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You may not be a web developer, but that doesn't mean you can't build a professional website that serves as a marketing tool for your business with some simple web design principles. With a bit of patience, you can learn how to design a website by following our guidance in as little as seven steps. Web design beginners: If you're in the beginning stages of building a website, check out our comprehensive guide that gives you everything you need to know about building a small business website, including how to design, build, and launch your website. How to Design a Website in 7 Easy Steps Web design may sound complicated (and it can be), but we'll show you how to easily and strategically design a website that works as a marketing tool. To start, determine the goal of your site, or in other words, what you're looking to accomplish with your site. Then, do your research on comparable sites and on your audience. Next, collect your branding assets (i.e., your logo and color scheme) and build a wireframe before choosing and customizing a theme. 1. Determine Your Site Goal In short, start by asking why you need a site. The first thought for many might be as simple as "Well, I know every business needs to have a site these days" or to increase exposure, but if you dig deeper, you'll most likely find reasons that better suit your business and its needs. Examples of common site goals: To build awareness To generate leads To drive online sales (e.g., appointment booking, online orders, and so on) To drive offline sales To build customer loyalty With a goal in mind, you can then consider how your site will provide value to visitors and with that, have a conversion point for visitors. For example, a site with the goal of driving offline sales might include a Google Maps integration to automatically provide directions from wherever a user is. 2. Explore Comparable Sites Research other websites, such as competitors within your industry, to get a better understanding of what others are doing (and what your site visitors will be seeing). Take notes on what you like about other sites in regard to general layout, functionality, offers, and calls to action (CTAs). Also, look at what type of conversion points or call-to-action buttons comparable sites are using, and which best serve site visitors. For example, say you're building a site for a local landscaping company and you see that another site includes a virtual landscape design tool. Before jumping to use this same tool, determine if it's worth investing in by researching how many visitors this page gets with a free keyword research tool, such as Ubersuggest. There, you can copy and paste any URL and see visitor stats. This type of research can help you discover what resonates with visitors. 3. Research Your Audience In order to design a website that effectively speaks to your audience, you have to first understand your audience. For example, work to understand what language they prefer (more casual or more professional, descriptive vs plain, and so on). Consider where the majority of your audience is in the buyer decision-making stages, and what they need to take the next step toward achieving your site's goal. Example: A surf school is designing a website and through research, learns that what holds its audience back from booking lessons is fear of the unknown. To overcome this, it plans to include and highlight its rain check policy, a lesson itinerary to tell visitors what to expect, and a list of items to bring on lesson day. It also helps assure potential students by offering a stand-up guarantee, which will be promoted across its site. 4. Create or Collect Brand Identity Assets If you don't already have your business' branding elements created, then you'll need to get those. This includes your logo, fonts, color scheme, and with that, an idea of the style theme or template you'll want to use for your site. When creating brand identity assets, consider brand ethos and how your collection of brand identity assets collectively communicates and reinforces what your brand represents. Brand identity assets to create or collect include: Logo Fonts Color scheme Theme and layout (how modern, traditional, and so on) 5. Build a Wireframe to Map Your User's Journey Web design wireframe mock-up Next, map your user's journey through your site by building a wireframe, or a mock-up of a site's structure. This includes choosing which web page you need to include on your site and with that, consider how visitors will logically navigate through your site from page to page (ending with achieving your site goal). As you build a wireframe, keep in mind user experience (UX) web design best practices, such as keeping the site clean and easy to use with navigation that makes sense and pages that lead with the most important information. Consider what type of information each web page should include based on the unique needs of the visitors who will be interested in reading that page. For a modern, streamlined site, consider using a one-page website. Tip: Use a free wireframe tool, such as MockFlow, to easily build out your site's user interface (UI). Elements of a Website Basic elements of a website Every website consists of certain elements. These include the homepage, supporting web pages, site navigation, a call to action, and a conversion point. Collectively, these elements make up a website and enable it to serve as a marketing tool that can effectively build brand awareness, generate leads, drive online sales, and drive offline sales. Homepage Web pages Navigation Call to action Conversion point Tip: New to web design and want more information about the standard site elements? Get all the information you need about website basics. 6. Choose a Theme or Template That Best Matches Your Brand Identity Next, take your time finding and choosing a website theme or template (depending on which site builder you plan to use) that matches your brand identity. In other words, choose a template that already looks and functions how you want your site to look and function. By doing so, you'll reduce the amount of time it will take to build your site and it will help ensure that your site effectively works as a marketing tool for your business. Example: A campground is designing a site to not only promote their services but to drive online bookings. Rather than finding a generic business theme, it finds an accommodation theme that has built-in booking tools for the travel and hospitality industry. This makes it easy to customize as it already includes everything the business needs for its site. 7. Customize Your Theme or Template By now, you have everything you need to start building your site. Customize your theme or template using a site builder. Build out your web pages, customize your header with your logo, update for your footer, and configure navigation with your user journey in mind and while referring to your wireframe (mock-up). In order for a site to be live, you'll need to get a domain name (if you don't already have one) and web hosting if you're using WordPress. These two things will enable your business website to be live on the web. Tip: Make a plan to optimize your site design and use insight and conversion rate optimization tools such as Crazy Egg and Yoast SEO. By building your site with these tools, you can later improve and optimize your site for better search rankings, user experience, and conversions. Get the step-by-step instructions on how to build a website using the following platforms: WordPress Squarespace Wix Weebly GoDaddy Frequently Asked Questions Which site builders have the best web design? The all-in-one site builder that's best known for professional web design and high-quality templates is Squarespace. It's a top-rated site builder that is highly regarded for well-designed templates that make it easy for anyone to design their own site in little time and at an affordable price. How do I get a domain name? There are a couple of ways to get a domain name. First, buy one from a domain name registrar such as GoDaddy or Namecheap. You can also get one for free with most web hosting plans, such as through Bluehost or DreamHost, or with an all-in-one site builder plan such as with Squarespace or Wix. The difficulty is finding a domain name that's available. To help, learn more about choosing a domain name. How do I design an ecommerce website? It's easier than ever to design and build an online store. Whether you choose to build your site using WordPress or opt for an easy-to-use site builder such as Squarespace or Shopify, you'll need to get a domain name, sign up for a plan (a web hosting plan for WordPress sites), choose an ecommerce theme or template, customize your site, add products, configure store settings, and launch your site. Bottom Line: How to Design a Website Good web design is actually pretty simple. It puts the reader at the core of everything to ensure a good user experience with straightforward navigation, concise language, and provide ways for a reader (and a business) to get what they want. Hopefully, this guide has taken some of the fear out of starting your web design project and has given you the tools you need to launch your new business website. If you're still hesitant to take on the job of designing your website, you may want to consider investing in professional web design. Companies like Lyfe Marketing make getting a professionally designed site more affordable than most imagine and can help you get your site up and running in no time. Visit Lyfe Marketing You Might Also Like... Copywriter | Helping businesses sell without selling their soulThis a chicken and egg dilemma that goes way back!If you're a website designer, a copywriter or a new startup founder, then you would've probably come across this conundrum.We all know how important it is to have a stunning website design to please the users. And we do know how much the interactive, appealing content can pull in the attention. But what goes behind the process of creating a website that's great in both design and copy? Should the design come first? Or the copy? Are you confused or annoyed with all the back-and-forths?Well, such instances are more common than you think.In many website development projects, the web copy is at the bottom of the silo, often after website development and design. And it may often seem like the natural thing to do.The designers take care of how the website looks and the writer then comes up with the copy that fits in the design. Sounds simple, isn't it?But it isn't.What Happens When Web Design Comes First?While the web designer specializes in creating user-friendly designs, the copywriter is an expert in creating content that is attractive to the audience.So, when the web designer has already finalized the web design, the copywriter has no way but to make the design work. What could be the drawbacks if that happens?The content length may be too long than required and the copywriter may be forced to fill it with fluff.The content length may be so short that the copywriter wouldn't have the space to describe the product in detail. In a detailed design with specific word length for each section, the copywriter would be restricted to explore more.When the copywriter exceeds the word count of individual blocks, it can disrupt the alignment of the complete design.What Happens When the Web Copy Comes First?As you look at the drawbacks of the design-first, copy-later project approach, are you thinking of switching these two steps?No, you shouldn't! 'Why so', you ask?1. When you write the web copy first, there can be discrepancies in the synchronizations of the design elements.For example, in a section, there can be 4 sub-blocks. All of these should have the same length to make the design look pleasing. But with a copy-first approach, it can be big trouble.2. The web designer is responsible for user-friendliness. But when the copy restricts the designer's creativity, it can impact the final design.So, what's the solution here?Collaboration of Web Designer + Copywriter = The Winning ComboWhen one thing comes before the other, there's often a disjointed communication that translates to dissatisfying user experience. The designer wouldn't know how the content is going to come out and the writer wouldn't know how the content will be placed. And it ends up affecting the website's outcome. In my personal experience, I've seen many great products take a hit because of the lack of communication between the web designer and the copywriter. The crux of the problem has always been the restriction of creative space for both.Good design and copy go hand in hand for building impressive websites and so should the process be. Here are a few more reasons why the web designer and the copywriter should work together.You Can Save So Much Wasted Time!I've often seen instances where a designer has a different opinion after seeing the copy or the copywriter wants a change in the design after the designer has completed the work.Since both of them are emotionally invested in their works, such situations call for unnecessary tension, finger-pointing and conflicts, none of which bodes well for creating a fantastic website. During such times, there's so much redoing involved that both of them can get frustrated. On top of that, it can delay the launch of the product with more edits going around. And it's a complete waste of time!But when a copywriter and web designer work together, they can discuss and get things out in the open before both put in an enormous amount of effort and finalize their work. They can settle their differences quickly and move on amicably. The Brainstorming Sessions Mean More Creative IdeasThe web designers and copywriters thrive on creativity and are actually paid for their creative minds. When they put their creative minds together, they can come up with new ideas and different perspectives that would enrich the website even more.As they begin to understand how the other person works, they can also customize their working process accordingly to deliver the best output. The Website Will Have Better ReadabilityConsistent, aesthetic designs across the entire website is a challenge to build but is a necessary art to master.Chris Bank of UXPin says, "Website is a form of visual art in its own right, and follows many of the same rules as more traditional artforms. It is the science of aesthetics, mixed with the principles of business, and an extraordinary website interface must feel effortless yet enticing."Most often, the web designers come up with a consistent design, but it can get disturbed by the web copy.But when the designers and writers work together, they would focus on making the website look coherent across graphic designs, fonts, content positioning, etc.Let's say that a writer wants to highlight three main questions that the target audience has. The designer can create separate sections and graphics related to the content and highlight them on the website.When we blur the lines between the process of web design and copywriting, we can build truly great products that are aesthetically pleasing and resonate with your audience. No Compromises at the Expense of AudienceWhen there's so much back and forth with a design-first or copy-first content, either one of them ends up compromising at the expense of the audience or the client — even when they feel that it would disrupt the user experience. Instead of clashing and compromising, it becomes much better when they're on the same side of the coin. As the writer and the designer spend time with each other, they may even grow to respect and value the other's opinion, which will do wonders for the final product!How Can a Business Owner Make This Partnership Work?If you have an in-house team with a designer and copywriter, make them a part of the website development process. If you're hiring remote freelancers, you can hire a team with a developer, designer and a copywriter. If you're planning to individually outsource, make sure that the freelancers are open to work together on design+copy.Even if you're hiring freelancers, conduct short, brainstorming sessions in which both can discuss their ideas and suggestions openly.Encourage the writer first to provide a rough outline of the points they plan to cover and collaborate with the designer on creating a website interface that fits in with the plan. And then, they can begin collaborating as they progress further.Create short iterations with mini-goals for each of them to finalize and move to the next iteration. This way, you can avoid reworks and shorten the project lifecycle. For small projects, you can hire someone who handles both the design and the copy.Final ThoughtsCreating a good website requires a smooth project development with a special emphasis on the end-users. The copywriters and the designers are masters of their crafts. And when there's proper interaction between them, they can amplify each other's abilities and do much better for the bottom line.Join Hacker Noon Create your free account to unlock your custom reading experience.