



# ARE YOU READY FOR A NEW WEBSITE?

A practical guide with worksheets  
to help prepare your business for  
a new or—newly redesigned—  
website

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# An investment in your website is an investment in your business.

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Your website can be one of the most effective marketing tools for your business—that is, if you have one.

If you're a small business without a website or a small business with an outdated or underused one, then it may be time for a new site.

This guide is intended to help your business prepare for a new or newly redesigned website.

It provides worksheets to help you plan for the work ahead because there will be work to do before, during, and after you launch.

This guide looks at three critical factors when it comes to creating or redesigning your website:

- **Goals.** What do you want to achieve with your website?
- **Audience.** Who is your target audience or the ideal client that you want to attract?
- **Content.** Do you have content for your website and what types of content do you have?

Let's get started with your goals and answering the question, "Why do I want a new website?"

# Your website goals

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The first step to defining your goals is understanding the purpose of your website. There must be a reason or reasons for wanting a website; otherwise, you can save yourself both time and money creating one.

For most small businesses, the simple answer to the question, “Why do I want a new website?” is one of the following:

- If you have a product-based business, it’s to sell more products.
- If you have a services-based business, it’s to sell more services.

However, your reasons for wanting a new website may go deeper than simply selling a product or service.

## If you don’t have a website

If you’re a new business without a website or an established business that hasn’t invested in one yet, then here is a list of common reasons for creating a new website. Check all that apply or write in your own.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> My customers expect my business to have an online presence.                  | <input type="checkbox"/> I want to reduce phone calls by keeping my customers informed online. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My social media presence just isn’t sufficient for my online business needs. | <input type="checkbox"/> I want to establish expertise in my field and build my reputation.    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I want to attract new clients or customers to my business.                   | <input type="checkbox"/> I want to be found online via search engines.                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I want to grow my business via more clients or sales.                        | <input type="checkbox"/> I want to build my brand online.                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other:   |  |
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## If you have an existing website

If you have an existing website, then your reasons for wanting to redesign your site may be one of the following. Check all that apply or write in your own reason.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I want a custom designed site that reflects my business and/or brand.       | <input type="checkbox"/> I want my site design to be responsive and to appear in mobile search results. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I've rebranded my business and need to reflect those changes on my website. | <input type="checkbox"/> My website design looks outdated compared to my competitors' websites.         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I've outgrown my current website template.                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> I want better results for my business from my website.                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I haven't updated my website in more than 3 years.                          | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm migrating content management systems (CMS).                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other:  |   |
-

## Turning your reasons into goals

Now that you've examined the reasons for wanting a new website, it's time to translate those reasons into goals for your site.

Here are a few ways in which you can translate the reasons that you chose into goals that show whether or not your website is successful:

- "My customers expect my business to have an online presence." In this case, perhaps you set a goal of 500 unique visitors per month by January of the new year.
- "I want to reduce phone calls by keeping my customers informed online." Maybe the goal is to reduce weekly or monthly calls by 50% within three months of launching your website.
- "I want to establish expertise in my field and build my reputation." To achieve this one, you might set a goal of one new blog post once a week for six months.
- "I want better results for my business from my website." This may translate into eight new clients in the 12 months following your web redesign launch.

With each goal, ask yourself what it looks like. In other words, how will you know if you've been successful? Be as specific as possible when drafting your goals and remember that you want your goal to be measurable. Both will help you to know whether or not you've achieved your goal.

The following worksheet has space for four goals. Though you may have more than four reasons for wanting a new website, it may be a good idea to limit yourself to three or four goals to begin.

You can certainly add more goals as needed, but the fewer goals you have, the easier it is to focus on achieving those goals.

## Setting your goals

The key to translating your reasons into goals is to ask yourself, "How will I measure the success?" Have a clear idea or image of what achieving a goal will look like to you, then write it down below.

Reason for website	Goal

# Your website audience

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Knowing your website audience is crucial to the website creation process because it has a significant influence on your content.

The following worksheets will help you to identify your target audience or ideal client. These exercises are useful if:

- You're a new business owner and haven't completed an ideal client profile or similar exercise before.
- You've been in business for a while, have a good idea who your target audience or ideal client is, but haven't put it in writing before now.
- You're a small business owner who hasn't been attracting your target audience or who wants to target a new audience.

Before you write your first web page, you need to know who it is you're writing for. Not only will this make creating content easier, but it may spare you from rewriting content later on.

The purpose of this exercise is to develop a specific audience profile for your website. Once you know who that person is, then you can draft your web content with him or her in mind.



## Demographics

Let's first capture basic demographics about your target audience.

**What is the average age or age range of your target audience?**

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**What gender is your target audience?**

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**Where is your target audience located? Is your audience local, regional, national, or international for example?**

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**What is the highest level of education that your target audience has achieved?**

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**What profession, job title, or job role does your target audience hold?**

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**In which industry or industries does your target audience work?**

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**What is your target audience's income or budget?**

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**What is your target audience's family status?**

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## Behaviors

Demographics help you narrow your audience down to a group, but let's go a step further. With the following behavior questions, you're asked to think like your target audience.

**Which websites or blogs is your target audience likely to visit?**

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**Does your target audience use social media, and if so, which sites is he or she most likely to use?**

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**Which magazines does your audience read? Which TV shows or movies does your audience watch?**

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**Which adjectives best describe your target audience?**

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**What are some of the concerns that your target audience has?**

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**How might your target audience make decisions? Alone? With a partner? With others?**

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**What's most important to your target audience?**

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**What is your target audience's view of money?**

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## Your ideal client description

Now that you've narrowed your target audience down to a group and gotten into the head of one of those group members, it's time to put it all together in an ideal client or customer description.

Use the rest of this worksheet to describe that person in detail.

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# Your website content

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So far, you've determined your website goals by examining the reasons for having a website. And you've narrowed down your target audience and described in detail your ideal client. With these two things in mind, you're ready to write your website content.

## Why your site content is so important

Before you consider hiring a web designer or developer, you should have at least a rough draft of your most important web pages. If this sounds like a cart before the horse scenario, let us explain.

Your design is meant to work with your content. Your design may invite your audience to your website, but your content is what convinces them to stay. It also gives your audience reason to return.

If you approach a designer with little to no content already drafted, then the designer may rely on placeholder text to create your design—and that can be a problem.

Imagine this scenario: Your web designer begins design on your home page, one of the most visited pages on any website. However, because you don't know what content to feature on the home page, the designer uses placeholder text in places where it looks best in her design.

The designer creates a home page with a three column layout. Later, you discover that you have only enough content to fill two columns. Do you leave a gaping hole on your home page?

Suddenly, the well balanced design that you approved and paid for is no longer balanced or appealing.

Maybe you ask the designer to change the three column layout to a two column layout to fit the amount of content you have. She's happy to do so, but because the work falls outside the project scope, there are additional costs—not to mention that additional work means additional time on the schedule.

If you create the content before the design, then you can avoid not only delays required to redesign and redevelop your website, but also the additional costs that go along with those changes.

## Your content inventory

You may be surprised by how much web content already exists. If the idea of generating new content intimidates you then, start by taking stock of the content that you already have available.

The intent of the content inventory is to help you evaluate content that already exists and estimate what you need to create.

Content isn't limited to text. When deciding what content to feature on your website, consider the following:

- Images, including your logo, product photos, illustrations, or infographics
- Videos, such as MP4 files or YouTube links, which you can embed on a web page
- Downloads, such as PDF or MP3 files
- Links to relevant social media accounts and to content on third-party websites, for instance, an interview with you featured on a blog
- Offers or registerable content
- Newsletter sign-up if you use email marketing tools, such as MailChimp

These are some common content items to share with your web designer if you want to feature them on your website.

Also, gather up any existing marketing materials, such as brochures, or other relevant content that can be included in your website. Look for both printed as well as online material. Use the next worksheet to make a list of these items and where to find them.

## Existing website content

If you have an existing website to redesign, now is a good time to evaluate which content to migrate to the new site and which to remove.

If you gather web metrics, then you may want to start with the number of visits and / or page views per page. You may want to consider deleting any pages with few visits or low page views.

We recommend that you look at about 12 months of metrics to see if a page's visits or views have steadily declined or have experienced only a seasonal decline.

Also, it's a good idea to review your page content. This is an opportunity for you to update outdated pages that you intend to keep.

Does each page have a CTA? Is your CTA still valid? Are there any broken links to remove or replace? These are just a few things to look for when you review content.

## Next step

Now that your inventory is complete, the next step is to determine how many pages and which pages your website needs.

So much can vary depending upon your business. At a minimum, we recommend these three web pages on every site regardless of the type of business you operate:

- Home page
- About page
- Contact page

Likely, your website will need more pages than just these three, but what you deem necessary depends largely on the audience you want to attract and the goals that you want to achieve. For example, if your goal is to write one blog post a week, then you need a blog.

When determining what pages you need, conduct an inventory of your competitors' web pages. What content do they feature on their sites? Your audience may expect the same or similar content on your site.

Another consideration is resources—both cost and time. If you hire a web content writer to write your web pages, then the more pages you require, the greater the cost.

If you write the pages yourself, then you have to consider the time investment to write, edit, and proofread each page.

Don't forget that pages may need updating as well because content grows stale and links break. There may be additional time later on that you need to spend to maintain your web content whether or not you write it yourself.

Experience has taught us that it's better to have fewer pages that you maintain regularly rather than many pages that are neglected.

What is it?

Where is it?


## Your home page

Your home page needs to engage your audience and lead them into your website. While it's a good idea to view your home page from the perspective of your ideal client, you, too, will have goals for your audience.

At minimum, your home page should have the following:

- Text telling your audience who you are and what you do
- Call to action

## Who am I and what do I do?

Information like this on your home page tells the web visitor immediately if he or she is in the right place. This text does not need to be long. Because this information may overlap with content on your about page, you can keep it brief.

You can answer the questions “who am I?” and “what do I do?” with a page title and brief introductory text. Think of this introduction as a preview similar to a movie trailer. You want to hook your visitor—make them want to learn more by going further into your website.

**Title:**

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**Subtitle (optional):**

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**Introductory text:**

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## Call to action

A call to action or CTA prompts your web visitor to take a specific action. What is it that you want your ideal client to do upon coming to your home page? (Your call to action is not limited to the home page, by the way.)

Here are some common call to action examples:

- Subscribe to a weekly newsletter
- Join an email list
- Download an offer, such as an ebook or white paper
- Attend an in-person or online event, such as a webinar
- Listen to a podcast
- Register for a free trial
- Make a donation
- Volunteer
- Schedule an appointment

Your CTA may involve an exchange of personal information, typically an email address, for something that the visitor finds valuable, such as an ebook. If you want to build an email list, then having a compelling, registerable offer can be effective.

However, your call to action doesn't have to be a web interaction. You may, for example, want you web visitor to call you for a free consultation.

It's best to limit yourself to one to two CTAs per page. The more options you present to your audience, the less likely they are to take action. You can overwhelm your web visitor with too many options and leave them unsure which one to choose.

Calls to action may differ depending upon the web page and how many CTAs you have to choose from. If you have several of them, then you may want to place the calls to action where they are most relevant.

Choose the ones more relevant for your home page. Your web designer can determine the most optimal placement for your CTAs.

**First CTA title:**

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**CTA link:**

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**CTA description:**

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**Second CTA title:**

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**CTA link:**

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**CTA description:**

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## Your about page

An about page isn't a resume listing previous work experience, your education, and skills—though all of those things have their merit and may find their way into an about page.

Your about page affords you an unique opportunity to connect with your audience. If you think about pages are dull, professional bios, think again.

How you approach your about page may depend upon your type of business. If you are an independent consultant, for instance, then establishing your expertise may require that you talk about previous work experience or education.

There are several things that you can emphasize when writing your about page, especially if you are uncomfortable writing about yourself:

- Sharing your brand or business story if you have a particularly compelling story
- Demonstrating your brand or business personality especially if you have a sense of humor
- Featuring the individuals who make up the business to humanize your brand
- Emphasizing why you do what you do for your audience to show how passionate you are about your products or services

Your about page doesn't have to be text only. Rich media, such as photos, videos, or infographics, can convey the same information more succinctly in some cases. If you are small foods business, for example, sharing a behind-the-scenes video of the making of your products can help you connect with your audience.

## Things to consider

If you're looking for ideas to get started, here are few common things that you may find on an about page:

- Your audience's challenges and/or needs
- A brief history of your business
- Your business's vision, mission, or purpose
- Social causes or charities that your business supports
- Your company values
- Your manufacturing or work process
- Your materials or ingredients
- Your business or personal philosophy

- Statistics relevant to your products, services, or audience
- Awards or accreditations
- Client testimonials
- Contact information

The about page is often one of the most viewed pages on a website, so it's worth taking the time to craft an engaging one that your audience can relate to.

Ready to get started? While we recommend that you use "About us" or something similar for your link text because it's what web visitors may expect, don't be afraid to use an attention grabbing headline for your page.

**Headline:**

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**Body copy:**

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As a high traffic page, don't forget to include a call to action on the page.

## Your contact page

Have you ever visited a business website without a contact page? Probably not. Like your about page, the contact page is another high traffic web page. Your ideal client wants to know how to contact you.

You can keep the contact page short, simple, and straight-forward. If you have more than one way in which visitors can contact you, then include them.

For example, if you have a product-based business, then your customers may look for a customer service phone number, email address, and mailing address in case of returns.

Another way in which a client may contact you is through social media, so you may want to share profile information where applicable.

If you operate a brick and mortar business, then include your business hours and directions.

**Phone number:**

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**Email address:**

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**Mailing address (optional):**

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**Social media accounts:**

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**Hours (optional):**

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**Directions (optional):**

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**Parking (optional):**

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# Final thoughts

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Congratulations! If you've completed the worksheets in this guide, then you are well on your way to creating a new website.

Determining your goals, identifying your ideal client or target audience, and creating drafts of your web content are important initial steps in the website creation process.

I hope that you are armed and ready to begin work with a web designer or developer to get started.

Have questions about this guide or feedback to help me improve it? Email me at **hello@TaraHall.me**.