

# HOW TO PLAN

WHAT SETS THE BEST WEBSITES APART?

## How to plan a successful website redesign project

A comprehensive guide from the experts at TBH Creative





**You want to get the most from your company's website, and we're here to offer guidance in evaluating your options and defining a plan.**

This comprehensive website redesign guide covers everything you need to know about planning your project, developing a budget, and choosing a vendor. These topics are crucial considerations when it comes to making your website a powerful tool for your business.

## Sections

### STRATEGIC PLANNING

Discover how to analyze your current site so that you can set baselines, determine what you need, and set goals for measuring success.

### WEBSITE BUDGETING

Find out how to budget for the website redesign costs and use our comparison grid to learn more about the pros/cons of various budgeting options.

### VENDOR SELECTION

Get our tips for narrowing down your list of website companies you want to work with, then use our checklist to objectively evaluate your top picks.

# It's time for a website redesign if:

## Your site isn't working

Your site doesn't deliver results, and you can't quite put a finger on why.

## You're unhappy with your current web design company

Things aren't running smoothly, and you want to start working with a new partner.

## You need more than a template website

You need a new customized website solution to meet your business goals.

## Your site is out of date

Your website is so old that it is not accurate and even embarrassing.

## Your website no longer represents your company accurately

From product launches and mergers to rebranding and marketing goal shifts, your website needs to reflect major changes in your business.

## Your target audience isn't visiting your website

Your website doesn't rank in Google, and you want to improve search engine optimization.

# Strategic planning

Taking the time to think through your project in advance pays significant strategic dividends.

## CONDUCT AN OVERALL SITE AUDIT

### Where are you today?

**All successful website projects start with evaluation and planning.** While redesigning and development are critical, the real work begins long before layouts are reworked and code is rewritten. Evaluate your current site to figure out what works and what doesn't. Think about your big picture goals and how a new or improved website can help you reach those goals.

- Where are the gaps between what your current website does and what you'd like your ideal website to do? Are you looking to gain more leads? Better reach ideal customers? Shorten sales funnels?
- Aesthetically, is your site design modern? Does the content sync with your business culture and brand identity guidelines?
- Was your website developed with your audience's needs in mind? Does your website efficiently communicate the right message to your ideal audience?
- Is your website delivering on your audience's expectations with regard to design and functionality?
- Are clear and compelling calls to action included on every page?
- If you have custom functionality, does it work?
- Is your website responsive? Have you created a consistent experience for users on mobile devices and desktop computers?
- Is your audience base getting the most up-to-date marketing message? It's possible your business realities have changed since your site launched.
- Does your website function as an online sales marketing tool and/or client-nurturing engine?
- How clearly is content organized? Can users easily find what they need?



Auditing your current website objectively can be tricky and overwhelming. It helps to have a team in place that can prevent you from missing opportunities while also helping you stand out from your competition.

You'll need to think through your content, visuals, design functionality, and determine how customers find, view, and use your site.

If you have a marketing staff, bring them in to help you analyze your website. Your sales representatives might be able to provide additional insights into how your site performs through customers' eyes.

#### RELATED ARTICLES

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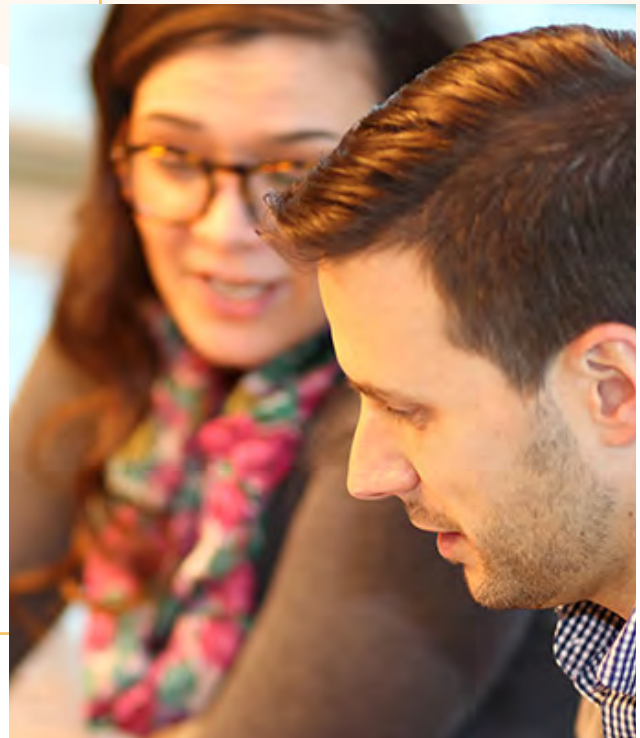
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## DEVELOP WEBSITE PERSONAS

## What do your users need?

**When it comes to digital marketing and website success, it is essential that you understand your customers.** Whether you have one ideal audience or several different targets, who you want to reach with your website is just as important as who they are, what they need, and how to best communicate to them. These factors should drive your website redesign decision making.

In web design lingo, this analysis of your users and their needs is called a website personas report. You'll use your personas to develop an effective conversion strategy, create optimized content, and position strong calls to action that get results. Then, you'll tailor your new website layouts to create the best user experience for those target audiences.



### RELATED ARTICLES

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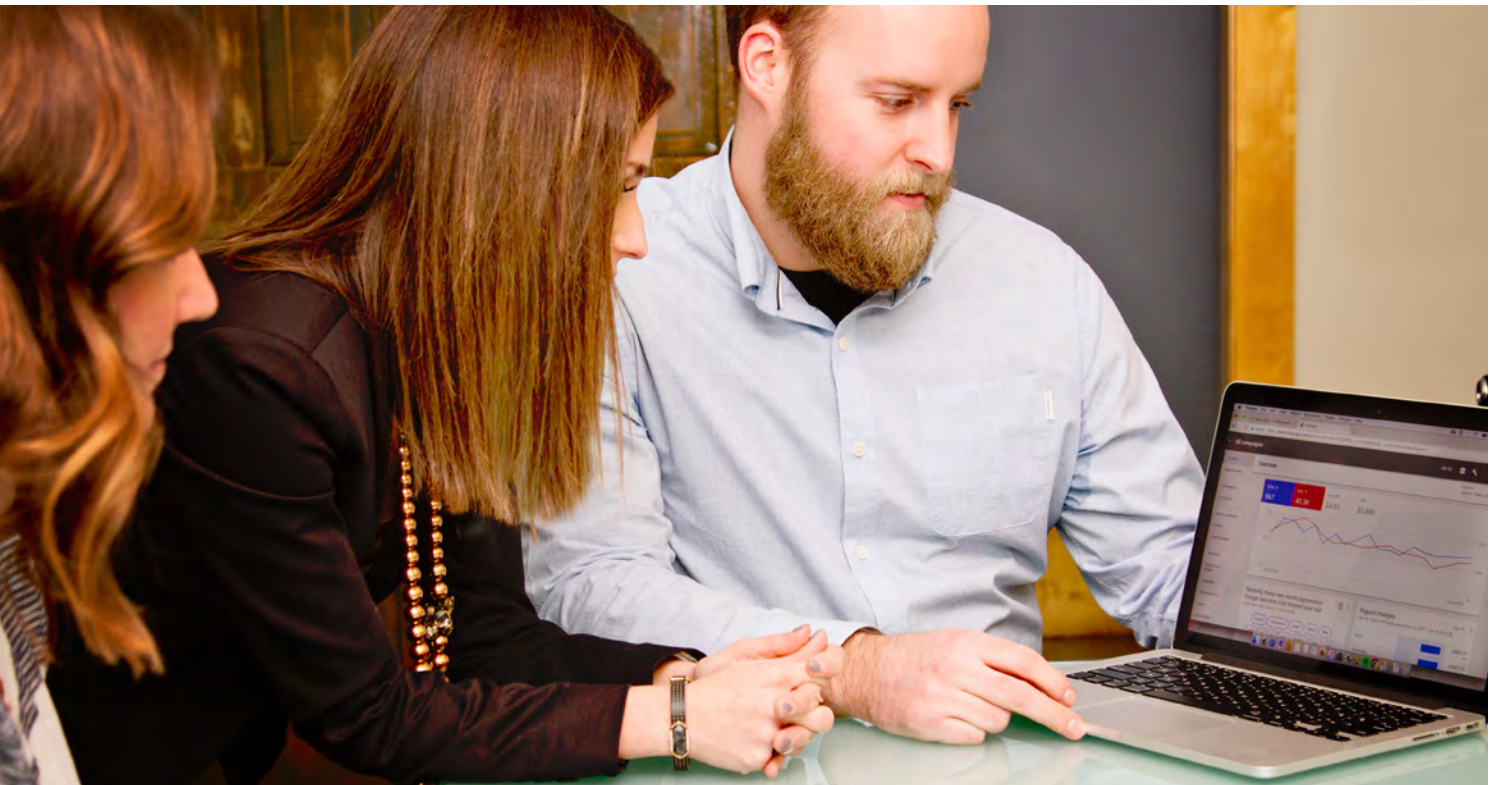
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## TAKE AN IN-DEPTH ANALYTICS REVIEW

## What do the numbers say?

**After you've put together your website personas report, you'll want to turn to the hard numbers.** Analytics track actual statistics and individual web metrics, and this data can help you answer vital questions, including:

- Who is using your website? What do you know about them?
- Is SEO driving your website traffic? Are you ranking for appropriate key terms? Is most of your traffic coming from people in your target audience?
- Are your website visitors taking action at the right places?
- At what point are your visitors leaving your site?
- What website usage trends or activities are you measuring currently? How many conversions are you getting now (per day/week/month)?
- What promotion tactics seem to work best?
- Anything surprising in your website analytics?



Your existing website probably tracks some data, but your metrics or conversions may not be as high as you'd like. That's ok. Take note of your starting point, and make a list of other types of information you'd like to capture going forward.

This will make you better equipped to close any gaps moving forward during your website redesign process.

### RELATED ARTICLES

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### CHECKLIST

Download our *Website Redesign Getting Started Checklist*

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## DEFINE YOUR REDESIGN PROJECT'S PURPOSE

## What does success look like?

**Use what you've learned so far to build a strategy for your website redesign project.** Look at your findings and set aside some time to create a master plan. Your strategy should answer questions, such as:

- What part does your website play in your organization's overall marketing plan?
- Once your new website launches, what results will you need to measure to determine success (or have an ROI)?
- What other factors could influence the relative success of your website?
- Are your goals for the website realistic? In what timeframe?
- How often will you track and report on different success measures?
- What is the business value of meeting these goals?



### RELATED ARTICLES

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## REVIEW CURRENT PARTNERSHIPS

**Are your vendor relationships still working?**

**Another important step during your planning process should include assessing your current vendor partnerships and technology tools.** Once you have a strategy for creating an improved website, coupled with an analysis of your current website's performance, you'll be in a better place to consider how you want to build and maintain your new website. Determine which tools, software, resources, and partners are best suited to help you reach your goals by answering these questions:

- What third party tools and software are currently being used to power your website? Do you still need to use all of them? Are these still the best tools available to meet your needs? Who manages or owns these tools? (e.g., are they hosted, set up by a third party, or managed by your team?) What are the current contracts terms for each?
- How satisfied are you by the work done by your current web design company and digital marketing agency? Do you like working with them?
- Have you grown to the point where you need to bring in new partners? Do you need to engage an outside web design company for the first time? Is it time to replace an existing partnership you've outgrown?
- Are you working with many different partners to cover your marketing needs? Would it be more efficient and cost-effective to work with one firm that offers a wide range of services and can manage multiple marketing projects at one time?

**As with any project, going into a website redesign project with a strategy in place helps to shorten timelines, improve results, and keep costs within your budget.** The real work in a website redesign project begins long before you hire a web design company to write new code. Taking a strategic approach from the start helps extend the life of your website redesign project by making it an ongoing part of your marketing program.

# Website budgeting

How can you build a realistic web design project budget that still gets results?

## CREATE A WEBSITE BUDGET

### How much should my new website cost?

**How do you take your website from boring to brilliant without breaking the bank?** Many companies do part of the work in-house and then are surprised to find that expenses are higher once they factor in the cost of employee time. Believe it or not, in the long run it's usually cheaper to outsource your website redesign project.

As you consider how much a website redesign project may cost, you should also consider the value and return on investment potential your new website will bring. It's easier to get a handle on what your website redesign cost might be so that you can budget appropriately. Start by reframing your perspective strategically, and thinking about marketing in the big picture:

- How much does your business spend decorating its lobby? For many companies, decoration and upkeep of a lobby is considered a worthwhile investment because they often provide an initial impression. It helps to think of your website the same way. In today's market, your website may be your first chance to capture customers' attention. For the most part, they won't see your "interior design" if your website and key landing pages don't get their attention.
- Your website should function as a member of your sales team. Would you make a long-term employee's salary and benefits a line item for one year only, or amortize the cost across the years the employee works for your company? Build the website redesign cost into your marketing budget over time, generally 3–4 years.



- Consider a web design project budget in light of your overall marketing plan. Good website redesign also incorporates marketing, copywriting, search engine optimization, coding, technical skill, and analytical ability. These areas of expertise have impact on more than just how your website looks. They provide functionality that turns your website into a marketing tool.

- Taking an iterative approach to web design not only makes your new website more effective, but this also extends its lifespan. Keeping updates and enhancements to functionality, SEO, and content in mind helps to spread the cost of redesign, and lengthens the life of your website.

### Why does having a good website matter?

Ideally, your website should serve as a critical component of your business plan—working as a fully-integrated tool or functioning as a digital sales rep. Think of your website as a 24/7 engine helping you reach business goals.

- 88% of consumers will research product information before they make a purchase online or in the store.
- 48% of people cited a website's design as the number one factor in deciding the credibility of a business.
- 38% of people will stop engaging with a website if the content is unclear or its layout is unattractive.



## COMPARE WEBSITE ESTIMATES

## Why different vendor costs aren't apples to apples?

**When it comes to website redesign costs, you have options.** For many parts of your project, you can choose to handle the task internally, use a template, opt for partial customization, or ask for a comprehensive solution. Any of those options can work, but some may make more sense than others to handle in-house depending on the size of the job, what your goals are and what expertise you have on staff, and even your project timeline.

You may also be surprised to see very large pricing differences between estimates you receive. Some web design companies will offer packages A, B and C. Others might propose a price for one customized solution. The difference in costs are much like the differences you might find when buying a house because of all the different factors involved, including aspects like size/square footage, builder options, and the level of features of your new home.

When it comes to website estimates, variations in quotes might be due to the number of pages, application development functions, and details such as design quality, interactivity, and SEO.


As you analyze your quotes, don't forget to check and see if strategy work is covered by their price. Just as you might hire an architect to design your home, to get your website just right you may need professional help developing a content strategy to organize your site's information and create a strategy to ensure your new pages rank with Google.

When comparing estimates, it is also important to get a breakdown of what different price ranges may cover and what components your team will be responsible managing or creating.



## Different types of website solutions:

	 <b>In-house work</b>	 <b>Template</b>	 <b>Partial customization</b>	 <b>Comprehensive solution</b>
<b>How much time will your website redesign project take?</b>	When redesigning your website in-house, expect to devote considerable staff time.	If optimization and personalization aren't essential for meeting your marketing goals, you can get up and running in less time using a templated-website solution.	To add your own spin to a template, you'll need to invest additional time to prepare your site to go live.	When you hire a professional team, your internal team will have to do less work overall, but you should still plan to allot time for providing assets, sharing feedback, and getting approvals.
<b>What sort of functionality will your redesigned site have?</b>	Time, resources, and expertise may limit your ability to add custom functionality if you handle the redesign in-house.	Templates don't typically support custom functionality. Hosted solutions offer out-of-the-box options which you can use as-is.	There may be limits depending on the software solution or vendor expertise if you are trying to do a partial custom site.	Custom development work can be done strategically as needed. Depending on your target users and their goals, you might add data sorting, custom page structure, filtering, or other interactive tools.
<b>Will your site stand out from the competition?</b>	Time, resources, and expertise may limit your ability to create add custom design elements and details if you handle the redesign in-house.	Templates don't support extensive custom designing, which means you will not be the only organization using the template you choose.	Templates support limited customization, so you may change a few colors or be able to rearrange some modules within pages, but you won't be able to get the same uniqueness you'd expect from complete custom design.	Comprehensive customization allows maximum flexibility to include unique elements and features that make your site stand out and truly communicate your brand.
<b>Will the site feature custom interactive design?</b>	Time, resources, and expertise may limit your ability to add custom interactive design elements, if you handle the redesign in-house.	Templates don't support custom interactive design elements.	If your team is highly talented, you may be able to build out interactive features using a partially customized template, but depending on their level of expertise, the results may not be as refined as a professional solution and cause issues with load time or interfere with user experience.	If interactive design helps meet your goals, custom development makes it happen. With comprehensive customization, you have full control of the look and functionality of any interactive elements, and custom development ensures clean code that won't slow your site down or hamper usability.

	 <b>In-house work</b>	 <b>Template</b>	 <b>Partial customization</b>	 <b>Comprehensive solution</b>
<b>What type of business does this option work best for?</b>	A business with a large, experienced internal marketing and IT departments that are currently underutilized may help you save money and achieve decent results.	A small business with a limited budget may consider a template to establish their web presence until revenue justifies investing in a more strategic, custom solution.	A small- to medium-sized business with a limited marketing budget may choose to invest a little more in a partially customized template website to gain more traction online.	A business of any size committed to using its website as a sales, marketing, and client cultivation tool should consider comprehensive customization because the ROI for this option is unquestionably higher.
<b>What does this option cost?</b>	In-house redesign projects often cost more than expected, due to employee time costs and the need for external review.	Templates are available in a range of prices, from free to expensive.	Partial customization adds to the cost of a template website, and price is variable based on time needed for implementation and integrating changes.	Pricing for comprehensive solutions depends on client needs and strategy. In many cases, custom solutions wind up being the cheaper option overall.
<b>What is the ROI for the website redesign project?</b>	In-house redesign may deliver great results—or not. It always depends on available time and team expertise.	Coding and SEO make it difficult for template sites to rank as high as competitors who invest in a custom website. However, depending on your industry and goals, a template website can be a good starting point.	Coding and SEO make it difficult for template sites to rank as high as competitors who invest in a custom website. However, depending on your industry and goals, a template website can be a good starting point.	Custom websites with strategic planning have the potential to deliver substantial increases in lead generation due to SEO capture, high impact user experience, and optimized functionality and performance.



## CONSIDER A PHASED APPROACH

## When is it beneficial to not do it all at once?

**It is easy to make a wishlist for your new website and get frustrated (or surprised) when the timeline or budget makes your dream project seem impossible to complete.** That's why we always recommend prioritizing the work included in your feature list. Tagging or grouping features as "must-have," "should-have," "nice-to-have," and "future ideas" makes it easier to budget for what you need by launch and what you can tackle during future phases of your project.

The items in your "must-have" group should correlate directly back to features that will help you achieve your goals. When you're starting a complex project, this exercise is extremely helpful, especially if you need to get buy-in from a large group with differing opinions on what should be a priority and it can also help you focus on necessities when you're trying to get the max out of a limited budget.

Taking a phased approach also helps make website redesign costs more digestible, allowing you to iterate other marketing atop your website redesign project so that you can start showing ROI sooner.



### RELATED ARTICLES

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[Find out how phased website development leads to success](#)

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### Why does responsive design matter?

If it's been more than a few years since your last website design, you may be surprised at how quickly things have changed. The biggest difference over the past five years has been the explosion of mobile browsing.

Did you know that more web searches are now performed on mobile devices than from desktop computers? In this mobile-first environment, having a website with an easy-to-use responsive design isn't optional. It's critical. With more than 200 potential screen sizes in use today, coding a website that's functional and effective regardless of how it's accessed is a bigger job than ever.

What this means for any web development company is that we have to build code in a completely new way to "respond" appropriately and consistently to all of these different devices and sizes. What we used to do once as "pixel perfect" now has to be fluid and flexible. At a minimum, we have to set up templates with standardized shifting for the primary device sizes.

For more detailed sites and designs, we can customize individual viewports for specific sizes. We oftentimes determine this after setting basic shifting and weighing the importance and popularity of certain pages. Analytics also give insight as to whether spending extra time for special mobile views would be worth the investment.

Though responsive design prep can involve a lot of work, this customization for mobile users is essential and always pays off.

- 62% of companies with websites designed for mobile users see increased sales.
- 40% of people will choose a different search result if the first website is not mobile friendly.
- 48% of users say that if they arrive on a business website that isn't working well on their mobile device that it's an indication the business doesn't care.

## COMPARE YOUR SITE BUDGET WITH INDUSTRY NORMS

## What are others paying for their website?

Are you curious how much other companies like you are spending on digital marketing and building websites? Here is a roundup of statistics and guidelines that may surprise you:

- According to the *Wall Street Journal*, digital marketing spending varies by industry. Ranging anywhere from 4 to 24%, the **average amount most companies spend on digital marketing is 11% of their total budget**. Think about how you can spread your website redesign project costs across your organization's budget.
- Small businesses, which Forbes defines as those with under \$5 million in annual revenue, typically spend **7-8% of their total revenue on marketing**.
- The Small Business Administration recommends that businesses operating with at least a 10-12% margin consider spending **7-12% of total revenue on marketing**.
- *Entrepreneur* suggests that companies between one and five years old spend **12-20% of their gross revenue on marketing**. For older companies with more brand equity, **6-12% may be enough**.

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# Vendor selection

Selecting the right web design company can be challenging because there are so many options and factors to consider.

## REVIEW WEB DESIGN PORTFOLIOS

### How do you evaluate examples and quality of work?

**One of the best ways to figure out what you want is to look at as many other websites as possible.** Check out sites you visit frequently, review your competitors, and visit other companies in your industry. As you review, take screenshots of notable pages or features and make notes detailing what you like and why. (Also consider what you don't like and think about why).

As you gain a better perspective on available design options, use this knowledge as you review the portfolios of perspective website companies. Good website companies will include a robust portfolio with samples of their work to make it easy to assess their technical skills and visual design talent.

Here are questions to think about as you review website design portfolios:

- Does their portfolio include examples of work done for others in my industry?
- Does their portfolio include projects similar in size and scale to my project?
- Do I really like their work?
- Are goals and results included as part of their project write-ups?
- Have they included a client testimonial with each project description?

#### RELATED ARTICLES

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## CHECK OUT ONLINE REVIEWS AND RATINGS

## What do their clients have to say?

**One of the most valuable steps you can take when evaluating website companies is to check out feedback from their past clients.**

Google each vendor's name with the word review or rating ("[Company name] reviews") and look at sites such as Facebook, Google, Yelp!, and Clutch Pay attention to the star rating number, the quantity of reviews, when the reviews were posted, and what the customers say in their comments. What others say (or don't say) about a company publicly should be one of the strongest indicators on your checklist.

## RETHINK SENDING OUT A RFP

## Do you really need a request for proposals?

**As part of your process for selecting a company to partner with on your website redesign project, you might have heard you need to send out a request for proposals.** Although some companies are required to locate vendors using a RFP process, many organizations find that this method of vendor selection cuts them off from opportunities to receive strategic input.

If you're looking for a significant website upgrade, you'll get better results choosing a web design company with expertise that fits your team's culture and personality, and then asking that firm for recommendations. In many cases, outside experts will present you with a choice of options that will make your project better, faster, and more efficient.

### RELATED ARTICLES

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## START TALKING TO WEB COMPANIES

## Who has the best solution? Who asks the good questions?

**Once you've narrowed down the list of best vendors to consider for your website redesign project, it's time talk.** Set up interviews with each web design company to learn how they might approach your project. As you have these conversations, one or two companies should rise to the top. This might be based on personality or process styles, their portfolio may be a standout, or a combination of factors.

Another thing to look out for is ideas. Who has the best solution for your project? Who asks good questions that challenges your thinking (in a good way)? Who will be a good partner to make sure you reach your goals?

A long-term website partner will be good at bringing your ideas to life and adding to them. Website companies build websites all day, everyday. Why would you expect or accept anything less?

Who rises to the top?



### CHECKLIST

Use our checklist to simplify the process of evaluating your top web company choices—plus questions to ask.

[tbhcreative.com/compare-web-vendors](https://tbhcreative.com/compare-web-vendors)

# Summary

Put your best foot forward during the next steps of your website redesign process using the proven processes outlined in this guide.

**The best website redesign projects start with making strategic plans that cover users' needs, allocating appropriate budget and resources, and partnering with the right website company.**

A website redesign project should not be a second-tier priority or quick decision for your company. Going into a website redesign project with a strategy in place will help to shorten timelines, improve results, and keep costs down.

By following the advice in this guide and selecting the right website partner, you will be in the best position for your website redesign project and online success.



## About TBH Creative

Since 2004, TBH Creative has worked with hundreds of companies in a wide range of industries, including **healthcare, finance, and service**. We specialize in developing complex, enterprise-level websites that convert.

Once your site is live, we are still your team. Whether you're looking to integrate digital marketing, phase in new features, monitor analytics, or keep improving to extend the life of your website, TBH Creative provides support and results-driven insights.

We believe in clear communication, high standards of excellence, and beating deadlines. But beyond those ideals, what really drives the heart of our business is your business. We take pride in helping our clients achieve more with digital marketing and web design than they ever thought possible.



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