



BOURKEDESIGN PRESENTS

# WEBSITE REDESIGN PLANNING GUIDE

10 Tips for a Successful Project Kickoff



By Leslie Bourke

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*Website Redesign Planning Guide: 10 Tips for a Successful Project Kickoff*

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## *Introduction*

# Who Will Gain the Most From This Guide

This handbook is geared toward a small business owner, entrepreneur, or individual with an existing website.

Your site may have been built several years ago and now suffers from an ineffective design, confusing structure, or outdated code. The following chapters guide you through the redesign planning process. By reviewing your current site and completing the outlined steps, you'll be on your way to a vastly-improved, engaging, and long-lasting website that satisfies your business needs.

Let's get started!

## Feedback & Analytics

# Completing a Site Review

All websites have a lifespan. After launch, they ideally promote your brand, help customers find you, and generate new business. A few years later, your site may no longer align with your company goals. What should you do next?

Instead of rushing into wireframing and redesign stages, conduct a thorough site review and choose which aspects of your current site to apply to your new site and which to eliminate.

Tip  
#1

## Gather Feedback From Customers and Colleagues

Your current customers help your business thrive, so their opinions are invaluable. Ask them how often they visit the site and if they find the layout intuitive. Can they easily find the information they need?

Collect your clients' feedback through informal conversations or more direct methods. Email a short survey to your clients (you can use an online form builder such as [Wufoo](#) or [Poll Daddy](#)), or send a hard copy with a stamped envelope.

Some of the same tactics can be used for gathering internal feedback. Ask your co-workers or employees about their experiences with the site. Maybe they love the way it's organized but dislike how difficult it is to update? Does the design accurately represent the company? Upon launch, your team should be proud of your site and anxious to share it with potential customers.

Evaluate all the suggestions you've gathered during this phase.

Tip  
#2

## Review Your Analytics Data

If **Google Analytics** is installed on your site, comb through its data. (Consider installing it if you haven't already, and wait a few weeks while it collects information.) The software reveals helpful statistics such as the number of people visiting your site, their geographic location, and which sites referred them.

While evaluating your Analytics report, note which pages on your site are most and least popular, your top landing pages, and your top exit pages.

### EXAMPLE WEBSITE SURVEY

- 1) How did you first learn about our website?
- 2) How many times have you visited the site in the past year?
- 3) Does it meet your expectations?
- 3) Was it easy to find the information you needed?
- 4) What do you like/dislike about the design?
- 5) How could the website be improved?

Can you incorporate aspects of your top landing pages into your new site? At a minimum, note their URLs and later forward visitors to corresponding pages on the redesigned site.

Conversely, examine the site's top exit pages and those with the highest bounce rate. What is specifically sending visitors away? The design, functionality, and content of your exit pages are areas you should consider.

## Up Next

Now that you've identified the strengths and shortcomings of your current site, you're ready to define your project scope.

### COMMON GOOGLE ANALYTICS TERMS

#### **Landing Pages**

Instead of first visiting the home page, some users enter the site via a subpage or landing page.

#### **Exit Pages**

The pages where visitors most often leave the site are your top exit pages.

#### **Bounce Rate**

When visitors land and exit from the same page (without visiting other site pages), this contributes to the bounce rate.

*An Overhaul or Touch Up?*

*Tip  
#3*

## Define Your Project Scope

The timing and reasons for a website redesign are different for every business. Before embarking upon the planning process, you may be wondering if your site requires a complete redesign or just a few revisions. Periodical site reviews, as described in the previous chapter, can help you define the scope of your project. During your audit, you articulated the website's strengths and weaknesses. If you can add any of the following characteristics to your list, you are due for a site redesign.

### Old Development Techniques

The majority of websites launched in the last few years were developed with HTML, CSS, and a content management system (CMS). A CMS is an essential modern feature, allowing site owners with little or no knowledge of code to update content and regularly communicate with customers. If unsure how your site was built, check with your previous site designer/developer.



Most contemporary websites target a 1024x768 pixel screen resolution or, better yet, are responsive. Responsive sites contract and expand depending on the browser's width. They generate optimal layouts for desktop and mobile devices. If your site was formatted for a 800x600 screen resolution (or less) and set at a fixed width, it may appear dated to your audience.

## Doesn't Reflect Your Business

Has your business evolved, yet your site has remained stagnant? If you haven't updated your site in over a year, it likely does not accurately portray your company. Maybe you are able to update the text via a CMS, but the overall design suggests an old version of your business? Design appeal and the timeliness of your content color your visitors' perceptions of your company. By optimizing both factors, your site will reflect your professionalism and dedication to your business.

## Suffers from Low Traffic

If you've installed Google Analytics on your site ([as described previously](#)), you can check vital stats such as traffic, bounce rate, and the number of return visitors. Low traffic alerts you to problems such as poor content, stale design, and improper SEO. Does your site content give visitors a reason to share it? Are the pages search-engine friendly? Further reflection and a conversation with your team and customers should reveal the specific factors contributing to low traffic.

## Up Next

If you discover one or more of these indicators, you will need to plan and complete a redesign. The following chapters guide you through the initial project phases.

*From Structure to Maintenance*

# Developing Your Redesign Strategy

After evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of your current site, you can map your new site. Recording your redesign goals will help you during this and later phases. You may aim to increase business, strengthen brand perception, and better connect with current customers. Write your reasons down so you can refer to them as you progress through your project.

How will you address these goals? Your strategy can surround the site's structure, visual perception, interactive features & functionality, platform, search engine optimization, and maintenance. Analyzing these six areas will jump-start your redesign project.

*Tip*  
*#4*

## Compile Your Site Structure

Start by outlining your site structure. This should be a list of pages indicating hierarchy and a description of content for each page. You can re-purpose your current site architecture if your visitors find it intuitive. Or start anew. Refer to competitors' sites and examine their organizational ideas.

Keep in mind that online audiences expect certain pages in universal navigation (the menu included on all pages) including: Home, About, and Contact. You may wish to include these pages in your navigation and avoid causing confusion.

When deciding where to place content within your site structure, consider your existing resources and those you can create. Do you have a company logo, print materials, and branding specifications? What about photos and videos? Where can this content be used most advantageously? High-quality assets that complement your business will prove invaluable during the design phase.

Engaging copy likewise is essential. Short, informative paragraphs written for the web should grace your pages. Decide now how this copy will be created. Are you going to write it yourself, or do you need to hire a copywriter? The lack of ready website copy is one of the most common missing site assets and will delay your project.

Whatever structure you finalize, consciously decide what will make sense to your visitors and highlight your company's strengths.

### *Tip* #5 Describe Your Site's Appearance

How should the site be perceived? Choose several descriptive adjectives that align with your brand. Should the design be modern, innovative, spare & minimalistic, sophisticated, rich & bold, or casual? Your choice will guide the design decisions and affect the overall website appeal.

### *Tip* #6 Consider Interactive Features & Functionality

Selecting the right interactive feature set will captivate your audience. A slideshow on the home page, for example, could showcase your best photos, promote your current campaigns, and present a refreshed front.

Other functionality can make your pages more compelling while increasing usability. Depending on your site content and goals, you may consider enhancements such as accordion lists, social media integration, media galleries, custom Google Maps, and an e-newsletter sign-up.

## Tip #7 Research Possible Platforms

Your site's CMS will affect multiple factors during site creation and after launch. The platform will determine which developers you can work with, the features you can incorporate, the speed of development, and how easily you can update the site. Popular platforms include: Joomla!, Drupal, ExpressionEngine, DotNetNuke, TinyCMS, MODX, and WordPress. An expert can help you decide which will best satisfy your project requirements.

## Tip #8 Work on Search Engine Optimization

Is it important that Google and other search engines index your company? If so, plan on readying your site for search engines. Decide on your keywords and weave them into the site copy.

### COMMON SEO TERMS

#### **Title Tag**

The title tag provides a title for the browser toolbar and is usually the first line displayed in search engine results.

#### **Robots.txt**

This is a plain text file placed on your server. Read by many search engines, robots.txt provides instructions on which directories to index and which to ignore.

#### **Interlinks**

Interlinks are body copy links that allow users to visit other relevant pages on the site.

Ask your web developer to put these keywords into your site's title tag. The developer can also add a sitemap, robots.txt file, and interlinks to improve SEO.

After your site launches, continue to work toward search-engine success. On an ongoing basis, seek inbound links from an array of sites. Possible targets are: search engines, internet phone books, directories, social bookmarking & social media sites, forums, and blogs.

Tip  
#9

## Plan for Ongoing Maintenance

Resolve to update your website on a regular basis. New, interesting content gives customers a reason to visit your site and interact with your company. How often can you commit to writing posts and adding new media? Be realistic in your commitments and build them into your schedule.

## Up Next

Reflecting on the above areas will help you form a sound project strategy. A knowledgeable and talented web designer will help you execute your plans and realize your site goals.

### STARTER SEO LIST: WHERE TO SUBMIT YOUR SITE

Google Places for Business	SuperPages.com
Google Webmaster Tools	InsiderPages.com
Local.Yahoo.com	YellowBot.com
BingPlaces.com	CitySearch.com
Bing Webmaster Tools	Kudzu.com
FourSquare	Angieslist.com
MerchantCircle.com	eLocal.com
Yelp.com	Open Directory
YellowPages.com	

*Finding a Web Designer*

Tip  
#10

## Partner with an Expert

You evaluated your old website, set goals for a new site, and developed a redesign strategy. Maybe you've started writing your website copy and gathering photos. Now it's time to partner with an expert web designer.

Why hire Bourke Design?

### 9 Years Industry Experience

I bring almost a decade of web design experience to your project. I've worked with a variety of businesses, from design and creative agencies, to small local businesses, to international companies.

### Tailor-Made Designs

Investing in a custom website is a smart business decision. I will craft unique designs for your business and ensure they meet your goals and serve your target audience.

### Expertise in WordPress-Powered Sites

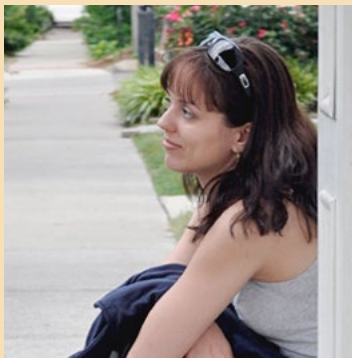
I built my first WordPress site five years ago, and I've been a devoted user and developer ever since. Because of the software's intuitive interface and the backend customizations I will install for you, your site will be easy to update.

## Dedicated to Your Success

After partnering with Bourke Design, we'll first discuss your business, goals, target audience, and project details. I will use this information to create your project plan. This plan will outline the site structure, visual perception, platform, and features. As this guide reflects, I believe spending careful time upfront will help position your site for long-term success.

## Ready to Get Started?

Order a Bourke Design site today and give your business a sleek and updated online presence. To get started, submit my [New Project Questionnaire](#) or [contact me](#). I look forward to speaking with you!



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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

As an independent web designer in Portland, Oregon, I help small businesses, entrepreneurs, and individuals by fulfilling their online marketing needs. My focus at Bourke Design is creating clean, intuitive websites powered by WordPress.

Need a site built from scratch, or does your current site need a redesign? I specialize in creating user-friendly, modern sites for your business and target audience. I build sites on the WordPress platform, so you can easily update the content after launch.

## Website Redesign Summary

# Your 10 Tips for a Successful Project Kickoff

1. Gather feedback on your current site.
2. Review your analytics data.
3. Define your project scope.
4. Compile your new site structure.
5. Describe your new site's appearance.
6. Consider interactive features and functionality.
7. Research possible platforms.
8. Work on search engine optimization.
9. Plan for ongoing maintenance.
10. Partner with an expert.

## That's a Wrap

After selecting the best designer for your project, you'll begin the exciting process of building a new site to represent your business. The planning process is detailed, but an effective, long-lasting website that satisfies your goals will reward all your efforts. Because of your investment, your new site will serve as an ongoing vital asset to your company.