Mastering The Art of Website Redesigns

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Introduction

You've decided to redesign your website. Great! The next step is to find a designer and a developer and get the project going, right? Hold your horses. Redesigning your website is not as simple as that.

A website redesign requires juggling many different tasks at the same time. Without a project manager, this can be decidedly difficult. In order for your project to go smoothly, you must not drop anything, fall behind, or become overwhelmed. When a marketer jumps headlong into building a new website, planning is the most crucial element to the project's success and will help negate many of the logistical problems that will inevitably arise.

By answering important questions early, setting expectations about project deadlines and budget, working with the right team, and effectively communicating what you want, you're sure to have the website you're envisioning.

This comprehensive guide will walk you through five phases of website redesign, your best options for a content management system (CMS), and how to pick the right team for your project.

Let's get started!

CHAPTER 01

The 5 Phases of a Website Redesign

Committing to redesigning your website can be an overwhelming initiative. From planning to budget and from design to launch, there seems to be an insurmountable number of tasks that occur at any given time. On top of that, you must manage this project within your already hectic schedule. In this chapter, we will break down the redesign process into bite-sized pieces so that you can plan, prioritize, and arrive at the site of your dreams.

Phase 01: Start With Strategy

The first step to any project, including a website redesign, is to decide on your strategy. This will shape and set the tone for the finished product. Without a strategy, a project can lack direction and become convoluted. Think of your strategy as your home base. When you get further into the planning process, ask yourself, "Does this match my strategy?" Bringing solid footing into a website redesign will make all the difference at launch time.

Before you proceed with any planning, you must document your current performance metrics. If you don't have access to the information listed below, you should add a tool such as Google Analytics or HubSpot's marketing analytics to better track your site's performance.
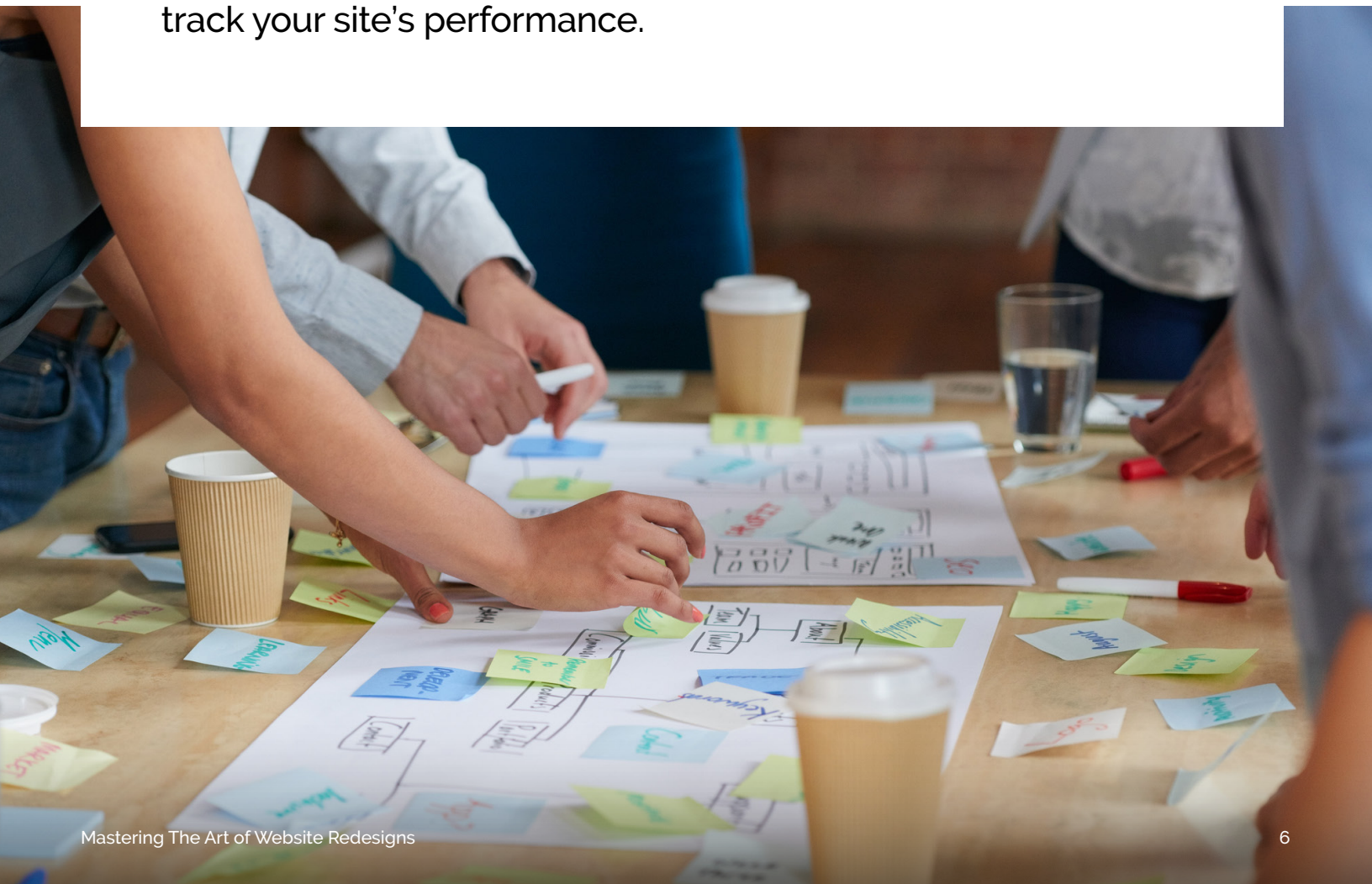
Benchmarks you should track:

- Average monthly visitors to website

- Average monthly bounce rate

- Average monthly time on site

- Top-performing keywords by rank, traffic, and lead gen

- Total number of inbound linking domains

- Average monthly leads per month

- Total number of sales per month

- Current number of website pages indexed

- Current number of pages that receive traffic

PRO TIP: In order to track these metrics effectively, take note of the tools you're using for your benchmarks. When you compare post-design metrics, you'll want to use the exact same tools. Analytics tools can vary, and consistency is key when tracking benchmarks.

Within your strategy, you should also determine your goals, brand identity, target personas, and competition. Below are questions you should think about and then answer when you feel confident.

Goal Identification

- Why are you proceeding with a website redesign?

- What do you hope to accomplish with the redesign?

- What are the costs of redesigning?

- What are the costs of not redesigning?

- How do you envision the finished product?

PRO TIP: Make sure your goals are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely (SMART). SMART goals not only help you communicate timelines and needs among teams, but also ensure that you have a solid grasp of why you need this redesign.

Brand Identity

- What is your company's value proposition?

- Are you keeping the messaging the same?

- Are you changing the branding?

- If changing, what about the brand must change?

- Why are you making or not making these changes?

PRO TIP: If you will be creating new content, be clear and certain about your branding strategy. Your decisions about branding will help you decide if your content is consistent throughout the site and will provide a pathway to make it consistent if it isn't already. Messaging is important—new visitors should almost instantly understand what you do, how it relates to them, and whether or not they should stay on your website.

If you will be creating new content, be clear and certain about your branding strategy.

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Target Personas

- Do you have clearly defined target personas?

- Are you including their needs in the redesign?

- Does your branding and content currently align with your personas' needs and pain points?

- If not, are you planning to change it?

- When do personas come to your website?

- How often do they visit?

- What kinds of devices do they use to visit?

- Who do you want to visit that isn't already?

PRO TIP: Personas will affect everything you create in your website redesign, from site pages to navigation, images, and beyond. Have these clearly planned and specified before you proceed. If you would like to read more about personas, check out our <u>free guide here</u>.

Competition

- Which competitors' sites do you like or want to emulate?

- What are the top five competitor keywords for your industry?

- Which companies rank the highest out of your competitors?

PRO TIP: Do not obsess over your competitors. Use them as inspiration, make notes about the positives and negatives, and uncover what you can do better. The examples will also help your design team get in line with your vision.

Once you have answered the questions in this section, you can start planning the tactical approaches to your website redesign.
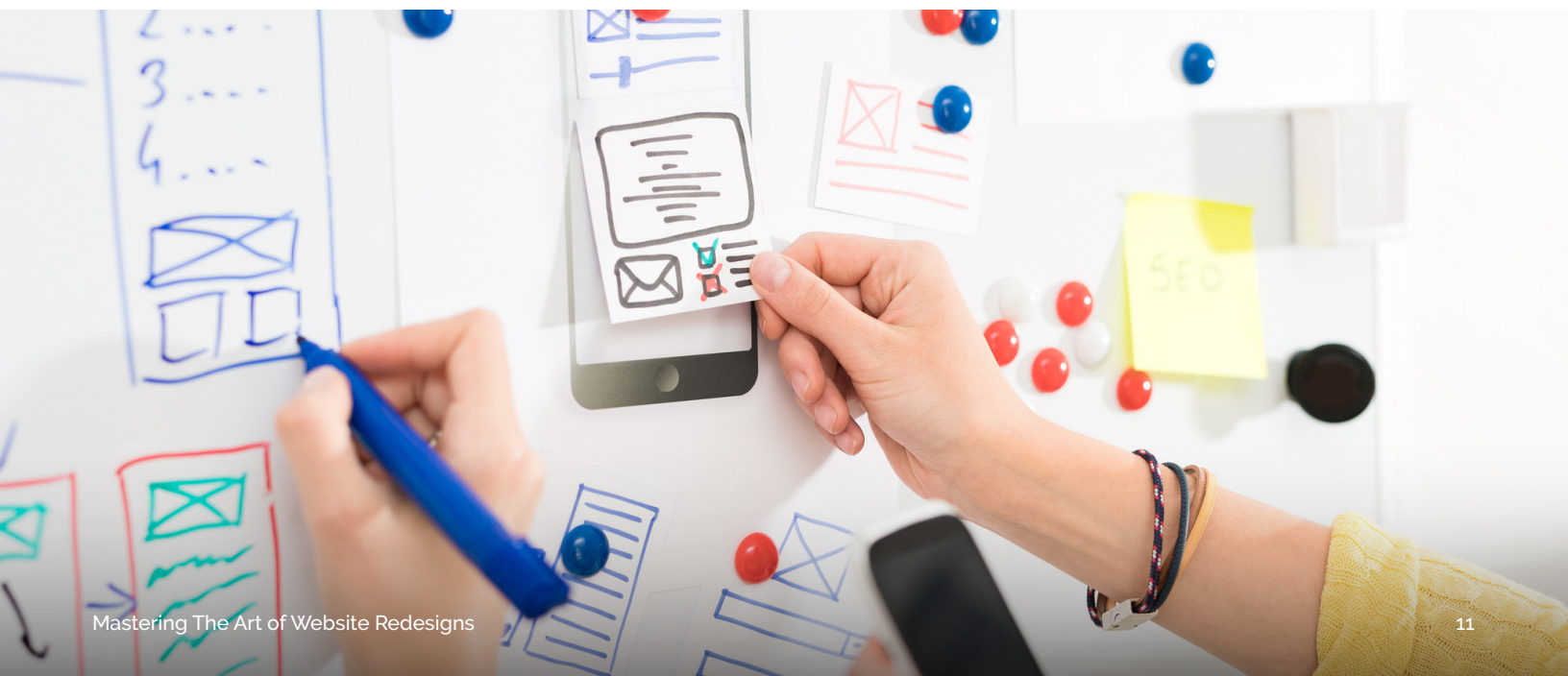
Phase 02: Plan Your Project

Planning your website's redesign can be taxing and fun at the same time. This chapter will help you sort out what high-level questions to consider and what platforms you should use. It will also help you understand your asset inventory, site architecture, and other technical components of the redesign process. Let's jump in!

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IMMEDIATELY

- Are we redesigning an entire site or tweaking the current site?

- Will there be any changes to the domain?

- What is my realistic timeline for this project?

- What is the budget for this project?

- Do we need to hire an agency to help us accomplish the redesign?

- What do I currently like and dislike about my website?

- What platform am I going to use?

- Will the domain name change at all? If so, why?

- Who will be responsible for what parts of the project?

These questions must be answered first. They will help you and your team gauge whether your needs and desires align with your budget and in-house capabilities. Normally, companies will work with an agency to help them reach their goals and answer some of the above questions (such as what platform to use for the website). Answering as many of these questions as possible before speaking with a professional is highly recommended.

The Look and Feel

Deciding on the look and feel of your website will help you communicate with your design team. Coming in with a plan and additional questions to refine that plan will allow the team to guide you toward best practices and other solutions.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER INCLUDE:

■ What first impression do I want my personas to have?

■ What do I currently like about my website?

■ What do I currently dislike about my website?

■ Does my current site convey trustworthiness? If not, how can the new design help accomplish this?

■ How could the look and feel of the site be described? (e.g., sleek, rustic, high-tech, quirky).

■ Does the look and feel match your branding?

■ What colors do you have in mind for the new website?

Deciding on the look and feel of your website will help you communicate with your design team.

Platform Considerations

Do your research before committing to a platform. Marketers often rely on the same thing they've always used, but change can be good. For example, HubSpot's new COS is the only tool on the market to offer a completely integrated Smart Content feature. This means you can customize what a subscriber sees versus what a lead sees versus what a customer sees ... you get the idea. WordPress, Drupal, and other platforms do not offer the same seamless integration.

HELP YOURSELF PLAN BY ASKING:

- What platforms am I evaluating now?

- What ratings and reputations does the current platform have?

- How is the deliverability of the platform?
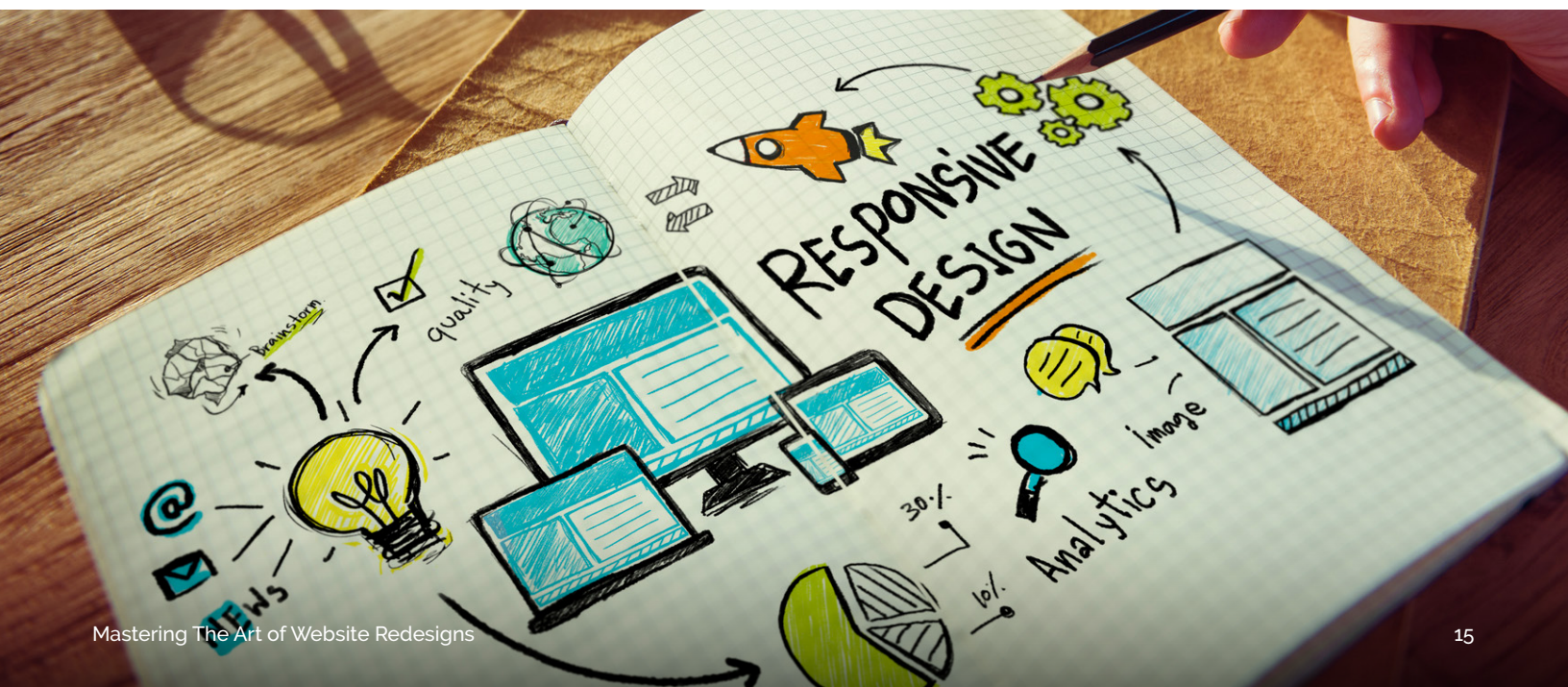
- How SEO-friendly is the platform?

- Does the platform integrate your marketing tools?

- What kind of customization is available for it?

- Does my development team have expertise building on mytop choice?

- Have I looked at all other contenders versus what I'm using today?

- If not, what other platforms exist?

Content Asset Inventory

- What content is most viewed on your site?

- What content is most shared on your site?

- Which pages receive the most traffic?

- Which pages have the highest rank?

- Which pages receive the most leads?

- What content stays?

- What content goes?

- What content do you need to create going forward?
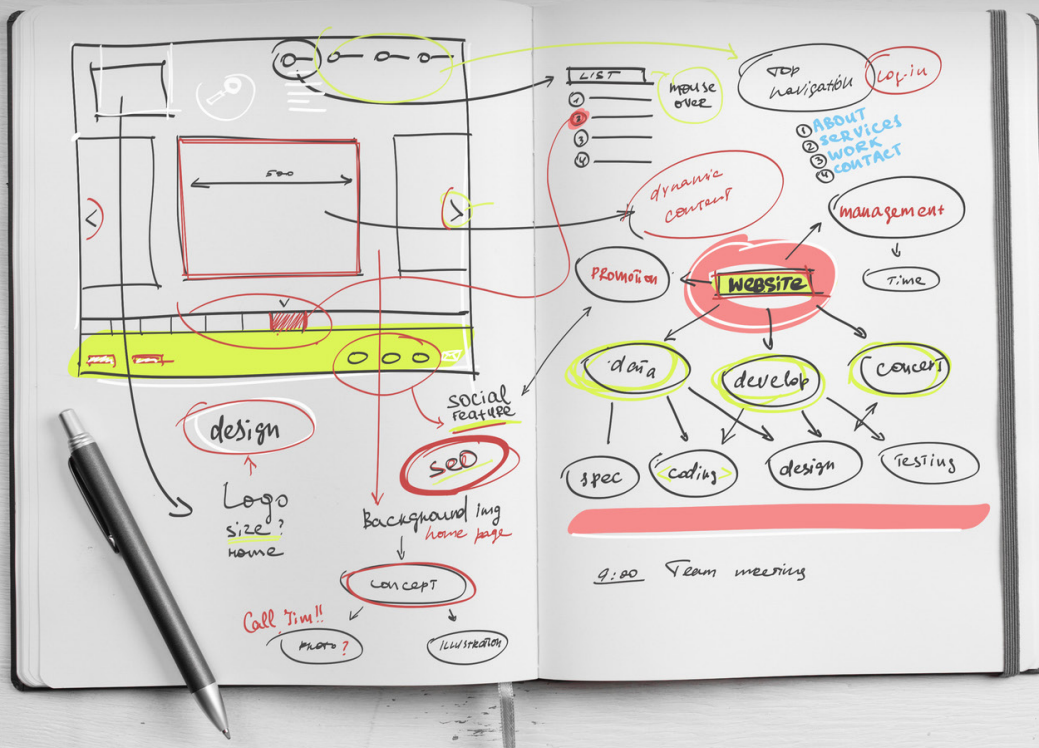
- Do you have content for every stage of the buyer's journey (i.e., awareness, consideration, decision)?

- Is any content duplicated?

- Is your content optimized?

- Is your content tailored to your personas?

- What content must be rewritten?

- Should any CTAs be added?

HubSpot's new COS is the only tool on the market to offer a completely integrated Smart Content feature.
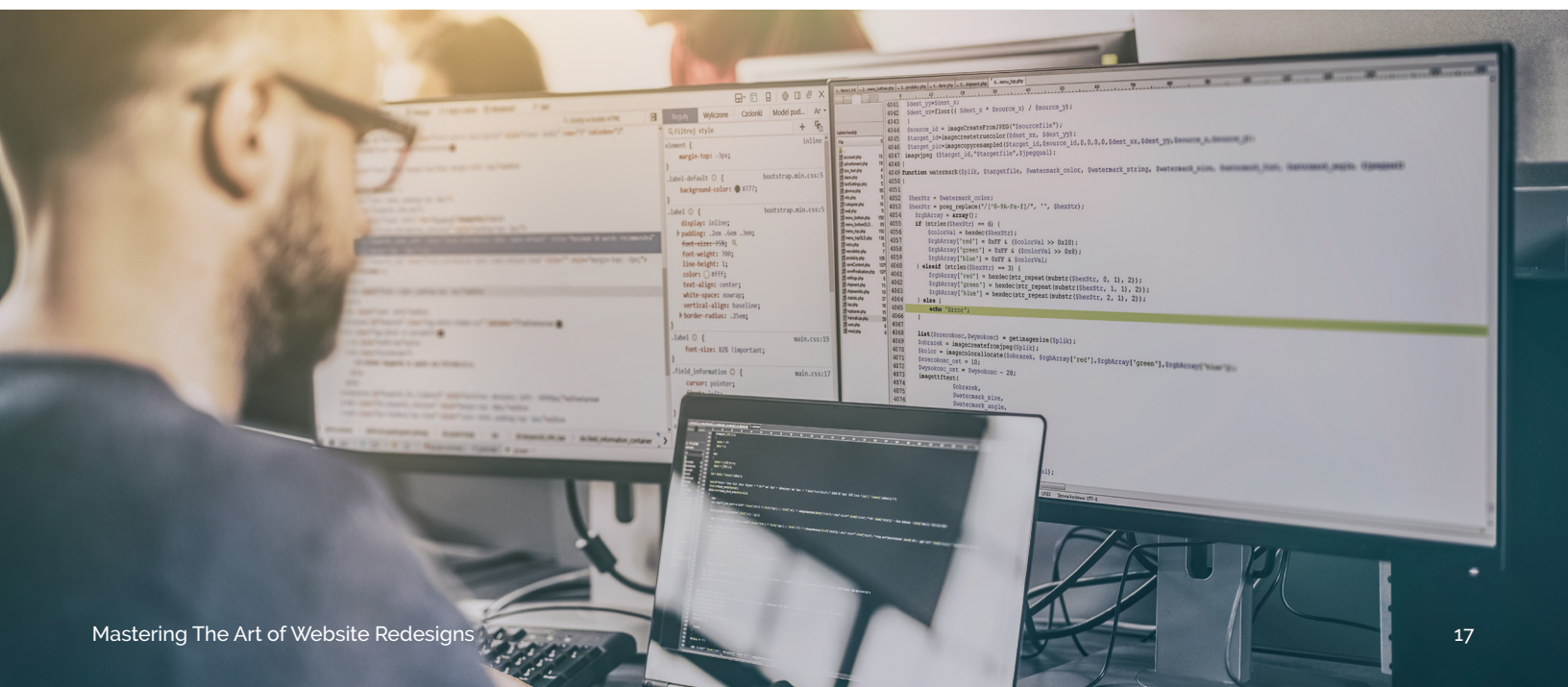
Technical Planning

SITE ARCHITECTURE

- Inventory your current URL mapping in Excel.

- Create a site map for your proposed redesign.

- Plan the new site architecture, navigation, and so on.

- Build out wire frames for the design.

PRO TIP: Remember to set hard deadlines for yourself and your team. Track your progress week to week, getting updates from those involved in this process.

Hosting, Security, and CDNS

- Do you need hosting services (if on HubSpot, no; on something else, yes)?

- Will you need separate CDNs (HubSpot, no; others, yes)?

- How much extra will come out of my budget if on other platforms?

- What is the most secure way to build the new website?

PRO TIP: Bring these questions to your technical contact. The agency that you are partnering with will be able to connect you with the right person so that you have all of the answers ahead of building the website.
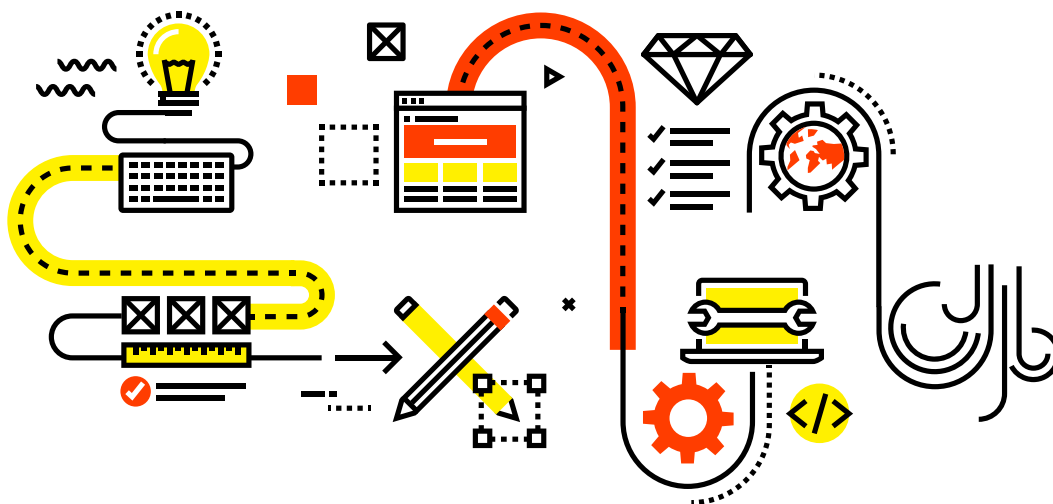
URL Mapping and 301 Redirects

Previously, we referenced URL mapping in Excel. This section will take your planning process a step further.

ANSWER TRUE OR FALSE TO THE FOLLOWING:

- The site structure is changing and I will be changing URLs.

- The site structure is not changing, but I want to update URLs for SEO purposes.

- Some site changes will be made, but not every URL will change.

- Some site pages will be merged.

Any of the options you said "true" to will require 301 redirects to be set up in your site. You can note these redirects in your URL mapping Excel sheet. A 301 redirect is a permanent link that sends the user from an old page to a new page on your website. For example, if you have a page about blue widgets on your old website, but you no longer offer those, you would need a 301 redirect so that when a user finds the blue widget page, it automatically reroutes to the general widget page. You will need a technical resource to set up the redirects. Though HubSpot makes this relatively easy, it is important to assign the task to someone proficient in the process because it affects SEO.

Development Requirements

One of the most common pitfalls of a website redesign is failing to understand the development requirements to complete the project. For example, do you know if your website will be built from scratch with no template? Here are common questions to ask before jumping into the design phase of the project:

- Will you need a developer, or will you build the site yourself?

- Are you building your website from the ground up or using a template?

- Will you use a basic template and customize yourself?

- Will you need a pre-designed template with little or no customization?

- Will you need a template and major customization?

Phase 03: Start the Design Process

At SmartBug Media, we recommend that clients that need a typical company website start with a template and then customize to their needs. This will help you streamline the design and development processes.

The design process can be challenging and rewarding. In this phase, consider these best practices when starting your design process. Once these are solidified, you can start approving wireframes, mockups, color schemes, and all other visual assets.
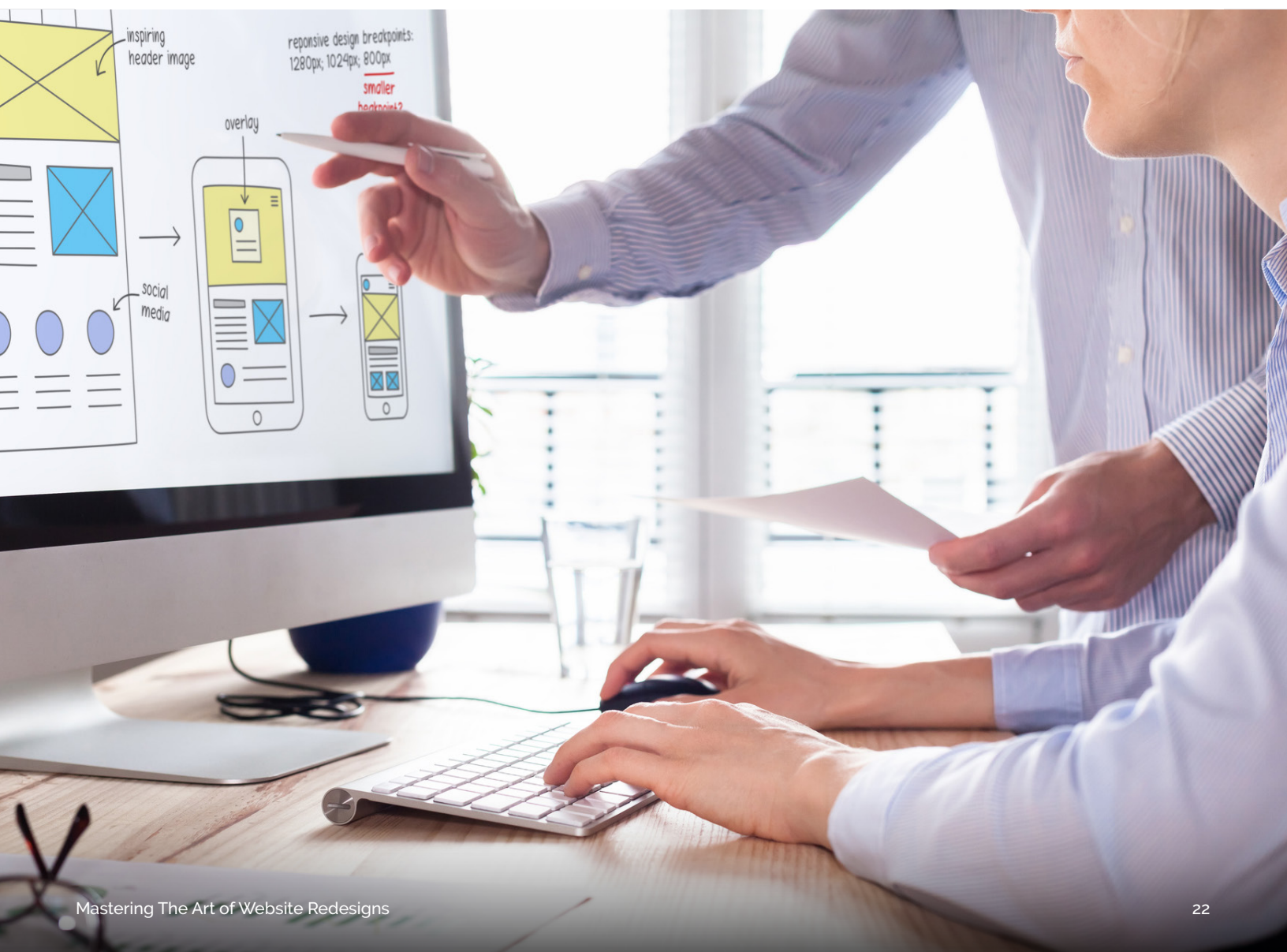
5 Current Design Trends You Should Know

1. Design for your personas' needs

"If you try to be everything to everyone, you'll be nothing to no one." You've likely heard this quote before, but have you truly applied it to your web design? Often, companies will jump into the design process by selecting colors, images, and cool features for their websites. These are all important concepts, of course, but how effectively those colors, images, and features work to generate quality leads doesn't sit at the forefront of design conversations.

Unlike some artistic features of your website, a design that is focused on your buyer personas will help bring you more qualified leads. To make your website appealing to your buyer personas, start by answering questions that allow you to segment and develop personas, such as:

- Behavior

- Demographics

- Needs

- Pain points

- Goals

- Interests

Once you have established buyer personas, you can design a persona-based website in several ways, including:

■ **Click-through paths:** When visitors land on your homepage, give them the option to choose their own path. For example, Khan Academy's website (shown below) lets you customize your website experience depending on if you are visiting as a parent or a teacher.

■ **Pages:** If your personas will be driven to explore different product or service pages, each of these pages should be persona-based. You should also ensure these pages can be easily found in the main navigation, and use language that resonates with the persona.

■ **Content offers and conversion paths:** Throughout your website and within your inbound marketing campaigns, you should create content offers (e-books, white papers, and so on) that address your buyer personas. On the website, include conversion paths (calls to action, landing pages, and forms) that appeal to the unique characteristics of each buyer persona.

■ **Categories in your resource center and blog:** There may be particular topics that are more applicable to one persona than others. By categorizing topics in your resource center and blog, you make it easy for buyer personas to quickly find the information that resonates with them.

2. Optimize your site for search

To be found online and help generate more leads and customers for your company, your website pages must stay updated with proper search engine optimization (SEO). Each of your website pages contains content that is utilized by search engines to determine your page's position in search results. The better the content and the easier it can be found by search engines, the more likely you are to be found by leads and customers. How do search engines determine what is good content? According to Moz, good content must supply a demand and be linkable.

Here are some considerations for optimizing your site for search:

- Target a long tail keyword/topic on each page.

- Add the keyword to these important elements:

    - Header tag

    - URL

    - The page's content

    - Image alt text

- Each page should offer one-of-a-kind and valuable content.

- Link to and from the appropriate subcategory and category.

- Link to the homepage by adding a clickable logo to the top of every webpage.

3. Consider your site speed

Although Google hasn't disclosed exactly how site speed is determined, research by Zoompf and Moz indicates that the most important factor is not actually the page load time, but how quickly Google gets a response from your Web server. With that in mind, optimize for overall site speed by ensuring your page's content loads quickly (visitors prefer not to wait for more than four seconds) and has a quick server.

4. Add testimonials and/or product reviews to your website

Testimonials on your website help increase your company's social proof and, ultimately, help close more customers. There are several ways you can incorporate testimonials in your website design, including:

- Add testimonials to universal elements such as the header or footer.

- Add an image, name, and company name (if applicable) to the testimonial to show it isn't a phony.

- In addition to text testimonials, consider video testimonials; seeing a real person talk about their experience may be more convincing to some visitors.

- Link testimonials to a website page that is dedicated to product reviews and/or case studies of customers.

- Be sure to place testimonials on product or service pages on which visitors are considering a purchase.

When planning your website redesign, determine the testimonial showcases that fit best with the design.

Testimonials on your website help increase your company's social proof and, ultimately, help close more customers.

5. Utilize a responsive design

A responsive design will allow a website to perform well regardless of the user's device and screen size. Considering that 74 percent of people use their mobile phones to help with purchases, responsive design is a critical element of a website. When selecting a provider for your website's design, be wary of any that claim they can provide "mobile optimization" for your site. Ask questions early to determine whether the provider is properly implementing a responsive design. A properly implemented responsive design will include:

- Easy navigation (usually done with a drop-down menu)

- Better viewing of copy and images

- Minimal scrolling

- No excessive manual resizing or configuring of images and content

- The use of CSS media queries to optimize the content for various devices

- Identical HTML for each device (i.e., redirect of mobile traffic to a separate URL)

Ask potential website development agencies what process they use for responsive design, and ensure that they adhere to all the above best practices.

6 Tried and True Design Best Practices

1. Good design is simple

In terms of website design, less truly is more. Decluttering and simplifying your company's website allows users to seamlessly get the information they need, and it also helps ensure that visitors see your messages and calls to action. Simple design:

- Utilizes white space effectively

- Minimizes the number of colors and fonts used

- Does not overload images

- Uses a common page layout throughout the site

- Avoids too much content

- Uses short and concise copy

2. Clear, simple navigation

Your website should be as easy as possible for users to navigate. A great design will utilize a main navigation that includes no more than seven items and also has sub-navigation on secondary website pages. To nail down the items that you should include in navigation, examine the pages most viewed by visitors who become customers. This can be achieved by using the Visitors Flow Report in Google Analytics. For HubSpot customers, this can easily be done with the Conversion Assists Report. Once you know the pages you would like in your website's navigation, determine the actual term to use in the navigation bar. The terms should be short (2-3 words), include words that your customers use, and also consider search engine optimization.

3. Always consider your brand strategy

Branding materials such as colors, fonts, and your logo are important to consider and finalize at the beginning of your website's design. To ensure your branding assets will give your company the representation you desire, follow each of the tips below:

- **Colors:** Colors can evoke emotions and determine how someone feels about your brand. Before you start design, select some basic colors for the brand and website. Choose colors that are parallel to your products and services and also help support the message your brand is sharing. For example, a green living company would want to use colors that remind visitors of nature, such as sky blue. You should also avoid colors that are similar to those used by competitors.

- **Fonts:** Early in the design process, decide on font families and sizes you'll want to use. Your website's font should be easy to read; a unique, cool-looking font may not appeal to visitors if they cannot quickly read it. You should also stick to no more than three font variations: one each for the body text, headers, and sub-headers.

- **Logos:** Your logo is your brand's visual representation and is also essential in website design. If you have not yet developed a logo, start by discussing the story behind your company, then simply brainstorm and sketch ideas. From there, share these concepts with a designer. If you already use a company logo, be ready to forward its design files to your website development team.

■ **Branding style guides:** Let's say your company has some branding intricacies that should be considered in website redesign (e.g., you avoid certain types of images or prefer a more professional tone). Compile this information into a brand style guide to share with the website development team.

4. Place important content above the fold

When marketers refer to content being "above the fold" on a website page, they are referring to the content that displays without requiring the visitor to scroll. This is the content you first see when landing on a site page. Because many website visitors don't take the time to scroll below the fold, place the content you value most or think will be most beneficial in driving lead and customer conversions above it.

5. Design with inbound in mind

As mentioned in the introduction of this e-book, website design just about looking good; it should also help you achieve your inbound marketing goals, from effectively attracting visitors to converting leads to turning those leads into customers. When designing your website, keep in mind these important inbound marketing concepts:

ATTRACT VISITORS

A website with the latest and most aesthetically pleasing design can improve your brand and grow your sales funnel, but only if visitors end up on your site. There are several channels by which visitors find your website; the most important elements in attracting visitors when designing your website are outlined hereafter.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO)

As already mentioned, you must optimize your site for search engines. With 61 percent of global Internet users researching products online, SEO is essential. In addition to optimizing your website using the suggestions already shared, follow these best practices:

- Think about SEO from the start.

- Complete a website audit before starting redesign. Take into consideration important SEO elements, including:

  - Number of pages that receive traffic

  - Number of indexed pages

  - Total of inbound linking domains

  - Best-performing keywords

  - Average monthly visitors and unique visitors

- Set up proper 301 redirects.

- Clean up poor-quality backlinks.

BLOGGING

Regardless of your company's industry or market audience, blogging is a central component of attracting visitors to your website. It helps improve SEO because search engines will crawl your site more frequently with each new piece of content, which ultimately gives you more opportunities to attract leads and customers. Below are some tips for how best to design a blog for your website:

- Add your blog to the main navigation and/or link to it from your homepage to make it easy for website visitors to find.

- Your blog's design should be an extension of your website design and incorporate similar design concepts.
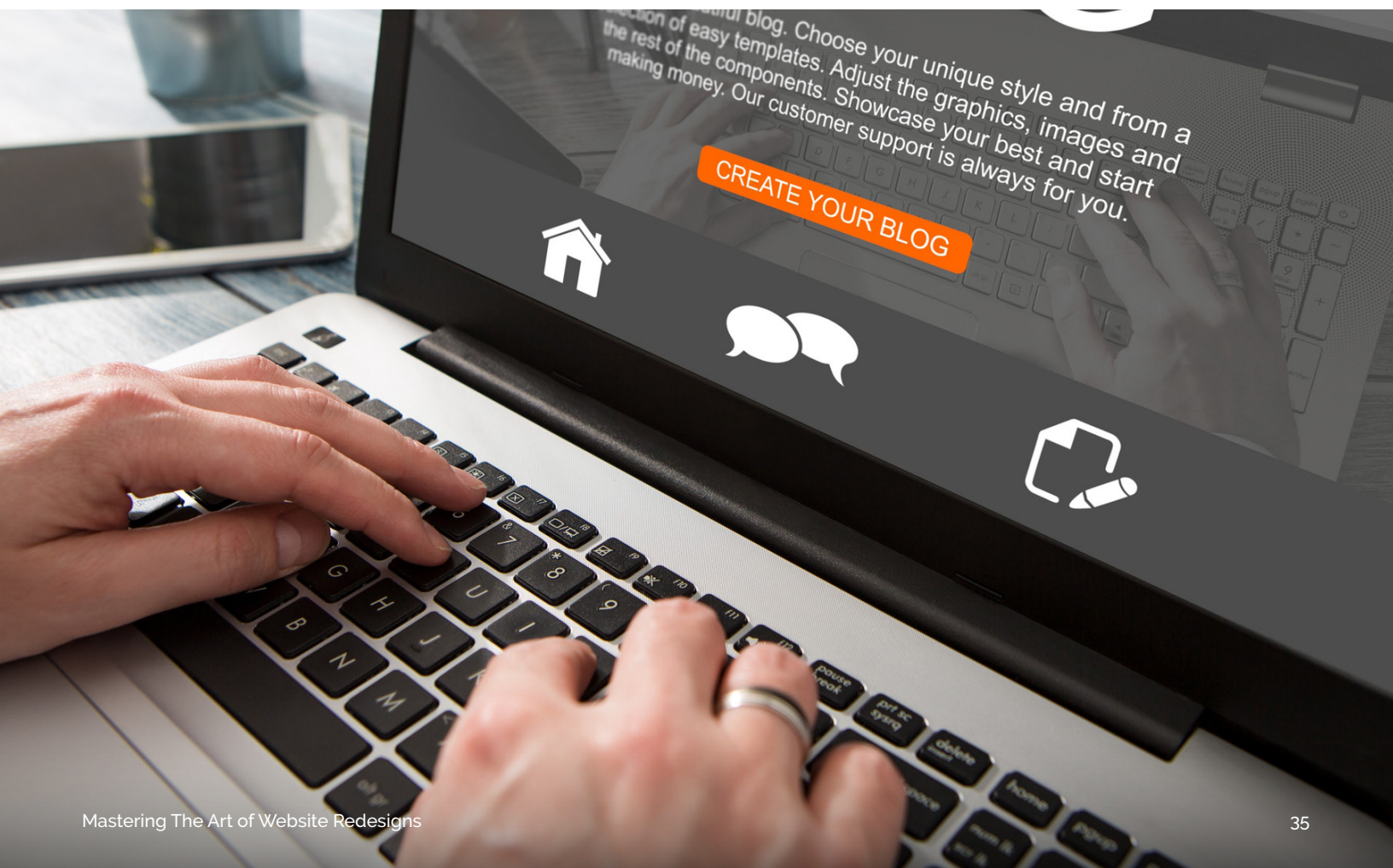
- Add the capability to sort by categories or publishing dates for easy navigation.

- Include a form on the design template to subscribe to your blog to help grow subscriptions.

- Use consistent header fonts and sizes for each blog post you publish.

- Add room for calls to action to your content offers in the blog post's design.

- Keep your blog updated and constantly work to publish fresh content.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Along with SEO and blogging, your website can gain traffic from social media channels. When designing your website, utilize social media by incorporating some of these best practices:

- Add social icons that link to your social media accounts universally throughout the site (usually added to the header or footer).

- Add social sharing icons to landing pages, thank you pages, and blog posts. (Note: Social sharing icons differ from the social icons mentioned above in that they allow the user to take the content on the page and share a snippet with friends and followers.)

- Don't overdo social icons. Choose to include only those that give you the most ROI and that you are able to manage.

- Include your website's URL on your social media profiles to drive traffic.

LEAD GENERATION

A website design will reap true ROI only if it has been effectively designed for generating leads. To ensure that your website helps you capture more leads, incorporate the following tips in your designs:

Develop and optimize content offers

You likely already have several content offers such as e-books, checklists, worksheets, and white papers. With your new website design, follow these tips so that content offers help make that design even more effective:

- Update the design of offers to accommodate design changes in the website if required.

- Create offers that are valuable to your buyer personas and will help provide them the answers to some of their typical questions (e.g., "Is inbound marketing right for my company?").

- Include offers on each website page and make sure the primary offer stands out.

- Utilize landing pages and forms to gate offers and capture lead information.

LANDING PAGES

The design of landing pages should not be neglected in your redesign plans. A landing page is essentially the gateway to your offers and the last touchpoint before visitors convert to leads. Get the most leads out of each offer you create, optimizing the landing pages' design for these best practices:

- Layout should be simple.

- Copy should be clear, concise (bullets help with this), and tell readers what value they will get from downloading.

- Copy should also call the visitor to take action and clarify what should be done next.

- Remove navigation because it distracts visitors from converting.

- Add an image to highlight the offer.

- Limit the number of questions on the form. Too many questions can deter visitors from converting.

- Use custom copy (e.g., "Download e-book") rather than the standard "Submit" for the form button.

- Optimize your landing page for search engines.

CLEAR CALLS TO ACTION THROUGHOUT THE WEBSITE

Calls to action (CTAs) on your website are what drive visitors to your offers and landing pages. Typically, they are designed as buttons, but they can also appear in copy as hyperlinks. Below are some tips for optimizing call-to-action buttons and how to effectively place them on your website:

- Use CTA copy that makes visitors want to act.

- Offer a clear value proposition.

- Link to a specific landing page.

- Target a specific buyer persona with your copy. (more on this later in the e-book).

- Avoid industry jargon.
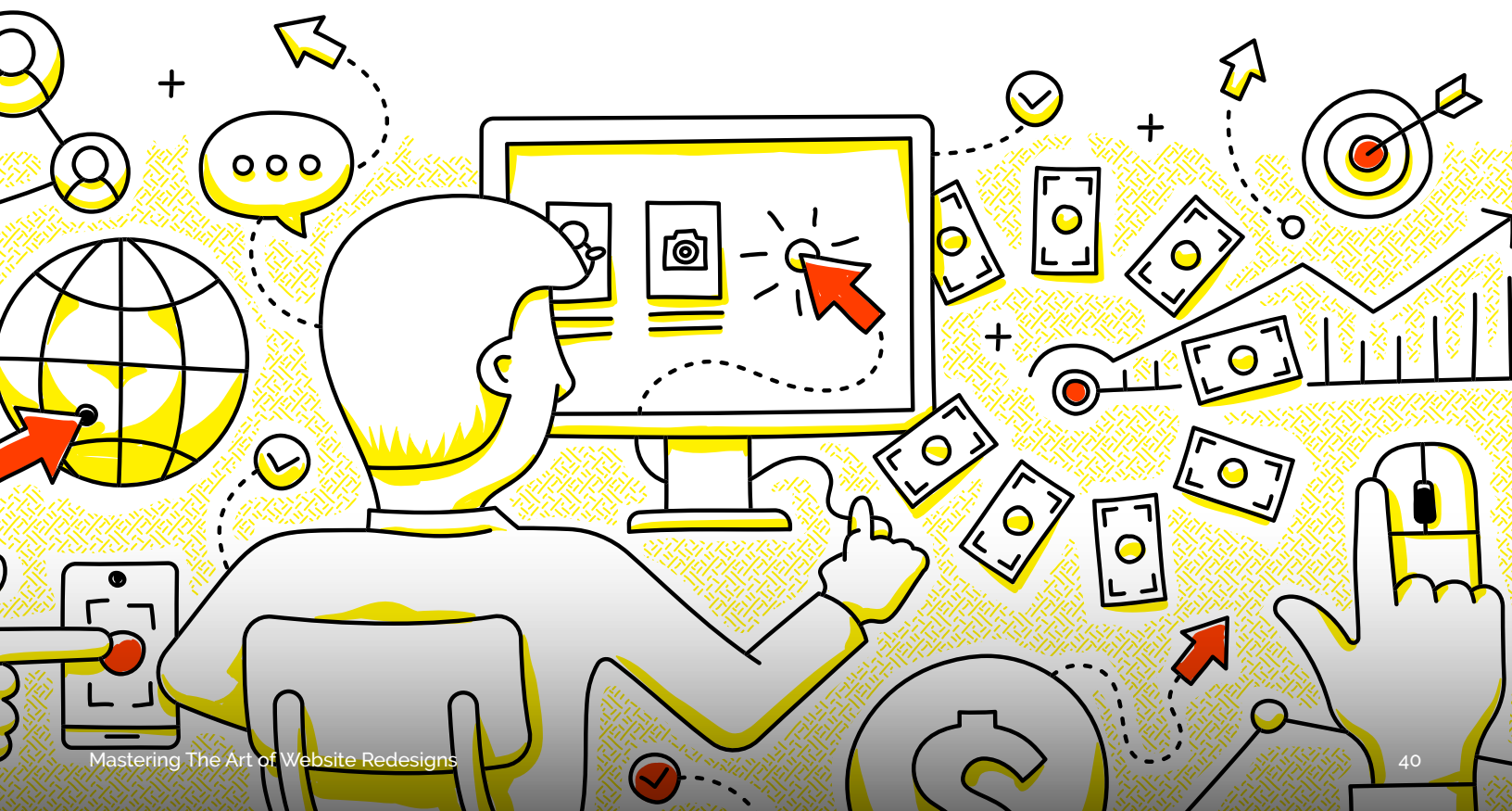
- Place a CTA button in areas with plenty of white space.

- Ensure each CTA button is large enough to stand out.

- Use spatial effect to make buttons look clickable.

- Place at least one CTA above the fold on a page.

- Use a CTA on every blog you publish.

- Test all of the above and make changes when needed.

ADD A RESOURCE CENTER TO THE WEBSITE

Although CTAs help drive visitors to your offers, you should also make searching and finding your content offers easy. Adding a resource center to your website gives you a place to house offers and generate more leads. When designing your resource center, consider the following:

- Add the resource center to your homepage. Check out SmartBug Media's design as an example.

- Add the resource center to the main navigation so that it can easily be found.

- Although "resource center" may be a good label for some industries, use the terminology that best fits your buyer persona (e.g., "learning center" may be a better fit).

- As mentioned earlier, categorize your resource center to make searching and finding relevant offers easy.

- Use images on the main resource page to help make offers more compelling.

- Link to landing pages using the image and/or a button from the resource center.

- Add your resource center to your Facebook page using custom code to drive more traffic from social media.

6. Dynamic website personalization

As emphasized multiple times throughout this e-book, your buyer personas are essential to lead generation. With the capabilities of the HubSpot COS, you can take your website's ability to target buyer personas one step further with dynamic website personalization.

SMART CONTENT

What is smart content? It allows marketers to adapt their website and messaging to accommodate a visitor's unique characteristics. Smart content is typically based on the buyer persona and/or lifecycle stage of the lead, but here are some individual features of HubSpot's smart content:

- **Smart Forms:** A lead should never have to give you information twice. This is the premise behind smart forms, which allow you to hide a question once you've already obtained that information from a lead. Smart forms also allow you to replace the previously answered question with a new one that helps you gain more lead intelligence.
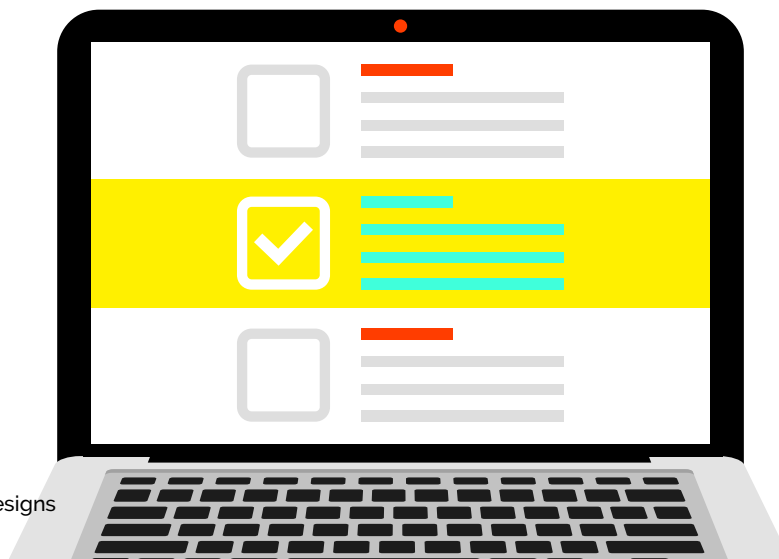
■ **Smart CTAs:** Several visits to your website may be necessary before someone becomes a lead. You may also be limited in design as to how many CTAs you can place in front of a visitor on a website page. Yet, when leads come to your website, they should see a CTA that aligns to their buyer persona and their stage in the funnel. Although there have traditionally been limitations to personalization due to a website's design and the functionality of most CMS technology, smart CTAs on the HubSpot COS help to personalize a CTA using marketing analytics software.

As an example of how this works, let's say a lead has downloaded your introductory e-book on inbound marketing, and he or she has also downloaded several of your case studies. At this point, sharing a CTA for an offer that leads to something that has already been read would be ineffective, but this is what most CMS technology forces you to do. However, with the HubSpot COS, we can present a CTA to your consultation--the more logical next step for this lead.

- **Anonymous Personalization:** Smart CTAs are great, especially when you have data on the visitor reaching your site; however, you may be wondering what happens if you have no previous history on a visitor. How can you personalize in those cases? With HubSpot's anonymous personalization, you can personalize the website experience from the beginning based on geographic location, device, or the source or channel by which the visitor found your website.

Several visits to your website may be necessary before someone becomes a lead.

Phase 04: Design Project Management

Project management is of the utmost importance for any website redesign. Having no system in place during the design phase can be costly at launch time; your launch can be delayed if all elements and assets are not correctly branded, uploaded, and approved.Here's what to do to keep your design team on track:

- Set specific due dates.

- Clarify who is responsible for each task.

- Review and approve wireframes in three or fewer revisions.

- Review and approve design mockups in three or fewer revisions.

- Finalize color scheme and branding if needed.

- Give all visual assets to the development or project manager.

When working with an agency, these guidelines and deadlines will be made clear from the start. Agencies act as project manager, design team, and development team for you. This takes the burden off of you and puts you in control of the vision and approval process.

PRO TIP: If something goes wrong with your project, vision, or design, ask to set up a call with the designer directly. Often, the designer must hear from the original visionary on what the end result should be and how it should feel.

Phase 05: Choosing The Right Platform

As discussed in the planning phase, picking the right platform is extremely important. In this section, we will show the positives and negatives of a few different platforms, along with how to analyze which features are the right fit for your company, team, brand, and overall marketing efforts.

What is a CMS?

A content management system, or CMS, is the platform on which your website lives. You've probably heard of WordPress, Drupal, Joomla, and others. All of these allow you to build your website on their platforms, update website pages, organize media assets, add blog content, and so on. They do not integrate with other marketing efforts (such as lead generation), though they often provide plugins that allow you to set up auto-publishing to social media sites.
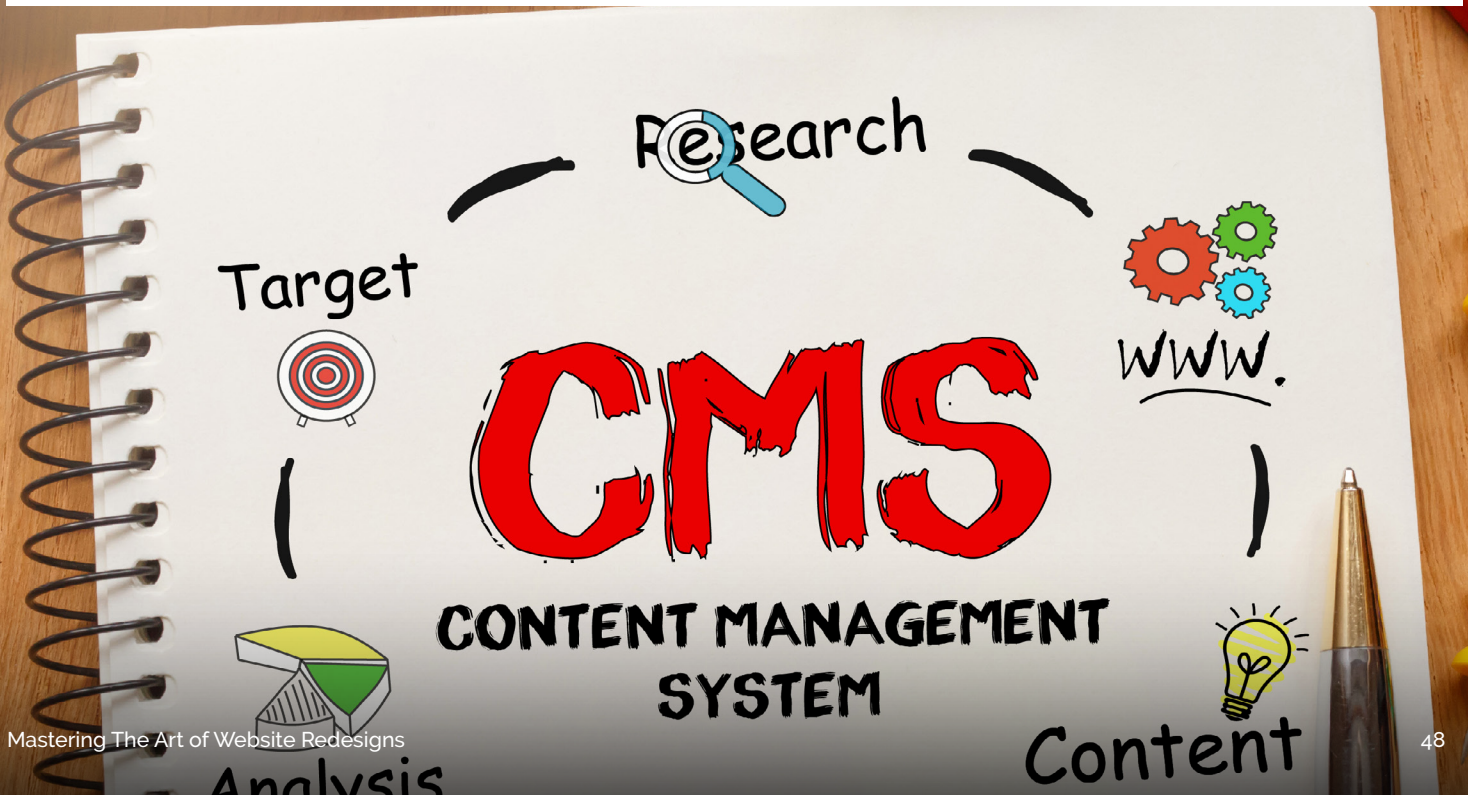
How HubSpot has changed the CMS game

You'll notice we didn't lump HubSpot in with the CMS tools listed above. Why? HubSpot is different and has even stopped calling itself a CMS. When researching systems, search for "HubSpot COS." COS stands for "content optimization system" and takes what a CMS was to the next level. Sure, you can still develop your website in an open format the same way you can on all of the other CMS platforms, but HubSpot allows you to integrate every single piece of your marketing efforts—from social media, to blogging, to lead generation, to customer tracking, all the way to complete campaign tracking—all in one place. Here are some of the main benefits of the HubSpot COS:

- All-in-one marketing platform, not just websites; HubSpot's COS provides you with:

    - **Social media:** Publishing, scheduling, and monitoring tools that sync with your leads database so you know who your hottest leads are.

    - **Blogging:** Tool includes SEO reminders, image customization, CTA tool integration, analytics, and personalization.

    - **Website and landing pages:** Based on templates with built-in optimization and drag-and-drop design capabilities; no designer required after launch.

- **Calls to action:** Build and implement CTAs right in the tool itself.

- **Email marketing:** Schedule, send, and track your promotional emails all in one place.

- **Lead nurturing:** Integrates seamlessly with the email tool and has an in-depth analytical reporting system.

- **SEO:** All pages, including blogs and landing pages, are set up to notify you in real time whether you are optimized for search engines.

- **Contacts database:** Every single tool in HubSpot has been created to integrate with your contacts database. You can customize properties, create lists based on properties, and track a lead from the first touch of your site all the way to customer.
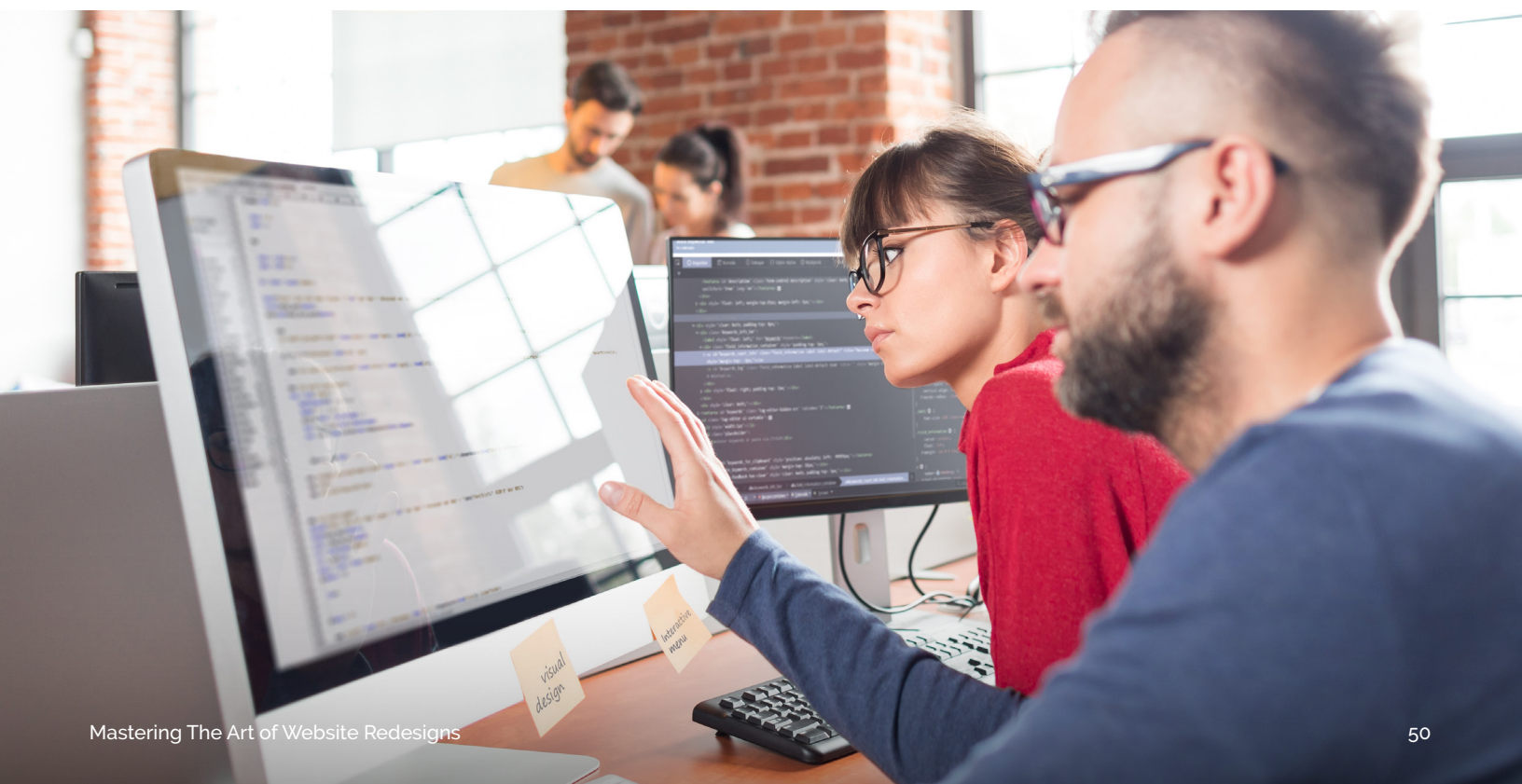
- No technical person needed to make updates:

  - You can easily add or remove site pages.

  - Landing page templates are built with best practices already in place.

  - Add calls to action with the CTA tool to any site page on your own; no experience required.

  - Add or change media files as needed.

  - Design templates are built using a modular system so they can be updated by anyone, anytime, by simply dragging and dropping.

The importance of technical support

When you choose a normal CMS platform, you have to turn to online forums to figure out what you're doing. Most often, you will need to hire an expert of the tool to even make small changes. HubSpot sees this as unacceptable. In addition to the COS being completely customizable from a developer standpoint, it is also easy for marketers, like us, to jump in and make changes without breaking anything. The next question we are often asked is, "What if something does break?" If you're on WordPress, Joomla, Drupal, or other CMS platforms, the answer is, "Good luck!" The use of forums is fine for some, but for busy professionals, there isn't always time to scavenge through hundreds of messages. Because CMS platforms are typically open-sourced, they don't come with technical support. "Open-sourced" means that many, many developers across the world contribute to it. There isn't one office with a director making sure everything is on track. So, if it breaks, sorry ...

Then there's HubSpot, a homegrown application with in-house developers working to ensure the best experience available. So, what happens when something doesn't work in HubSpot? The answer is simple: Call tech support. The tech support members at HubSpot are based in the Boston area, have had previous positions with technical experience, and know what they are doing. They're also friendly! Additionally, tech support is available 24 hours a day. There's no need to try to guess the exact right question to ask to find the answer; HubSpot tech support professionals can give you the help you need, when you need it.

BONUS: Tech support's wait time is under one minute. Amazing!

PRO TIP: HubSpot's tech support is also trained in inbound marketing best practices. Need help deciding if your landing page is up to snuff? Simply call and their experts can help!

In addition to live tech support, you receive:

- Access to forums frequented by HubSpot consultants

- The HubSpot Academy, chock full of webinars, free user guides, and e-books

- A marketing library to brush up on best practices

- Online helpdesk chat

- Web-based support ticket submissions when you don't need help in a hurry or just have a question

- HubSpot partner agencies that are experts in the tool, Web design, the HubSpot COS, and inbound marketing strategies

- Updates that are taken care of for you; no installation like you would need with ordinary CMS platforms

- Continual security updates, bug fixes, and features added without the need of your technical contact

As you can see, the option to speak to a live person is a benefit. Worry less, be more productive, and be a better marketer on the HubSpot COS.

Because CMS platforms are typically open-sourced, they don't come with technical support.

CHAPTER 02

Building An Impactful Website On HubSpot

Let's assume you've decided to build your website on the HubSpot COS. Great! There are some things you will want to communicate with your developer or agency before you begin. The HubSpot COS offers many options that can make your website spectacular.
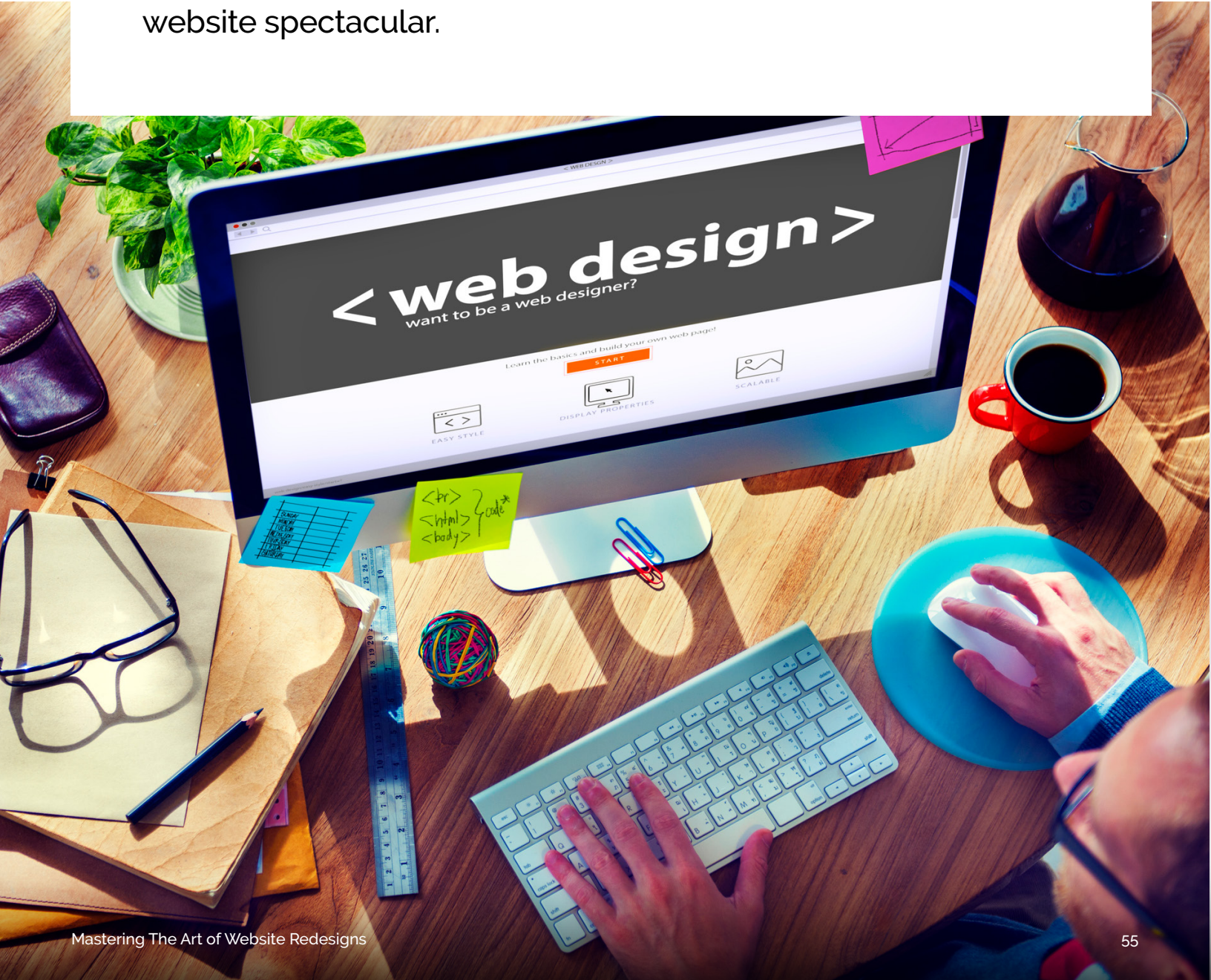
To start, here are a few frequently asked questions about the COS:

1 **My designer/developer doesn't know how to use HubSpot. What do I do?**

- Tell him or her not to worry. The HubSpot COS is as open and easy to build on as any other CMS. There are also user guides to help answer any burning questions your designers may have. However, everything can be built from the ground up if necessary. Developers can also work with your partner agency to answer any questions they may have.

2 **How do I migrate my other blogs over to HubSpot?**

- HubSpot simplifies migration by using a plugin or just by exporting and importing a file with all of the posts.

3 **What constraints exist to using the HubSpot COS?**

- There are cost constraints, but that's it.

4 **How do I make my website responsive on HubSpot?**

- You don't need to. HubSpot COS sites are inherently responsive, thus taking the burden off of you and your developer.

5 Can I use Google Analytics for tracking?

- Sure! Just paste the code in the global header and track in Google Analytics. However, we recommend using HubSpot and Google Analytics to track different things. Do not compare visits to visits or leads to leads, for example.

The best HubSpot features to remember when building your website

HubSpot offers many incredible features that you should include in the development process of your new site in order to make updating and adding new content a cinch. Here are the ones our team at SmartBug Media recommends:

- **Custom modules:** These allow your developer to create advanced tools such as page banners, social sharing widgets, custom navigation, image resizing options, and so much more! Once they are created, you and your team can add them to any page at any time using the drag-and-drop feature. These are especially great for large amounts of repeatable content—no HTML or technical abilities required.

- **Global modules:** Your developer can build global modules, such as a header, footer, and sidebars, that appear on every single site page. Based on your wire frames, work with your developer to decide what global modules are needed.

- **Differentiated site page templates:** Make sure your developer is using the designs crafted by your designer and incorporating them into saved templates that you can use time and time again on your site pages. There are folders the developer can use to separate one page template from another. For example, your pricing page template may look different from your "contact us" page template. Make sure each is saved in HubSpot so that when you need to add site pages, you can easily.

- **Author bios in blogs:** In the blogging tool, you can set up author bios that include images of the authors themselves. This is great for further personalizing your brand and should be included in your requests of the blog template.

- **301 redirects:** When changing a site page URL that is already in HubSpot, this tool will automatically set up the redirect for you. Cool, huh? Issues can arise when you're moving your site over or deleting pages. HubSpot allows you to upload a list of redirects directly into the tool along with the proper links. Make sure your developer uses this method instead of adding redirects one by one.

- **Smart Content:** As mentioned previously, smart content is extremely important to your success at inbound marketing. Make sure you have this when your site launches and that it hasn't been removed from the templates.

- **Site maps:** HubSpot allows you to upload your site map, which it then sends to Google. You can customize this so that pages you don't want to be found won't show up in search engines. Site maps also help Google understand how your site works and integrates together.

- **Revision control:** Before completing and launching the website, make sure your developer shows you how to use the revision control tool in HubSpot. If you mess something up, you won't have to worry; HubSpot saves versions of everything you do, so reverting back isn't a problem.

- **Multiple domains:** Using different sub-domains for your website is recommended. For example, you may use info. companywebsite.com for your landing pages and blog. companywebsite.com for your blog. These can be set up in HubSpot. You can also create your own domain for email campaigns to help with deliverability. Make sure your developer sets these up before the project is completed.

- **Landing page templates:** Your landing page template should differ from your site page template, with best practices in place. Make sure you have a few different options to choose from so you don't have to build new ones later.

- **Thank you page templates:** Like landing pages, thank you page templates differ from site pages, so ensure these are being built for your convenience as well.

- **Blog tool utilization:** Instead of spending extra time building out a customized resource center, request that your developer use the blogging tool. Not only will this be easier for you in the long run, but you will also receive analytics on the most popular pieces! The blogging tool can be used for your marketing blog, any additional industry blogs, your news release center, free resources, and anything else that needs to be updated constantly. The benefit is that the core tool is already built, so it only requires a bit of template customization. It works similar to a custom post type on other CMS tools.
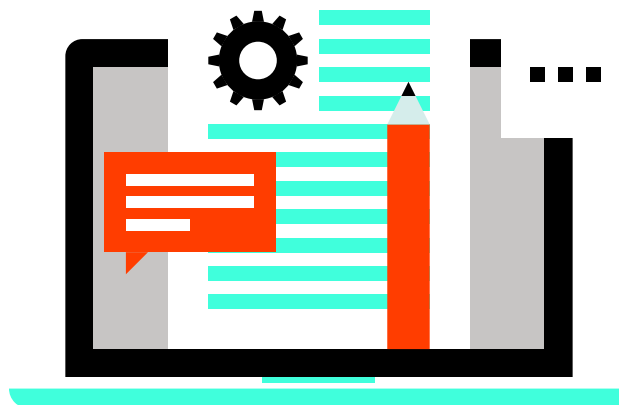
CHAPTER 03

Picking The Right Team For The Project

Picking a team for any project can be daunting, especially for a website redesign. How do you know the designer will take your opinions into consideration? Does the developer really know what he or she is doing in HubSpot? What don't I know, and will my team help me understand so I'm not in the dark later? Do I use an in-house developer, an out-of-country and inexpensive outsourced developer, or an agency that has one already? All of these are logical questions to be asking; in this chapter, we will help you work through them.

When you are deciding how best to staff your team, look back at your initial strategy and goals. As mentioned previously, your strategy will set the stage for the project going smoothly. If you don't have a full staff on hand and it's just you or you and a small team of marketers, we suggest choosing an agency that can help implement what you are envisioning.

Picking a team for any project can be daunting, especially for a website redesign.

The benefits of working with an agency

Agencies have been through the process of redesigning a website over and over again. They are unlikely to be surprised by any complications that arise, and they are there to help you and keep you in the loop. They staff the best designers, developers, marketers, and client services team members to keep everything on track. Some of the core benefits of working with an agency are:

- **They know HubSpot:** SmartBug Media developers and designers are trained rigorously in the HubSpot tool and know how to customize anything you envision.

- **Inbound strategists are on your team:** Whenever a website redesign contract begins, an inbound marketing specialist is pulled in early on to ensure your wiring, framing, and designs are maintaining inbound best practices.

- **The qualities of a designer are obvious:** Marketing agencies work with all kinds of designers all the time. There is not a question as to which designers provide the highest quality of work and which do not. You can be certain that an agency will always provide the best designer on the market.

- **Development talent is hard to find:** Finding a developer on your own can be risky. At SmartBug Media, we pride ourselves on the time necessary to find and hire exceptional developers. You will have a lead developer assigned to your account who will see your project through from start to finish during normal business hours. This means no random 2 a.m. emails because your developer lives across an ocean.

- **Project management is taken care of:** As a marketer, you should spend your time focusing on getting more leads and customers for your company. Being burdened with busy work such as redirects is bothersome and takes away from your main goals. Marketing agencies such as our own have project managers in place who make sure deadlines are met and the quality of work is high. You communicate with the project manager on a weekly basis and are kept in the loop on everything. No more managing schedules and project management systems; It's all done for you.

The 13 qualities of a great agency

1 Asks questions about goals at the beginning and sets clear expectations about the project and costs

2 Does not implement anything without approval

3 Listens to your needs and considers your wants

4 Guides you if you are moving off track or away from your goals

5 Does not nickel-and-dime you for every minor update

6 Is friendly and positive to work with

7 Has a project management system in place to make communication seamless

8 Provides deliverables on time in completed form

9 Learns about who you are, how you like to work, and your expectations before signing the contract

10 Adjusts to your working style to make the process as stress-free as possible

11 Educates you about what it is working on and why

12 Takes feedback and implements quickly

13 Provides post-launch support, training, and inbound and optimization packages

As previously discussed, picking the right team for your website redesign can impact how smooth the process goes and how successful a site launch is. Make sure you choose the right one.

When you are deciding how best to staff your team, look back at your initial strategy and goals. As mentioned previously, your strategy will set the stage for the project going smoothly.
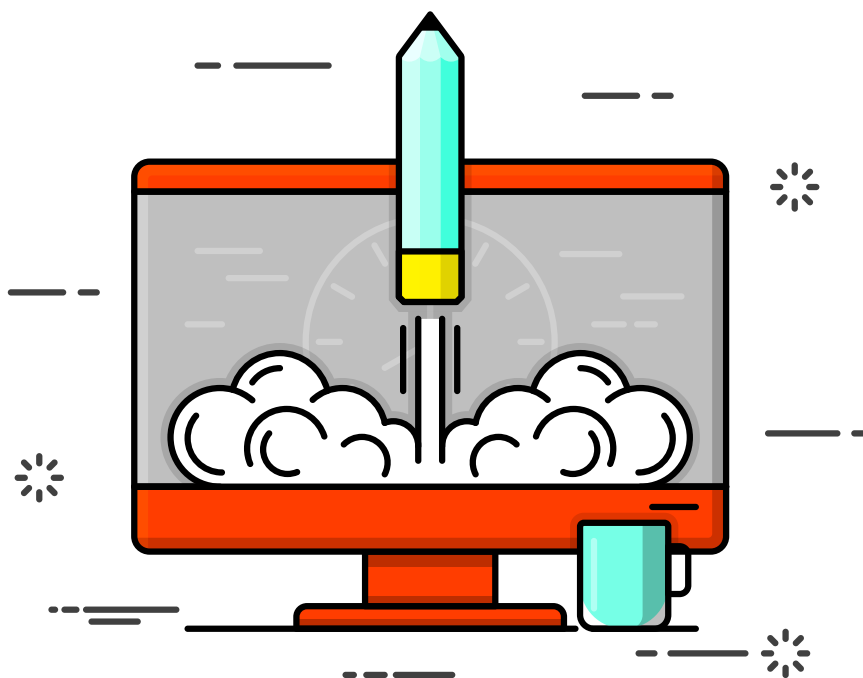
CHAPTER 04

Launching Your Website

You made it! You're finally through the strategy, planning, and team-building processes of your project. Now is the time to enjoy a successful launch!

Here's what you should do to prepare:

1 **Test before going live:**

Going live means that your new site is available for anyone to see. Test all of the pages, buttons, forms, and so on. If anything is wrong, fix it.

2 **Be prepared for mistakes:**

Have your team available the day of launch in case anything happens. Do not schedule a full day of meetings. Take time to have a happy and healthy launch day. Then, celebrate!

3 **Announce the launch:**

Use email marketing, social media, news releases, blogs, and any other forms of advertising to let the world know that your beautiful new site is live! Note: Your agency should be able to help you accomplish this as well for an additional fee.

4 **Begin your inbound marketing strategy:**

You are ready. Your site is live, and you can't wait for leads to start coming in. Your personas are going to love what you have to offer them. Remember, your website, while stunning, will be in vain if you don't have an inbound marketing strategy that is rich in content such as blogs, e-books, and keyword optimization.

Have your team available the day of launch in case anything happens.

Post-launch deliverables

Once you've launched your site and have your content marketing strategy and tactics in place, start analyzing how things are performing. Here are your questions to answer and tasks to complete post launch:

One week after launch:

■ How many pages are indexed?

■ Are all of your important pages indexed?

■ Is the robots.txt file(s) set up properly?

■ Make sure the site map has been resubmitted.

■ Add a public HTML site map.

■ Make sure analytics tools are working properly.

Going live means that your new site is available for anyone to see. Test all of the pages, buttons, forms, and so on. If anything is wrong, fix it.

Benchmarks for 1, 3, and 6 months after launch:

- Number of visitors monthly (average)

- Average bounce rate

- Average time on site

- Top-performing keywords

- Number of inbound linking domains (keep track)

- New leads

- New customers

- Number of indexed pages

- Pages with the best traffic

- Number of indexed pages receiving traffic

Most marketing agencies will provide you with a minimum of a two-week post-launch support program to make sure all of the back-end development is set up correctly and with no issues. If you opt for an inbound marketing package in addition to your website redesign project, the agency can take care of all of the reporting for you as well.

CHAPTER 05

How Smartbug Media Can Help You Create A Stunning Website

At SmartBug Media, we pride ourselves on having the smartest team with inbound, technical, and design chops so that you're never left stranded trying to figure things out on your own.

Every single team member is Inbound and HubSpot certified and is required to provide monthly feedback to clients with actionable takeaways. Our project management system is second to none.

Aside from a great team, a project management and communication system that works, and top development talent, here are other ways SmartBug Media can help you achieve the website of your dreams:

1 We are excited about the design capabilities in HubSpot's COS and use them in-house. Like, really, really excited!

2 We know how to implement HubSpot COS features for you.

3 We combine marketing with design so your ultimate goal of getting more traffic, leads, and customers doesn't get lost in translation.

4 We have long-term success in mind, so you see the benefits of your redesign months and even years later.

5 Our staff consists of world-class designers and developers based in North America.

6 We answer the phone.

7 We achieve all 13 characteristics of a great agency listed in this e-book.

Every single team member at Smartbug is Inbound and HubSpot certified and is required to provide monthly feedback to clients with actionable takeaways.

About SmartBug

SmartBug Media is one of a handful of HubSpot Diamond partners in the world and is the highest-rated agency in the history of the HubSpot ecosystem. We also boast the highest ROI documented from any HubSpot partner—3,558% and 14,500% ROI on a six-month and three-year campaign, respectively. At Inbound 2015, SmartBug Media was the most recognized agency, having won or been named a finalist in nine awards.

SmartBug Media is one of the first HubSpot partners to implement growth-driven design and was an inaugural member of the HubSpot COS Advisory Board. For more than seven years, SmartBug Media has been helping businesses increase sales leads, close more customers, and enhance the reach of their brands. From building comprehensive online marketing programs to designing new websites to driving leads through social media or sales enablement, we're an extension of your marketing team that delivers.

For a free inbound marketing or Web design consultation, or to learn more, visit www.smartbugmedia.com or call 949-236-6448.

Have a question? Curious how we can
help grow your business?

Let's Talk

SmartBug.