Planning Your Website

The most important part of any project is the planning stage. Without plans, you couldn't build a house, why would you put the face of your business online without giving it the same consideration? These questions will get you thinking about your website, and your goals for creating your web presence. A well-executed plan will dramatically cut down on production time, frustration and cost! Block out some time and answer the questions below to get started.

1. **What is your timeline expectation/goal?**
   Expectation setting: are you flexible, or is there a specific deadline? Even if there is a set deadline, you ideally have a buffer between launching and an event, just in case any problems arise that need to be worked out.

2. **What is the primary focus of your business?**
   You know what you do, but I don't, a simple rule is having the ability to explain what your business does to an older relative or a child. When it comes to content, keep it simple, lure in visitors with enough to answer their questions, but compel them to get in touch.

3. **Who is your target audience and/or ideal customer profile?**
   Brainstorming time: Put yourself in the shoes of the visitor, who needs your services, what is your niche? Some people use a spreadsheet, others draw stick figures with thought bubbles representing the person, what they are feeling, and what thoughts they have. Use whatever method works best for you to identify your audience.

4. **How do they find you?**
   Brainstorming time: Write down the terms you would use to search for someone like you, if you needed your own services.

5. **What will people do on your website?**
   Are they researching? If so, are you educating them with resources and tools for self-service? Do you plan on creating whitepapers, or other informational downloads in exchange for names/email addresses? ("sticky-ness" tactic to add to your mail list and/or sales funnel)

6. **Do you have a website now? If so, what do you love/hate about it?**
   If you already have something started – even if it's brochures, presentations, etc., it will be helpful when you are organizing your content.

7. **What makes you/your company special?**
   You are the only one of you, therefore by design, you are special! Time to toot your own horn and let people know why!

8. **Search for businesses like yours. Who would you compare yourself/your business to?**
   Act as if… write down your top 2 and identify parts that you relate to, this will help focus your content.

9. **What do you like/dislike about the way those like-minded businesses present themselves?**
   Trust and reputation are so important, and websites can make or break the first impression. Pay attention to how you feel when you see other websites and make notes.

10. **What are the top three websites you love?**
    Check out a few of your favorite websites, why do you love them (colors, white space, content organization, images, etc.) This will help narrow down the look of your presentation, note what colors you are drawn to (or not), and other key elements, such as: do they get personal, is there movement, or are the images still, is it easy to navigate, etc.

11. **What are must-have website features?**
    Will you blog, add videos, scheduling, resources, mobile functionality, ecommerce (transactional/payments accepted)?

12. **Do You Have digital media?**
    What photos, videos or illustrations do you have already that could be used for your website? If you don't have them already, will you be taking photos? If not, start searching online resources such as dreamstime, istockphoto, shutterstock, photocase, depositphotos. If you use any online photos, be sure to purchase them, or face the copyright consequences.

13. **Do you have a design theme?**
    What will be your color theme, font choices, or do you already have a style guide/branding?

14. **What will be the key elements in your [navigation](#)?**
    Example: Home, About, Products/Services, Blog, Contact. Keep it simple and clear.

15. **Do you anticipate ongoing need for changes after going live with your website?**
    This includes editing, posting blogs, maintenance. If you will be doing these things, think ahead when planning a platform (wix, wordpress, godaddy, etc.). Some of the platforms are much easier to manage than others, and you don't want to get caught up in the trappings of lost time in self maintenance with an unruly platform that's difficult to manage.

    These articles offer a good breakdown with more info if you'd like to review for yourself to understand the differences:

    - https://www.websitebuilderexpert.com/website-builders/comparisons/wix-vs-wordpress/
    - https://webhostingcat.com/bluehost-vs-wix/

16. **Do you use Twitter/Instagram/Facebook, etc.?**
    Once the website is established, you should carry the same theme to all other platforms for branding consistency.

17. **SEO / Meta Descriptions**

Describe what you do in [135-160 characters](#). This is an important step that cannot be overlooked, as it's how search engines will find you. Save your longer copy for brochures, and longer descriptions on your website, but keep in mind that you'll need these snippets too!

Whew!! Congratulations you finished, now what? *Email the completed form to lizuminary@gmail.com and [schedule a time](#) to meet and kick off the project.*

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