



Website Planning Guide

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Introduction

Chances are if you are reading this you have probably had a go at using Reason8 website systems and realized that there are very few technical barriers that now stand between you and a new website for your business.

However, although we can remove the technical barriers, the biggest hurdle still stands between you and a website that works. Your lack of experience and a lack of a plan

You must have a plan before you start.

You are an expert at running your business. We are experts in website design. We have built hundreds of successful websites and we know how to design compelling websites that do the job they are designed to do. The purpose of this document is to try and condense in a simple way, the things that you need to think about and do before wading in and writing your text.

You may have some experience of creating a brochure, or perhaps you have created an advertisement for your business in the past. Maybe you have seen other websites and stored pages or designs in your head.

All of these areas of experience are probably swilling around in your head and dying to burst out into your new website. However we suggest taking stock first. Read this short e-book and perform the tasks that are outlined here (it should take you less than an hour and it will be the most important hour you will spend)

Rather than just give you a set of G.O.B.O.'s (glimpses of the blindingly obvious). We have structured the book around 6 chapters and 7 clear tasks. Don't underestimate the importance of each of these tasks and don't miss any out. Individually they may appear trivial but together they are a powerful set of activities that force you to think through your site in the right way and the right sequence.



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1 Strategy

“All men can see these tactics whereby I conquer, but what none can see is the strategy out of which victory evolved”

*Sun Tzu
(The art of war)*

All great websites have a great strategy. Their creators had a clear idea about the purpose of the website, they knew the ‘journeys’ their customers would take. They knew what they would give their customers, and they knew what they wanted their customers to think, feel and do.

This is what we want to teach you in this short e-book.

However, evolution is as vital as a great strategy and has an important role to play. . Not only will you **NOT** get it right first time, it is good that you don’t. Search engines love to see your website change and evolve and so do your customers.



1.1 Outcomes

Task 1 Create an outcome for your website that is realistic and achievable

Why are you bothering to read this e-book?

The answer to this question is an important one and will form the basis of your entire website plan.

Do you want more people to visit your hotel, join your health club, come to your shop, call you to get a quote or advertise with you ?

Do you want to reduce your workload provide info to your customers in more consistent and efficient manner ?

Do you want to establish a professional brand, launch a new product, gauge reaction to a new idea?

All these are valid desired outcomes for establishing a website and there are many thousands more. Make sure you decide wisely on your desired outcome.

“If your investment of time, effort and cost is to be worthwhile, then you must make sure that you never lose sight of this outcome.”

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1.2 Goals

Task 2. Create a set of goals that support the outcome you are looking for

For example if your outcome is to gain more customers then your goals might be.

- Articulate the quality and price of the service or product on your website
- Gain high ranking on search engines for your keywords
- Market your website offline by attaching it to stationery and other advertising.
- Make it very easy for the customer to contact you through your site.

If your outcome was to become more efficient, your goals might be:

- Create all documents and forms in a downloadable form and place on the website
- Develop an advertising strategy to inform your existing customers of your new website
- Structure your website in an organized way so that your clients can find the information they need easily.

As you can see many of the goals rely on you undertaking tasks that are outside and that compliment your website content.



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2 Customer perspective

“The aim of marketing is to know and understand the customer so well that the product or service fits him and sells itself.”

Peter F Drucker

Task 3. design a customer journey

If you are to meet your goals and obtain a satisfactory outcome then your website needs to take your customer on a journey.



As he progresses on this journey he should become more and more convinced about your proposition. More and more willing to act in the way you want him to. The sequence of the navigation buttons, the words in the headings, the style and quantity of images should all be geared towards removing any reservations and building confidence in you.

The quality of the customer journey you create is linked to how well you really know and understand your customer.

“The journey should give your customer all the information he needs in the sequence that he needs it in a form that is best suited to him.”

Do you know how they think? Do you know what they want to see? Do you know how they will react to information you give them? Do you know how to word ideas so they will be more attractive. Do your customers want pictures or words? Do they prefer style or lots of information?

Never forget that the website is not for you but for your customer.

For example a customer journey for a local builder who's target outcome is to gain more customers might be something like the following:

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Basic customer Journey

<p>Show the customer at a glance the kinds of work we specialize in.</p>	<p>Website style should be professional and clean and clear, but not so slick that we appear too expensive.</p> <p>Main title on homepage who we are and what we do and what makes us special. Immediate un-ambiguous sub titles. Driveways and Bricklaying. Pictures next to each title. Picture of me smiling, ideally with a customer to show I am friendly and not a cowboy</p>
<p>Show examples our work with customer quotes</p>	<p>Show pictures of customers standing next to their finished work with quotes from them. Each quote should concentrate on a different element of our performance. (service, quality, project management). Infer that this is the tip of the iceberg.</p>
<p>Address customer price concerns.</p>	<p>Give some comparisons of our work and how they have resulted in increased value of homes. Explain how we are not the cheapest but also not the most expensive.</p>
<p>Explain why we are special</p>	<p>Clean titles. Honest words. Good pictures of our company HQ with our sign-written vans outside. Downloadable company brochures in PDF format. Tell what makes us special is our attention to detail and 50% retention until the client is 100% satisfied. Neat clean stylish images linked to our corporate colours.</p>
<p>Get them to call us</p>	<p>Encourage them to call us a have a big bold image that says 'Call for a quote now' this links to our contact page.</p>

As you can see this is a basic task. The first column and it's sequence is born from an understanding of your client - what questions they will want answering and in what order. The Second column can be refined as you progress with the other Tasks.



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3 Collecting the information

“The two words information and communication are often used interchangeably, but they signify quite different things.

Information is giving out; communication is getting through.”

Sydney J Harris

If you have been running your business for a while, then no doubt you are awash with information. You probably have more pictures, quotes, brochures, logos and images than you can shake a sick at.

Just because you have a lot of information it does not mean that you have the right information to communicate your messages.

Task 4. Build a content shopping list

Once you have created your customer journey, list all the sources of information that you require to communicate your messages about your business and help your customers think, feel and act in the way you want. This basics are included below:

“The Internet is awash with websites that have been cobbled together with bits of random website furniture that does not fit together in style or in message.”



Text: Create your text ‘offline’ in a word processor. Take time to craft the words and structure the sentences in a way that will get your messages across in a simple way.

Images: The Internet is rich in pictures. Most visitors (apart from visitors on dialup that is) love lots of images that convey messages in the form of attractive images. Make a list of all the images that you require for your site. Some you might have, some you might need to take and some you may need to find.

Nowadays you can get many millions of images from public websites and image libraries. Once you have ascertained that there are no copyright issues with the images, you can just right click over the image and save directly to your desktop.

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Quotes: If it is appropriate to use quotes from your customers or perhaps respective figures, doing so it helps to bring an element of credibility to your site. Again make a list of all the quotes you require. If you do not already have quotes call your customers or organizations.

Links: Be prepared to build a page of useful, relevant links to other websites in which you think your customers might have an interest. If your collection of links are comprehensive and relevant to your customers you may find that your customers retrace their steps and revisit your site just to keep using your links.

Site Jewelry: When you look at established sites you might often see ornamental images that break text and provide a quality look to the page such as the simple image below.

It provides a feeling that the page is alive and professionally designed. Once again you can find such 'jewelry' on many websites. The same copyright advice applies.



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4 Structuring your website

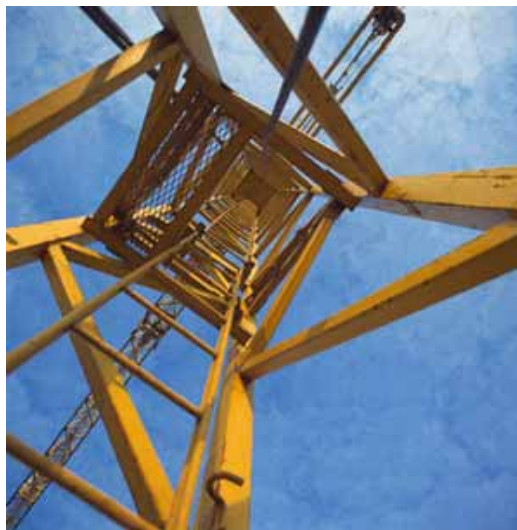
“99% of website creators fail to realise that the web is an emotional experience. Few websites reflect this important priority”

Grant Fairly

Task 5 Create a site structure

Create a schematic diagram of your pages and how they will all link together. Start with your home page at the top and create an idea of how your pages will link together. Decide which pages will be visible from your home page and which ones are hidden and only accessible by clicking through others to reach them.

Don't build too many layers. As a rule of thumb your visitor should not have to click more than 2 times to get to the information he needs.



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5 Creating your site

“The greatest strength of our service is the flexibility of our editor, the greatest weakness of our system is the flexibility of our editor.”

*Martin Cooke
Founder of Reason8*

Internet users are impatient and unforgiving. They will give you between 5 and 10 seconds to impress them. If you fail, your competitor is only ever one click away.

5.1 Style

Task 6. Create a style plan for your site

It is tempting to dive in and use all the colours, fonts and text decorations available to you with our editor. However, without careful consideration your site will look amateurish and be difficult to read. We recommend being ruthlessly consistent. You will be amazed how much easier your site will be to read and how much more professional it will appear:

Font: Fix the font - use a single font type through your entire document.

Size: Decide on a size of font for all body text (usually 12px). Decide on a size for all subheadings and main headings.

Bold and italics: If you are going to use bold or italics then be consistent. If you use it in one heading, use it in all headings.

Colour: Poor use of colour can ruin a website, but colour can also bring it to life. If you want to make your headings a different colour, we recommend making all your headings one colour, your subheadings perhaps different shade of the same colour. Use colour in your body text sparingly.

Images: Decide how you will use images in your website. Will they all be the same size? Will you edit the images before up-loading. Will you align them all the to the right or the left, or just wrap the text around them.

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5.2 Content

Task 7. Create a content plan

And finally decide what content (from task 4) will appear on which pages.

Refer back to your customer journey (from task 3) and make sure the content that you offer allows your visitor to think, feel and do the things you have planned.

“Remember that writing for the screen is not the same as writing for paper. You need to be punchy, simple and to the point.”



And finally:

Once you have created your plan, all that is left is to set aside some time and use the Reason8 systems to create your pages and build your new site to a deadline you define.

“I love deadlines. I love the whooooshing sound they make as they fly by”

Douglas Adams

