

Welcome back!

In this article, we will dive into answering the first four questions on the list I posed earlier. The reason why we need to answer these questions isn't just about what CMS to use, but also so you get to know your company from your customers point of view and the entire scope of this project before you dive into it.

There are so many options when it comes to web site solutions and even as a web developer myself, I have become overwhelmed with the choices available. Many website builders will sell you on the idea that it is a one stop shop and all you have to do is x,y,z and you will have a stunning, never breaking, masterpiece of a website. The unfortunate side of that, is that every business has a different set of needs. I have never had two clients that were even remotely similar. Some of them share space in the same industry like retail, but their needs are much different. With these in mind, developers

have created a starting place for users of CMS's that can fit with many online business models and can cater to a large amount of people but they are certainly not perfect. Having your plan and knowing what tools you will need to succeed will allow you to have the confidence to go to any of these companies with a list of questions for them and find the best fit for you. Web design can be overwhelming and you want to be prepared. The functions of your website and the needs you have in relation to your business are the answers we are after so let's get started.

What are my “non-negotiable’s”?

Non-negotiable's are something I ask my clients about at the beginning of our strategy session when we talk about their overall site structure. What are the things you 1000% absolutely need to have to make this website function properly.

I have created a fun case study for demonstration purposes - Lexi's Barbershop. Lexi needs a website that her clients can visit to book appointments, browse new hair styles and purchase products from. The non-negotiable's in this case study would be 1) a booking tool 2) an interactive photo gallery and, 3) an e-commerce solution.

These non-negotiable's help set up the fundamentals of your site and from here you can build your wire frame - a drawn out map of your website, much like a blueprint. Wireframes help illustrate the page structure, layout and function of your site. As a wireframe usually represents the initial site concept like where everything will go, styling, colour, and graphics are kept to a minimum. I draw my wireframes in illustrator, a program on my computer but good ol' paper and pencil work just fine.

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“get to know your company from your customers point of view.”

Will I want my site to be something else?

Lexi really wants to be able to sell the products in her store on her site. She doesn't really have the resources yet to set that up and wants to leave that part for later. Problem is, she went with a CMS that doesn't have the best E-commerce solution and now she's stuck using it or risks having to start from scratch. It's important that you have a good idea of the finish line before you start.

Who is my target market?

Knowing your audience is a vital part of starting your website. Let's use our case study again. Lexi's clientele is younger men and women in the 25-40 year old range. She can have a robust booking tool that syncs her clients calendar with hers, send out notifications and reminders in text or email and can show all the times and dates she is available on her site and so on. This gives her the functionality she needs to be successful. Her demographic of clients know how to use this kind of tech and this is great application for it. In the end, ask your clients to participate with your site but make sure you are reasonable with your request. This same kind of tech might not be worth it if her clientele was elderly.

Who is going to have access?

Who else is going to have access to this site?

Do you have multiple employees that need to log in and add products? Or maybe you are a solopreneur and plan on staying that way. In any case, knowing who will be using the backend of your site is important. Remember that if you are sharing the workload, you need to set up the backend in a way that is easy not only for you, but also your staff. I'm sure there are more, but in my experience, Wordpress and Shopify are great for retail outfits that have multiple people involved.

Up Next...

We have asked and answered some of the important questions about the first stages of functionality for your site so, up next we will ask a few more about time, money, content and what your customers want. Things will come into focus and you will have a strong foundation to start your project with confidence.

Until next time,
Christine Kollo

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