Acumenology

business support

GETTING YOUR WORDPRESS WEBSITE RIGHT

Help to ensure your
WordPress website
is ready for launch

Contents

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Introduction

Building and launching a WordPress website requires ensuring a lot of different elements come together for the launch.

In order to ensure you have covered all the bases and done all that is required for a successful launch, we have prepared a checklist of information to ensure you have not missed anything.

We have tried to cover most elements and you may find that not all the information is relevant to your project. However, we hope that the information we have provided will help in making your life just that little bit easier.

To further help you, Acumenology has produced a series of Business Guides on a range of relevant topics. You can find these at: www.acumenology.co.uk/business-guides

02
Content

Content is king for any website.
It is imperative that your content accurately reflects your business as it will let both users and search engines know what your business is all about.

It is important to get the content right from the outset and ensure that the information presented is informative, concise and answers key questions a user may be looking for.

Avoid the temptation of giving 'too much' information as that is likely to drive users away.

Content checklist

- **Proofread**
  Thoroughly check all content for grammatical and spelling mistakes.

- **Layout**
  Ensure content is formatted so that it looks pleasing to the eye and is easy to read.
  Avoid unnecessarily long sentences and give text space to make it more readable.

- **Dummy content**
  Check your site for placeholder text (such as Lorem ipsum) and make sure actual content is in place.

- **Dummy images**
  Check for dummy images and ensure actual images with appropriate permissions are in place.

- **Check links**
  Ensure all internal and external links are pointing to where they should be and that the links open in a new tab.

- **Check audio & video files**
  Check all files are in the right place and working as they should be.

- **Check downloadable files**
  Ensure files can be downloaded correctly and have been compressed to make downloading quicker.

- **404 error page**
  Set up a custom 404 error page those who get to your site through a faulty link.

- **Contact page**
  Set up a contact page. Your developer can use plugins like Jetpack, Contact Form 7, and Fast Secure Contact Form to set up an easy way for users to communicate with you.

- **Redirections**
  If your site requires redirections (such as redirecting from an old site), make sure they are set up correctly.
  Redirection is an excellent plugin tool for this.

03
Design

Good design is just as important as relevant content as it ensures that content is presented in the best possible way across different devices.

It may take time to create a design with a WOW factor, but the hard work will definitely be worth it.

Design checklist

- **Validate HTML markup**
  To avoid incompatibilities, use tools like W3C's Markup Validation Service to check all pages of your site adhere to web standards.

- **Preview site in major browsers**
  To spot cross-browser compatibility problems, view your site in Firefox, Chrome, Safari, Internet Explorer/Microsoft Edge, and any legacy browser your client wants to support.
  Look especially at images and videos.
  An alternative is using a service like Browsershots.

- **Check responsive design**
  Mobile devices are increasingly being used and it is essential to have a site that looks good on a mobile device.

  To ensure an optimal user experience, test your design on different gadgets (both phones and tablets) and platforms (Android, iOS) and/or use something like MobileTest.me.

- **Use Google's mobile testing tool**
  In addition to manual testing, Google also offers a mobile testing tool with lots of helpful feedback. Just input your URL and it will run a full analysis of your site.

- **Optimise images**
  Reducing image size as much as possible (without compromising quality, of course) will improve page load time and thereby user experience and SEO.
  TinyPNG and RIOT can do this for you.

- **Add a Favicon**
  Favicon is short for Favourite Icon, and is also referred to a website icon, a shortcut icon or a bookmark icon.
  They are small square images usually 16×16 pixels which are used by web browsers to show a graphical representation of the site being visited at the left side of the browser's address bar and makes you look extra professional.
  Favicomatic will generate one for you.

  This is Acumenology's Favicon

- **Link header logo back to homepage**
  Ensure sure your company logo is present in the header. Then, check that it links back to the homepage so users can return there quickly.
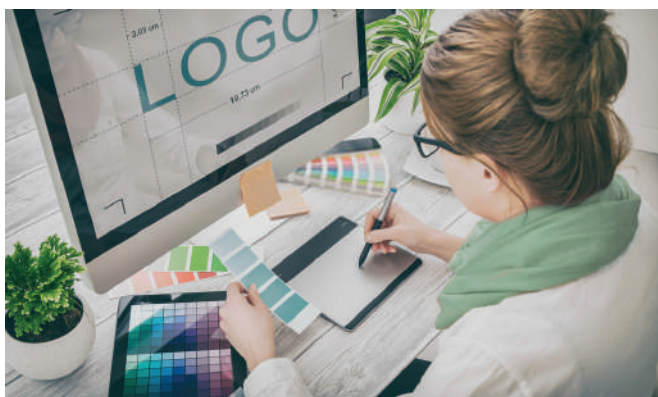
04
Functionality

Your website should perform and function in the way that users expect it to, and their experience (UX) should be easy and intuitive.

If users find the information, they are looking for difficult to access they are likely togo away and no amount of good content and design will make up for it.

Functionality checklist

- **Test web forms**
  Ensure that any forms used submit data correctly and that the form emails arrive in the right place.

- **Confirm form messages and redirects**
  Do users get relevant help messages and are they moved on to the right place after submitting data?

- **Review autoresponders**
  Are automatic emails in place, and working correctly?

- **Check your speed score**
  Use a tool like Google Page speed Insights, WP Engine WordPress speed test or GTMetrix, to see how quickly your site loads and what you can do to make it even faster.
  If at all possible, aim for a loading time below two seconds.

- **Test social sharing functionality**
  Check whether social sharing is in place and working properly.

- **Test third party tools**
  If you are using external tools for CRM, ecommerce, marketing, or something else, check they are doing what they are meant to do.

05

SEO

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is essential to ensure that your site is visible when searched for and as this process takes time it is essential you start immediately.

SEO checklist

- **Install and configure an SEO plugin**
  While WordPress is well configured for SEO a SEO plugin like Yoast SEO or All-in-One SEO Packcan make a significant improvement.

- **Set site title and tag line**
  If your SEO plugin doesn't already take care of your site's title and tagline, make sure to set it under Settings > General

- **Configure SEO page and post titles**
  All pages and posts on your site should have unique titles with less than 70 characters that include the keywords each of them is optimised for.

- **Setout meta descriptions**
  Create meta descriptions for all p pages that include keywords and are less than 156 characters long. wpbeginner has a good guide o how to achieve this

- **Set up permalinks**
  Make sure the permalink structure is set to your liking (Settings > Permalinks) and that each page URL contains its main keyword.

- **Optimise images**
  Check image file names, descriptions, and ALT tags for keyword inclusion and make sure each image is compressed for quick loading times.

- **Set focus keywords**
  If you are using an SEO plugin, each page should also have a defined focus keyword. This will give you important information on how to further optimise them.

- **Create a sitemap**
  Yoast SEO and Google XML Sitemaps can help you set up a sitemap to share with search engines.

- **Set up metadata**
  Check meta tags for social and RSS feeds and whether they are set up correctly, appropriate, and proofread.

06

Marketing

When launching a new site not only is it important to make it visible for search engines you need to make it visible to your target market as well.

Digital marketing is an essential practice that should be carried out to deliver your content to your potential customer.

Marketing checklist

- **Implement signups**
  Promoting your site and generating leads is all important. Have you included a signup form in all the relevant places?
  Check out SumoMe a great free resource that will help grow your list.

- **Set up email marketing**
  If email marketing is important ensure you set up with a carefully selected email marketing provider. There are many to choose from.

- **Set up social media icons**
  Does your business need social media? Whilst not every business does, having social media on your website can help your search ranking.
  If you do have them your social icons for completeness, proper functionality, and whether they are linking to the correct addresses.
  Check whether social sharing is working as it should.

07
Legal

You need to ensure your website complies with all legal requirements. Having all the necessary information shows you are a professional organisation.

Legal checklist

- **Show company details**
  Make your contact details easy to reach within the site and show transparency such as key people in the organisation.

  Include important info like vat registration, etc. if relevant.

- **Provide privacy notice**
  You are required to provide privacy policy under new data protection legislation (GDPR).
  Make sure it complies with the regulation and that the information is tailor made to your organisation and its activities.

  You may consider acquiring a suitable template and then modifying it to suit your business.

  For more information of the Privacy Notice visit the ICO website.

- **Cookie policy**
  Under current regulation you are required to tell people if you set cookies and explain what cookies do and why. You are also required to get the users consent.

  Make sure you are compliant. To find out more about cookies visit the ICO website.

- **Terms & Conditions**
  If you are selling something or there are transactions involved, you should provide a T&C's that set out your terms of business.

  Again, you can acquire a template and alter it to suit your requirement.

- **Copyright and other Licenses**
  Include a copyright statement if necessary and ensure you have the necessary licenses in place for third party plugins etc.

08
Operational items

There are a host of operational issues to deal with some of them quite technical.
However, in the interest of simplicity we will focus on some key issues here.

Operational checklist

- **Set up Google analytics**
  It is important to assess how your website is performing. To do this you need to collect usage data that will allow you to track your sites performance and make informed decisions.

  While there are other analytics solutions on the market Google Analytics is by far the most popular.

- **Install anti-spam**
  You are likely get spam on your site especially if your site generates traffic.

  Look at solutions like Akismet or Antispam Bee.

- **Backup your site**
  One of the most important steps is to ensure website is backed up at least daily.

  This is crucial in case you lose data, or your website gets hacked. Having a backup will solve your problems.

  Ensure you set up a backup for both your site data and database.
  A managed hosting provider will handle backups for you.

- **Verify backups**
  Check and verify that your backup is working and that the information has been backed up in the specified location and is retrievable.

- **Update admin password**
  Set up a safe password and restrict access to trusted personnel who need to access the backend.

  Make sure your developer does not retain access if he has finished with the site.

09
Launch

A few things to do as your site goes live'

- **Disable "Discourage search engines'**
  In the WordPress dashboard under Settings uncheck the box that says "Discourage search engines from indexing this site." If you don't do this search engines will be unable to find your website

- **Build a 'sitemap'**
  Ensure you have created a sitemap and then make sure to submit it to any search engine you wish to be ranked upon.

- **Promote your site**
  Promote your site on all the platforms your customers are likely to visit.

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And finally.......

Now that your site is live do not forget to keep a record of the following in a document

- Login names and passwords
- Hosting information
- Database information
- FTB Credentials
- Login information for other accounts linked to the website (google analytics, social media, email marketing provider etc)
- Expiration dates of plugins

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Conclusion

Launching a WordPress website is no easy task with many elements to consider as you develop and launch your site.

It can seem overwhelming and confusing especially if you are new to this.

We hope this guide helps you towards getting your WordPress site ready for launch.

There is a lot of help out there but one source worth looking at is WPEngine.
It is an excellent resource on all things WordPress related and will provide you with a myriad of solutions to deliver a solution that is right for your business.

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