Hi! I'm Christine, the creative director, head graphic designer and owner of OakTree Designs. I am a front-end web developer and graphic designer. OakTree is a new company that officially launched in 2020 (yikes, I know) and I am hoping that I can help share some knowledge and help get your site up and running with as few hiccups as possible.

The aim of this series isn't as much a step by step instruction on building a website but more on the concepts and thought processes that go into a design before the project actually starts. In this article, we will be talking about some questions you should ask yourself before you get started and some general information that is important to know before starting your project. Thank you for going on this journey with me and I hope this series finds you well and is helpful to you and your business. Best of luck!

- Christine Kollo

> "A website that is incredibly eye catching is only worth its weight if it is also functional."

Let's get to it...

Web development can be broken down into two fundamental pieces, form and function. A website that is incredibly eye catching is only worth its weight if it is also functional. If you go to said beautiful website and it breaks at the first sign of trouble, we are going to be in some hot water so let's talk about the functions of a good site and the makings of a great one.

When we talk about function, I want you to imagine a birthday cake. The function of the website is the cake and the form is the icing and decorations we put on it to make it complete. When it comes to your website, things like html, java script or bootstrap is the cake that create the structure we are working with.

Creating the working environment can also be deciding to go with a CMS - Content Management System. A CMS is a great option if you don't have a lot of coding experience or time but would like to tackle building your website on your own or, if you have other employees that need to update your site.

Some examples of CMS's would include Wordpress, Shopify, Wix, SquareSpace or any of the D.I.Y website builders you may have come across. A CMS is a pre-built starting ground that, for the most part, you just need to add decorations to. It does exactly what the name implies…it manages your content. For the purpose of this series, I will be focusing on websites built with CMS's and website builders and less on a self coded model.

CMS's take care of some of the really heavy lifting when it comes to creating a functional site and some of these website builders are better than others. When it comes time to choose a solution that will suit your business, there are a few questions you need to ask yourself first before you dive into anything else.

- What are my "non-negotiable's"?

- Who am I trying to reach?

- Do I eventually want/need my website to do something else down the road?

- Who else is going to have access to this site for administration?

- Do I have time to build this website?

- What is my budget for this project?

- What content do I need to be displayed here and what do I just want to have here?

- Have I talked to any customers about building my website and received any input from them?

- How do I plan on promoting/advertising or marketing this site once we launch?

Asking yourself these questions will give you a good foundation on what your next steps should be and figuring out the answers may be a tough ask, but an important one. It's so understandable to want to start with what colours and fonts you want to use but it's important to start with your functionality and in the next section, I will go through each question and explain why they're important.

I'm going to stop here for now and keep going with the answers in the next article. It is really important that you take the time to answer those questions honestly and fully.

Until next time,
Christine Kollo