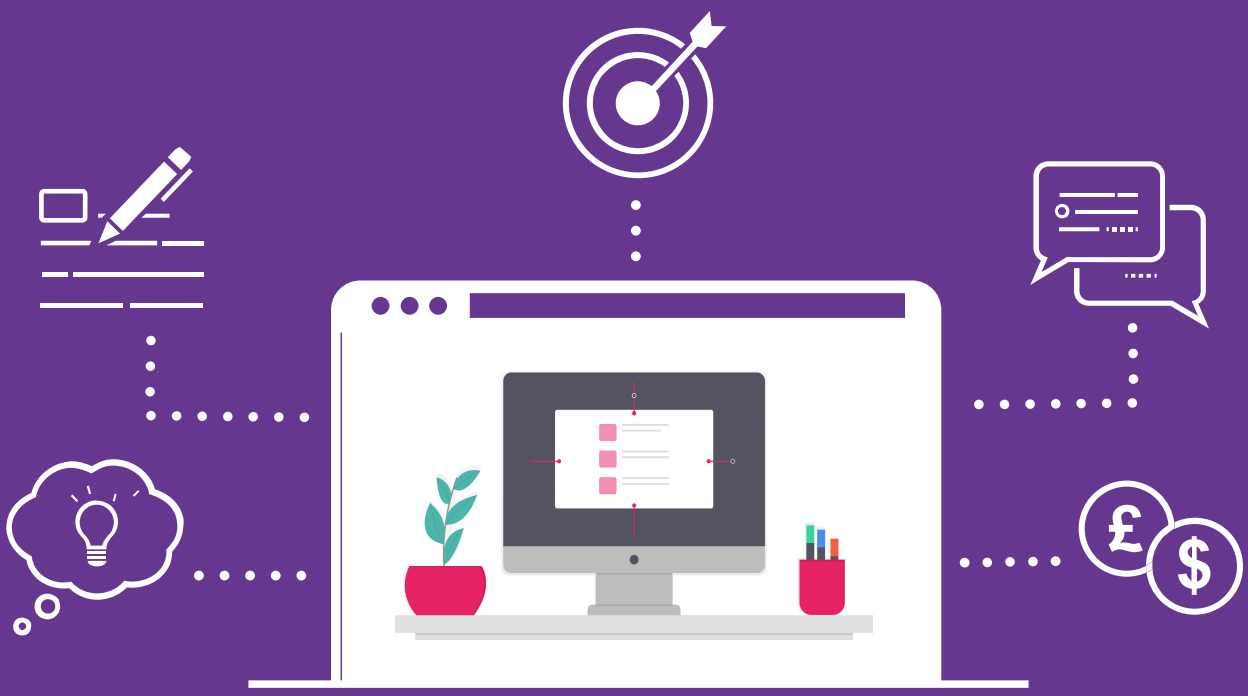

5 STEPS TO A WINNING WEBSITE PROJECT

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What Makes A Web Design Project Successful?

Successful website projects are a collaboration between you (the client) and the design agency or web designer that you're working with.

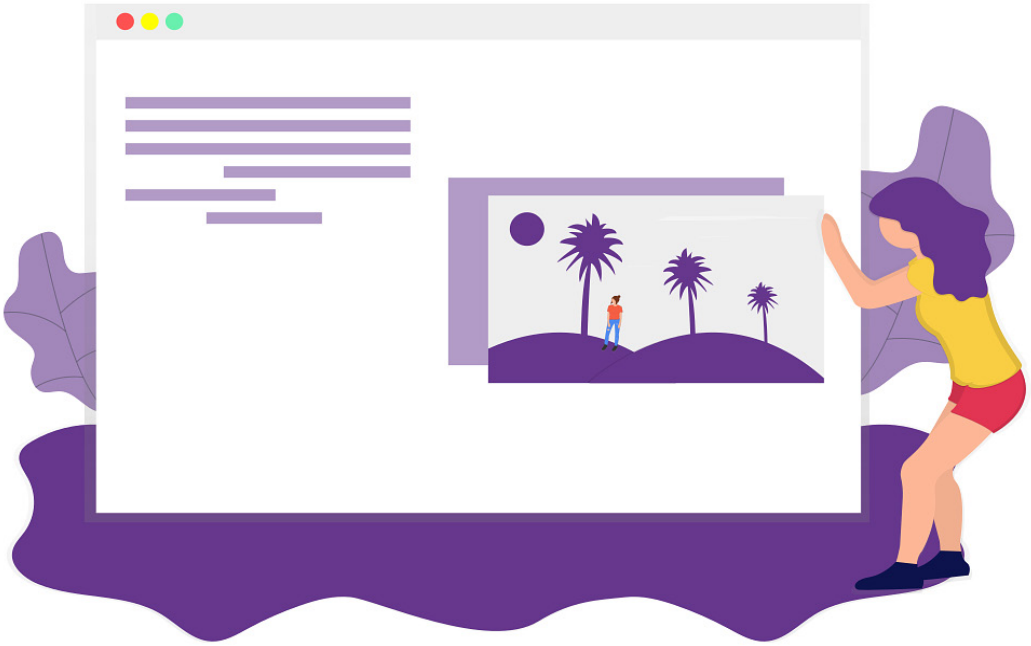
Whilst you need the expertise of the designer to put together a beautiful website that suits the intended purpose, the designer in turn needs you to communicate effectively on a regular basis.

It's possible that you've already had an experience creating a website with an agency or solo web designer that didn't have a successful result. It does happen sometimes and it's usually down to one (or both) parties not delivering what was needed to push a great project over the line.

In this guide, we've put together 5 important steps that are crucial for a winning website project. If your designer works in tandem with you to deliver each of these 5 important steps, you're going to end up with a result that you can both be proud of. More importantly, it will be something that your customers will love.

A new website project or a website in need of a re-design is a platform filled with untapped potential. The potential to clearly communicate your message, your brand and your products/services with your target audience.

A website is so much more than just a visual brochure. Yes, you can have a 'brochure website', but if it's not built to sell, then it won't bring success to your business.



1 Requirements

The very start of a website project has you thinking about the requirements of what you're after.

Your requirements could focus around specific features that you are looking to have, for example, the ability for customers to purchase your products/services online. Or perhaps a Live Chat option, so your customers can get quick answers from you or your team.

No matter the requirements that you're after, the most important thing is clarity. With clear and well-thought out requirements, it helps everyone to be on the same page. Be prepared to discuss your requirements with your web designer, as they can help you to understand what is and isn't possible.

Sometimes you may have an idea that can't be feasibly realised in your new website. Your designer will let you know this and if possible, they will suggest an alternative. Remember that they're trying to work with you, so it's important to have an open discussion.

TIP: Make a list of 5 key features that you would love to see on your new website. It doesn't hurt to look at what your closest competitors are doing here...after all, you want to do things better than them, don't you?

Another thing to consider when thinking about your requirements is that your needs and the needs of your audience can sometimes be two completely different things.

Your business website is not for 'you' as an individual, it's for your customers and potential customers who will be using it. It's okay for you not to like a specific colour or feature, but do take a moment to consider your target audience and what they would think.

It can be hard to get yourself into the mindset of your target audience. As humans, we're all built in different ways - it's one of our wonderful idiosyncrasies. You may find it helpful to speak to some existing customers and ask them what made them purchase from your business and what would influence their purchasing decision in general.

TIP: In one sentence, try to describe how your ideal website would make your audience feel/think/act.

2 Investment

Every website project needs a budget, however you shouldn't look at it as a "budget" or a "price". It's an investment in your business. Yes, you might feel that this sounds like marketing talk, but it's actually just a mindset shift.

Instead of thinking about how much each element that makes up the website costs, think about your project along the lines of "what investment do I need to make in our website to bring success to my business?"

By changing the way you look at the investment needed in a website, you open the doors to more critical thinking. It's not about spending more, it's about spending smarter.

TIP: Thinking about the investment you want to make in your new website. What would success mean to you? E.g. "Double your sales in a year" or "100 new customers in 6 months".

The role of your web designer is to create a great website for your business AND for your customers. To do this, they'll listen to your requirements and the investment level that you have available.

It's possible that the budget you have set aside for your project will not match the requirements that you've asked for. In this situation, you would either need to think about increasing your investment a little or setting aside some of the less important requirements for a second phase of design work in the future.

Focus is best spent on key tasks and requirements that will get your new website live and in front of your target audience. As your business grows from the benefits of the new website, you can plan the next phase of development tasks with your web designer.

TIP: Make a list of your requirements and assign a priority to each. Which of these could be pushed to a second phase of design work, if necessary?

3 Goals

It's important to have goals for your new website so that you can measure the success of your project as you move forwards.

For the website project itself this would typically be that the website is delivered on-time, for agreed level of investment and with all agreed requirements in place. Having scheduled, clear goals, allows for easy communication during a website project. Both the web designer and you will be aware of any goals for the new website, as these will be discussed at the start of your project.

Have you ever heard of or used SMART goals previously? These are goals that are defined as:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Time Bound

SMART goals are trackable goals with definitive results. This brings a level of structure to your goals and makes sure that you can easily see if they were attained or not.

Here's a few quick examples of a SMART goal:

- 20% increase in sales through our website in the next 6 months.
- Reduce administration costs in managing our website by 15% over the next 4 months.
- 25% increase in membership for my online course website this year.

Each of these goals has a specific target, which we can measure, is achievable, relevant and bound by a timescale.

TIP: Think about SMART goals for your business. What SMART goals would you like to achieve with your new website? Write down at least 3 if you can.

4 Content

The content on your website is one of the most important features. It has the power to draw people into your site and also the power to repel them back to the search engines.

Wherever possible, you should work with a copywriter to ensure that you have great copy on your website. This can depend a little on your available investment, but investing in a great copywriter will pay for itself many times over.

It can be tempting to write the copy yourself, but unless you have experience at doing so, it can be hard to get the tone right. A better option would be to work alongside your copywriter, sending them over some notes on your products/services and helping them to understand your target market. Then, let them create some great copy for your website.

A great copywriter is skilled at turning features into benefits.

For example, back when Creative Technology and Apple were battling it out with their competing MP3 devices. Creative Technology stuck to features, telling people how large their hard drives were. Apple launched the iPod in October 2001, with Steve Jobs simply telling people they could have “1000 songs in your pocket”, and then pulling an iPod out of his pocket on stage.

By turning features into benefits, you help your audience to relate to what you’re offering and you evoke emotional responses.

Without sounding harsh, your customers don’t really care about a new feature that you’re shipping in your products or how many extra hours your team worked at night/on weekends, just to get the latest software version to them. They simply care about themselves.

You have one question to answer for your customer - “what’s in it for me?”. This single question should control the copy on almost every page of your website.

TIP: Think about the products or services that you offer your clients and how you currently promote these. You likely list a number of features. Try re-framing these features as benefits.

5 Communication

Great communication allows both you and your web designer to get the most out of your website project. It's very much a two way street, needing care and attention from both sides.

Effective communication helps to keep a website project on track and avoid any time delays. As part of the original proposal that your web designer sends over to you, there will be a section on the project's timeframe. This schedule is drawn out with a typical expectation that both parties will be able to communicate on a timely basis.

One of the best things you can do for your website project is to ensure that there is one clear point of contact in your business. This will often be yourself, but if you have a larger team of employees, then you may choose to delegate this to an appropriate member of staff.

If you're working with a design agency, they will have the same processes in place and will also delegate a single point of contact. The advantages to these two single points of contact is that they both get to understand the requirements, needs and nuances of the project in great detail.

TIP: Decide who will be the main point of contact in your company for your website project. If it's not going to be you, make sure that person is briefed on your requirements and any other necessary details.

For any parts of the project that require feedback from your company, you'll want to make sure you send back clear and concise feedback to your web designer. If you have multiple people inside your company who will be looking at the website work, it's good to do this together and make a list of key points that you want to feed back to the web designer. Then, your main contact person can feed these back as part of the process.

The worst case scenario here would be multiple people in your company all having their own ideas and sending them over independently to the web designer. This can lead to confusion and unnecessary delays in the project, as well as potential work being carried out on changes that you didn't want.

TIP: If there are multiple people in your business who will be looking at the new website project with you as it progresses, try and arrange time to sit down in a meeting with them at important feedback points, so you can have a roundtable discussion. Make sure they're all aware of your project goals and the requirements, so you can give the most valuable feedback possible.

Summary

We hope you've enjoyed reading through our guide on **5 Steps To A Winning Website Project.**

Your next website project could be the very first one for your new business, or it could be the latest re-design in a line of successful websites that you've had previously.

It doesn't matter what level of experience you've had with website projects previously, the most important thing is that you choose to work with a web designer who clearly understands your business and your requirements.

We've got some additional tips and ideas that we'll be sending over to you via email in the next few days, offering some additional insight and action points that will help you with a successful project.

If you have any questions or would like some more information on how we can help your business, please get in touch.