, make sure backups are in place. Run at least two backups daily - one in the morning and one 12 hours later, limiting the amount of data that can go missing.
    - ☐ Version Control: Try running a project through Git, it's a great version control system for teams of developers working in collaboration. Source code history is saved meaning that you can refer or revert back to previous versions if and when needed.
    - ☐ Analytics: In order to suggest improvements going forwards ask to be set up on the client's analytics, this way you can monitor traffic and site stats for the client and suggest improvements over the following month and year after launch.

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