COMMEXIS
Website Development Process

FIRST OF ALL, WHAT EXACTLY IS A 'PROCESS'?

A web development process is a documented outline of the steps needed to be taken from start to finish in order to complete a typical web design project.

What follows is the standard process that Commexis has developed which has proven to be successful for both the agency and our clients:

1. PLANNING/DISCOVERY

The planning stage is arguably the most important, because what's decided and mapped here sets the stage for the entire project. This is also the stage that requires the most client interaction and participation.

- **REQUIREMENTS ANALYSIS**
  During this phase, Commexis will work together with you to define your goals, target audience, detailed feature requests and compile as much relevant information as you can provide. This is a brainstorming session and all input is welcome. The more information we can glean from you, the easier it will be to deliver a site design that exceeds your expectations. We find that this goes best if you and your team are prepared with a list of sites you like, dislike or simply want to extract some design elements from.

- **RESEARCH AND SUBMISSION OF SAMPLE SITE DESIGNS**
  An essential part of all planning is getting some direction from your team as to what they like or dislike in regards to design, flow and color palettes. If your company has a style guide or brand bible, please share it with us so that we can ensure consistent branding throughout.

- **CONTRACTS THAT DEFINE ROLES, COPYRIGHT AND FINANCIAL POINTS**
  This is a crucial element of the documentation and should include payment terms, project closure clauses, termination clauses, copyright ownership and timelines.

- **SITE MAP**
  What is website sitemapping and why is it needed?

  What is website sitemapping and why is it needed? Sitemapping is the visual process of outlining a website's structure, high-level functionality and navigation scheme. The end deliverable can be a sketch, image, PDF, or presented in a tool like SlickPlan. A website's sitemap should be defined early in the website planning process before beginning any design.

  Sitemapping is a critical phase to the structure of a website because it represents a crucial deliverable of information architecture (IA). How critical? Bad information architecture causes most user failures. A sitemap guides end users who are lost in the structure or need to find a piece of information quickly. Rather than simply listing pages, including links and a hierarchy of page organization is good practice. If you have a particular hierarchy or structure in mind for how your site should be organized, please be sure to share it with us so that we can incorporate it into the sitemapping process.

- **SITE HOSTING, ACCESS TO SERVERS AND BUILD FOLDER STRUCTURE**
  If we are hosting the site, then we need to discuss email records.

  Should you opt to use another hosting company, we will need to both obtain and validate FTP host access, usernames and passwords; control panel login information; database configuration details; and finally, any languages or frameworks currently installed on the site.

- Determine required software and resources (stock photography, fonts, etc.)

2. DESIGN

TThe design stage typically involves moving the information outlined in the planning stage closer to reality. The main deliverables for this phase are a documented site structure and, more importantly, a visual representation of the user journey.

Upon completion of this phase, the website should more-or-less have taken shape, but for the absence of the content and special features.

- **WIREFRAME AND DESIGN ELEMENTS PLANNING**
  This is where the visual layout of the website begins to coalesce. Using information gathered in the planning phase, our developers will begin to design the layout using a wireframe.

- **MOCK-UPS BASED ON REQUIREMENTS ANALYSIS**
  Designing mock-ups makes for relatively easy modification, it keeps the design elements organized in layers, and it primes you for slicing and coding when the time later on.

- **REVIEW AND APPROVAL CYCLE**
  At this point, you and our team will likely go through several iterative designs until we arrive at a final version. This is the easiest time to make changes, not after the design has been coded.

3. DEVELOPMENT

Development involves the bulk of the programming work, as well as loading content.

Our development team will now build out the HTML and CSS code from the mockups created at the end of the approval cycle. At the end of this stage, we'll have created a coded base for the site structure.

- **WHY WE PREFER WORDPRESS AS OUR CMS SOLUTION**
 WordPress is the leading content management system on the market today. We use it whenever possible because it is incredibly user friendly and fully customizable. It lets us build your site in a way that will allow you to fully manage every page, post, and piece of content yourself, without you having to deal with any code. WordPress is also very SEO friendly and allows our digital marketing team to do everything they need to ensure your website is as easy to find as possible.

- **BUILD DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**
  Next comes any special features and functionality. Here's where the fancy elements come into play. We like to take care of this after adding the static content because the website now provides a relatively clean and uncluttered workspace. Sometimes we will get forms and validation up and running at this stage as well.

- **URL MAPPING**
  If you have an existing website and are looking to build a new one, it is important that the URLs from your existing website are directed to appropriate URLs on your new website. Without taking this important step, URLs from your old site that are not used on your new site will become damaging 404 pages that can negatively affect your SEO and rankings. Through extensive research we can determine what content on your existing site should be transferred to your new site. We can then map out an SEO friendly plan for redirecting pages to ensure that you have a seamless transition into your new website.
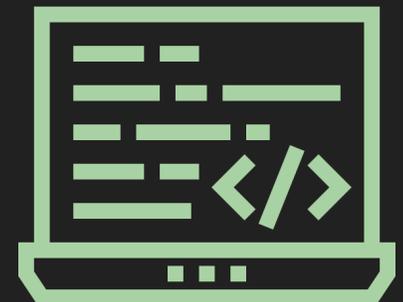
3. DEVELOPMENT (CONT.)

- **TEST AND VERIFY LINKS AND FUNCTIONALITY.**
  This is a good time for a full website review. Using our file manager as a guide, we'll walk through every single page we've created— everything from the home page to the submission confirmation page—and make sure everything is in working order and that we haven't missed anything visually or functionally.

- **INTEGRATE RESPONSIVE DESIGN**
  Final cross-browser check (IE, Firefox, Chrome, Safari, Mobile Phone, iPad & Tablet). We'll check the website in multiple browsers one last time.

4. LAUNCH

The purpose of the launch phase is to prepare the website for your audience. This requires final polishing of design elements, deep testing of interactivity and features and, most of all, a consideration of the user experience. An important early step in this phase is to move the website, if need be, to its permanent web server. Testing in the production environment is important because different servers can have different features and unexpected behavior (e.g., different database host addresses).

- **TRANSFER TO LIVE SERVER**
  This could mean transferring to a live web server, "unhiding" the website or removing the "Under construction" page. Our last-minute review of the live website happens now.

- **TESTING**
  We'll run the website through the final diagnostics using our full suite of tools: code validators, broken-link checkers, website health checks, spell-checker and the like. We'll also add analytics and any coding needed for a digital campaign.