

As you consider any new web development project, this Online Work Plan will help you begin defining an online strategy aligned with your goals and resources. Take your time to work through these questions.

PROJECT STAKEHOLDERS

Who has either authority or significant vested interest in the outcome of this project? Who will need to be consulted throughout the development process? This could be just you, this could be you and your boss, this could be a broader coalition of people and/or organizations. The more people involved, the more energy you will need to dedicate to internal process and communication.

GOALS/MESSAGING

Organizational Goals

What is your organizational mission and your primary goals. Identify these clearly before trying to define the goals for your web site. Your web site should support your fundamental organizational and/or campaign goals.

Web Site Goals

- 1. Goals of Online Publisher (that's YOU):** Why do you want this web site (or online tool)? How will it benefit your organization? How can you use it to enhance your mission? When a user comes to your site, what would you like them to do, learn, experience? What information should they have easy access to? How do you want them to interact? What methods of feedback would you like available to them?
- 2. Primary Audience (s):** Are you building a site for a very specific constituency, the general public, the media, or all. Knowing who you're speaking to will help you develop a plan that reaches them.
- 3. Goals of Site User:** Once you've established your primary audiences, you can start to develop use case scenarios. When a user comes to your site, what will they mostly likely be looking to do, learn, experience? What information will they want easy access to? How will they be looking to interact and engage?
- 4. Key Message:** What's the most important message your online presence should relay?

SITE DESIGN

1. **Overall Tone:** What's your desired overall tone for the site? Authoritative? Fun? Quirky? Edgy? Youthful? Whatever tone you choose should connect to the audiences you've identified in the previous section.
2. **Look and Feel:** Colors, design themes, graphics?
3. **Organization Specs (if applicable for brand continuity):** Logos, specific fonts, colors?
4. **Web Sites You Love:** From a visual design perspective, list a few web sites that work for you. Be specific about what you like – Colors? Shapes? Spaciousness? Images?
5. **Web Sites You Hate** Again, from a design perspective, what sites really do not work for you, and why.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS OF AUDIENCE

When you're building a web site, the technical capacity of your audience will largely influence your development tools and the final site structure. If your audience consists of advanced users with the latest technology, that's one thing. However, if your audience consists primarily of folks who rarely use the Internet and certainly don't have fast connections, that's also important to know up front.

1. **Connection Speed:** Broadband or dial-up?
2. **Plug-Ins:** Are your users tech savvy enough to have the Flash or Real Player plug-ins (for multi-media)?
3. **Technical Expertise:** How savvy is your audience? Are they familiar with Internet conventions? How much hand holding will be needed?
4. **Disabilities:** Important and usually not addressed. Blind? Color blind? Physical disabilities? All are important considerations. If you're building a site that may be used with voice activated software, for example, you will need to accommodate this.

MAINTENANCE

Consider the maintenance requirements for your web site at the BEGINNING of the development process. This will save you much heartache in the long run. Identify your resources and build what you can afford to maintain. You may also consider investing in infrastructure that allows for easy maintenance by non-technical administrators.

1. Who?: Who will be maintaining your site? Someone in house? A contractor? If you know that someone who barely understands HTML will most likely be the designated maintenance person for your site, the site structure and design should allow for easy maintenance.

2. What?: Graphics? Plain text? Streaming media?

3. How Much?: Are you uploading 100 pages of new content a day, or 2 pages a week? You will need to develop the appropriate structures to accommodate your maintenance needs.

4. How Often?: Are you updating content once a week or 3 times a day?

SYSTEMS INTEGRATION

What offline systems will need to be integrated into the new web project (e.g. a membership database)? Also, what potential online systems would significantly affect your offline systems? For example, if you implement an e-commerce system, this will need to be integrated with your offline accounting system.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: BUILD TO SCALE

Do you want to do this again in 2 years? Probably not. Carefully evaluate your potential organizational trajectory, and build a web tool that can accommodate future growth. If you know you're launching a particular program one year from now, build the online capacity to support this now.

1. Where will you be in 1 year?:

2. Where will you be in 2 years?:

3. Where will you be in 5 years?: