



BLUE STEEL

8 Steps to Planning a
High ROI Website



So, You Need a Website?

Maybe you're just getting started, or it's time to knock the cobwebs off your current site. Either way, building a new site for your business will be (and should be) a significant investment of time and money. You want to get this one right, because your website is likely to be your number one communication tool with leads and prospects, and maybe even existing customers.

Before you get excited about sliders, layouts, fonts and all the pretty stuff, let me ask you something: What's your website's job going to be? How is your website going to serve your business? What value will it bring you?

We're going to build a website in a way that may feel strange to you. We're flipping things around, and we're not thinking about design until the very end of our planning process.

Honestly, most websites really, really suck. They just don't do their job, and they never drive new business. There is no return on the significant investment of time and money many businesses make in building their websites.

People have been going about the process all wrong, but in this book you'll learn the right way to plan and execute your most valuable communications tool. Because your website, just like a good sales or marketing employee, should be delivering a high ROI.

How to Use This Guide

Although you may be tempted to open this guide up on your tablet or computer and follow along electronically, we recommend you **print this guide out**. You will need to answer a lot of questions before you finish this guide, and you definitely want to keep track of your work, so print it out so that you can fill out the answers directly on the page.



Step 1: Defining Your Audience

Anyone else having flashbacks to Marketing 101? Defining your audience is one of those things every business owner/marketer/MBA knows they should do - but very few actually do.

But, you might ask, if we're building a website -- not designing a product or writing a marketing plan, why worry about audience now?

“Well, your website is most likely your number one communication tool for prospects, customers, and the general public. “

You probably forget that because you don't use your own site the way they do.

If you have one shot at communicating (well) with people who want to do business with you, don't you want to be absolutely sure you're speaking directly to the right people? Yeah, thought so.

Who Is Your Audience?

If you answered “I don't know” or even worse “EVERYONE!” -- congratulations. You just killed a kitten. Ok, maybe not a kitten, but a little piece of me dies every time I hear a client say either of these.

The good news is, if you gave a soul-stabbing answer, we're about to build a more encouraging answer to the question.



Who Do You Want to Work With?

The fun part of this exercise is you get to decide who you really enjoy working with and who is best for you to work with.

If it feels difficult to narrow your answers down, good! You want to really push yourself here to see how well you can define your ideal client/customer/audience. And you may find that you actually have more than one audience.

Beyond the basics of your ideal audience demographics, think about the personality and demeanor of your ideal clients. Do you like to work with customers who are strictly business or people who are a little more laid back? Do you want customers who can challenge you and might have a bit of fire in their bellies or do you sleep better at night when your clients are quieter? (There's no right answer to this, only what's right for you.)

Knowing your target market is excellent, but having an actual ideal person you want to work with is even better.

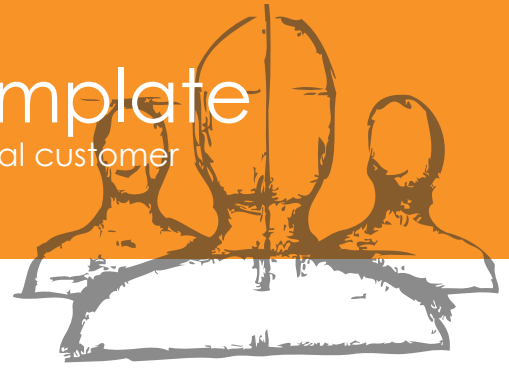


Jamie Mays discusses the importance of setting boundaries in your business, including only working with your ideal customers. Check out the conversation at bluesteelesolutions.com/setting-maintaining-boundaries-business



Customer Persona Template

Fill out this template to clearly define your ideal customer



Date:

Customer Name:

Customer's Organization:

About You

1. I sell to:

Consumers or **Businesses**

2. Your Name, Title, and Company (if applicable)

To complete this exercise, you'll need to think about an actual customer or client who you LOVED working with and who you profit from. Picture that person as you complete this task or even better, interview them directly.

About Your Customer | If Business to Business (B2B)

1. Overview of company you sell to (what they do and who they do it for)

2. Details about this person's role in the company

3. Annual revenue of company





1. Customer annual income

3. Customer's age

4. Customer's gender

5. Personality traits of customer

6. Hobbies or leisure activities of customer

7. Is your customer heavily involved in or concerned about politics, religion, or another cause/organization? Describe in detail their affiliations and feelings about these groups.

8. Level of technical expertise: (how comfortable are they online, do they use mobile devices, what social networks are they on)

9. What keeps them up at night? What are their concerns? (this does not have to relate to your product or service)

Relevant to You

1. What is your customer's primary goal?

2. What is your customer's secondary goal?

3. What is the biggest roadblock to their success?



4. How do you help them reach their goals or solve their problems?

5. Write a few quotes from this person in relation to their goals/challenges

6. What are their objections to your products or services?

7. How would you introduce your product or service to this person?



Step 2: Developing Your Brand

Can we just get one thing straight? I feel like we're at a point now where I can be honest with you. You can handle it, right?

your brand ≠ your logo

Whew. Thanks for letting me get that off my chest. Yes, a logo is a very important part of branding. But your brand is not just your logo. Your brand is how the outside world sees you. It's your business personality, it's the things people think you care about, it's the attitude they expect to get from you (and attitude is not necessarily negative).

From the time we're little children we're taught not to judge one another based solely on appearance. It's what's inside that counts, right? So channel your 1st grade teacher and let's talk about how you really want the world to see you.



Step 3: Personality

If your business was a person, what would they be like?

Would they be funny or serious? Remember the persona exercise we did for audience building in chapter one? Well, here it comes again -- but this time you'll be creating a persona that represents who your company is. If you're a small or single person business, this persona should heavily reflect who you are.

What You Do & Who You Do it For?

Your brand should also reflect what you do and who you do it for. We'll get more into this later - but part of branding your site will be simply stating what you do and who you do it for. Try to avoid the standard responses like "I'm a home builder" or "I'm a financial planner" -- think more in terms of the benefit you provide people.

"I help give people peace of mind that they won't outlive their retirement funds"



Defining Your Brand Persona

Fill out this worksheet to clearly create a brand persona



Date:

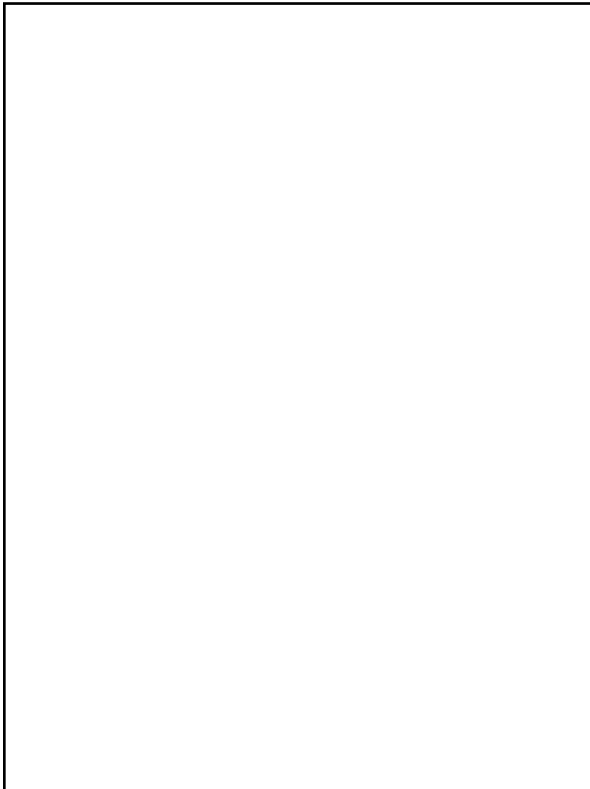
Company Name:

Company Overview

Write a brief overview of what you do and who you do it for.



If Your Brand Was a Person



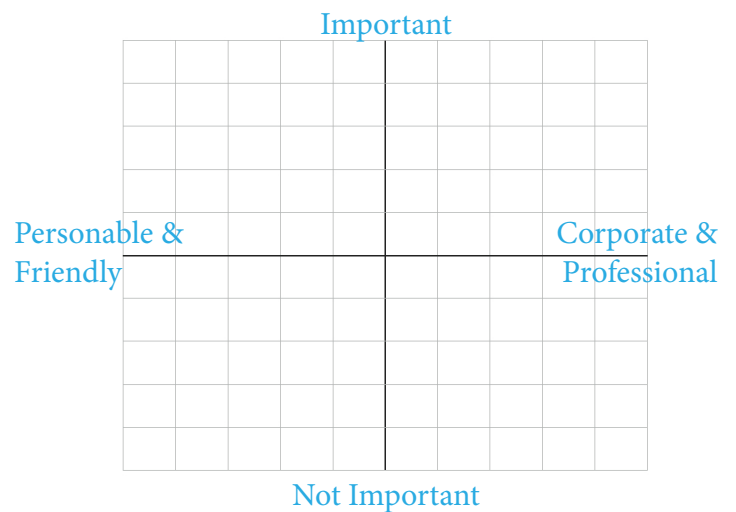
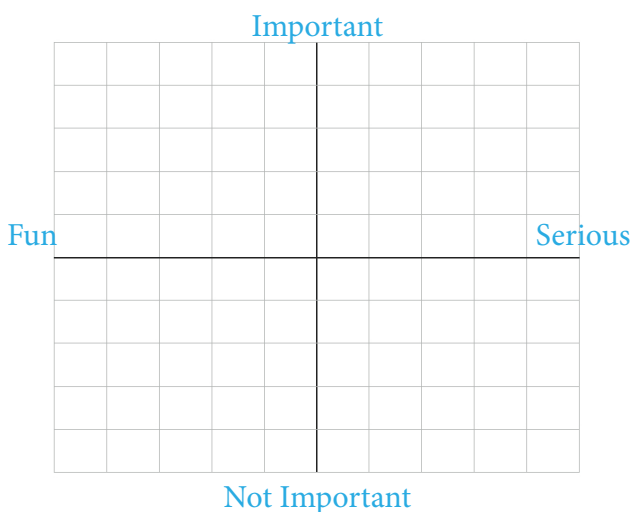
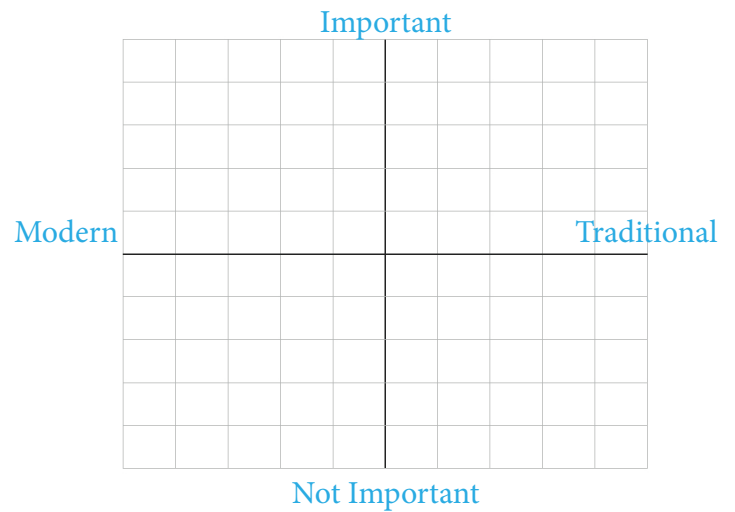
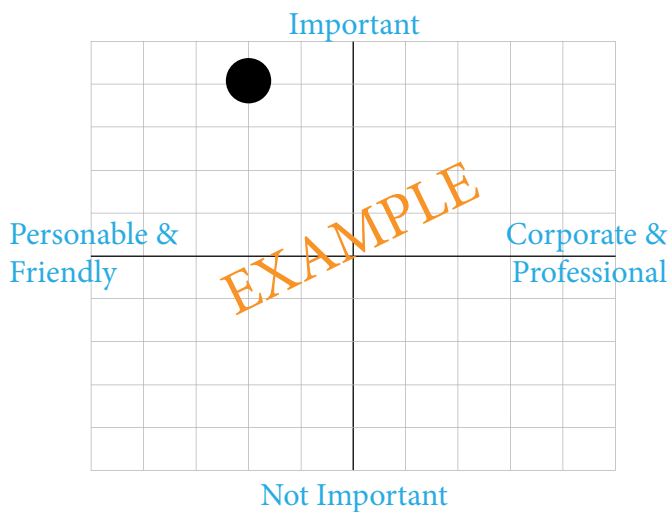
Write several statements and adjectives that describe your brand as if it were a person. It may help to include a photograph of an actual person you feel embodies your brand while you write these statements.



Brand Personality & Beliefs

Place an X on each graph to represent where your brand falls on the spectrum and how important the trait is to your brand. Avoid the temptation to be completely neutral in your answers to these questions. Be uniquely you, and your best customers will love you for it.

The example below shows the brand is moderately personable & friendly and that trait is highly important to the brand.



Important									
Feminine									Masculine
Not Important									

Important									
Young									Old
Not Important									

Important									
No Tech									Cutting Edge
Not Important									

Important									
Accessible to All									Upscale
Not Important									

Add your own important personality traits below

Important									
Not Important									

Important									
Not Important									



Key Affiliations and Causes

What religious, political, or other affiliations, organizations and causes are important to your brand?

What is the affiliation or cause?

What is your brand's standing?

Do your beliefs align with your ideal customer?

Should your beliefs be conveyed through your brand strategy?

Is this relevant and important to your brand in the public eye?

Important									
Not Important									



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Important									
Not Important									





This, but Not That

Use opposing adjectives to define exactly who your brand is.
For example: *generous but not cheap*

_____ *but not* _____

_____ *but not* _____

_____ *but not* _____

_____ *but not* _____

_____ *but not* _____

_____ *but not* _____

_____ *but not* _____



Your Brand Voice

Do you refer to yourself in first or third person?

Is your customer second person?

Do you use common vernacular?

Are contractions ok?

Is your voice conversational or technically correct?





Phrases You Would Use

How would you answer the phone?

How would you address and close an email?

An error alert on your website might look like

A success message on your website might look like

A tweet from your company would say

A block of marketing content would look like



Key Statements

Battle Cry

Think about it this way. You created your business for a reason. Something inspired you, and whatever that was your clients can probably relate to it. Try this exercise before you start writing about your company.

For example: *I started Blue Steele Solutions, a full service marketing firm that helps small businesses to grow, be more efficient, and perform like the big guys, because I was sick and tired of seeing good ideas fail, and good people feel like failures.*

I started _____, a _____ that helps _____ to _____, because I was sick and tired of _____.

Benefits Statement

Features are great, but they don't sell much. Focus on benefits to convey the true value of your products and services. To find your benefits statements complete the following Copyblogger exercise:

1. List all of your product's features, what your product, service or brand has. Narrow it down to the features that are most likely to hook your prospect:
2. Examine what each feature does, or why you've included it:
3. Take your list of what your features do and ask yourself how they connect with your prospect's true desires:
4. To get to the bottom of each feature's true benefit, keep asking the question "What does this mean for your prospect on an emotional level?":



Color & Typography

If you already have an established color palette and typography set, list it below. If you've yet to complete this step of the process take the first 12 pages of this activity to the nearest branding specialist and put them to work.

Hint: we can help with that, just give us a shout at bluesteelesolutions.com or 214-680-0654

Typography

Fonts used for web:

Fonts used for print:

Color Palette

Pantone Colors

CMYK Colors

RGB Colors

Hex Colors



Step 4. Calling Readers to Action (Conversion)

We touched on it a little bit in the introduction, but now it's time to dive in and put your website to work.

In order to get a high return on the time and money you invest in this site, you've got to define specific jobs it will do. Successfully completing these jobs is what we refer to as conversion.

Do you want people to call you, fill out a form, sign up for a webinar, or download a white paper? While the primary objective of the website is ultimately to sell something, you won't be able to do that on every single page (or depending on the product or service, maybe not on your website at all).

Chapter 6, Planning Your Current and Ongoing Content, will help you match each page of your site with an appropriate call to action, but first we have to define what those are.

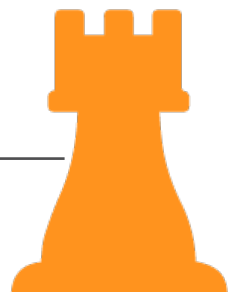
Top-of-the-Funnel Actions

Folks at the top of the sales funnel are the people just getting to know you. They're not ready to buy yet, but they might be ready to take one tiny step forward in building a relationship with you.

Offer them a white paper, an ebook or another digital product in exchange for permission to add them to your email list.

This gives you the opportunity to build trust and start to form a relationship over time. Regular communication, with even more great content, will help push them further through your sales funnel.

Your offer must be relative to them and truly helpful. Anything else will damage their opinion of you and ensure they won't be coming back for more.



Mid-Funnel Actions

As prospects get to know, like and trust you they will move further through the sales funnel and become ready to take higher risk actions.

These mid-funnel folks will be ready for calls to action like requesting a call, starting a free trial or participating in a project review.

Notes:

Bottom-of-the-Funnel Actions

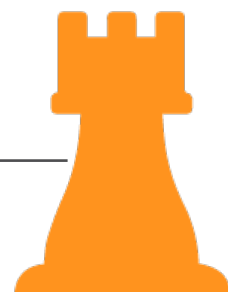
Finally, they move all the way to the bottom of the funnel. It's time to ask for the sale. Depending on your sales process and workflow this may happen on your website or it may happen over the phone, in a meeting or by email.

Notes:

Post-Sale Actions

Don't forget to include conversion opportunities for people you've already sold to. Related products/services and referrals are great calls to action for customers who have already moved through your sales funnel.

Notes:



Step 5. Configuring Your Traffic Plan

If you build it, they will come. If only that was true for your website. The truth is, getting people to your site is going to take work.

At this point in the planning you need to take a step back and think about how you'll drive traffic to your website. Some options to consider:

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Google, Bing, Yahoo: these are the places people go when they are looking for information. You want your website to be among the top results when they look for the products and services you offer.

The process is more complicated than it seems -- but not impossible. You can learn everything you can about the SEO process and do it yourself or you can hire a pro.



Pam Ann discusses the basics of SEO and talks about how businesses can get more customers to their website. Check out the conversation at **bluesteelesolutions.com/seo-chat**



Social Media

People spend more hours on social media than they spend sleeping. Ok, I just made that up, but really, we spend LOTS of time on social. Building and fostering relationships on social media is another way you can lead people back to your website.

Word of Mouth/Referrals

If you've done a bang up job defining your ideal client/customer and you provide them the best products and services around - you should be getting more referrals than you can handle. But don't leave it to chance, create a plan for reminding friends, colleagues, and clients to refer folks to your website.

Spend some time working out the details on all the other ways you plan to send traffic back to your website. A website with no traffic won't do much for your business.



Amy Donohue discusses the basics of social media marketing and talks about how businesses use social media to their advantage. Check out the conversation at **bluesteelesolutions.com/social-media-marketing/chat**



Step 6. Planning Your Current and Ongoing Content

Whose Job Is It?

Your website content absolutely cannot be written by a committee. You may have contributors to different parts of the site content, but one single person must be responsible for wrangling all that content together. That person should also do the editing work to ensure your content has a consistent tone and voice.

When you count on writing your website content as a group, you'll find that the process drags on far longer than it should. So right now decide -- whose job is it to manage the content creation process?

Minimum Viable Content

Look for the bare necessities, the simple bare necessities....

The idea of creating all the content your business will ever need is overwhelming. If you approach your website with this mentality, you'll never finish the site.

Instead of aiming for completed content, start with just your minimum viable content. This is the minimum amount of information you need on your site to convert visitors. Your MVC may be different from mine, but in general we only need 3 primary pieces of information to launch a website: the "about us" information, social proof, and an offer.

If you can create more content than this prior to launch, great! But don't keep your website on a shelf simply because you haven't crossed off every page of content on your list.

About Us - Introducing Your Company

Forget Mission Statements: I want to Know About Your Dent in the Universe.

Mission statements have nothing to do with reality, and they certainly have nothing to do with who you are. Instead, think about how you want to impact the world around you.

In the book *Rework*, David Heinemeier Hansson talks about knowing your place in the universe. Where are you making a difference? What is your impact? What will the world miss out on if you don't continue what you're doing?



Your Battle Cry

Think about it this way. You created your business for a reason. Something inspired you, and whatever that was your clients can probably relate to it. Try this exercise before you start writing about your company.

I started _____,
a _____
that helps _____
to _____,
because I was sick and tired of _____.

For example: I started Blue Steele Solutions, a full service marketing firm that helps small businesses to grow, be more efficient, and perform like the big guys, because I was sick and tired of seeing good ideas fail, and good people feel like failures.

Your “about” content will most likely be the most visited pages of your website. People want to know who they are working with or buying from. Be honest here. If you are a one person team, use the word “I” instead of “we”. Share your story, let people really get to know you through this part of your website.

The Structure Is Up to You, But We Suggest the Following:

- Story - why did you get into this business, what makes you the best fit? Don't forget about that battle cry, let people know you're passionate and motivated to work hard for them.
- Bios - introduce yourself and your team. Use photos and have some fun with really letting people know who the folks are behind the brand.
- Ideal Fit - clearly state not only what you do and what you're about but who you work best with. This is your opportunity to weed out people who are not your ideal audience and appeal very highly to those who are.

Social Proof

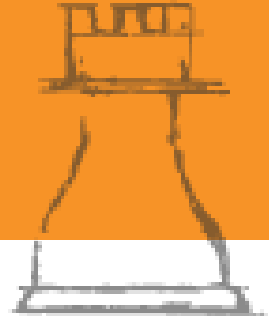
People need to feel safe buying from you -- and safety comes in numbers. Show your audience that real people have survived working with you or purchasing your products and come out on the other side happy and better off for it.

Use testimonials, case studies, client stories, tweets and reviews to prove to your audience you are the real deal and someone their peers already trust.

Bonus! This part of your content plan is just curation - you don't even have to write anything!



Content Outline



Date:

Company Name:

Website URL:

Keyword Phrase*

*If you know what keyword you are optimizing for, add it. If not, leave it blank.

Print a copy of the Content Outline for each page of your site. Follow this formula to construct your pages in a way that focuses on the benefits and gives your customer confidence that you are a safe business to buy from.

1. Page title

2. Page Goal (Primary)

3. Page Goal (Secondary)



4. Overview/basic description
5. Examples/social proof
6. Call To Action - Primary
7. Detailed description/more benefits/process
8. Examples/social proof
9. Call To Action - Secondary



10. Recap benefits

11. Pricing (if applicable)

12. Call To Action Primary

13. Related Products/Services

You may not have reviews (social proof) or examples at this point. If not, you can abbreviate your pages -- but make it a goal to add these elements as soon as you have them available.



Offer/Product

Finally you've got to have an offer. A product or service to sell.

Focus on the Benefits

We tend to describe our products and services with a list of features -- when what our clients really want to know is how they will benefit from those things.

<http://www.copyblogger.com/copywriting-benefits/>

Keep it Simple

If you offer more than one product or service, it can be tempting to load up a single page with everything you do -- but that is very overwhelming to your audience. Instead, focus on only one product or service per page. Just Start Writing

This is the first bit of writing you're doing for your website, so go back to the personas you created in chapter one. Write your content as if you were talking to one of the people you profiled. Once you think it's perfect, read it out loud. Does the content sound natural or is it awkward? Does it sound like something your business persona would say?

Somewhere along the way we educated the good writing right out of people. All the formal papers for school forced us to forget how to write for a real human. That doesn't mean spelling and grammar don't matter - but it does mean inflated language and jargon have no place here.

You're Never Done Done.

A great website should continue to grow and develop as your business grows and develops. Never consider your website complete and ready to put back on the shelf.



Step 7. Integrating Your Website with Your Work Flow

The last thing you want is to build a website that creates more busy work in your business. Consider the systems you already have in place that your website needs to work with.

CRM

If you have an established CRM system (and you should), consider hooking in your website forms so that data flows automatically instead of requiring manual entry.

Notes:

Invoicing

You may also want those leads flowing directly into your invoicing or accounting system.

Notes:

Newsletters/Communication

Collecting email addresses for your newsletter? That's right - integrate your website form with your newsletter form to reduce your manual workflow.

What other systems in your business need to talk directly to your website? List them, then decide if the cost of integrating them is worth the investment, or if it gets added to your website's long-term road map.

Notes:



Step 8. Designing your website

Honestly, This is a Job For a Pro

You may not have the budget for professional web design services right now, and starting on your own is better than doing nothing at all, but your short term marketing plans should include budgeting for professional design services.

If your website is doing the jobs you outlined previously, you will soon have increased revenue which can be applied to the design project. In the meantime, follow these guidelines for designing your own site or selecting a template for your website.

Simple is Better

Simple is always better when it comes to website design. Don't be tempted by flashy, busy or heavy templates and themes. These design elements distract from your content and typically don't do a great job of reinforcing your brand.

Guided by Content

You've already written the content for your website, so let that be your guide for layout and design. Think about how you want your audience to absorb your content, and layout your pages accordingly.

Never try to fit your content into the template demo layout or limit content to the areas a designer has designated with filler text. Content always rules over design.

Appeals to Your Target Audience

Forget about what YOU like and put yourself in your customers' shoes.

Reinforces Your Brand

Get out your Business Persona Worksheet and review the things you said were important to your business; what you stand for, what you do and who you do it for. Your website design should directly reflect these things.

That means if customer relationships are important to your brand, don't use stale stock photos in the design of your site. Use real pictures of you and your clients working together. If your brand persona is casual, relaxed and friendly use warm or bright colors rather than dark primaries to reflect your personality.



End Notes

Well, You Hung in There

You made it all the way to the end (or you just skipped straight here, in which case - get back to the beginning of the book!)

If you've followed along and completed the exercises, you should not only have an awesome plan for building your website, but a firmer view of your own business, what you do, and who you do it for.

You've already invested several hours in this process, and you'll invest many more (not to mention the financial investments you'll make along the way). Resist the urge to rush through any part of the website planning and building stages. Your website can be your most valuable marketing tool if you just put a little love and effort into the process of creating it.

If you're feeling a bit lost or like it might be time to call in the pros - schedule a project review and discover what we can do for you. Go to **bluesteelesolutions.com** to get in contact with us today!

