



ICT & WEB TECHNOLOGIES

## 11 Website Design And Development Best Practices For 2018

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### Website Design And Development Guidelines For 2018

In today's global marketplace, it's not enough to just have a digital presence. To capitalize on opportunity and captivate real, live, human readers, an optimized, functional, interactive website is a must. Unfortunately, the Internet is swarming with poor website designs that miss both the technical and content mark. Worse yet, clients and developers alike continuously contribute to the current outbreak of design delinquency in equal measure.

It's time to end bad websites, once and for all. Let's take a look at how clients and developers perpetrate this trend of low-quality websites and pinpoint new design and development standards in 2018 that will help end this vicious cycle of "all-surface-no-substance" sites.

#### **Clients**

A client's unrealistic expectations can doom a website to fail before the design process even begins.

Unfortunately, many clients have limited knowledge of what a website should be, and more importantly, what a functional, intentional website can deliver. They underestimate the value of going beyond aesthetics with their sites, assuming that build success relies solely on an appealing interface. Clients believe that, as long as their site "looks good," it will float in cyberspace, effectively extending brand reach while magically attracting millions of interested users and converting them into customers.

The truth is, that's not how website magic works.

To deliver digital results, a website must offer an engaging, dynamic user experience. Yes, graphics are critical to the design process. However, to optimize success, your site must provide more than compelling graphics. Your developer is or, at least should be working hard behind the scenes for you, creating a sophisticated infrastructure of both site and SEO functionality that must be developed and tested before going live. That is where the website magic truly begins.

A client's budget expectations can also play a major role in launching an inferior website. When it comes to promoting your brand, it's important to remember that you ultimately get what you pay for. Effective, intuitive website design is complicated. But the return is well worth the investment. So, clients, invest already. And trust your developer's insight, talent, and experience as you navigate through the process to a final design that doesn't just look great, but also achieves all of your critical online marketing goals.

#### **Developers**

Of course, clients aren't the only ones perpetuating bad websites. Developers themselves can also contribute to the slew of poorly designed, ineffective sites plaguing the Internet. How? It often starts by treating must-have digital marketing features as "extras" when offering site packages to clients.

#### **Not cool, developers. Not cool.**

Developers, 2018 is the year you up your game and raise the bar on acceptable industry standards. No more static, one-dimensional tactics that render a site into a mere PowerPoint presentation (aka a static and boring data deluge). Going forward, refuse to work on a design that isn't multidimensional and fully functional. Every project you take on should have all necessary digital marketing functions to elevate both owner and user experience.

Yes, some of your clients will express a bit of sticker shock. Stand firm. Rather than dilute design features, enlighten them on the many benefits offered by a highly functioning website. If they insist on a cheap and crummy website? Don't take on the project. It's far better to refuse one client than to lose countless prospects who notice you have a knack for churning out poor product.



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## 2018 Website Feature Checklist

Ready to put an actionable plan in place to redefine the new normal for 2018 sites? Here are nine non-negotiable standards (and two bonus tips) to implement on your site:

1. **Fast Loading** -- No one wants to wait (and wait and wait) for your site to load. Design sites with prompt loading times for all users on all devices (even the ones with slower Internet connections). You can use Pingdom or Pagespeed Insights by Google to check your website speed and see how you can improve.
2. **Mobile Ready** -- Virtually everyone uses smart devices on a daily basis. Create an engaging, mobile-friendly design that your audience can access whenever they want, wherever they roam.
3. **Tracking Enabled** -- Analytics matter - it's the best way to determine that your website is actually doing its job. The final design should include functionality to gauge key indicators such as traffic, goals, and conversions.
4. **SEO Savvy** -- Don't underestimate the power of optimizing your site for both browsers and humans. Develop compelling, readable content for your followers. For the search engines, always include all important on-page SEO tags and elements, including schema and XML sitemaps.
5. **Enabled CMS** -- We aren't quite done with the power of the written word just yet. Consistently publishing fresh, original content not only captivates your audience, it can deliver invaluable, long-term digital marketing momentum. Include a back-end Content Management System in the design so clients can post and edit content as needed.
6. **Conversion Optimized** -- Have a conversion-centric client? Implement tools for creating campaign landing pages into your design. These designated pages can keep your readers moving through your site and direct them to schedule an appointment, request a product demonstration, and even make a purchase.
7. **Email Marketing** -- Yes, email marketing is still a thing - and a highly effective thing at that. A site's email capture forms should sync with the client's email marketing system for seamless access and connection.
8. **Social Media** -- Never miss an opportunity to leverage the power of social media. Integrate all relevant social media platforms within your design. Allowing users to quickly access social media pages from the website instantly broadens a brand's reach and helps increase visibility and traffic.
9. **Strong Security** -- Never compromise on-site security. Every design should include fundamental security and privacy protocols, such as basic security checks, to protect client and user data.
1. This concludes the non-negotiable portion of our 2018 website design guidelines. However, there are two bonus tips to consider when creating a site:
10. **Progressive Web Apps** -- Savvy web designers, intrigued by the impact apps have on mobile media platforms, have successfully blended the very best web and app features into a hybrid known as Progressive Web Apps. Expect to see Progressive Web Apps out in full force throughout 2018. As a developer, consider including various features into your design such as splash screens, push notifications, and animated page transitions to elevate overall UX.
11. **Machine Learning And Artificial Intelligence** -- Yes, really. Artificial intelligence is no longer a futuristic, high-tech term and has successfully worked its way into our everyday vernacular and online experience. Don't believe me? Have you ever posed a question to Siri or Alexa? I rest my case. Adobe's Sensei is delivering AI tools to various web design platforms worldwide, making it a more accessible, available resource.

## Is Your Brand's Website Up To 2018 Standards?

If not, it's time for an immediate online renovation. Remember, it's not about grand gestures and overhauls. Rather, 2018 will focus on a shift towards simple, functional, and futuristic designs. Implementing these (relatively painless) standards as a non-negotiable design baseline can have a significant impact on the way we do business and connect with potential customers online for optimal ROI with every user engagement.