Website Organization

When talking about website design and development, there are two areas we want to focus on: **site structure** and **site organization**. Site structure is more technical and refers to how your site is put together on the backend and is site wide. How are the pages organized? Where do they link and how this affect the navigation? Site organization is more design focused and page specific. It refers to how the information on each page is placed and how that affects the user experience. What draws the users' eye? Is it easy to pick out the most important pieces of information?

The way your site is organized can have an impact on:

- Traffic

- Conversions

- Bounce Rate

- User Experience

Planning your Site Structure

Given that the purpose of most websites is to provide information, provide as much information as possible that is organized in a clear, readable and quickly scan able format for site visitors.

- Start by **making it simple and intuitive**. Some research says that seven main menu items is the maximum number of items you should have in your navigation. Though this good guideline, it isn't a hard and fast rule. The main thing to remember is that when it comes to your navigation, less is more. Users have an extremely short attention span, so we have to make sure that we're giving them all the information they need, but in a concise manner.

- Something you'll also want to consider is that **every page on your website does not need to appear in the main navigation**. Specialty or geo-targeted pages are not pertinent to the user when they're first looking for information. These types of pages can be linked within the site content and found in other areas of the site, such as the footer.

- Finally, you want to make sure **the language you're using in the navigation relates to the questions that the users are asking**. For instance, if you are a service based company, you'll want to use words like "Services" and "Specials" that are topic specific and easily identifiable to users.

Home Page: Purpose and Organization

Every site has a home page. It may not always be where people start since some arrive via links to your site from ads or emails. But most businesses can expect the majority of their site visitors to begin here, so it's an important "front door" to your website.

People typically scan a home page—more so than other pages on your site. The reason is that—in the space of a couple seconds—they are trying to answer several questions for themselves: "Who are you, what do you do, and how can I benefit from spending time on your website?

With this in mind, there are several things your home page must accomplish:

- **Engage Visitors:** This means stopping them long enough so they don't leave the site and close the browser window. Briefly address who you are, what do you do and for whom.

- **Direct Visitors:** Assuming you have successfully engaged them, now they need to know how to learn more. So, direct them into the site to pages that have greater detail about the solution(s) you offer.

- **Make an Offer:** People aren't always ready to act when they haven't educated themselves yet, so jamming an "act now" offer in their face on the home page might be premature. But, depending on what you're offering and to whom, it may be a great step.

For example, you might offer them information that helps further educate them, like a free guide or report. In this case, your goal should be to have them contact you, provide their email and/or sign up for your blog so you can continue to market to them.

Other Website Pages

There are several pages that most websites have (e.g. about and Contact), and people often look for these to answer specific questions. But other than that, pages vary by the type of business and how the site owner wants to organize his/her content.

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Though site organization may not directly affect your site's traffic or rankings, it can affect user experience and, in the end, conversions and bounce rate. When a user comes to your site, they are looking for some kind of information. It is our job to provide the necessary information and guide them to the answer. Though it's good for SEO, it's not enough to have a long page of content. It's helpful to section off the content, using headers and calls-to-action to show the user the most important information and guide them to the desired action. When you section off content, it makes things much easier for the user to digest. If they land on a page full of text and no hierarchy, it can become overwhelming and will lead to a higher bounce rate. By creating sections and guiding them through the experience, we give them access to all the information they need without overwhelming them, allowing them to craft their experience based on their needs.