WEB DESIGN BASICS

for

NON-TECHIES

Let's face it, designing and building a new website can be very technical and the truth is that many of us involved in the web design process aren't highly technical.

HTML, CMS, DNS, URL, SEO and CTAs. What is with all of the initials necessary to build a B2B website? While we'd like to leave all of that technical stuff to the professional web developers and experienced web designers, there are a few things you need to know to have a successful website project and launch.

In this guide, we'll explain, in plain language, the basics of web design, including:

• Important Factors Affecting Website Design
• The Foundation of a Strong Website
• Frequently Asked Questions About WordPress
• Fundamental Web Design Definitions
• Tips to Design for Users & Search Engines

IMPORTANT FACTORS IMPACTING WEB DESIGN

Why should you bother with a new website if you have an existing website? There are 3 main reasons a B2B firm needs a new website.

- **Multi-Screen Searching**
- **Lead Generation**
- **Credibility**

Multi-screen searching is when users perform searches for products or services across a variety of devices, including desktop computers, tablets, and smart phones. Whether a potential client is searching for your product or services on a desktop computer and checking it later on their smartphone, you want them to be able to access your website with ease.

It's a busy world and people often don't have the time to pick up the phone and call a potential vendor. Whether your firm provides products or services, a well-crafted B2B web design offers potential clients the ability to contact your firm via your website – typically with online forms. These forms have the possibility to become a major source of **lead generation** for a sales team.

Whether your firm provides cutting edge SaaS, recruiting services, or hard-to-find components, your first impression to a potential client matters. As your B2B website is often your first impression on a potential client, you want it to build up your **credibility** and not make your firm appear outdated. A technology that incorporates current technology ensures a prospect that you are up-to-date and a credible company.

THE FOUNDATION OF A STRONG WEBSITE

Although every company and website project is unique, there are a few best practices when it comes to building a great B2B web design.

• Distinctive Branding
• Clear Messaging
• Strong, Visible Calls-to-Action
• Content Resources
• A Blog Feature

A strong B2B brand carried throughout the layout, content, and imagery informs your prospects who you are and what you have to offer. Direct messaging removes all doubt, educates potential clients about your value proposition and tells them why you are the best.

An easy way to provide an excellent user experience for your prospects is by letting them know what next steps to take. A strong call-to-action (CTA) that is highly visible lets them know what to do next: Call for consultation, Schedule an appointment, Contact our sales team.

If a potential client isn't ready to take the next step, it's important to give them tools where they can learn more about you, your product or services, and how to use them. A well-laid out Content Library with case studies, before and afters, infographics, and ebooks gives them resources to move them down the sales funnel.

This last one is simple: a blog. Even if your B2B firm isn't ready to start blogging every week, it's ideal to create a web design that incorporates a blog feature. A blog is a simple way to share timely, relevant content with prospects and existing clients and it's an easy way to continue adding optimized content to your B2B website.

HERE ARE THE MAIN TYPES OF CONTENT PAGES TO INCLUDE ON YOUR WEBSITE:

• **Who –** About Our Company page

• **What –** Products or Services pages

• **When –** Clients Needs / Portfolio pages

• **Where –** Contact Us / Map / Address

• **Why –** All pages should incorporate your value proposition that discusses WHY a potential client should work with you.

IS SEO REALLY NECESSARY?

If you want potential clients to find your website, you need to incorporate search engine optimization into your web design. SEO isn't just keywords and page titles; it also includes the hierarchy of pages, website loading time, hosting, back-end coding, image titles and more. A professional web design firm will incorporate all best practices for SEO into a strong website design.

WORDPRESS FAQ

WordPress isn't the only content management system out there, but it is widely used and therefore has a large support network. It's often very simple to use but has extensive functionality. It's functional, straightforward, and easy to maintain.

1. WHAT IS WORDPRESS?

WordPress is a website creation tool and a powerful website content management system. It's written in PHP and is also one of the most popular blogging engines on the web. For the B2B web designs, WordPress enables website owners to easily and quickly make updates on the backend of the website.

2. WHAT IS A CMS?

A CMS is a content management system, or web application, that enables website owners to add pages to, edit pages, and manage a website. Essentially, it's the backend of the website where updates can be made and content can be added or deleted. A CMS gets rid of the need to edit HTML (for the most part) and upload pages through Dreamweaver or FTP.

3. WHY USE WORDPRESS?

The top 100 blogs and websites in the U.S. use WordPress and over 20% of all websites worldwide use it as well. With such a large community of WordPress users, there is also a large developer community for WP. In addition to the support community availability and the wide variety of plug-in options out there, WordPress is also an open source content management system so you don't need to rely on an agency or freelancer to update the site.

4. WHAT'S A PLUGIN?

A plugin is an existing piece of code that adds a specific functionality to a website. Plugins enable website owners to add certain features to their website above and beyond what WordPress offers. They can be free or paid, depending on the functionality and complexity.

5. WHO USES WORDPRESS?

Many of the top blogs, websites, and even Fortune 500 companies use WordPress. Large companies using WordPress include TechCrunch, The New Yorker, BBC America, Sony Music, Best Buy, Xerox, Harvard Business Review and many others.

6. IS WORDPRESS SECURE?

WordPress is updated anywhere from 4 to 8 times per year, which is more frequent than most types of software. The regular updates continually increase the security of WordPress websites and ensure the very latest version is in use.
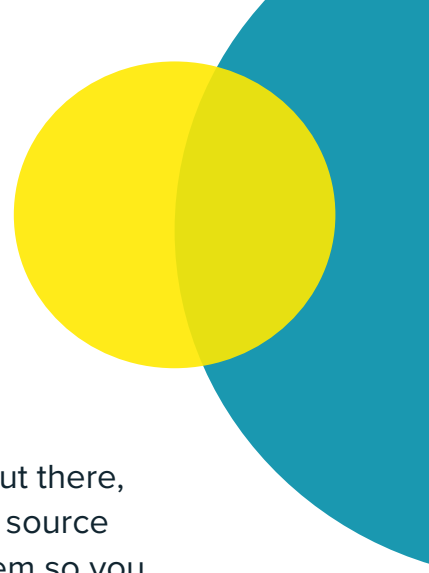
7. WILL I NEED TO INSTALL UPDATES?

Installing updates to your WordPress website are essential to maintaining the security of your website. In addition to fixing any issues or adding functionality, updates patch security holes. Because WordPress is so popular, a lot of hackers target it. Out-dated versions of WordPress and plugins are a security liability.

8. IS WORDPRESS EASY TO USE?

WordPress is designed to be user-friendly for non-technical users. As a CMS it enables even the most technologically challenged folks to change font sizes and colors, update navigation, add new web pages, include images, and embed video. It all depends on how WordPress is set up and how effectively the developer uses it as a CMS.

17 WEB DESIGN DEFINITIONS

Anyone who has completed a B2B website project has at some point in the process wondered if the web designer or developer was just starting to make up terms and acronyms for the fun of it. Don't be intimidated by all the terms thrown around before, during, and after a website design project. Here are 17 of the most common web design terms and their definitions.

1. BREADCRUMBS

A breadcrumb trail on a website is a visual path of the hierarchy of that particular page. Typically, the path will appear horizontally across the top of the page, directly under the navigation. Example of breadcrumbs on a website: *Home > Industries > Education > Education Services*

2. BROWSER

The software used to access and view websites on the Internet. Common browsers are Internet Explorer (now being replaced by Microsoft Edge), Chrome, Safari, and Firefox.

3. CMS

Stands for Content Management System. The CMS enables you to edit, add, and manage your website without having to know programming languages or website coding. The most widely used CMS applications are WordPress, Drupal, and Joomla.

4. CTAS

Stands for Call-to-Action or the directive you give to a visitor on a particular page of your B2B website. Common CTAs include phrases such as Call Now, Schedule a Consultation, Request a Quote, and Contact Us Today. CTAs can be text, buttons, boxes, and a lot of other things—as long as they attract attention.

SCHEDULE MY CONSULTATION

5. DNS

The acronym DNS stands for Domain Name System. The DNS translates a website's URL into an IP address and is what enables users to view a website without having to remember an IP address (11 digit number).

6. DOMAIN NAME

This is the name that uniquely identifies a computer or computers on the Internet. It is part of a website's URL. For example, in www.bopdesign.com, bopdesign.com is our domain name.

7. HEADER TAGS

Also called heading tags, head tags, and HTML header tags, header tags are used to separate the headings (or titles) and sub-headings from the rest of the content on a web page. The tags have a hierarchy from H1 to H6 to assign importance, with H1 being the most important. These tags are very important for SEO purposes to properly categorize and evaluate the text on a B2B web page.

8. HOSTING

A web hosting service stores and shares all of the website content to be displayed to users, including files, images, text, video, code, etc. It makes it possible for your B2B website to display properly to a user.

9. HTML

The term stands for HyperText Markup Language. HTML is the coding language (among others) used to create and format web pages.

10. HYPERLINK

A link on a website, called a hyperlink, connects one page on a website to either another page on the same website (internal) or a page on a different website (external). These turn text on a web page into a clickable pathway to a new page.

11. NAVIGATION

Your website's navigation includes the menu bar at the top of the page or side, links, icons, and buttons across the site. Navigation also covers where everything is located on the webpages and where they take a website visitor.

12. RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN (RWD)

Is a design and development approach that enables your website to render properly on a variety of devices, from mobile phones to tablets to desktop computers. Responsive web design is an approach that allows a website to display optimally regardless of the size of the device and input devices (eg. Touch screen vs mouse click).

13. SITEMAP

The architecture of a website based on the website's navigation and content. Think of a sitemap like a blueprint for a website. Example of a sitemap:

14. SLIDER

A slideshow of images or videos on a website, typically at the top of a web page. See Slideshow.

15. SLIDESHOW (AKA CAROUSEL)

A slideshow, or carousel, is a rotating group of predetermined images or videos. It will often advance to the next image in the group according to a set time frame.

16. URL

Stands for Uniform Resource Locator, also know as a website address. The URL for Bop Design is https://www.bopdesign.com/.

17. SEO

Short for Search Engine Optimization. It is the strategy and process for creating a website that is easily accessible by search engines (like Google and Bing) and thus potential clients or visitors. In B2B web design, SEO impacts content creation, page titles, load time, image labeling, coding, types of files used and more.

TIPS TO DESIGN FOR USERS AND SEARCH ENGINES

A great website design provides an excellent experience for online users and gives search engines, like Google and Bing, the information needed to categorize the website content.

It's almost impossible to find a website developer who is also a master of SEO and user interface best practices, so we have identified essential design elements that create a great balance for SEO and the users.

DEFINE CLEAR PAGE HIERARCHY AND STRUCTURE

Have you ever walked into a store where everything is a mess and it's hard to find what you want? A website without a clear page hierarchy and structure is like the messy store. By creating a simple website map, identifying main pages, and designing around the customer, a website becomes an orderly digital place where information is easy to find.

Before a website is designed and developed, a clearly defined site map must be created. A site map is a visual image of all the website's pages and subpages. Many developers call these parent and child pages since it looks like a family tree.

The site map dictates the top-level navigation pages. The top-level pages should always be the most important pages with the best information for users and search engines. For a business, these typically include the home, services, industries served, about, contact, and resources pages.

USE RESPONSIVE DESIGN

Google and other search engines have stated that websites built with responsive designs are favored over non-responsive websites. Why do search engines say this? End users want responsive design and search engines are competing to serve up the best results.

People are accessing websites on their phones, tablets, and laptops and don't have the patience to try to navigate on a static website. Users tend to quickly leave non-responsive websites that won't display properly and search engines pay attention to that behavior. A responsive website that displays well on all types of devices and has easy click-to-call or "email us" options pleases end users, which pleases search engines.

BUILD CREDIBILITY WITH CONSISTENCY

A consistent design across a firm's digital presence is essential to building trust and sending the right message. Consistency begins with the colors used in the design. The color palate should work well together and be coherent in the images, buttons, scroll bars, and graphics.

Language isn't always considered part of web design, but don't images and headers often have words? How about call-to-action buttons and contact forms? Defining and using the same terminology across

things like headers, subheaders, images, graphics, forms, buttons, footers, etc. will ensure that your end user can easily read and navigate your website. Also, consistent language makes sure search engines see the complete picture about a company.

While a website tells a story about your firm, it must have visual components to keep the user engaged. However, a mishmash of images with different themes, colors, and messages creates confusing visuals. Consistency does not mean using images with only people or images of only landscapes. Rather, it means images that represent the overall brand and values.

CREATE AN INTUITIVE LAYOUT

A lot of information needs to be included on a website but a website starts to look "cluttered" if too much information is added. To avoid the common issue of clutter and to keep the layout intuitive, we've come up with a general page layout to help the user find information.

1. Have clearly defined headers and subheaders. These tell visitors what they are looking at and define what the page is about for a search engine.

2. Contact information should be easy to find on every webpage. Typically, it's marked off from the rest of the page so it's easy to identify, in some cases this is either at the top of the page or in the footer.

3. The main content should be organized on the website. Since the content is there to educate and persuade, it needs to be easy to see and read.

4. The font needs to be viewable by search engines and web visitors.

5. Many people want to connect with businesses on social media, so it's important to link social media to a website. A linked social presence also provides great backlinks to the website, builds credibility with search engines, and can increase the listings on search engine results pages (SERPs).

Got questions about content marketing? Contact Bop Design for the answers.

TWITTER **FACEBOOK** **LINKEDIN**