



The Website Process Playbook for Builders

A comprehensive guide to planning a successful website project.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Your reasons for needing a new website

1. Budget

Avoid cutting corners

2. Goals

Turn your reasons into goals

3. Strategy

Plan out a strategy for achieving your goals

4. Inspiration

The look and feel of your new website

5. Content

Educate your visitors

6. Design & Development

Where all your hard work comes to life

7. Launch

Go live and celebrate

Bonus: Post Launch

Website care and other considerations

Conclusion

Final word

Introduction



My name is Peter Wright, but most people call me Pete.

I've been building websites for construction businesses for over a decade, with a special focus on helping luxury and custom home builders generate leads and look good online.

In this playbook you'll learn how to plan and execute a successful website project, because realistically, every business is going to need a new website every few years or so and it's important to be as prepared as possible.

There are many good reasons for needing a new website, whether you're rebranding, suffering from a lack of lead generation, or because your current website looks outdated and is no longer an accurate reflection of your business. Perhaps you've never had a website for your business and you want to do it right the first time.

Whatever it may be, a website project can be a huge success, or it can fail miserably. That's why I've put together this comprehensive guide to ensure your next website project is a successful one.

How do you know if you need a new website?

Before investing your valuable time and money into a new website, you need to make sure you're doing it for the right reasons.

There are a few ways to tell if you need a new website, including the examples below.

You haven't touched your website in years

The Internet is constantly changing, so it can be hard to keep your website fresh and modern if you're not updating it regularly.

Site visitors and search engines alike love clean, modern websites that are easy-to-use and feature helpful content.

If you can't remember the last time your website had a refresh, it's probably time to start considering it.

Your website isn't mobile-friendly

Mobile-friendly websites provide the same great experience for visitors, whether they access your site via desktop computers, laptops, mobile devices, or tablets.

If your website isn't easily accessible on a mobile device or tablet, it's definitely time for a new one.

Mobile searches are higher than ever. Over 55% of website traffic now comes from mobile phones. That means it's likely that more people look at your website on a mobile device than on a desktop, so if your site isn't mobile-friendly, you're likely missing out on valuable leads and potential revenue!

Your website isn't generating leads

Your website should be a lead-generating, revenue-increasing machine. If it's not, you likely need a website redesign. Of course, many things can contribute to a lack of website traffic and leads, but web design is a huge factor.

Even if your website design isn't the main cause of your decreased leads and website traffic, upgrading your design can never hurt.

Your business has changed

Businesses change all the time, and your website should be an accurate representation of your business at every stage. That means if your service offering changes, your website should reflect that. If you've changed locations or changed your entire branding, your website should reflect that too.

Your website is essentially a virtual business card, so if it doesn't accurately represent your business, it's time to consider a new website.

These factors should give you a good idea of whether or not you need a new website. Assuming you do, here are the key steps you need to take.

Step 1

Allocate Budget

If there's ever been a time to avoid cutting corners, it's now.

Before talking dollars, it's important to remind yourself of one thing - your website is the cornerstone of your business. It's where people form first impressions, and it can be the difference between someone contacting you over your competitor.

If there's ever been a time to avoid cutting corners, it's now.

Unfortunately, asking how much a website costs is a bit like asking "how much does it cost to build a house?" There are many different factors that can affect overall price.

At the very least, having an idea of how much you're willing to spend is an important part of the conversation. I always ask potential clients to be honest with me when it comes to their allocated budget in order for me to accurately communicate what I can and can't do for them.

Step 2

Set Goals

Take your reason for needing a new website and set some goals.

As mentioned above, there's always at least one specific reason why you need a new website. Now it's time to take that reason and set some goals.

I like to start every website project by asking some questions. For example:

Q. What is your main reason(s) for needing a new website?

Common answer: current website is outdated, doesn't reflect current brand, doesn't represent the quality of our work

Q. What are the top goals for your website?

Common answer: showcase work, get more leads

Q. What do you want people to do on your website?

Common answer: view portfolio, get in touch

These answers help me understand what I need to focus on during the strategy, design and development phases of the project.

Step 3

Define Strategy

Plan out a strategy for achieving your goals.

With an understanding of your reasons for needing a new website, along with a set of well-defined goals, it's time to start planning out a strategy to achieve your goals. This strategy should include:

Sitemap

A sitemap is where you gather all your pages and organise them in a hierarchical and meaningful order.

User journey

A user journey maps out the different stages a website visitor goes through on their way to a predefined end-goal, and focuses on the different actions someone may take and emotions they may feel in each stage.

The end-goal for your website will likely be a visitor contacting you for a quote. Typically, you would look to guide them through your website to a contact page where they can contact you via phone, email or by filling in a form.

The best way to set yourself up for success is by understanding what the visitor is looking for, what questions they need answered, and how they'll look for it on your website on their way to this end-goal.

By focusing on the user journey and reducing any friction, you'll be positioning your new website to generate real results.

User flow

While your user journey deals with the stages someone goes through on their way to your end-goal, your user flow maps out the specific steps someone would ideally take within those stages to complete an action.

Mapping out an ideal user flow will help you start thinking about how people interact with your website, from a first-time visitor to becoming a qualified

lead. Once you plan how someone would move through your site, you can start to figure out how to optimise the different parts of their journey.

Showcasing beautifully shot photos and videos of your work alongside relevant social proof, like glowing reviews from past clients, are effective ways to build trust, convey professionalism and encourage the visitor to take action as you strategically guide them through your website to the end-goal.



Step 4

Find Inspiration

Start thinking about the look and feel of your new website.

With a roadmap in place, you can now start to think about the look and feel of your new website. I always suggest checking out a few competitor websites as well as a couple of websites outside of your industry.

This process should give you an idea of industry standards while helping you decide what visual elements and styles you might want to incorporate into your own website. The aim here is to confirm the visual direction of your website while ensuring that it aligns with the overall goals of the project.

When looking for inspiration, try to answer questions like:

- What feeling should a visitor get when visiting your site?
- What features and functionality should your website have?
- What are your competitors doing that you think is working?

As you look for inspiration for your new website, be sure to make note of which elements you like. This includes things like typography, imagery, colours, buttons, layouts or even entire websites.

Step 5

Create Your Content

Make sure you're constantly looking for opportunities to educate your visitors.

By now you should have an idea of how you want your website to look. But it's not actually time to start designing just yet.

Many people attempt a design-first approach because they're not sure where to start when it comes to creating their content. They then find themselves trying to retrofit content into an existing design - an approach which rarely works and wastes time further down the road due to unforeseen design revisions and a potential reduction in the quality of content.

Your content should always dictate the layout of your website pages. Design is meant to enhance your message, not distract from or overpower it.

When creating your content make sure you're constantly looking for opportunities to educate your visitors. A simple exercise to see how well you're educating visitors is to brainstorm the top questions you constantly hear from people enquiring about your services. Make sure you're answering those questions in the pages on your new site.

I suggest taking a look at your new sitemap to get a high-level view of all the pages you need content for and breaking those pages down into sections. This should make it easier for you to focus on the story you're telling for each page.

Look for opportunities to include the following in your content:

- Professional photography and videography of your past projects
- Information about your business, your services, your projects and any other details that might set you apart from your competitors
- An outline of your process so potential clients can know what to expect should they choose to work with you
- Social proof like client testimonials and industry recognition
- Photos of you and your team
- Pre-qualifying questions in your contact form to help eliminate tyre kickers

These are all powerful assets that can be used to educate and inform your visitors and encourage them to take action and get in touch with you.

Step 6

Design & Develop

This is where all your hard work comes to life.

In most instances it's best to start the design process by creating wireframes. Wireframes are simple black and white designs that show the general layout and flow of each page, as well as outlining what content will go where.

Once the wireframes are done I like to start by designing the homepage. Getting this nailed down first allows me to ensure I'm on the right track with the overall look and feel, before moving onto other pages.

All aspects of design need to be considered here, including typography, colours, buttons, imagery and so on. This approach helps save time and unnecessary revisions in the long run. In order to achieve a consistent design throughout the entire website, the rest of your site's pages should take the lead from your homepage and feature most, if not all, of the elements mentioned above.

Next is the development phase, where your flat design mockups are turned into code and optimised for maximum compatibility with popular web browsers like Chrome and Safari, and different devices like desktops, laptops, tablets and smartphones. In doing so, you get peace of mind that no matter what browser or device is used, your site will display exactly as intended and also ensure your users are getting a fully optimised experience.

Step 7

Launch Your New Website

It's finally time to launch your new website!

Before launching your new website, it's important to do a pre-launch review to confirm that everything is in order and ready to go. This will not only help prevent the need to rush and fix issues post-launch but also ensure a smooth transition for people from using your old website to using your new one.

When you're positive everything is ready to go, it's time to launch your new site!

Immediately after launch, it's important to make sure that all pages are rendering properly, analytics tracking codes are in place and sitemap has been submitted to Google Search Console.

Now all that's left to do is crack open a cold beverage. Your new website is live and all your hard work has paid off. Congratulations!



Bonus

Post Launch

Make sure your website is being looked after and maintained.

Now that your website is live, it's important to make sure it is being looked after and maintained. This includes updating your software, regular backups, security checks and uptime monitoring to ensure your website is online and open for business 24/7. This is essential for any live website and something I offer to all my clients as a done-for-you service.

As we touched on earlier, successful websites are those that attract the right type of visitors and lead them down a path towards becoming a client. Continuing to attract the right type of visitors requires consistent content publishing and monitoring of the website to make sure it is achieving its objectives and delivering a positive return on your investment.

Make sure recently completed projects are being published and shared. Including a blog is also something worth considering. Google looks favourably on websites that share helpful information, so a well-structured blogging platform is the perfect place to posting thought leading articles in order to attract targeted visitors to the website. You can also use your blog to post project updates, share your industry knowledge and provide answers to commonly asked questions.

Creating unique and interesting content on a regular basis for your website is also critical to increasing your visibility amongst search engines. Launching your website and then forgetting about it is a surefire way to get lost amongst the noise.

Conclusion



Remember, when thinking about starting a website project, always assess why you need a new website first. Make sure there's sound reasoning behind your decision. From here, the success of your project will depend on dedicating the right amount of time to preparation and planning.

While it may not always be easy, following this process from start to finish is definitely recommended and definitely worth it.

That said, if this all seems a little overwhelming and you'd like someone to hold your hand and do everything for you, let's have a chat to see how I can best help you.

Want a website that's been custom designed to accurately represent your business, appeal to your target audience and encourage them to take action?

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