

**Welcome**

About me

## **Ryan A. Ripley**

I've specialized in technology consulting for nonprofits, artists, and arts organizations. I have also been deeply entrenched in the nonprofit arts administration world for over a decade, working at both the Playwrights' Center and Park Square Theatre.

**[ryanaripley.com](http://ryanaripley.com)**



# Website basics

View the presentation online at [ryanaripley.com/website-basics](http://ryanaripley.com/website-basics).

# **Agenda**

Part 1: Content

Part 2: Functionality

Part 3: Website platforms

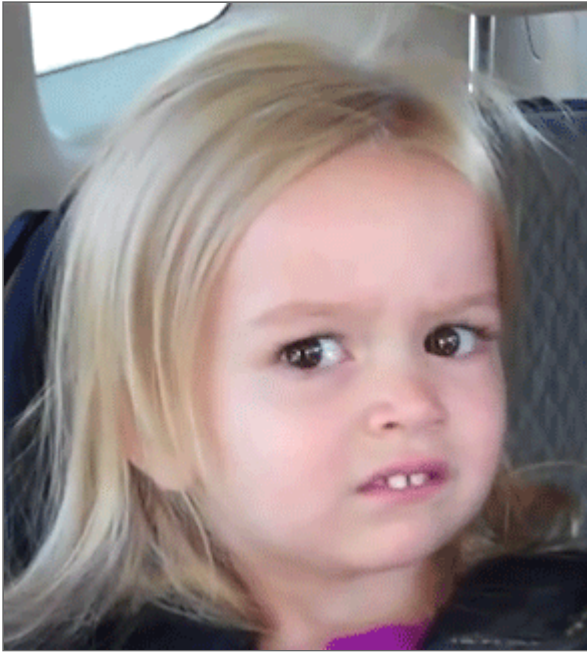
Questions & working session

# **Introductions**

Let's get to know each other.

1. Your name
2. Your organization (if applicable)
3. One thing you are hoping to learn today.

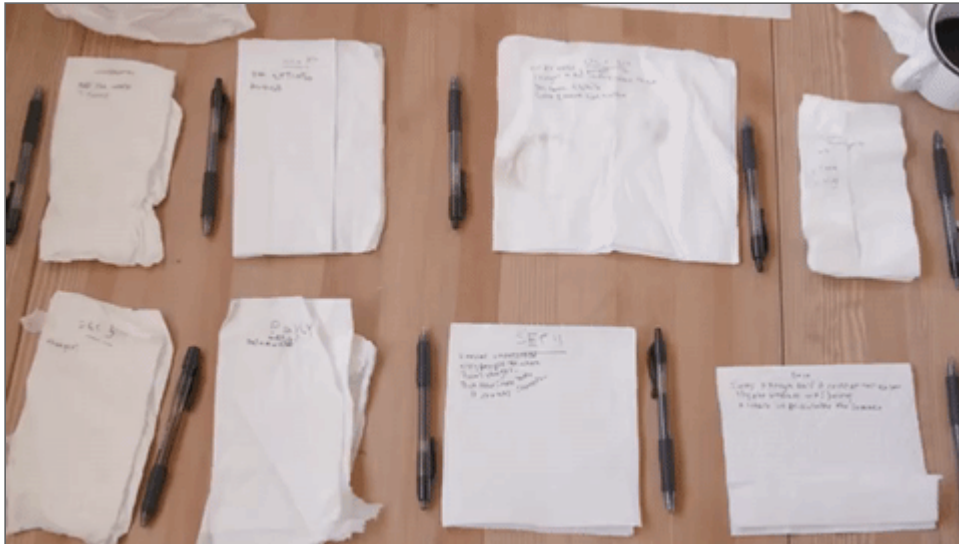
**Where do I start?**



Step 1:

**Start with content**

**Content analysis involves writing out lists.**





List #1: Users and goals

**1. Who is the user?**

**2. What are they trying to accomplish?**

Example list of users and goals

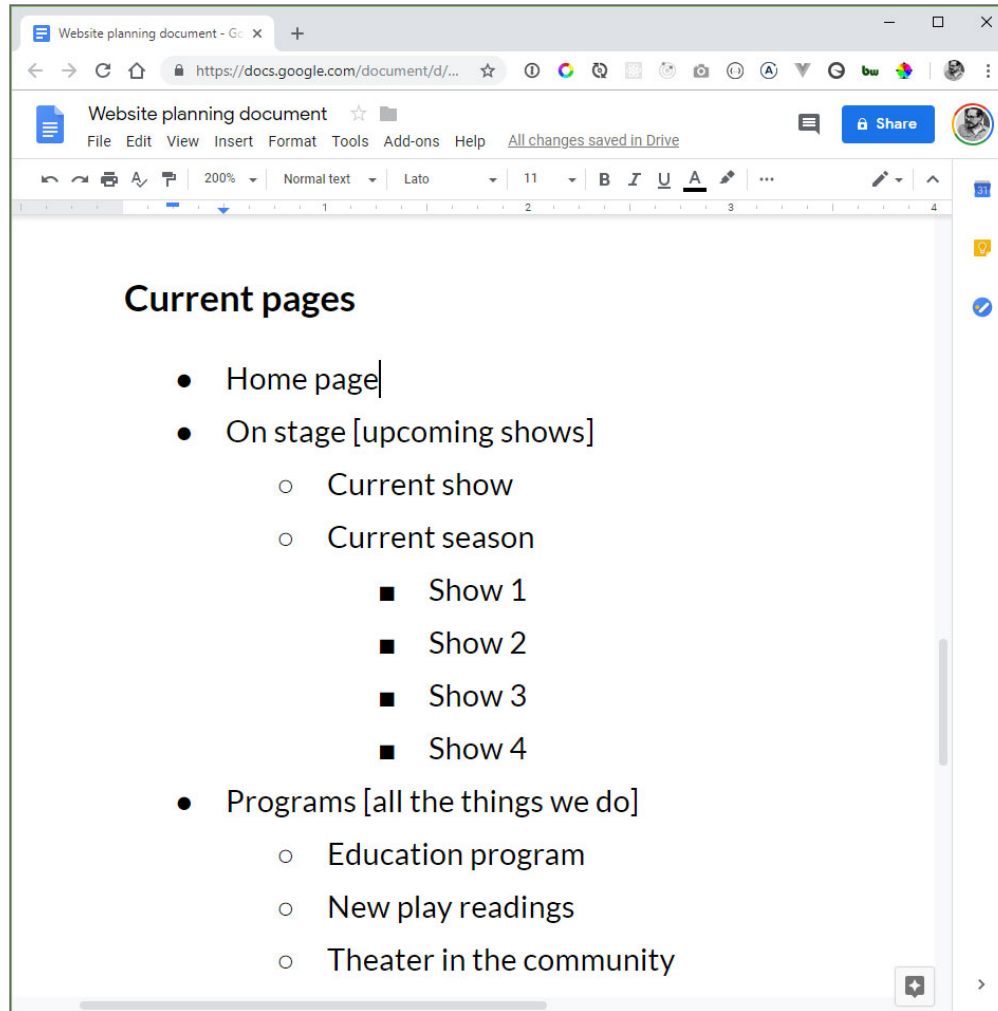
## **Community Art Center**

- **Parents** who are looking for classes that their kids can attend.
- **Art lovers** who are looking to attend art events in their local community.
- **Seniors** who are looking to explore a hobby and find a community of like-minded individuals.

## **List #2: Website pages**

1. Write out a list of all pages
2. If needed, write out a two- or three-word description of that page's content
3. Don't edit yourself at this point; just write down everything

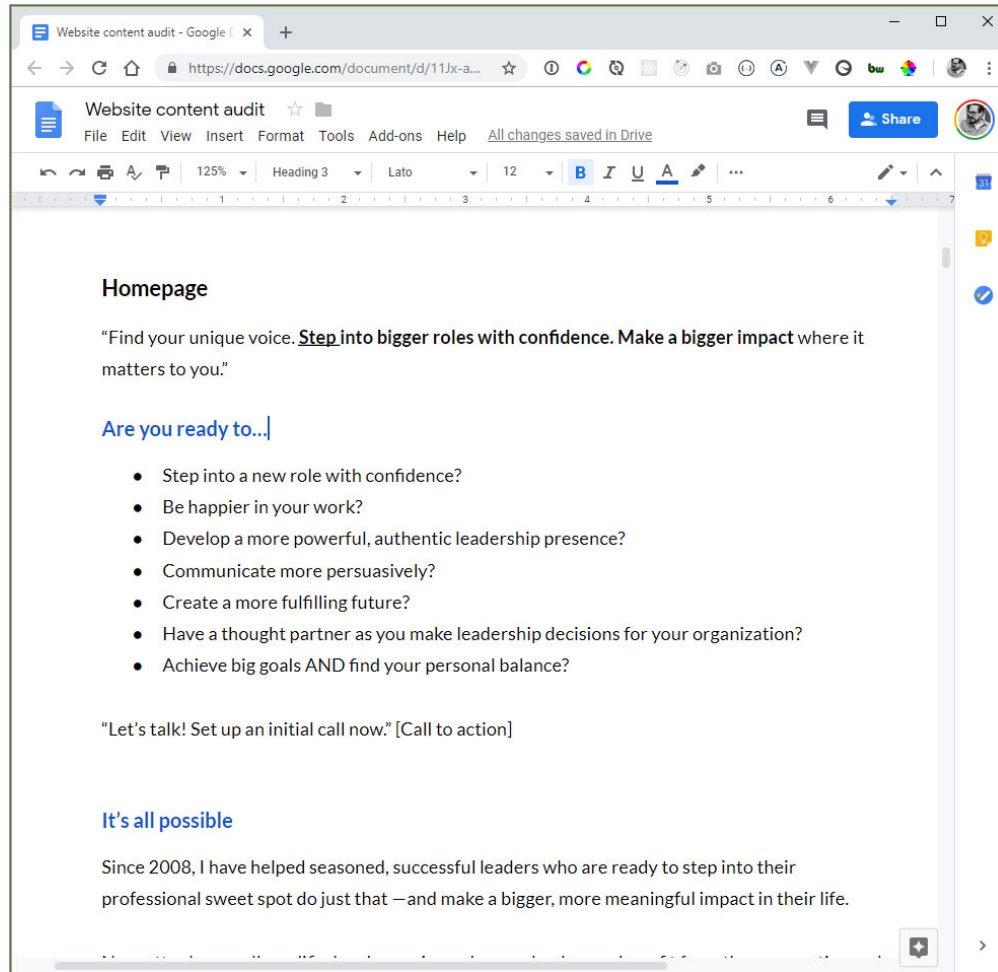
# Example list of website pages



## **List #3: Content on each page**

1. For each page you wrote down in the previous step, start writing out the content
2. Don't get stuck if you don't have a piece of content. Fill in what you know. For instance, write [TESTIMONIALS GO HERE] if you don't have them yet

# Example document of page content



**Next, make a copy of these lists, and start your edits.**

1. Is every piece of content on the website helping one of your users accomplish their goal?
2. Simplify and declutter wherever possible.
3. Make sure the content on your website is focused.
4. Have no more than 7 top-level pages. Have no more than 7 sub-pages under each page.

## **Let's talk about non-written content**

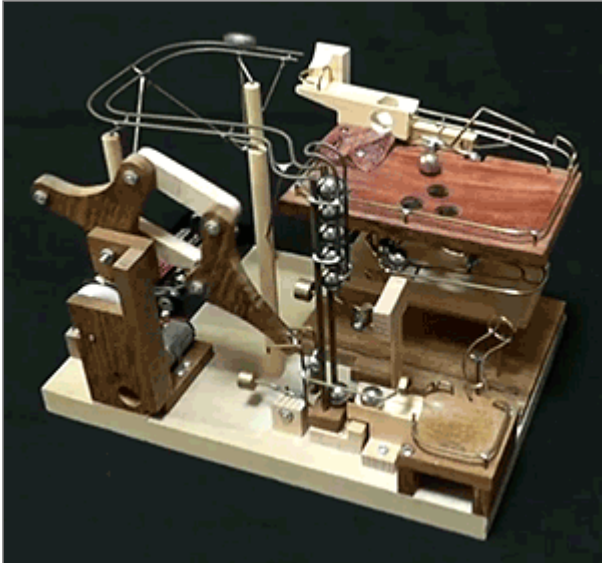
- Logos and other branding material
- Photos of your work
- Photos of you or your staff
- Photos of your building or venues
- Other media: videos, audio files, etc.
- This list should note which pieces of content you already have, and what content you need.
- Put all of this into a Dropbox or Google Drive folder.



**Detailed content analysis like this will be invaluable as you move into the next phases of your website project.**

Step 2:

## Functionality



## **Four essential features of a website in 2019:**

1. It must be responsive (work on all device sizes)
2. It must load quickly
3. It must be accessible
4. It must have a security certificate

## **D.R.Y. principle**

**Don't repeat yourself.** If you have to update a single piece of information in more than one place on your website, it wastes your time and opens you up to mistakes.

# **Content management systems**

CMS's provide a platform that allows you to update your website easily —without knowing how to code—and can leverage dynamic content so you don't have to repeat yourself.

## **Other functionality (yep...make another list)**

- Does your website need a blog?
- Does your website need a contact form?
- Are you selling anything? Taking donations?
- Do you need an events calendar?
- Does your website need to connect to a donor or patron database?

## **Finally, what do you like and not like about your current website?**

- What do you like about your current site?
- What are the pain points of your current site?
- What other sites do you like? Importantly, what do you like about them?

Part 3:

## **Platforms and tools**



**There are huge number of amazing tools to help you build your website.**



# **Types of content management systems**

There is an overwhelming number of content management systems available.

But there are two main kinds: **Website builder services** and **self-hosted CMS's**.

# Website builder CMS's

*Examples: SquareSpace, Wix, Weebly, Duda, WordPress.com.*

## Advantages

- Great looking templates
- Low cost (\$12-\$15/month for basic sites, \$30-\$35/month for e-commerce)
- Ongoing maintenance and support is included

## Disadvantages

- Not as customizable as a self-hosted CMS

# Self-hosted CMS's

*Examples: WordPress.org, Drupal, Joomla*

## Advantages

- Great looking templates (though some may cost extra)
- Fully customizable, and plugins can provide a huge array of additional functionality

## Disadvantages

- Higher cost (\$1,500 - \$4,000 for design/development, ~\$100/month for hosting and support)
- Since it is self-hosted, performance, security, and maintenance is all up to you

## **WordPress makes things complicated**

- It's the CMS used on 1/3 of all websites.
- It has a site-builder version available at [WordPress.com](https://WordPress.com), similar to SquareSpace or Wix.
- It has a self-hosted version available at [WordPress.org](https://WordPress.org), which is fully customizable.

## **Which kind of CMS do I need?**

**Site builder CMS's** are great for individuals or organizations who need a simple website with basic functionality—up to and including an online store.

**Self-hosted CMS's** are best for folks who need more customizability or functionality (e.g.: a complicated event calendar system, advanced integration with a donor database, etc.).

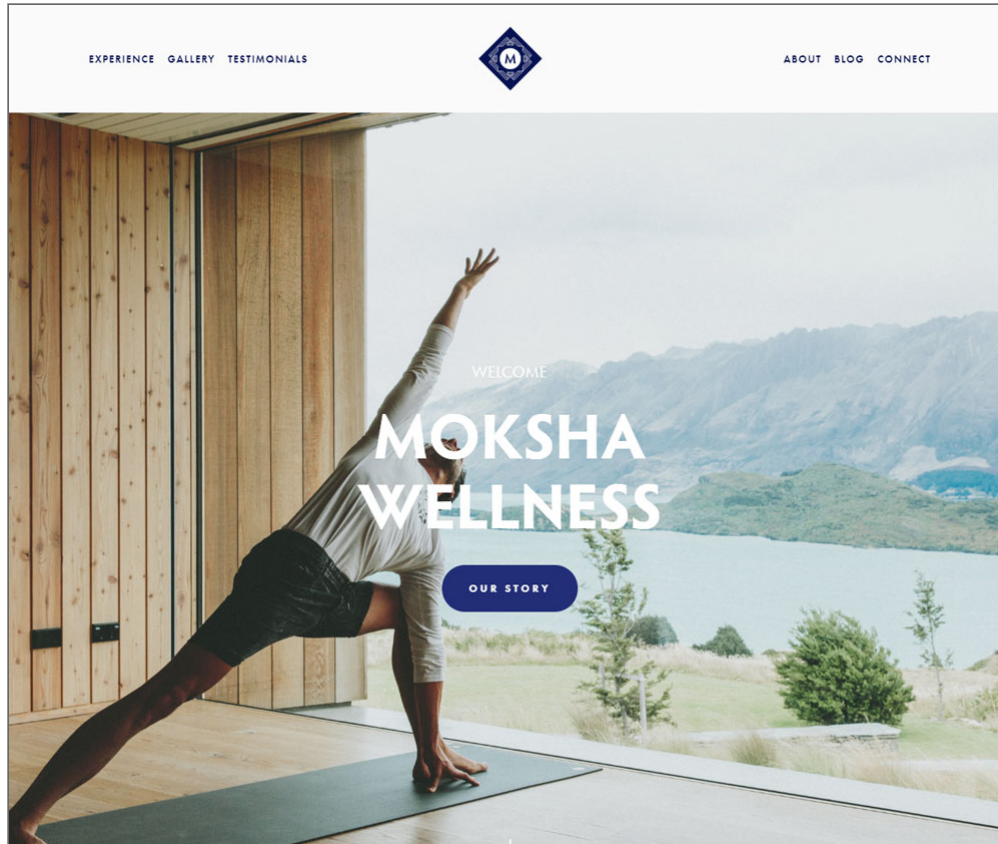
**All CMS's come with pre-made templates or themes.**

**Use your content and functionality lists to help you pick a template.**

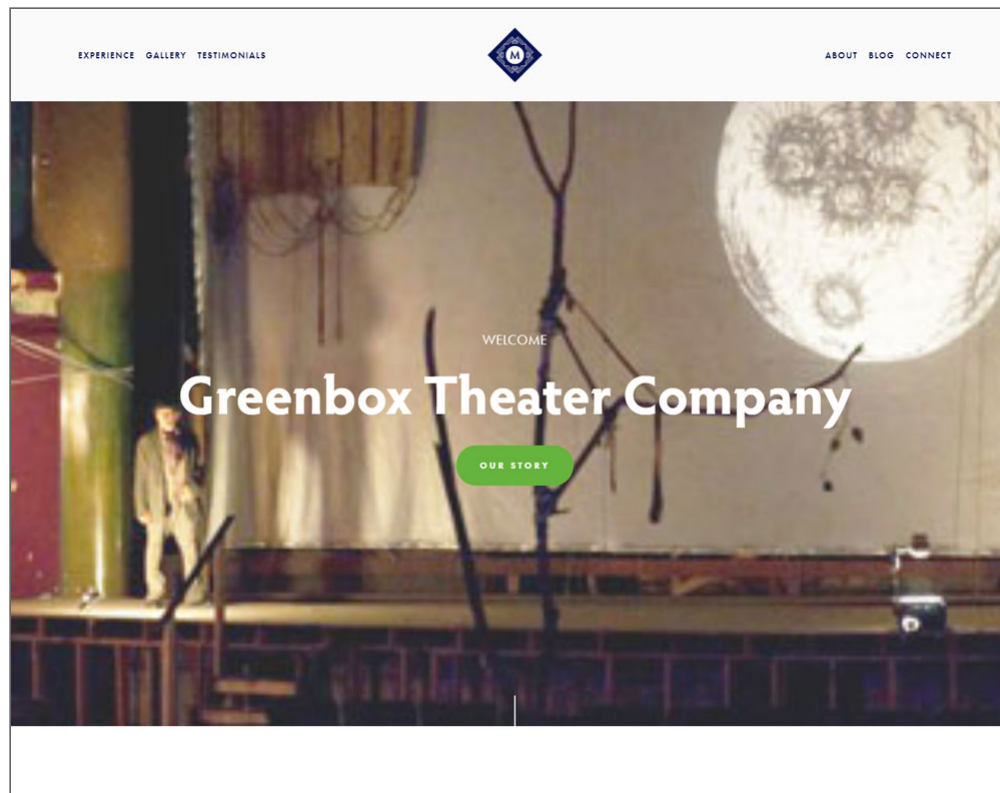
Judge a theme by its content and functionality. Be careful not to fall in love with beautiful images and artwork that you can't replicate.



SquareSpace templates are beautiful.



...if you have beautiful, high-resolution photos.



# Good imagery is important

Playwright Christina Ham commissioned illustrator Jacob Stoltz to create images for her SquareSpace site.



## Sources for free, high-quality images

- **Unsplash**: Beautiful royalty-free photographs
- **Free Nature Stock**: Nature photos, royalty-free
- **BarnImages**: Free photos, as well as a blog with design tips
- **Pattern Library**: Textures and patterns to use on your site.

*When using images, make sure they are royalty-free. These sites say attribution isn't required, but it is appreciated.*

## **Design tips**

- Simplify whenever, wherever possible
- Using templates and plugin as intended will help you in the long run
- Carousels are problematic
- Be very...purposeful when integrating social media
- Test your site, especially on different devices and in different browsers

## **Working with contractors**

- Agencies vs. independent contractors
- Is the communication style a fit? Design approach?
- Be very clear about cost and project scope
- Don't ask for spec work
- Communication is hugely important; take great care about how and when you communicate with your contractors
- How is the website maintained long term?

## **Empower staff to become experts.**

- Give them the time and resources to gain expertise
- Find workshops (like this one) or conferences for them to attend
- Lynda.com is free with a Hennepin Co. library card; SkillShare and Udemy aren't terribly expensive
- Have staff report back to the full team on their learnings

**Good luck!**





**Time for questions**