

Your website is the online storefront for your business. Just as you would make sure the sidewalk is swept, your sign is clearly visible and your open sign is lit, you need to prepare your website for visitors. Our rubric for reviewing your website gives you direction on how to follow website design best practices, build trust with your audience, and drive visitors to contact you.

Organization & Navigation

These items make sure your website is easy to navigate and doesn't confuse or alienate any visitors. Start with your navigation: make sure your menu at the top of your website is clear and easy to understand – even if consumers aren't familiar with you and your business. To make sure someone using screen-reading software can still navigate your site, avoid using images of text in your menu. Try using your website on a phone and a tablet: can you still get to every page?

Once you have reviewed your menu, take a look at your pages. Is the layout clear? Is the information easy to scan? Think of a textbook, using chapter names, headings, and subheadings to convey levels of information, with the most detailed information in plain text. Use a similar format to ensure you have clear hierarchy of information on your website. Unlike a textbook, visitors aren't held to one path through your website: they can click and visit any page. Think about where they would want to go when they finish reading a page, and add links to a relevant product page, contact us page or form to request more information. You want to keep your visitors on your website as long as possible, so make sure every page leads somewhere relevant. Lead your visitors through their own adventure on your website, leading to a happily-ever-after conclusion: filling out a form on your site or calling you for more information.



If you're looking to increase your digital traffic,
SMS can help with many of the steps above. **Call 1.800.786.5566 today.**

Branding

Branding isn't just for print collateral: it's imperative that your website reflects your overall brand. Think about how your business card, letterhead, print ads and even your office look, and think about how to get that same feeling on your website. Start by using your logo in your website's header so it shows up on every page.

Keep your colors and fonts as similar to your print collateral as you can. This creates consistency between your marketing pieces. Once you build consistency, your clients subconsciously begin to trust you more. Try to limit your color palette to 3 to 5 colors you use frequently, and limit your number of fonts to 3 or fewer. Instead of picking a brand new font for a headline, try using one you already use but with a larger size or a bold style.

Color can be difficult to match on your website, but it gets easier with a few simple tricks.



Websites use "hex codes," a six-digit mix of letters and numbers, to program colors, but other programs like Microsoft Word might use RGB (red, green, and blue) codes, or a set of three three-digit numbers. Convert your RGB code to hex with a simple color picker, like [this one](#) online. If you have a graphic designer or marketing person on staff (or one in your family), they can use tools like Adobe Photoshop to

help you determine the correct color codes for you to use.

All of these items together help make your website look cohesive. Every page should look like it's related to the other pages, down to the types of images you use. If you use stock images of happy people who look like your clients on every page but one, the page that doesn't match will stand out. Identify the types of images that fit your brand best and try to stay consistent within that style.

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Copy & Content

It's hard to overstate the importance of your website's copy and content. This is the reason anyone will visit your website, and it will help determine where you show up in online searches. It's what you're shouting from the online rooftops — and there are a few specific things to keep in mind while writing or reviewing content for a website.



Everything you put on the internet should be considered public and permanent. Even if a webpage changes, it may have been archived online or a user could have saved it on their personal computer. It is imperative that all of your content is accurate, informative and uses compliant language. If you are ever in doubt as to whether content is appropriate for your website, ask for a compliance specialist to review the content.

Your copy should be enticing to the audience you are hoping to attract. Think of your average client: how do they speak? How do they best receive new information? Write with your audience in mind, and try to review your website from their perspective. You can also ask one or two of your top clients for feedback and see if you're on the right track.

Because every page should lead to another page, make sure your copy reflects that. What is your desired goal for each page? If you want a client to fill out a form or make a call, make sure your call-to-action is clear and direct.

Ensure you are being consistent across all of your copy. Does your page URL (the part of your web address after the "/") match the title of the page? It should: small changes like this can be important for your search engine optimization (SEO). Additionally, consider adding a glossary or terms page to your website. Having rich content with keywords associated with your industry can also help with SEO.

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Use the following self-assessment to evaluate your website’s effectiveness today. This will help reveal areas where you need to focus on improving.

Organization & Navigation

	Exceptional	Exceeds Requirements	Meets Requirements	Gets By	Needs Work
Global navigation has clear menu					
Intuitive & ADA-compliant global navigation					
Mobile-optimized and/or responsive design					
Contact information readily available					
Page layout is easy to follow					
Pages have clear hierarchy of information					
Thoughtful website path and customer journey throughout the website					

Branding

	Exceptional	Exceeds Requirements	Meets Requirements	Gets By	Needs Work
Easy-to-understand, well-designed logo					
Complementary color scheme					
Consistent font use and text treatment					
Cohesive visual design and imagery					

Copy & Content

	Exceptional	Exceeds Requirements	Meets Requirements	Gets By	Needs Work
Accurate					
SEO-optimized					
Informative					
Enticing — speaks to the right audience					
Copy leads to clear calls-to-action					
Compliant language					
Glossary/terms page (suggested for SEO benefits)					

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