Gravity group

Get Started Guide for
Successful Web Projects

*While Staying Efficient and On-Brand

A Guide for Marketers, Leadership, and Project Managers

What's in this guide?

Sometimes the hardest part of a project is knowing where to start.

This guide will help you create a shared understanding of what kind of site you want for your organization, and how you plan to build it.
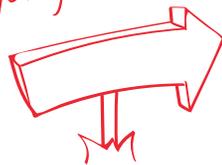
1   **What are your goals for your website?**

2   **Who is your audience?**

3   **Who should be involved?**

4   **What do you need your website to do?**

5   **What content do you need?**

6   **What is your budget?**

7   **What is your timeline?**

8   **What kind of process & partner do you want?**

If you know what your primary and secondary goals are, this makes all future decision-making much easier.

Your goals will determine what information is most prominent on the site, what pages you have, and how they're organized. This is one of the first things we ask during web projects, because it affects every part of design and development.

Do you want to get more leads? Attract new hires? Fundraise? Improve your local reach? Sell products?

Primary Goals

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Secondary Goals

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

These are hard questions, but don't skip this step! It'll guide everything going forward.

1

Who is your audience?

Do you have personas? If not, they are a great tool.

You want your website to serve the people you expect to visit it, and to encourage the actions you want them to take.

You can learn about your audience(s) using analytics for your current site, by interviewing staff who work directly with your audience, and asking your audience directly. A great exercise for defining your audience is to create personas for key audience groups.

	Who are they? E.g. employees, potential leads, etc.	**Why are they visiting your site?** E.g. to learn about your services	**What action do you want them to take?** E.g. fill out the contact form
Primary Audience Groups			
Other Audience Groups			

You'll want a project team that honors different perspectives, while being capable of making clear decisions and moving the project forward.

Primary Contact
Who will act as the main point of contact between the different people working on the project? They often help remove roadblocks and coordinate approvals.

Website Manager
Who will be responsible for managing the website after it's launched?

These people don't need to be familiar with web design. Your web partner should translate your guidance into good web design for you.

Input Team
Who do you need to give input during the initial phases of the project? This usually includes someone from each of the major divisions within an organization, and can be pretty large (5-20 people).

Approval Team
Who will make final decisions? It's a good idea to keep this group small (1-5 people).

Content Team
Who will be responsible for website content? This often involves gathering and organizing information from others, and sometimes creating new content (written and visual).

What specific functionality do you need? Do you need the site to integrate with any other technologies?

Your answers will inform which platform you build your website on, and what your budget needs to be. It's also helpful information to consider when looking for a web partner, so you can select a firm that is familiar with any specific functionality you need.

Don't worry about getting technical here. Focus on what your site needs to do, not how it needs to do it.

Functionality
Do you need a project portfolio? Contact forms? What do you need to be able to change and update yourselves vs. requesting someone else to update for you?

Integrations
Do you have software you currently use (e.g. for hiring or email marketing) that you need to integrate with the site?

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**Engaging websites generally use a variety of content.**

You'll want text to convey information about your organization, but you'll also want visuals that help people connect with your organization on an emotional level, and to engage people in the human side of your story. High-quality photography and video that represents your unique organization is as important to a good website as the copy.

It helps to do some initial content planning early on, so you know if you need a web firm that can help create custom visual content for your website.
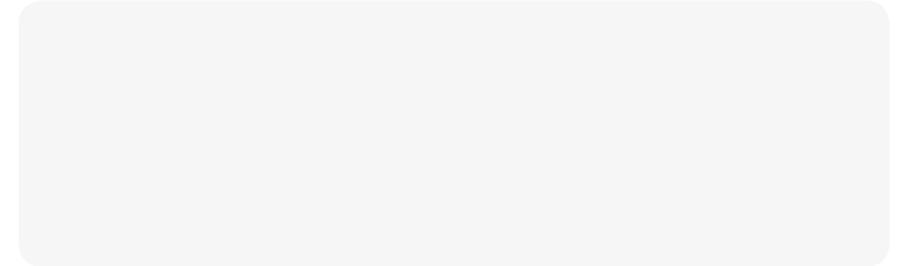
Custom visuals are always better than using stock! They feel more personal and the last thing you want is other sites with the same content as you.
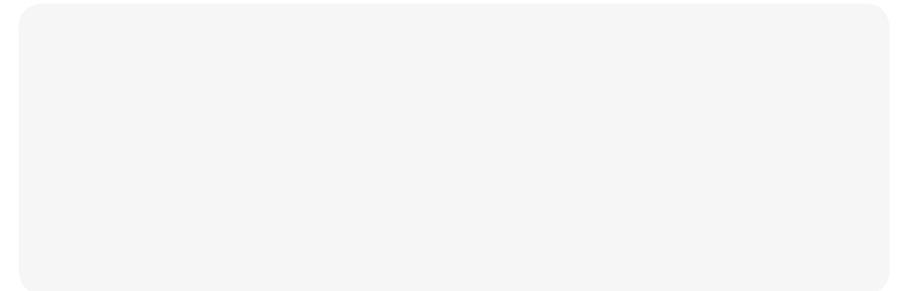
Text
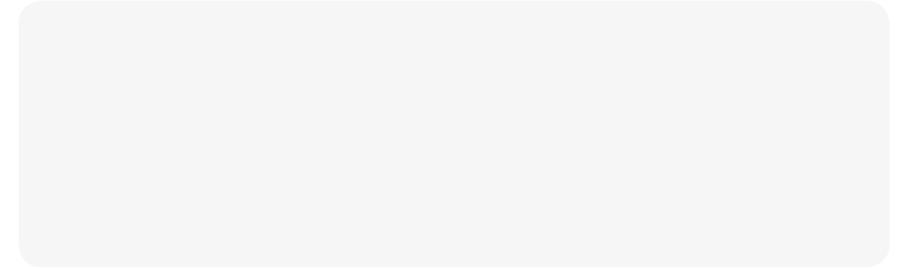
Images

Videos

What is your budget?

Features that can have the most impact on your budget are customization and functionality.

Costs for websites can vary dramatically, depending on how customized you want the site to be, functionality it needs to have, and tools and systems with which it needs to integrate. Templated sites often allow for little customization but faster development, whereas custom sites can be built to better fit your goals and how your visitors use your site but often take a little longer to develop.

When planning your budget, keep in mind that a little extra investment up front can help to prevent unexpected expenses in the future. A strong Discovery process will identify integration and functionality needs and ensure that your content management system meets your immediate and future needs so that your site can grow with you. Complex functionality, such as secure job boards, appointment scheduling, and eCommerce can require premium software or platforms. You'll also want to budget for content, such as photography and videos, as well as post-launch site maintenance, hosting, etc.

Budget for design and development
Initial site build

Budget for custom content
Content you need to create for the site

Budget for ongoing maintenance
Includes services such as hosting, updates, security, bug fixes, and future development

Often the budget will be a range until the end of Discovery, at which point you'll know enough to set a specific amount.

Do you need your website launched by a specific date? How much time do you need to provide the content and approvals for the project?

Website projects generally involve Discovery, Design, Development, Content, and Testing phases. At the very least, you'll need time to provide input, feedback, and approvals, plus additional time if you choose to do any of that work in-house. In building your timeline, you'll want to think about who will be working on the project, and how much time they can devote to it.

The most significant time commitment from your organization will likely be in gathering and creating content. Often this involves collecting information from people in leadership positions, who may have limited availability. Depending on your content needs, it may also involve scheduling video shoots and photography at key events or of key teams.

You'll want to allow yourself more time than you think to gather and create content, trust us.

MAJOR PROJECT PHASES

Discovery
Define the scope of the project in terms of content and functionality.

Design
Define the look and feel of the website.

Development
Build the site according to the design and content plan.

Content
Gather and create content, and format it on the site.

Testing
Test the site on relevant browsers and devices.

Thoughts

Web firms vary in terms of expertise, communication style, and process.

It's helpful to know ahead of time what you expect of your web partner. Should they have specific expertise? Do you want them to be nearby? Do you need them to be available for future development and maintenance? Will they be providing custom content?

You probably also have specific goals for your process. Do you need to keep your budget flexible until you've defined your scope in Discovery? What parts of the project need to be better defined before you can finalize roles and timeline? Who is involved, and how do their schedules influence the project?

We've also found it helpful to communicate early about how frequently you expect to check in on the project, and how collaborative you want the process to be.

What expertise are you looking for?

What kind of process do you want?

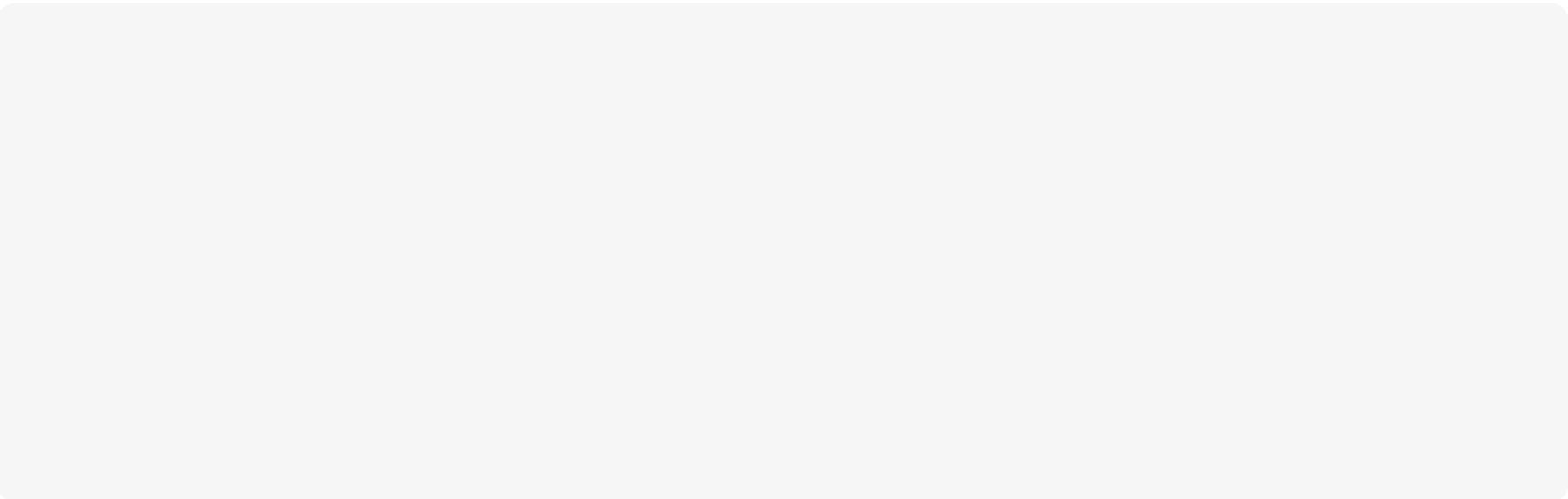**What do you expect as far as communication?**

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Ready to move forward?

We work with our partners to build websites that tell your brand story and grow your audience.

Contact us to talk about your project.

*If you're having trouble answering these questions, we can help point you in the right direction.

Notes

> "Gravity Group deserves tremendous credit for guiding us through the maze of branding and web design options. ComSonics is lucky to have such a professional, local marketing partner."

Bret V. Harrison
Chief Operating Officer
ComSonics

> "Gravity Group assisted us with a redesign of our website delivering a revised, polished, and professional website. The staff at Gravity is always personable, approachable, collaborative, and very responsive."

Kelly Blosser
Chief Financial Officer
Riddleberger Brothers, Inc

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