



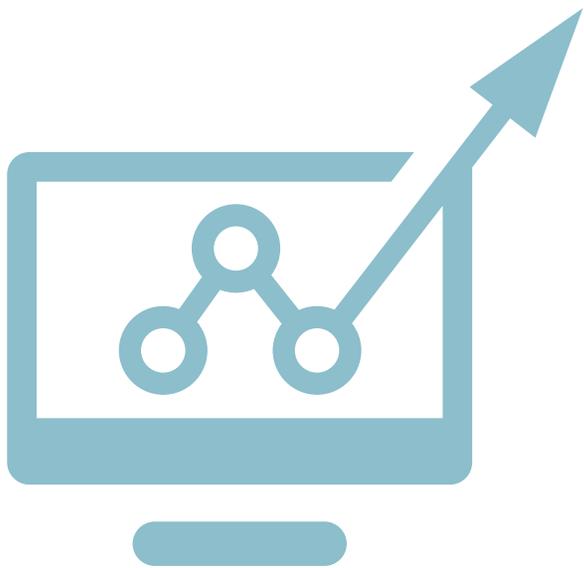
# **Web Development Guide:** 10 Questions to Consider Before Building a Website



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In order to effectively capitalize on Online Marketing opportunities, you must have a website that is built to capture, convert and retain your audience online. Your website is your mousetrap and the success of any marketing or advertising tactics you employ will be dictated by its ability to turn visitors into meaningful business opportunities. Here are the critical areas to consider when embarking on a new web development project.

## ***What Is The Business Objective?***

It seems simple, but too often the business objectives for the investment are not placed front and center. Why are you building a new site? What is your current site not accomplishing? What do you hope this investment will yield in terms of measureable results for the business? You should be crystal clear on this before signing any design / development contract and you should demand that your partner references anything they recommend back to the objectives you have set. Better yet, they should be involved in setting the objectives and developing the strategy to meet them.



## ***Who is Validating the Market Opportunity?***

Someone needs to do market research before you embark on the execution of any online marketing strategy. Who is your audience? How do they search? What competitors are already positioned in the space? What are the quantifiable metrics (keywords, search volumes, click costs, competitive index, etc.)? Again, the key here is letting data dictate what you should build and how you should penetrate the market.





## ***What Do the Analytics Tell You?***

Has your developer requested access to any analytics you already have in place? Assuming you have none, are they recommending setting them up? While the strategy is being developed and the new site is being constructed, you can gather important baseline metrics to measure the success of your new site against. The beauty of online engagement is the volumes of data you can collect that allow you to measure success and fine tune the strategy over time. Be wary of any developer who is not asking questions relating to your current efforts. It typically means they are a vendor that is simply in it for the project and not the long-term growth of your business.

## ***Custom vs. Template: How Should the Site be Built?***

Typically speaking, our approach to website development at Empire Sales Strategies is to advocate for custom development. A solution shrink wrapped to fit your needs and objectives, rather than an attempt to fit your need and objectives into a system with inherent limitations (think square peg, round hole). However, there are instances when certain functions (like a blog) are better served by third party plug-ins. What's important here is not so much what the approach is, but rather what is the rationale and justification for any recommended approach. Partners look out for your best interests, vendors look for maximum margin on any given project. At Empire, we're in it for the long-haul and want to be your partner in the growth of sales and revenue. Demand nothing less!



## Should You Employ 3rd Party Platforms?

We regularly consult with clients who have been pushed down the road of building a WordPress site simply because that is how their chosen developer builds websites. But why WordPress? What specifically, other than the ease of build for the vendor, are the reasons they build a site that way? There are instances when WordPress makes sense, and we're not advocates of reinventing the wheel, but be very wary of any vendor who builds all sites one way. It usually means that's all they know and it typically creates an artificial ceiling that will be extremely difficult to break through.

## How Will You Compel People to Convert?

A website is essentially a mousetrap designed to funnel new business opportunities into the sales system (leads, sales, etc). It should be designed to capture and convert visitors at the maximum rate possible. As your partner, Empire Sales Strategies works to improve metrics over time by recommending and employing new tactics designed to convert more of your visitors into meaningful opportunities (phone calls, form submissions, opt-ins, etc.). Central to this is employing targeted CTA's that speak to your audience and compel them to enter into a dialogue with you. A properly built website should employ a range of tools that grab the attention of your visitors no matter where they sit in the buy funnel. Make sure your partner understands the science behind this process.

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## ***How Will Results be Measured?***

They say nothing measured, nothing gained. With websites and online marketing, this definitely holds true. The tools you employ to measure results provide you the insights you need to adjust the strategy and deploy new tactics. Each calculated change is designed to improve results and keep the business moving forward. Make sure your partner is putting tools in place to give you these insights and that they understand that success is a moving target and yesterday's growth becomes today's new baseline.



 **bing**

**YAHOO!**

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## ***Will the Site be Optimized for Search?***

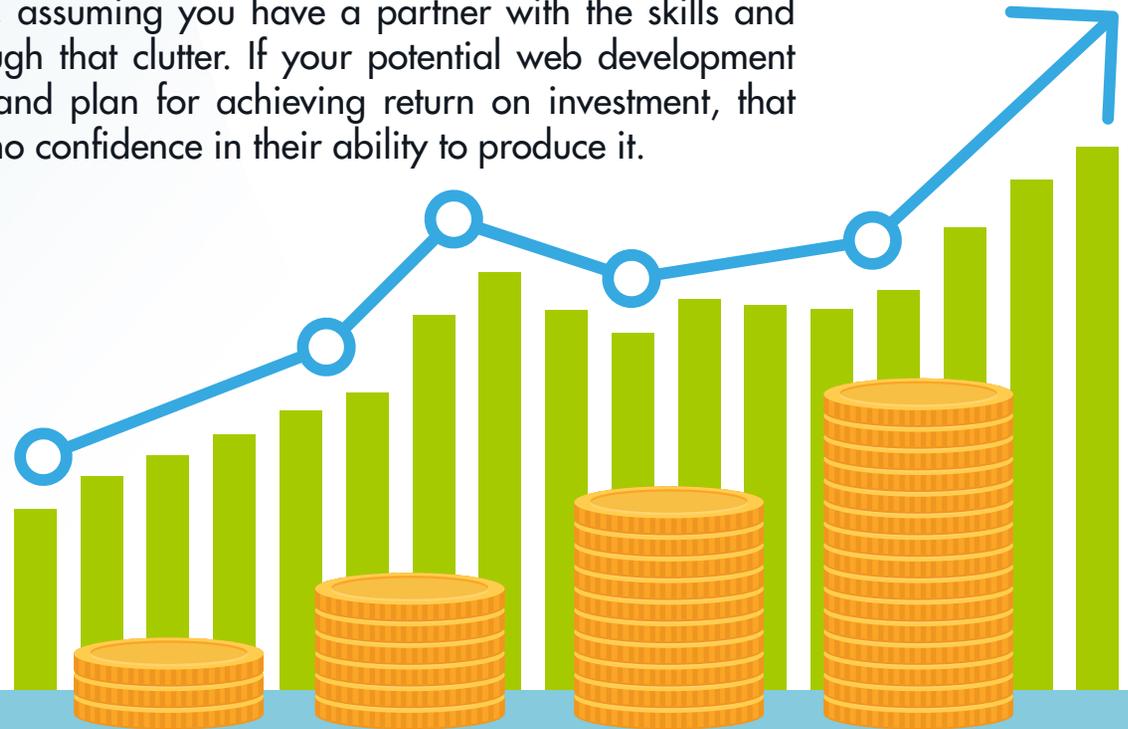
Once your website is built, your ability to optimize that site in order to begin the work of climbing your way to the top of the search engine results pages (SERPs) truly begins. However, without the proper foundation, you may very well find yourself rebuilding again. Countless times we have consulted with clients and made the recommendation to rebuild a site that is only months old. Ask your developer how they'll ensure it is built properly and then ask to see examples and possibly speak with people they have already done it for. Take weakness in this area as a major red flag that they're simply a vendor and not a partner in the fight to grow your business using the online channel.



# ROI

## ***Framing the Project: Cost or Investment?***

While this question may seem largely a matter of semantics, the language your potential development partner employs speaks volumes about their approach to client partnerships and their confidence in the results you will see. At Empire Sales Strategies, we partner with our clients to develop a plan and an investment strategy that is designed to produce ROI over time. The days of brochure-ware websites that get lost in the clutter of the Internet marketplace are long past, assuming you have a partner with the skills and background needed to break through that clutter. If your potential web development vendor can't articulate a timeline and plan for achieving return on investment, that should be your clue that they have no confidence in their ability to produce it.



# ***Supplemental Questionnaire: 10 Questions to Ask***

1. What can you tell me about my market online?
2. What do you see as the strengths / weaknesses of my current website?
3. How will you build the new site? Custom? Platform (ie. WordPress)? Why?
4. How does your approach translate into results for my business?
5. What analytics tools will be employed and what do they measure?

6. What projects can you reference where a similar approach yielded results?
7. What is your plan once the site goes live? How will it equal results for us?
8. How are future changes to the site handled and what will they cost me?
9. What will be your role in identifying and capitalizing on growth opportunities?
10. Quantify the results for me. What can I expect as a result of this investment?



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