



## Planning a new website

This document suggests considerations to make when planning the development of or enhancement to a website

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## Introduction

Web projects require careful planning. Often organisations find they know they need a new website, but aren't quite sure how users will interact with it, what their needs will be, how they will handle the project internally, and how their staff will manage the site on an ongoing basis.

It is in the planning stages that these issues should be considered. Addressing them at an early stage means that the ultimate system that is produced is a good fit, for both external and internal site users, and matches the overall organizational aims in developing a system in the first place.

Chameleon Net has produced this document as a pre-project guide to the considerations to think about prior to design and development. It is primarily concerned with understanding the site audience, and internal organizational requirements. We will be happy to go through any of these elements with you during our initial meetings, and assist you in collating the information required.

## Your audience and their needs

### The key points of considerations are:

- Who are your target audience?
- What other ways do your audience interact with your organisation? How will the site affect this?
- What content will users expect to find on the site? Does this match the content you have and/or wish to provide?
- Do your users require any unique or customised functionality?
- What future needs might need to be considered, including scalability and further online services?

### User research and scenario development

From your business research you will have some understanding of the possible needs of your customers and clients.

Research could come from many sources including interviews (on the phone or in person), a questionnaire, or informal observation of customers or clients at work. Ideally use all three techniques, though the latter is the most difficult to pursue. The insights and information you are looking for are at a number of levels – technical, skills, context of work, and psychological.

The following list details areas to explore:

- How often, when, and using what types of device do they use the Internet?
- Where in the world are they, and what cultural needs and differences do they have?
- What speed are they connected to the Internet and how easy is it for them to get a connection?
- What is the person's level of computer and Web skills.
- What is their context of use, including competing access to shared Internet access, access in public or shared spaces (such as an Internet café or the living room), and the nature of the environment they are in (how busy, noisy, or interruptive it is)?
- How do they perceive online products and particular online interfaces?
- What are their favourite Web sites are and why?

You may want also to build on this research to get a clearer picture of audience situations and needs by developing 'scenarios' about how a given user might use the Web site to achieve a given goal.

Scenarios might describe the person, their disposition, their goal, their environment, how they approach achieving that goal, where they are likely to get frustrated, and how they will know when they have succeeded.

From this research and scenario building you should be able to establish a clear picture of your customers and clients, which will give you a good grounding when putting together the detailed specifications (design brief, technical brief, etc) for the site.

## Defining your internal requirements

An important aspect of preparing for a new site is your own internal needs. For example, how will you work with the site and deliver the product or service? What is the content you will need to prepare and produce for the site itself?

The operational model of your organisation is key to your ability to support the website, and create a consistent and good customer experience across all interactions with your organisation. Creating a website is a good opportunity to build an integrated corporate and web strategy. By considering and defining your internal needs, you will be able to match your objectives with user expectations so that the project is a success on both sides.

Ideally, you should address:

- Who you plan to have working on the project, their skills, their availability and other demands on their time.
- What software and collaboration tools (such as e-mail) your people use, their level of training and skill, and their level of Internet access (e.g.: from their desktop, or using mobile, or via the office network).
- Any other parties involved in producing the site and how they will work with it once it is live, these could include copywriters, distributors, photographers or graphic designers.
- The availability of other resources (existing Web services, meeting spaces, support staff, fulfillment suppliers.)
- Milestones for any parallel or related projects, and dates of other key events, for example a board meeting where decisions might be made or progress reviewed, or a launch date for a marketing campaign.
- Identification of the key people inside your organisation who affect project progression. This includes decision-makers, content approvers, consultants, brand guardians, and any other stakeholders.
- Existing processes that will need to be supported in future. (For instance do you have existing databases that will need to be supported in future, or applications that you would like to deliver online at some point.)

## What we would like from you

When conducting web projects we try and determine as much information about our clients and their requirements as possible. At our initial meetings it would be helpful to gather any information that comes from your considering both your audience and your internal requirements as outlined in the previous sections.

Additionally, the following list identifies other primary pieces of information we would like to gather from you at the outset:

- An overview of your company
- Description of the project background and the business strategy that informs the project
- The project objectives and the 'big idea'
- The services needed and what we are being expected to deliver
- Who your competitors are
- Examples of any websites whose appearance appeals to you or which offer functionality that you are interested in replicating
- Your success criteria for the project
- Your approximate budget for the project
- The timescales for the project

