Best Practices of Website Design
CHEAT SHEET

Best practice is a coined expression or neologism used to designate a technique, method, process, activity, incentive, or reward which is regarded as more effective at delivering a particular outcome than any other technique, method, process, etc. when applied to a particular condition or circumstance. The idea is that with proper processes, checks and testing, a desired outcome can be delivered with fewer problems and unforeseen complications. *—Wikipedia*

Introduction

There are thousands of facets that come along with today's modern websites. As the landscapes and technologies have matured, so have the complexities that surround their intricate development processes. At Starmark, we not only have our own proprietary process that we go through in the creation of a business website, but with that process are bound "**best practices**" that should always be sought out and followed as it pertains to the design.

This cheat sheet will explore one of the primary divisions of a website and its deployment – the design. The design of a business' website is as interwoven to a businesses brand as the heart is to the body. Your website act as the hubs for your traditional, interactive and social intiatives.

» Design » Deploy » Optimize » Communicate » Rinse & Repeat

The days of "we should have a website" are long gone from any modern business' thinking; therefore, your digital status lies in what "generation" or "version" your website is in. What's critical to change in this thinking is that a website, if properly designed and maintained, is never finished. This is a contradicition to many business strategies of the past, but the simple truth is the market moves too fast to have a website that is not constantly optimized, maintained and scalable to service your customers needs and desires. Think of your website as a living and breathing entitiy that must be attended to and fed on an ongoing basis or your customers will most certainly have no reason to return, and thereby the death of your business can occur out of atrophy.

Challenges to address with your next website:

- Have you done your due dilligence? – Do you know what's happening within your industry online at any given time?

- Does your information flow? – This sounds odd, but when you're on your site, is it intuitive and easy to use?

- Does your design fit the audience? – From age to geographical location, demographics to psychographics, there are countless things that can go into your design.

- Does your website play well with others? – The growing key to your competitive edge is how well your website will work with your other marketing directives.

Let's explore.

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Intelligence Gathering

Make sure that the company that you work with does a credible job with you to determine who is in your space and what they're doing that is unique online.

Digestion of Information

Critical development of information heirarchy and layout scenarios called "wireframing" for your website will save you time, allow for intial prototying and giving you an intial sense of what the design could be.

Make it Shiny

Who is your customer? Design it for them, not who you think is the customer. This will ultimately affect the colors, fonts, layout and technological approach that will be taken.

Keep the Party Going

What could be the single most important bi-product of your next website design will connect you to your consumer. Today's websites are robust, connection hubs that work with different levels of social and rich media to best support and educate your consumer and build ever-lasting brand loyalty.

New Website Checklist

- **Goals:** Sales vs. Awareness

- **Competition:** Determine who's doing it right.

- **Architecture:** Do you have a page to cover all your messaging?

- **Modularity:** Is the site prepared to expand and contract?

- **Layout:** Do you have a consistent look and feel for all scenarios?

- **Wireframing:** Which content should be featured/is most important?

- **Technology:** What kind(s) of technology are best suited to tell your message?

- **Content Prioritization:** What content is in your "Viewable Area" and why?

- **Navigational:** Is your navigation in the best location?

- **Fonts, Colors & Sizes:** Is your page speaking to you, or your customer?

- **Voice & Demographic:** Who's talking to your customer?

- **Content Directive:** How are you tiering the importance of what you say?

- **Social Integration:** Have you choosen your social conduits? Where do they go?

- **Repurposable Content:** One piece of content can live in many places.

- **Search & Sitemap Footers:** The bottom of the page can be a reason to stay.

- **Mobile/Tablet Ready:** If it's online, it's also going mobile. Are you ready?

- **Testing & Optimization:** 30, 90, 120-day testing and changes - make it right.

- **Ongoing Content Development:** Who's writing what, when and how much?

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custom media

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