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WAYS TO KNOW YOU ABSOLUTELY NEED A NEW WEBSITE

A publication of:



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It's hard to believe that seven years have transpired since you launched your current website. Who can forget how much it cost—or how long it took? Fortunately, the site still functions—albeit a bit slowly—and it should be good for another several years. Right?

That's the mindset of companies who dread forking out money to update their websites. Businesses that would scoff at the notion of employing computer equipment, fleet vehicles, or any other short-term assets past their expected usefulness think a website should last forever.

But technology and user expectations change rapidly. Visitors read and interact with websites differently today than even a year or two ago. They expect information to be easy to find and digest, images to be meaningful and engaging, and navigation to be intuitive. Otherwise, they'll be on to another site.

So, if you're planning to put off investing in a new website much longer, check out this list to determine just how obsolete your current site is.

Your site is not responsive.

One surefire way to recognize that a website is past its prime is a lack of responsive design. A responsive website is programmed so its content layout automatically adjusts to fit any size electronic device (i.e., desktop, laptop, tablet, phone). Responsive design has been around for more than a decade, and the technique has been widely used for the past several years. If your website is too old to be responsive, visitors must view a tiny, scaled-down version of your desktop layout on smaller screens.

Why is responsiveness critical to your website? Mobile Internet usage is growing at startling speeds. While more than 75 percent of American adults now access the Internet on both mobile and desktop devices, the trend is shifting toward mobile-only Internet usage. For example, 21 percent of Millennials access the Internet using mobile devices only. And it's not just younger generations driving the move to mobile; Baby Boomers represent the fastest growing share of people accessing the Internet via their smartphones and tablets.

If your website is too old to be responsive, visitors must view a tiny, scaled-down version of your desktop layout on smaller screens.

If your site is not responsive, your entire online presence will appear obsolete on mobile devices.



2

Your site's images are old-fashioned.

Nothing screams “outdated website” as loudly as small photos with text wrapped around them. Old-school sites often feature stock photos of smiling business people (usually in groups with their arms crossed), industry-related clichés (i.e., law firms can’t help showing courthouse pillars and the scales of justice), and shots of the company’s headquarters. If your site includes those sorts of images, it undoubtedly appears archaic; what’s more, you’re missing out on a chance to truly engage visitors.

Using “hero images” is one of the latest trends in website design. A hero image is a large, full-screen-wide photo or illustration that resides at the top of a web page. The first thing visitors see when landing on a site’s homepage, a hero image serves as an introductory banner that offers a sense of the website’s theme, look, and feel.

Your old stock photos put you at risk of showing images that appear on countless other antiquated sites. Hero images make your site unique, while causing visitors to linger longer.

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4

Your site is not accessible.

The reasons for redesigning a website go beyond creating an updated look and feel. One critical objective is to remove any barriers to obtaining information.

Modern website design involves making your site accessible to everyone—including those living with disabilities. Toward that end, your website should have features that conform to the Americans with Disabilities Act, such as ensuring compatibility with various assistive computer technologies and providing visible captioning for photos and images. In some circumstances, there are costly legal ramifications for failing to comply.

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In addition, visitors should be able to choose the language in which the site's text appears. Today's newer websites include instant translation functions that convert displayed text to other languages.

If your current website lacks accessibility features, a redesign project presents an opportunity to become a more digitally responsible organization.



5

Your site's navigation is too complicated.

In web design's early days, developers sensed that visitors would view online content the same way they read newspapers. For that reason, they believed that important news should appear "above the fold;" or in website terms, vital content should fit on a single page. With homepage space thusly limited, additional information required navigating to another page—and then another. Navigation bars became burdened with endless page links.

Single-page website design encourages users to scroll rather than click.

Then something wonderful happened. Single-page website design encouraged users to scroll rather than click. Made popular by social media newsfeeds, scrolling allows visitors to browse quickly through a site without stopping to load new pages. Features such as parallax scrolling make the online experience fluid and entertaining, and turn your homepage into a storyboard.

If your homepage ends at the fold (that is to say, at the bottom of the first screen), navigation will interrupt your reader - and bring your story to a close.



6

Your site contains outdated information.

An obvious place to look when determining how often a website is updated is at the bottom of a page. Or, more specifically, at the copyright statement located in the footer. If the copyright year is not the current year, no one is paying attention to the website. If the copyright year is five years ago, the site is clearly obsolete.

Outdated information makes your site seem abandoned. If your “current events” page lists last summer’s open house as the next big happening, who could take your site seriously? And when your “meet our team” section includes employees who left during a previous U.S. president’s administration, how does anyone know whom to call?

Outdated information makes your site seem abandoned.

Modern techniques can prevent outdated information from appearing on your site. Coding that automatically updates the copyright year and causes upcoming events to drop after their scheduled dates gives your site a cared-for appearance.



Your site's blog is irrelevant

Another sign that a website has been forsaken can be found in recent blog activity. Posting blog content that your audience finds irrelevant signals that your site has not kept up with advances in inbound marketing.

Bygone wisdom stressed regular posting as a keystone to search engine optimization—regardless of the topic. Now we know that posting information that your ideal customers search for online helps drive potential clients to your blog content—and, ultimately, to the rest of your site.

Random musings have given way to thoughtfully written posts that incorporate keywords and phrases that match likely search strings. Meaningful content establishes your organization's expertise on the subject matter, which keeps interested prospects engaged and eventually leads to sales conversations.

On the other hand, if your latest post is a year old and offers little insight, readers will suspect you have nothing current—or helpful—to offer them.

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BLOG

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Your site has broken links.

Remember hurrying to launch your site all those years ago and having time run out before you could create that cool work portfolio page? Remember listing that page on your navigation bar anyway and linking to the message, “Coming Soon?” Let’s be honest: your coming soon pages are never coming, and visitors who have clicked on those links are never coming back to your site.

Little frustrates website readers more than stumbling onto broken links—regardless of whether those links are internal or external. Remember, today’s Internet visitors are searching for information. Expired links (i.e., links to content that has been moved or removed, or that never existed at all) are clues that your website—and, therefore, your information—is outdated. Their next click will likely take visitors back to their search engines.

Little frustrates website readers more than stumbling onto broken links.

Newer websites take advantage of [broken link checking software](#) that periodically validates hyperlinks. If your site lacks that safeguard, your new website had better be “Coming Soon.”



ABOUT US

When it comes to designing a brand, people usually know what they like - and what they dislike. However, few know what actually works.

Our job at The Creative Block is to design and implement branding that looks great while meeting your marketing expectations. Or, put another way, to know what you like and to know what works.

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