MTWhiteLABS

INSIGHT SERIES

THE EXECUTIVE'S WEBSITE PLANNING GUIDE

This isn't about WordPress.
It's about avoiding expensive mistakes.

Practical guidance for business leaders who are planning a website project.

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Why This Guide Exists

Website redesigns rarely fail because of bad design. They fail because of unclear goals, ownership gaps, and decisions made in the wrong order.

This guide walks through the ten things that most determine whether your next website project succeeds — or turns into an expensive, drawn-out mess.

You don't need to become a web expert. You need to ask the right questions before you sign anything.

Your time:	About 15 minutes to read
Chapters:	10, covering strategy through vendor selection
Your result:	A clear framework for evaluating your next website project

How to Use This Guide

- Read this before your first vendor conversation, not after.
- Use the Vendor Selection Checklist (Chapter 10) as an actual checklist during proposals.
- Come back to Chapter 2's questions any time a new project is proposed internally.

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CHAPTER 1

Why Most Redesigns Fail

- No clear business goal defined before design begins — “make it look modern” isn't a strategy.
- Decisions driven by personal taste instead of what actually converts visitors into customers.
- No single owner for content, so copy becomes an afterthought scramble at the end.
- Scope creep — “while we're at it” features that blow the timeline and budget.
- Technology chosen before strategy, locking you into the wrong platform for your needs.

A redesign fails in the planning phase, long before anyone opens a design tool.

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CHAPTER 2

Questions to Answer Before Hiring Anyone

- What is this website actually for — leads, sales, credibility, recruiting?
- Who owns and updates content after launch — you, or the agency?
- What's the real budget, including hosting, maintenance, and future updates?
- What does success look like in 6 months? What will you measure?
- Who has final sign-off authority, and how many rounds of revisions are included?

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CHAPTER 3

ADA / WCAG Considerations

- Web accessibility lawsuits have risen sharply — this is real legal exposure, not a nice-to-have.
- WCAG 2.1 Level AA is the practical baseline most businesses should target.
- Common failure points: missing alt text, poor color contrast, keyboard navigation gaps, unlabeled form fields.
- Accessible design also improves SEO and usability for all visitors — not just a compliance checkbox.

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CHAPTER 4

SEO Myths

- “More pages always help SEO” — thin, duplicate pages can hurt more than help.
- “Keyword stuffing works” — modern search engines penalize this.
- “SEO is a one-time project” — it's ongoing, not a launch-day checkbox.
- “Any web designer can do SEO” — design and SEO strategy are different skill sets.
- “More traffic automatically means more revenue” — the wrong traffic converts at 0%.

CHAPTER 5

Analytics That Actually Matter

- Track: conversion rate, lead quality, funnel drop-off points, which channels bring qualified traffic.
- Don't obsess over: raw pageviews, bounce rate in isolation, time-on-site without context.
- If you can't tie a metric to a business outcome, it's a vanity number.

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CHAPTER 6

Content: The Real Bottleneck in Every Redesign

- Design and development almost never blow the timeline — waiting on content does.
- “We'll write it later” is how launches slip by months.
- The person who volunteers to write content is rarely the right person to write it.
- Content-first planning — outlining pages and messaging before design starts — prevents expensive rework.
- A content plan with owners and deadlines, set at kickoff, is one of the highest-leverage things a client can do.

The website isn't late because of your developer. It's late because nobody owned the words.

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CHAPTER 7

AI Features Worth Adding

- AI-powered chat for instant answers to common visitor questions.
- Smart on-site search that understands intent, not just keywords.
- Personalized content or offers based on visitor behavior.
- AI-assisted content drafting tools for your team's ongoing updates.
- Automated lead qualification on contact or quote forms.

Worth adding when it solves a real visitor problem — not because it's trendy.

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CHAPTER 8

$ Budget Expectations

- Every website is different — page count, custom functionality, content volume, and integrations all move the number.
- Beware of any quote given before someone understands your actual goals and requirements.
- A thoughtful proposal should break down what you're paying for, not just a bottom-line total.
- Ask what's included post-launch — support, hosting, edits — and for how long.
- Budget in ongoing costs from day one: hosting, security, and maintenance are part of the true cost of ownership.

The right question isn't “what does a website cost?” — it's “what does my website need to do, and what does that cost?”

CHAPTER 9

Maintenance Planning

- Security patches and software updates — monthly, minimum.
- Regular backups with a tested restore process.
- Content updates and freshness reviews — quarterly at minimum.
- Performance monitoring and periodic accessibility audits.

A website is a product to maintain, not a project to finish.

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CHAPTER 10

Vendor Selection Checklist

- Portfolio includes work relevant to your industry or business size.
- Clear answer on who owns the code, content, and domain after launch.
- Defined post-launch support terms in writing, not verbal promises.
- Willing to provide references you can actually call.
- Realistic timeline — be wary of anyone promising a complex site in 2 weeks.

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What's Next?

You know what to ask. Let's talk through your specific project.

Every website project has its own goals, constraints, and history — the right plan depends on where you're starting from.

MTWhiteLABS offers a complimentary 30-minute Technology Strategy Review to help you think through your website project before you talk to a single vendor — or evaluate the proposals you've already received.

During our review, we'll:

- Talk through your goals and what success should look like
- Review any proposals or vendors you're already considering
- Flag accessibility, SEO, or scope risks before you sign anything
- Help you think through realistic budget and timeline
- Recommend next steps tailored to your specific project

No obligation. No technical jargon.

Just a practical conversation focused on getting your website project right the first time.

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Let's Talk About What's Next

MTWhiteLABS

Take the next step with a complimentary 30-minute Technology Strategy Review.

Visit our website
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