Planning Website Design

Planning is the process of choosing among competing opportunities for communication so that you can set overall goals for a web. You'll need to define your web's intended audience, formulate a statement of your web's purpose, and objective, and gather and maintain domain information to support your web.

As a web planner, you need to anticipate the skills and resources needed for developing, constructing, deploying, and operating the web. For example, if a web's design includes a specification for forms (a feature supported by HTML), you should note that web implementers should have skills in HTML forms as well as CGI (Common Gateway Interface) programming.

Importance of Website Planning

1. Determine goals

What are you trying to accomplish? What's the main purpose of the website? It's important to understand the overall goal of the website when building one. You don't just build a house to simply build a house. You want to make sure you're planning your "dream home" and that it's functional and built with the right intentions and audience in mind.

Whether you are trying to increase membership, convert more visitors into leads or provide investors with valuable information, you need to establish these goals at the beginning so you know what you are aiming for.

2. Define your target audience

What are the demographics of the audience you are trying to target? Understanding your target market is vital to creating plans for a website that will appeal to them. Do your research, create buyer personas and analyze your competition.

Do you know your customers? It's also a great idea to look at websites that your target market might visit. Make notes of what you like and what you don't like. By keeping your target audience in mind, it makes it much easier to design a website that resonates with them.

Do you need a Website Security review or Application Maintenance? Check out our Website Support page for more information.

3. Don't underestimate SEO

Its best practice to always keep SEO in mind as it directly impacts your online performance and success. There is no better time to focus on SEO than when you are building your website as it can help save you a lot of time in the long run. Knowing what keywords you want to rank for makes it easier to incorporate it into your site design and architecture. If you don't already have a solid list of keywords, check out Google Keyword Planner.

It's also extremely important these days to have a mobile-friendly or responsive website as Google ranks them higher.

4. Plan for content

You must have content that speaks to your audience. You need to not only make sure the content is there, but also that it is educational and engaging to your audience and optimized for search engines. You can have a beautifully structured and designed website, but if the content isn't there to back it up and people aren't seeing it, then it's a waste.

You also need to ensure you outline what types of content you want to include within your site. For example, do you want to have a blog? Do you want to incorporate video? These are all important things to consider when building out your website.

5. Develop use cases, sitemap and wireframes

Use cases help establish project requirements. They help determine how different users will behave on your site and a way of outlining the steps a user will take to accomplish their goal or task. The more we define and understand various use cases, the easier it will be moving forward.

Building out a sitemap helps to organize the content you want to have on your website. It builds the foundation of the pages you want included. When building out your site map your goal should be to keep it as intuitive and simple as possible. However, it's important that all of the features and functionality are outlined.

A wireframe is a blueprint of your website that shows the skeletal framework. It's a way for the client to see the layout and overall navigation and functionality of the site before the building begins. Wireframes also help the designer get a better idea of where different components need to be and provide them with an outline of how the website should function and where different features need to appear.

Steps for Planning a Website

As the old adage goes, **if you fail to plan, you plan to fail**. Building a website without a plan is like constructing a building without blueprints. Things end up in the wrong place, features are overlooked, and the situation is ripe for miscommunication between website builder and client. Planning your website ahead of time will give it clear direction as well as prevent missed deadlines and backtracking. If you are a web designer working with clients, then this guide will help both of you to plan properly. If you are a business owner or employee of an organization, then this guide will help lay the groundwork for your coming website.

1. Set your purpose and goals.

What is the purpose of your website? Is he gaining publicity for your business? To sell your inventory? To rally support behind an issue? It is important to determine the purpose of your website, as well as your target audience. You must also define your goals. How many visitors do you expect in a month? How much do you expect to subscribe to your newsletter? How much do you expect to achieve in sales? Set specific measurable goals for your website that matches your marketing goals. An analytics tool like Google Analytics will allow you to monitor your website's performance over time.

2. Create a budget.

Whether you are a well-established or medium-sized enterprise or startup, you should always set a budget for your website's expenditures. This could potentially include funds for web design, programming, and web hosting (although other costs may apply). Search the market by shopping and consulting with professionals. Do not sell yourself by comparing prices alone. What you save in money that you may pay later with a baht site and a lot of headaches. Team members are best chosen based on experience, insight, references, and work examples.

3. Assign roles.

Company stakeholders (owner, marketing manager, or anyone else who represents the primary function of the business)

- Web developer
- Content writer and / or editor
- HTML / CSS Professional
- Web and Graphic Designer

Make sure that all of your team members know their role and what is expected of them, and that they are up to date with new deadlines and developments.

4. Create a content strategy.

What kind of content will you display on your website? Content is anything that gives your visitors information. They may include, but are not limited to:

- Blog posts
- Documents
- Video
- Pictures (as shown in the gallery)
- Slide shows
- Included social media feeds (like Twitter stream or Facebook page updates)

Your content strategy is the way you plan to present your content over time. For example, when developing a blog strategy, you might want to publish two blog articles monthly, and create a free quarterly report for subscribers to download four times a year. Since content is a vital aspect of a website, ask for help if you need it. Hire a writer with web writing experience, and invest in some professional looking photos of storefront and staff.

5. Structure your website.

Decide what pages you'll be using and what features will be on each one. Most websites have an about and Contact page, but the pages you use should meet your business' needs.

6. Create a mockup.

The page template, also known as the wireframe, is basically a layout of your website (with the initial design being the first draft). Usually created in Photoshop or Fireworks, you don't have to put a lot of detail into your model. Use placeholder text to fill out the pages, and don't worry about the details. This is just to give everyone an idea of what the website will look like.

If you don't have a design program, you can also draw it with pen and paper! When you have a general feeling of what you want, you can send it to a designer to create or do it yourself.

7. Start designing.

The importance of good web design can't be stressed enough. Good website design includes both usability and aesthetics. An ugly website will drive away visitors, as will a website that's difficult to navigate. Keep in mind some basic concepts of usability as you go:

- Make your navigation easy to understand and easy to find. Research shows that most users expect website navigation to be vertical and centered at the top of the page.

- Use an easy-to-read font for blocks of text. Choose a background color and text color that contrast well (Hint: No red text on a hot pink background).

- Make sure your site fits the screen. Use responsive design (or an equally effective approach) to make your website one that adapts to all screen sizes.

- Keep your website light so that it loads quickly.

- Make the company logo and tag line prominent on the page.

- Keep styles and colors consistent across the website.

- Make copy clear and concise, and put important information and features (e.g., your newsletter sign-up form) above the fold.

8. Test it.

The test is important to get out of errors and get the details you may have missed in the beginning. Make sure your website appears the way you want it to all browsers, including

Chrome, Firefox, Internet Explorer and mobile web browsers such as Safari and Opera Mini. Test it on your cell phone, tablet, colleague's phones, and tablets as well. You want your site to have a consistent look no matter what screen it appears on. Ensure that all links work, that the images are appropriate in size, and that you replace all placeholders with actual content. Ensure that all forms and other input fields work.

9. Maintain your site.

Once your site is up and running, it doesn't end. A website is a continuous entity that constantly represents your company, so maintenance is very important. Watch for analytics to see how your website is performing with your audience. Monitor metrics like Unique Visitors, Bounce Rate, and the most popular pages on your website. You may find that some metrics are more useful to you than others, but this is information that you will discover over time.

You should also have a plan to maintain the website, such as responsible for posting new content or monitoring site security. Of course, get user feedback. Feedback is a valuable tool for improvement.

Planning a website early on is just as important as planning anything else in the business, but this move is often overlooked by those eager to claim their real estate on the Internet. Making time to plan your website is a huge investment, and it is best to have chances of getting a final product that will serve you well as long as you need it.