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EFFECTIVE WEBSITE PLANNING: SIX KEY STEPS

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A website is more than an online shop window. An effective website should create a positive experience for your visitors and guide them to take action. Ultimately, this will help support your business objectives.

Whether building a new website or improving your existing site, onebite's simple guide will help you scope and plan your project.

Follow these simple steps to help get you started.

1 **Do Your Research**

2 **The Bigger Picture Matters**

3 **Website Objectives**

  Lost Users Are Lost Opportunities

  and Drawing Your Website Information Architecture

  ...lity is Key

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Review your existing website (if you have one):

What do you like about your site?	What do you dislike about your site?	Have you received any feedback internally or externally about your website? What is that feedback?	Ask someone impartial to visit and navigate your website. Where do they end up? What do they think?

Research your competitors:

Visit the websites of your key competitors. What are they doing on their websites? How do they position their business or service and what can you learn? Make notes on what you like and don't like about these sites. Are there any common factors or trends across your competitors' sites? Is there anything your competitors are doing that you aren't?

Competitor name	Website URL	What do they do well and what can you learn or apply in your own website?	What do they not do as well?

Review websites outside your industry:

You can learn a lot about what you like and dislike and what drives your journey around a website by looking outside your industry or sector.

Company name	Website URL	What do they do well and what can you learn or apply in your own website?	What do they not do as well?

Do you have any analytics or tracking you can explore?

Below we have outlined a few data points we recommend you track as standard. If you have more comprehensive website tracking already set-up you may have a lot more information and analysis you can include here. All data is useful – the more you can learn about what is and isn't working currently, the more you can improve it.

Analytics questions	Answers
How many visitors are you getting on average each month?	
How long are visitors spending on your website?	
What is your bounce rate?	

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Analytics questions	Answers	
What are the most popular pages on your website?		
What are your least visited pages?	①	②
	③	④
What pages are visitors dropping off?	①	②
	③	④
How are visitors getting to your website? Direct, organic, social, etc?		
How are you driving people to your website and is this reflected in where users are visiting from?		
Do you have goals set up that you are tracking – what are the results of these?		

Review your research:

Based on your answers to the above questions, what is working well on the site, what isn't working well? What surprised you and what learnings can you take?

Your website should never be an idle part of your marketing mix. It must play an active role in supporting your business. But no matter what you do with your website, it will be powerless unless you are clear on your business objectives – the bigger picture.

So, what are your business objectives? Do you want to grow your customer numbers? Do you want customers to increase their spend? Do you want to do this by a certain percentage each year or over the next 5 years? **If so, think about what your website needs to do, to support this.**

Business Objective	How can your website help achieve this?

Having identified your business objectives and how the website can support them, it is important to establish what you need to change or add to your website to achieve your goals.
Do you want to generate leads, provide a user with more information, or make an online sale?

Website objective	What can be added to your website to help you achieve this objective?

Providing website visitors with an intuitive and informative journey around your site is crucial for a positive user experience. A well-planned user journey provides visitors with the information they need and encourages them to take the action you want.

The human attention span is shortening. In 2018, psychologists found that on average humans will concentrate on a new stimulus for just 8 seconds – down from 12 seconds in 2000[1]. This gives you a limited window of opportunity to capture the attention of your website visitors. Users want information quickly and easily therefore your site should be simple and logical to navigate.

It is important to remember that you aren't mapping your entire customer journey – only the journey you want them to take on your site.

Below is a very simple table to get you started and ensure you are thinking about the pages they will visit and the actions you want them to take.

Who is the user? (e.g. Someone who's never heard of you, or someone who has interacted with you before?)	Where will they land on the website?	Where do you want them to go once they've arrived on the site?	What action do you ultimately want them to take?

Your Website Information Architecture is essentially a map of your site. Using all the insights collated on the previous pages you should understand the journey you want your users to take and what pages they should visit. Understanding this will allow you to draw a simple map of your site or customer journey. This will help you be clear on the content requirements for your website, how that content should be grouped, and on which pages and sections it should be located.

(6) Functionality is Key

Good website architecture is only part of the picture. The functionality of your site will also make a huge difference in creating a positive user experience and encouraging visitors to take the action you want. Functionality can be summarised as the tools within your website that showcases your content, allows users to navigate, and encourages them to convert. You need to decide what you want your website to be able to do.

For example:

- Is site-wide search important?
- Do you need a contact form that emails you user-data?
- Do you need a blog area?
- Do you want to pull relevant blog posts on to particular pages?
- Should the site link to your CRM?
- Would a database of products / solutions be useful?

- Does a sticky navigation (a navigation that follows you down the page) matter?
- Do you need a social feed showcasing your latest posts?
- Does a filter on your case studies or resources matter?
- Do you need a Content Management System (CMS) so you can edit copy quickly and easily rather than relying on a development team?
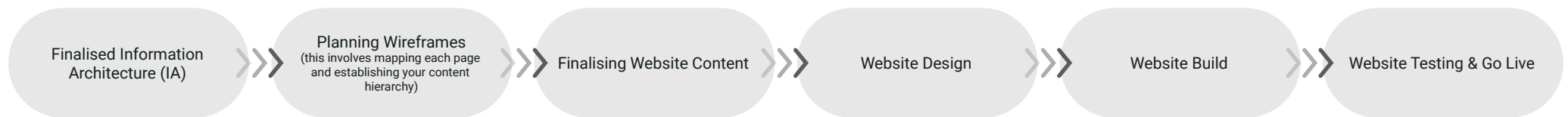- How important is Advanced Google Tracking to track certain events or downloads?

To make this process easier, you should consider the general functionality across the whole site. Once you are happy with the overall functionality you can then scope-out functionality page-by-page.

General (Site overview) List out site general functionality

Page	Required functionality

Page	Required functionality

Once you've completed these six steps you will be well equipped to take your website through to the next phases of development. The requirements within these phases will depend on whether you are planning a new website or refreshing your existing site. These phases include:

Finalised Information Architecture (IA) > Planning Wireframes (this involves mapping each page and establishing your content hierarchy) > Finalising Website Content > Website Design > Website Build > Website Testing & Go Live

You should also consider how you are going to drive people to your website. Will you focus on organic or paid social, PPC, email campaigns, online ads, or a mixture of everything?
Use your main marketing plan and strategy to support your new website and overall business objectives.

We hope this guide proves useful for your website build or refresh.

Do you need support bringing your website ideas to life? Contact us at onebite for an informal discussion to see how we can help.