



GROWTH-DRIVEN WEBSITE DESIGN

A Better Approach to Serving
Customers, Generating Leads
and Growing Your Business

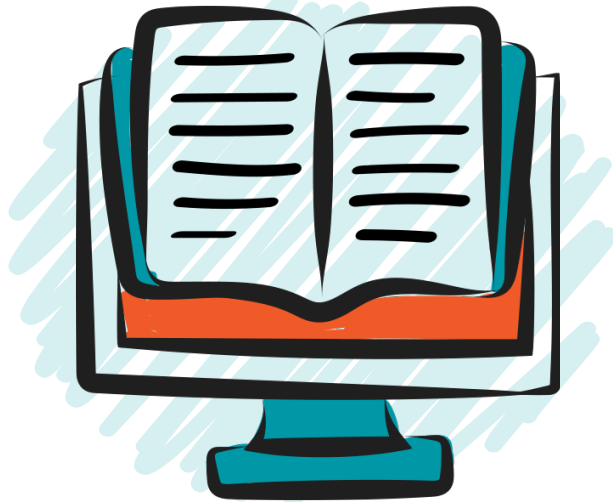


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Introduction



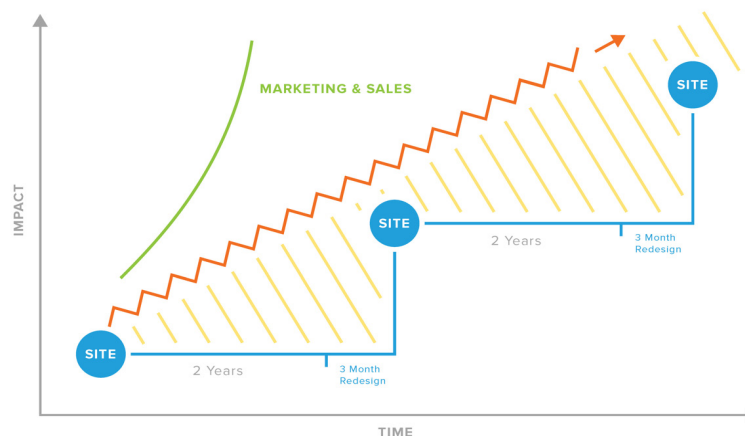
If you've managed a website redesign process recently, you might have come away with the impression that traditional website design is broken. It's definitely a reasonable feeling if you experienced any (or all) of the following:


- Site launch date delayed by weeks (or even months)
- Budget overruns
- "Wish list" features that had to be left out of the site for time or budgetary reasons

In fact, if you've experienced multiple website redesigns in your career, you may have given up on the concept of launching a site "on-time and on-budget" altogether.

Additionally, you've likely fallen into a routine of working 3-6 months to launch a site, only to see the once-shiny new state-of-the-art website sit stagnant 3-5 years without any major functional improvements. At the end of the cycle, you kick-start the redesign process all over again and follow the same pattern.

TRADITIONAL WEB DESIGN vs. GROWTH-DRIVEN WEB DESIGN





Doesn't the time between site redesigns feel like a potential missed opportunity to learn from your users' browsing habits and give them the best possible experience?

Fortunately, it doesn't have to be this way. Growth-driven website design was created specifically to address these traditional website design process pitfalls—and this e-book shows you the path forward. In it, we explain the basics behind growth-driven website design; what it entails from a planning and execution standpoint; and how it benefits your business, your customers and your prospects.

A new website is typically one of your largest marketing expenses, and it has the potential to be your greatest marketing asset when combined with a sound strategy. By taking a growth-driven/continuous improvement approach to the web design process, you can ensure that this asset is keeping pace with your customers' changing needs in the coming months and years.

We hope you find this information useful as you think through your business' website and digital strategies.

Strategic 7 Marketing's professionals are always eager to answer your questions or discuss ways in which our award-winning inbound marketing services can help your business drive qualified leads, expand customer relationships and create raving fans. We have included our contact information in the Conclusion.

Let's get to it!



Chapter One



Basics Behind Growth-Driven Website Design

Growth-driven website design is built around three core phases:

1. **Strategy** – Much like traditional website design, growth-driven website design is all about understanding your audience and how you can solve their problems.
2. **Launch Pad** – The *launch pad* is a fully functioning website that looks and performs better than what you have today—but it is not a final product. Rather, it will become the foundation for your future website growth.
3. **Continuous Improvement** – Once the *launch pad* site is live, it can be used to immediately collect user data so that you begin to identify high-impact website improvements that can help spark business growth.

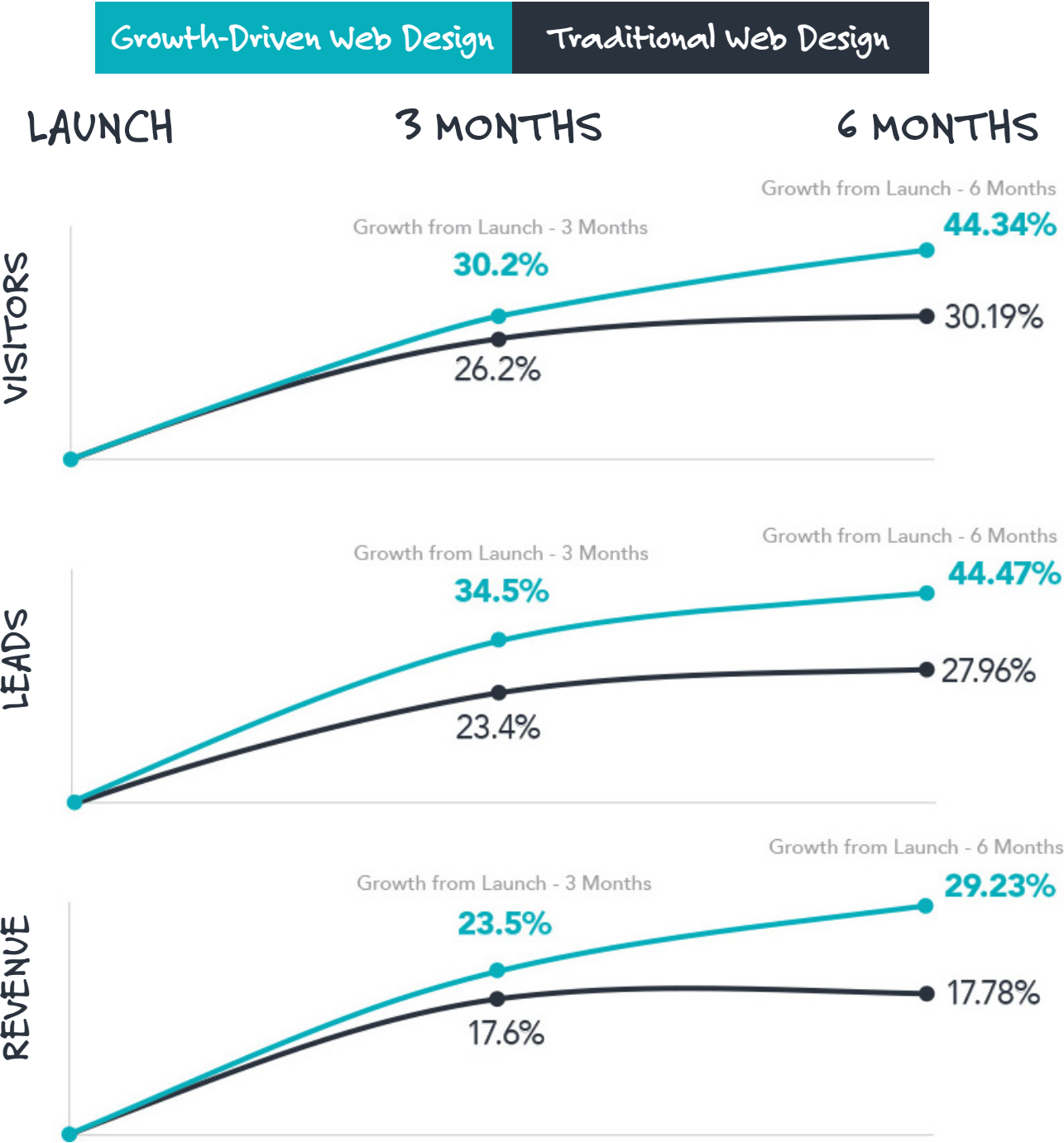


The key to growth-driven website design is learning based on real data from your users (rather than solely basing design decisions on assumptions about your audience) and capitalizing on those lessons learned to drive improvements to your website. With this approach, the faster that a *launch pad* site goes live, the better. As mentioned, it won't be a final product; however, it will be better than the site you have today and it can offer invaluable insights into user behavior after launch. Those insights can then be leveraged to determine which of your initial “wish list” features make the most sense to incorporate into the site in the next *continuous improvement* cycle (often on a quarterly basis).



What type of results can you expect with growth-driven website design? Rather than seeing an initial bump and then a slow leveling off of traffic and leads that can be common with traditional web design, the growth-driven approach aims to offer continual improvement over time. The chart below illustrates how those trends already are starting to show just six months after launch.

In our next chapter, we'll highlight how to develop a cohesive and comprehensive strategy around growth-driven website design.



Chapter Two



Developing a Cohesive and Comprehensive Strategy Around Growth-Driven Website Design

As we addressed in the Introduction, the traditional process for designing a website is broken. Budget overruns and delayed launch dates compel a better approach to website design. Growth-driven website design, which uses real data from users to drive improvements to your site, is built around three core phases: **strategy**, **launch pad** and **continuous improvement**. In this chapter, we focus on *strategy*.

Every successful website project begins with a well-defined *strategy*. Without a *strategy*, the success of a new site is mostly left up to guesswork and is unlikely to take the needs of the user into account.


While the heavy lifting for your website (e.g., copy, design, coding) will be performed by the marketing team, the *strategy* phase of the project allows you to involve stakeholders throughout your business who can provide valuable feedback and insights to help drive the success of your site.

The process itself encompasses several developmental steps outlined below.



Buyer Personas

The first step to a thorough website strategy is to understand your site visitors. One of the best places to start is by defining your website target audiences and developing buyer personas for each audience. A buyer persona, which is based on market research and real data, is developed by examining customer demographics, behavior patterns,



motivations and goals. These personas represent your ideal customers based on your market research.

If you are unfamiliar with buyer personas, online tools can help walk you through the process. We recommend [HubSpot's buyer persona development tool](#)—it's easy to use and delivers spot-on results.

Below is a sample buyer persona:



MARKETING ANDY

- Professional marketer (VP, Director, Manager)
- Mid-sized company (25-200 employees)
- Small marketing team (1-5 people)
- BComm (BU, MBA)
- 42, Married, 2 Kids (10 and 6)

Goals:

- Support sales with collateral and leads
- Manage company communications
- Build awareness

Challenges:

- Too much to do
- Not sure how to get there
- Marketing tool and channel mess

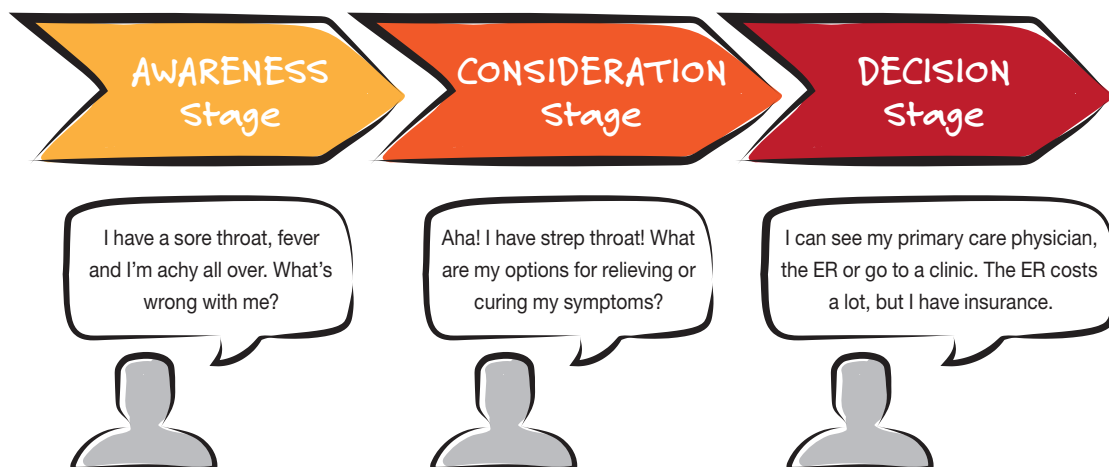
Loves HubSpot because:

- Easy to use tools that make life easier
- Learn Inbound marketing best practices
- Easier reporting to sales and CEO

The card features a stylized illustration of a man with a lightbulb above his head, representing a marketing professional.

Customer Journey

Once you have developed your buyer personas, it is time to consider the journey that each of these personas travels when making a buying decision for your product or service. This is critical to having a customer-focused website.





The main stages of the customer journey are **awareness**, **consideration** and **decision**.

Some questions to consider in the customer journey:

1. What are the visitors' motivations?
2. What questions are they asking?
3. What actions are they taking?
4. Where are they blocked?



Beyond the customer journey phases listed above, consider some additional variables in the customer journey map:

- **Channels:** Where are the visitors coming from and how did they find your site?
- **Touchpoints:** Where are the key opportunities for interaction with these visitors?
- **Emotional Response:** What emotions are the visitors feeling at each stage of their journey?

If you need additional assistance developing your customer journeys, check out a more detailed walk-through of customer journey mapping [here](#).



User Research

Now that your target audience(s) have been identified and their journeys further defined, user research helps us to learn more about how these groups of visitors use the website. You can use several tools to learn more about site visitors. Even currently underperforming websites can offer valuable insight into users' experiences and expectations, and several tools are available to help you learn more about site visitors.

- **Existing Analytics:** If you don't have a Google Analytics account on your current site, [set one up today](#). Google Analytics can tell you which pages are (and aren't) being visited on your current site and where visitors are spending the most time. It also has other valuable insights including the ability to identify pages where visitors frequently enter your site, such as a popular blog post.
- **Site Search:** Do you have an existing site search tool on your website? If so, take a look at popular search terms. Are users searching your site for content that doesn't currently exist? If so, creating that content may become a top priority for the new site.

- **Heatmaps:** You can use heatmapping tools such as HotJar or CrazyEgg to track users' mouse movements on your site. These tools can help you visually identify navigational challenges that your visitors may be experiencing.
- **Surveys:** If you're unsure of what your visitors are looking for on your new site, there's an easy way to find out—*just ask them*. User surveys, whether distributed via email to your distribution list or implemented as pop-up forms throughout your current site, can provide valuable insights direct from your customers.

Strategy Session

After having gathered and analyzed your data, it's time to convene your *strategy* team for a dedicated strategy session where you'll develop the following directives for your site:

1. Clear objectives – These allow you to direct the website build to your desired results.
2. Customer focus – Here, utilize your customer research to shape your site with the end customer in mind.
3. Functionality wish list – In the next stage, you'll begin to sort this by priority for the biggest impact. Remaining ideas can be tested during the *continuous improvement* phase.



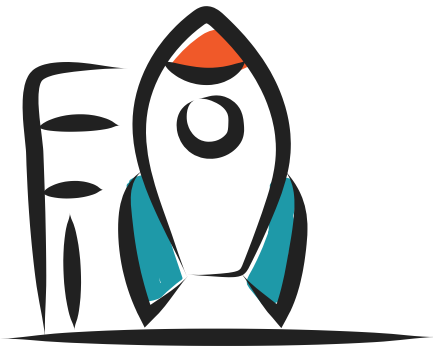
Following this session, you should have the direction that you need to move on to the *launch pad* phase of growth-driven design, which we'll cover next in Chapter 3.

Chapter Three



Understanding the *Launch Pad* Phase of Growth-Driven Website Design

In our last chapter, we highlighted the *strategy* development phase of growth-driven website design. To recap, during the *strategy* phase you set performance goals, develop persona profiles, chart customer journeys and leverage your existing site's analytics and user research. In doing so, the guesswork is removed from the equation—establishing in its place a strong understanding of your business goals and website users. With the *strategy* phase complete, it is now time to begin the *launch pad* phase.



The *Launch Pad* Website

While the *launch pad* website operates as a fully functioning website and looks and performs better than your current site, it's not a final product. The *launch pad* is comprised of the essential components necessary to help your visitors understand your business and activate them to seek more information. As they interact with your website, you'll be able to collect behavioral data and feedback from your

users. This data provides invaluable insights into user behavior after launch and can then be leveraged to help you make more informed decisions on which features make the most sense to incorporate into the site in the next *continuous improvement* cycle.



Although the *launch pad* won't include every bell and whistle you initially envisioned, it will enable you to:

- Launch your website in nearly half the time of a traditional website build
- Reduce up-front time and cost commitments in favor of spreading it out over time
- Balance growth efforts and reduce risk
- Achieve quicker time-to-value and ROI
- Provide data-driven insights into what pages and functionality to incorporate into the site next and how to prioritize adding them

For some, the idea of a *launch pad* website is uncomfortable. You are building a new website, and the expectation is that it will be bigger and better than your current site—and it will, just not right out of the gate. To get comfortable here, you must accept the fact that you do not fully understand everything about your site visitors or how they will interact with your website. Recognizing this truth makes it clear why you shouldn't immediately plan for and build out every conceivable aspect of your website. It just doesn't make sense to spend time building pages and developing site functionality when it's unclear whether it will be useful to your prospects. Remember, the goal of the *launch pad* is to develop and launch a fully functioning website that looks and performs better than the one you currently have, but in a fraction of the time it takes to launch a traditional website.


The 80/20 Rule

The focus of your *launch pad* site should be on the 20 percent of the impact items (e.g., pages, functionality, design elements, features, marketing assets and tools) that will yield 80 percent of the highest impact and value to your website visitors. To help determine and prioritize which items to include, gather your team and review the functionality wish list developed during the *strategy* phase and start segmenting the list into high-impact, medium, and low-impact value items. Then, looking only at the high-impact action items, further filter the list by asking the question:



“Is this action item a *must have* or a *nice to have*”?

Take the items you designated as *nice to have* and set them off to the side. Now, focusing only on the *must have* items, evaluate them further by answering the question, “Is this absolutely necessary for the initial *launch pad* site, or could it be added to the *launch pad* in one to three months down the road?” Whatever is left should be included in the *launch pad*.



To help evaluate which pages are *must haves*, use website analytics to determine what your top pages are, which pages provide the highest conversion rates and where users are spending the most time on your site. Heatmapping software (e.g., CrazyEgg, HotJar) is another valuable analytical tool to help determine which pages to include in the *launch pad*. It will provide a visual representation of user click, tap and scroll data and is a vital tool for improving user experience (UX), maximizing conversion rates and keeping site visitors on the right track.

Page Plans

With the *launch pad* pages determined, it is time to put together page plans that outline the content flow for each key page. Your content should:

- Take user needs as well as SEO objectives into consideration
- Align with the goals you set during the *strategy* phase
- Focus on the personas you specified
- Drive the highest impact and value



A great way to do this is by creating hypothesis statements for each page. Here's an example:

For [Business Owners] visiting the [Website Design and Development web page],
we believe adding an [e-book] on [Growth-Driven Website Design] will
[boost lead conversions by 10 percent].

We believe this to be true because [of the meaningful traffic driven to the website design and development web page from our e-newsletter/blog articles].

Additional steps in the page planning process include:

- Coding and development
- Inbound marketing strategy
- Message development and page layout
- Page design
- Site architecture
- UX
- Wireframes



Page Migrations

Since not every page of the *launch pad* will be initially focused on driving the highest impact and value, you will want to revisit SEO, update any images to match the new site design and edit/polish the rest of your content before migrating into your new website.

Quality Assurance and Testing

If the site doesn't work, it won't convert. The quality assurance and site testing stage is an essential part of your overall website *strategy*. A website not adequately tested for performance optimization will see high user abandonment rates and poor search engine rankings.

Below is a checklist of items that should be tested and reviewed before the launch of your *launch pad*.

- Address all 404 and 301 redirect errors
- Check browser and responsive compatibility on all relevant web browsers
- Check for broken external and internal links
- Check for missing alt attributes
- Confirm all video and audio files are working
- Confirm site submission to all search engines
- Format errors in robots.txt
- Check HTTPS protection/security issues
- Review all forms to ensure they are working
- Review site for low text-HTML ratio
- Review site for multiple or missing H1 and H2 headings
- Review site for pages with low word count
- Review site on all devices (e.g., laptops, desktops, tablets, smartphones)
- Run spell-checking software
- Test for missing or duplicate meta descriptions and title tags
- Test page load speeds



In summary, if you...

- Don't wait to get every single detail 100 percent squared away
- Resist the temptation to guess/assume what users want
- Create a minimally viable website in the quickest amount of time...

You will reduce risk and...

- Launch on time and on budget
- Achieve faster time-to-value
- Validate assumptions
- Save budget for optimization

In Chapter 4, we'll explain how *continuous improvement* works with growth-driven website design, and how it's beneficial.

Chapter Four



How Continuous Improvement Works in Growth-Driven Website Design

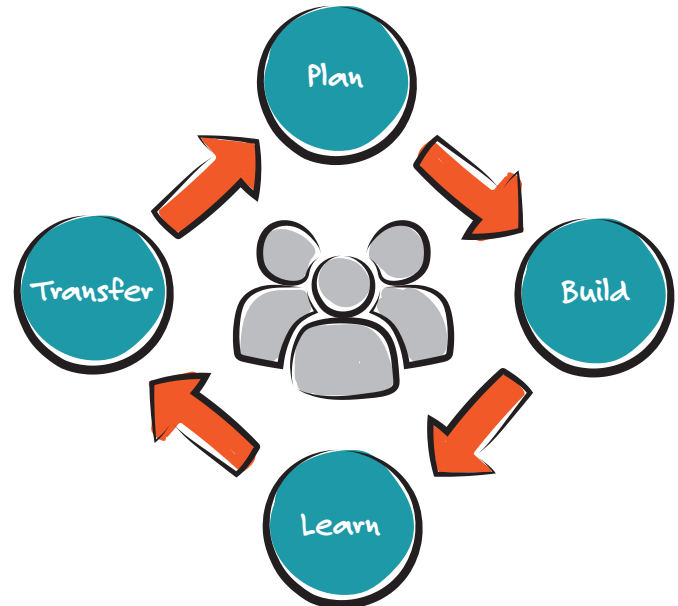
Continuous improvement, the third and final stage of the growth-driven website design process, is also the final chapter in our e-book—for good reason.

The Continuous Improvement Cycle

Continuous website improvement is the process of constantly updating and improving your website through incremental changes that are based on site analytics, performance metrics and user research and feedback. Taking a continuous improvement approach allows you to improve and reap the benefits of new features quickly, as opposed to traditional website design, where you may not see results for months, or even years.

At this point, you will have launched your new site and had real users interact with it. Their behavioral data will tell you what they think is important and help guide you to make impactful *continuous improvements*.

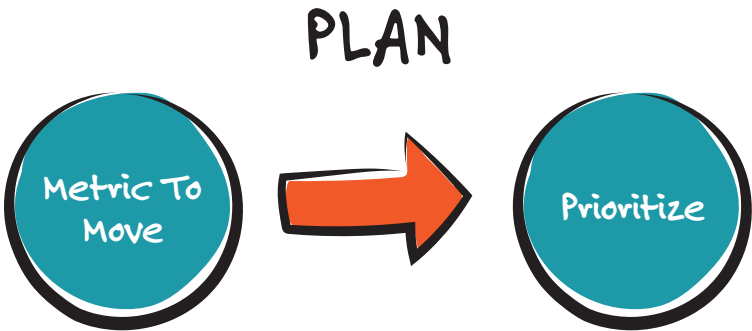
Already have an existing website? No problem—you can use your existing website as your *launch pad* and jump right to *continuous improvement*.





The *continuous improvement* cycle consists of four steps:

1. Plan – Every plan starts with a focus metric that you want to improve. Every month, determine and prioritize the most important/impactful actions that will provide value to your website visitors and achieve your goals.



EXAMPLE:

Boost lead conversions for website design and development services by 10%.

To help prioritize, review the current performance of the website and contrast it with your goals. This will help alert you to important opportunities. Once complete, prioritize the highest impact ideas and develop action items for each one.

PLAN

HIGH IMPACT
Action Item 1
Action Item 2
MEDIUM IMPACT
Action Item 3
Action Item 4
LOW IMPACT
Action Item 5
Action Item 6



Generally speaking, you can categorize your action items to fit within the following four buckets:

PLAN


Boost Conversions	Improve UX
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conversion points• User path• Testing value props• Split testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Navigation (e.g., blog layout)• UI improvements• Mobile experience
Personalize To The User	Build Marketing Assets
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SMART CTAs• SMART forms• Personalized landing pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tools• Marketing resources• Directories / listings• SEO-focused assets

2. Build – This is the “get stuff done” phase, when you set into motion the priority items identified in planning. Continual monitoring is important here to ensure goals and measurements are being achieved.

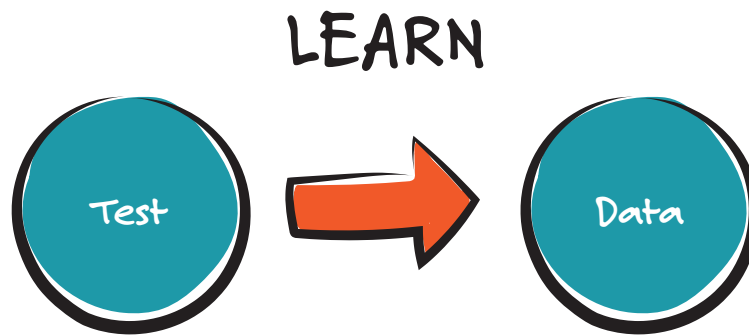
BUILD



Experiment with each action item you implement, and measure the impact it has on website performance. Measure your experiments by setting up validation tracking.

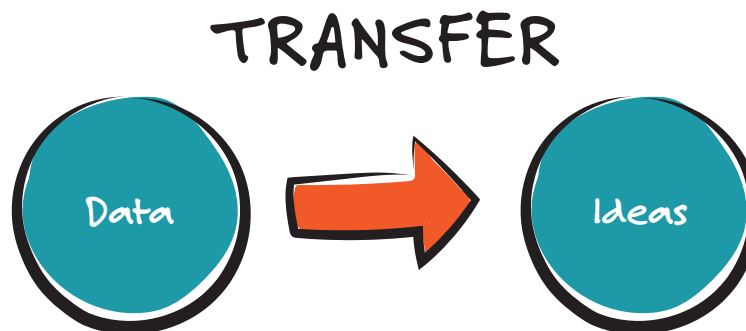


3. Learn – A key part to optimization is reviewing experiments and analyzing data to extract lessons learned about your audience.



Learning what works (and what doesn't work) will help inform the ideas generated in the planning step of your next sprint cycle.

4. Transfer – Once you've learned about your audience and customers, it's time to share those lessons learned with other parts of the company, including marketing, sales, service and more.



Cross-department collaboration helps your growth team better understand how to make adjustments for peak performance.

Benefits of Implementing a Continuous Improvement Approach

Compared to a traditional web design project, *continuous improvement* provides better results for several reasons:

- It delivers a quicker launch for new websites.
- Site changes/updates are based off real data from your users, allowing you to make more informed decisions.
- It allows more flexibility for A/B testing.
- It extends the life cycle of your website because you are constantly making improvements.



Your Website is Never “Done”

It’s important to keep in mind that things change—and they can change quickly. From design elements to Google’s latest SEO algorithms to changes in how users want to interact with websites, the digital industry is always evolving. Over time, your site can become outdated and may not perform as well as it once did. Continuous improvement offers you a way to extend the life of your website through ongoing monitoring and by addressing needed changes incrementally. Today, that also means leveraging AI optimization—using artificial intelligence to analyze user behavior, personalize content, and automate performance enhancements. By integrating AI-driven insights, you can adapt more intelligently to trends and user needs, ensuring your website stays competitive and effective in a rapidly changing landscape.



Conclusion



We hope this e-book has helped you understand the rationale behind growth-driven website design, as well as its essential components and how your business can utilize it to save time and money while optimizing visitor experiences.

If you're interested in learning more about the growth-driven design process, Strategic 7 Marketing team members are Growth-Driven Design Certified by HubSpot — we can help you determine how this approach might improve your next website design project. To start the conversation, contact Bob Goricki at 440-772-0182 or email bgoricki@strategicseven.com.

About the Author

Bob Goricki, Director of Digital Marketing

Bob Goricki is the director of digital marketing for Strategic 7 Marketing, with more than 20 years of marketing experience. His responsibilities include implementing and managing online marketing programs that are focused on building awareness and customer acquisition. Bob's experience includes copywriting for traditional marketing and digital initiatives, search engine optimization (SEO), lead nurturing campaigns and pay-per-click (PPC) advertising.

About Strategic 7 Marketing



Strategic 7 Marketing is an award-winning, full-service marketing and digital agency that delivers proactive marketing solutions for businesses and professional service firms across the country. Our service focus – covering strategic planning, branding, web design and development, and inbound/digital marketing – helps clients build awareness and brand preference in the markets they serve and drive leads that boost revenues.

Our Value to You

So what sets us apart from other marketing firms? First, we are focused on working with B2B companies, CPA, and professional service firms. We add value to all of our clients in the following ways:

- **Partners for the long term** – We practice a strategic approach to problem solving. If you're just looking for a one-off postcard or sell sheet, there are plenty of other firms that can do a perfectly fine job for you. We want to understand your business and determine what strategies really make the most sense for you before jumping headfirst into tactics.
- **We ask the tough questions** – When you sit down for your first meeting with us, we'll make you think about your business in different ways than you have in the past. These are the questions that other marketing agencies should be asking but likely are not.
- For more information, visit strategicseven.com or call 440-772-0186.



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