8 Must-Haves For Your New Website

You've researched and found that every company claims to be the best in web design and web development. You go with your gut feeling on which company you feel will deliver the best results.

Hopefully, you steer clear of the cheapest company. Your website is almost always someone's first impression of your business. Don't self-sabotage yourself over a few thousand dollars.

Other than checking out some of the projects your new web design company has worked on, and reading past customer reviews – ensure that you're very clear on what you want on your new site.

1. **A Unique Site Design.** The very first thing that attracts a person to your website is how it looks, and how it makes the user feel. Your site should be eye-catching and deliver a clear message. It should also have photos, graphics and informative content that makes a visitor want to explore more. Overall, visitors should feel welcomed and cared for when they land on any page of your website. Also, make sure you get a custom design and not some out-of-the-box theme that 100 other people have.

2. **Website Speed, Performance & Usability.** Besides having an impressive look and feel, your site should also be fast and easy to use. If your website scores high in Google's test, loads under 2 seconds in Pingdom and gets A's and/or B's in GT Metrics's test – congrats!

    Any person who visits your website should be able to navigate around to the other pages of your site with ease. There should be precise navigation, menus, call to actions and links that guide the website visitor to take the steps you desire. Remember, the bottom line to having a website is to increase your bottom line.

3. **Great Copywriting.** Your website should pre-sell your customers instead of just selling to them. In other words, your website should provide the relevant information that teaches, educates, informs and gives people confidence in their decisions with your company.

    But you don't want paragraphs all over the place, that's for your blog. If your new web company can't write great sales copy for your new site – it may be time to look for one who can provide full website services.

    Give your customers confidence in you and your business. Ensure you have trust icons, customer reviews, awards, and partnerships displayed on your homepage. Also, be open to conversion – request a chat feature on your site!

    Your new site should romance visitors into wanting to buy from you by creating trust, authority, and respect. This way, these people will become your buyers, repeat customers, and best advertisements for your business. Talk about great copywriting.

4. **Compose Content That Informs, Answers and is Useful.** In line with copywriting, your website should have excellent content. All the articles on your site should be engaging, accessible to read, free from jargon (and if any, it should be explained), informative and educative. The content should describe your products or services in a way that shows the website visitor the benefits of your products or services.

    It should enlighten the website visitor on why they need your products or services. Simply put, your website content is what helps your potential customers gain trust in your brand. You should also combine articles with videos, photos, and infographics.

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5. **Get Found: Search Engine Optimization.** Your new site needs to get found. Your site needs SEO. I shouldn't even go into this – it's dead simple. Don't dump money into a new website and then do absolutely nothing to get it seen. For best results, always work with a web company who is primarily an SEO agency.
Why? Well, not doing so is like going to an auto shop to get new tires – and they just give you the new tires and tell you they don't actually know how to install them, you'll have to go somewhere else for that.

   Now you're stranded at the "tire shop" with new tires and no way to put them on. You call around, and the other tire shops tell you that the new tires you just spent all this money on, aren't even safe – they recommend you just get new tires completely. I'm sure you can imagine the rest so I'll just get on to some of the basics things you should ensure of in your new sites SEO.

   The website should have on-page optimization. Proper URL structure, Title tags, Meta Descriptions, Alt text, keyword density checks, content (You don't want to get slapped by Google with a thin content penalty), and the list goes on.

   Schema.org is also something you should have. Scratch that, you need it. It helps search engines understand your site and what you do. This, in turn, helps organic rankings. It also allows your site to have cool features in search results.

6. **Responsive Design.** Your site should be mobile-friendly. You're probably thinking "Duh, everyone knows that." An actual web design and development company will be up-to-date with the latest tools and technology.

   What's the newest mobile technology for your site? AMP. Otherwise known as AMP Project, Accelerated Mobile Pages or, according to Google, the future of the web. Pretty big statement there.

   Here's a quick rundown: About 5-6 years ago, Amazon released a study saying that a 1 second lag in load time could cost them $1.6 billion in sales. The internet was scrambling to speed sites up. Facebook came out with Instant Articles, Google & Twitter came together and released AMP Project.

   The idea is simple: create a way to deliver users what they're looking for in the absolute shortest amount of time possible.

7. **Social Media Integration.** How does someone who's never heard of you decide if they want to do business with you? You guessed it: They try to find out if you're a trustworthy company. Maybe they'll check reviews people wrote on different sites online. Perhaps they'll ask their friends.

   One thing they will do is check your social profiles. Hopefully, you've been actively growing your social media or paying someone to do so. Say a company has 21 Facebook likes, and their Facebook page has no pictures except for their logo – I don't care what the Google or Yelp reviews say, I'm not giving that company my credit card info.

8. **Security.** Whether or not you sell items on your website – if you take any information whatsoever, you should have SSL. Also, make sure you're on a dedicated server. Don't go looking for the cheapest hosting package (usually it's called "shared hosting.") This is something your web company should be able to help you with.

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Remember how I hit on the importance of your website speed in #2 and #6? Well, I'll mention it again. On dedicated hosting, there's a 99.9% chance your website will load faster than it would on shared hosting. I use Amazon Web Servers (AWS), but there are plenty of others out there to choose from.

There are more benefits than just speed though. Shared hosting presents a plethora of other risks such as you could be on the same i.p. as porn sites or spam sites. Unfortunately, many people have experienced drops in rankings and ultimately drops in business because of this.

Just as you wouldn't purposefully build your new business on some street corner that you've heard "May or may not be swarming with crime," you shouldn't put your website on shared hosting.

Source: Chris Kirksey, Direction

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