



eBook

**A run book  
for launching  
a new website.**

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# Intro

**Launching a new website often comes with a big investment in terms of cash, time and resources. It can be quite overwhelming and it's no mean feat.**

You have to plan user journeys, develop content around your features, benefits, services or products, approve designs, develop the site and all whilst you're working to deadlines. There are sometimes things that are overlooked when launching a new site and these get rushed right at the end.

We've created this run book for launching a new website so that important steps aren't missed out and provide a little bit of help to make the process less stressful. If you're redesigning your website and you're a business owner, marketing manager or you've been charged with this project we hope you'll find this ebook useful whether you're techie or not. Work with your web designer and developer to make sure you've got all bases covered as this is intended only as a guide.



We are Sixth Story, a digital agency specialising in strategy and creating bespoke websites for B2B and B2C websites. Having launched hundreds of sites we thought it was time to share what we've learned and if it makes the task for launching a new site less daunting for someone out there, then our work here is done.

Our favourite Content Management System is WordPress (WP) so whilst this ebook will hopefully be generic enough for any project, there is a focus on WP throughout the following chapters.



WordPress is an open source software for creating websites, blogs or even web apps. WordPress is licensed under GPL but the good news is, it's free. With an incredible community contributing to WordPress it's fast becoming the World's favourite CMS system. There are constant updates and it's completely scalable so it can grow with your business.

# Where to start?

**You're about to start a new website or you're nearing the stage of going live.**

Make sure you have all your ducks in a row. There are some steps that we need to go through for every project, no matter the shape or size. They are as follows:

Collate all  
**your accounts**

Get ready  
for **updates**

Prepare for  
**maintenance**

**“ An hour of planning can  
save you 10 hours of doing. ”**

**-Dale Carnegie**

## Collate all your accounts

It's not uncommon for us to ask clients for their accounts, whether that's for social media or otherwise, and they don't have it. Your online profile or accounts are like assets, you need to make an inventory of them and keep everything accessible. Whether that's in a 'black book' or you use a password manager to securely keep your data together, it's a vital step to have in place. Not doing this can often cause delays further when you want to launch.

Account type	Description / Link	Username / Password
Domain name	Where did you buy it? What's the renewal date?	
Social media accounts	Provide a link for all your relevant accounts:  Facebook Twitter Google+ LinkedIn Instagram Pinterest YouTube Google	
Email	Master account Where are they hosted?	
Newsletter	Do you use MailChimp? Do you use a CRM system?	



## Get ready for updates

**“What do you mean updates? We haven't even launched yet!”** I hear you saying. We're often quoted many times during a project that 'a website is never finished'. Just because it's gone live, it doesn't stop there. In fact now the hard work can begin. Once you've made the investment in the new website make sure you use it, keep it updated and keep it fresh. You don't want it sitting on the virtual shelf gathering dust.

Strike while the iron is hot and set a recurring calendar reminder to review, tweak and improve the website. Often during a project you have new ideas, rather than adding to the project budget and timeline you can create a wishlist of things to work on after the launch. This way you have more reasons to keep in touch with users or customers.



**Fresh content is key to Google, by regularly adding quality content to your site you can get Google to love it.**

A blog is a great way to add fresh content. Don't underestimate how adding blogs drives traffic to your website and they never go out of date. As long as you're creating good quality, relevant content people will continue to find your blogs months after they have been published. Start small, don't overwhelm and get into a routine.





# 2016 MARKETING PLAN

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Target Industries / Customer Groups						
Marketing & Customer service to existing customers						
Networking / Events						
Your KPIs:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No Enquiries</li> <li>Conversion</li> <li>Sales Revenue</li> <li>Web Traffic</li> <li>Social Interaction</li> </ul>						

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## Maintenance plan

You know how your car has to get filled up, you need to check the oil and water and once in a while take it for a service? Your website is like a car. It needs regular maintenance and planning ahead prevents disasters.

The WordPress engine and any plug-ins that have been used need to be updated. Having out of date plug-ins will lead to your site going down. I say WILL because this is one of the reasons sites get hacked.

“ With sites we created, we use Wordfence to scan websites for viruses or malicious code. ”

## Holding page

Do you have a temporary holding page with a message that says your new website is coming soon? There are many benefits to having a holding page, you can create hype and get people to give over their valuable data in return for the big announcement and so on.

If you have bought a new domain name, you can use the holding page to get your domain indexed by Google and the longer you have a domain name around the better. Plus if the holding page is up and the domain is repointed to where you'll be hosting the real site, it saves you doing that admin job on go live day. (We'll talk about domain names a little later on).

## Settings

**In WordPress, you have some settings that need to be checked. As a base line, here are some to look out for.**

- Under Settings > General Settings, you'll find a screen with the site title, tagline and a few other things. The default setting usually says 'just another Wordpress site'. Make sure you change this to something on brand and descriptive.
- Check the email address is set to the correct one and that email address works. (Sometimes notification emails from WP come from an address like form@yourdomain.co.uk and sometimes this goes to spam, white list any email addresses so you don't miss valuable enquiries or orders).
- Robox.txt lets Search Engines crawlers crawl your website and get it indexed. This is really important so your content can be found in searches. If you have this on your development site then make sure you don't 'disallow' content when you go live.
- Permalinks are a setting to determine how your urls are displayed, use the 'pretty urls' as your setting. For all your pages this ensures that your title is shown in the url instead of the page ID. So instead of yourdomain.co.uk/blog/23! you will have yourdomain.co.uk/blog/launching-a-website displayed.

## Security

**We've already mentioned security in our topic on maintenance and how we use a plugin such as Wordfence to protect your site. Here are some other things to further harden your site.**

- Secure passwords. Make sure they are strong, use a password generator (WordPress provides this tool for you in your profile page). Please don't use "admin" or your admin site name as your username, then hackers only have to guess your password!
- When employees leave the company ensure that access is removed. Ensure that content they have added is moved to another user so nothing else is deleted in error.
- Only use plugins from well-known sources, best downloaded direct from Wordpress.org as they have been scanned prior to being submitted to the directory. If you are not using a particular plugin and it's there for no reason, it's a good idea to remove it from your site. It's better to minimise the plugins to avoid unwanted access.
- Try to avoid 'shared hosting'. If you have your site on a shared server with other sites that are hacked, this can get your site 'blacklisted' by Google which isn't great. Speak to your web developer or hosting company about your options. We recommend TSO Hosts, Linode and Digital Ocean as cloud hosting providers.
- We can't emphasize enough how important it is to keep Wordpress and your plugins updated. WordPress regularly releases updates with security patches to keep your site secure.
- You can harden the site further by restricting login access to specific authorised IP addresses, that's if you have a static IP address.
- Speak to your hosting provider to ensure you have the correct file permissions on your operating system. For folders, it should be 755 and for files it should be 644. (We know that sounds a bit Star Trek but your web developer or host company will be able to set this for you).

Disable file editors in the backend of your website to protect your code files in case a hacker managed to login to your website. In the wp-config.php file add the following line of code and you're done!

```
define( 'DISALLOW_FILE_EDIT', true );
```

Take regular scheduled backups of your website and database. If the worst happens, you'll at least have a backup to roll back to.

## eCommerce

**If you've got products to sell online, great. WordPress can handle it and one of our favourite eCommerce extensions is called WooCommerce.**

WooCommerce is a great tool and there are many addons that you can purchase making the task of selling online fairly straightforward. Here are some things you will need to have lined up.

<b>Payment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Select your <b>payment gateway</b> and ensure that you've got your accounts set up, verified and ready. Popular ones are PayPal, SagePay and WorldPay. This step often adds unexpected time delays to projects.</li><li>Do you require an SSL certificate?</li></ul>
<b>Products</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Do you need to charge <b>tax</b> on your products?</li><li>For <b>postage</b>, ensure you have this worked out and have countries you'll sell to, postage methods and costs ready.</li></ul>
<b>Legals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Do you have <b>terms and conditions</b>, returns policy, cancellations ready?</li><li>It's really important to check any legalities with your particular products. Do they fall under Distance Selling Regulations and do you comply?</li><li>If you sell jewellery online, you may only be able to deliver to the billing address for fraud prevention. If you sell alcohol, do you have a license and need to ask people for their age?</li></ul>



# Content

We could talk about content for a day (in fact we've written a separate book on the topic called **Content Pizza**).

Get a copy [here](#)

However the content we want to talk about for launch is a little different. You've collated all your copywriting, photography is done and now you're populating the website. Here are some things to bear in mind for your website's content.

- Consistency is key. With in your design, you will have templates for pages and within those templates you'll have set styling. Ensure you are making use of the Headings (H1, H2, H3 etc) and that pages look consistent throughout the site.
- Have all your website images been optimised for web resolution? This saves speed and lagging pages which can affect user experience negatively.
- Contact details. It might sound trivial but if you've plonked a holding number or fake email address on the site make sure it's all updated and correct.
  - Check the phone number, ring it if you have to.
  - Have you checked the address and is your Google business listing correct?
  - Do you have clear, concise call to actions on all your web pages? Whether it's to contact you, visit the next page/product, download something or sign up for news; make sure you are taking every opportunity to engage and communicate with your visitors.
- Are your social media icons linked and integrated? To fully integrate Twitter with a live feed, your Twitter account needs to be verified with a mobile number.
- Have you got appropriate fields on your enquiry or contact forms? When you've submitted the form does it have verification and a nicely designed 'thank you' page after successful submission?
- Does the site have a favicon in the browser? These are the little touches that make a big difference.
- Have you got a custom designed 404 'page not found' template? When a new site goes live this is often overlooked but any previously linked pages might not exist anymore. A 404 page is valuable opportunity to engage with your audience. Do you have a copyright notice as well as the legals included on the site?
- Ensuring you have the appropriate privacy policy and web terms in place is vital. For a limited company or charity, it's a legal requirement to provide your company number or registered charity number and such details on corporate communications. You can find out more from [gov.uk](http://gov.uk)



# Test, test and test

**You've been working tirelessly to get your site and now it's time to test it before the big launch.**

You could get some fresh eyes on the site as you'll have been looking at it non-stop for a while. Ask someone to test it for you and get them on a different screen size, browser so you can cover more bases. Create a snag list for any bugs you find and if possible, note the browser and version you were using with a screen shot. That'll help your web developer replicate the error quicker and get it fixed.

- Test in multiple browsers and across different devices. There are simulation tools you can use to test but nothing beats a bit of manual testing.
- Check your site is responsive. Google has a nifty tool where you can pop in your web page URL and it will do the simulation for you. (Really important, if your site is mobile responsive it will appear in mobile searches too). Here's the link to get started <https://www.google.co.uk/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly/>
- Check that all links are working. Your web developer will most likely validate your site but there's a tool you can use to do this for site links <https://validator.w3.org/checklink>
- Do buttons and links have hover over states so they are obvious to the user?

# Ready, set, launch

## **The big finale! It's time to press the big red button and launch your website.**

Only there isn't a big red button and it's a little more involved. If you're pushing a brand new site live you can typically set your launch date for any day or time. If you're pushing a site live after a redesign, we'd suggest doing this during a period where it will cause the least disruption.



**Call us superstitious but we don't put sites live on a Friday. If no one is available to provide support over a weekend, think about planning it when support is available should something go wrong.**

It's not instant when you push a new site live, once you've uploaded the files to your web server and repointed the domain name it can take up to 48 hours to be visible across the internet. This time must be accounted for in your launch plan especially if you're planning a campaign around it.

There are also some other things that need to be done, here's a list :

- Make sure you turn your site on for search engines
- Add your Google Analytics tracking code to the site
- Have a check through your web forms and do a test
- Make sure your site opens when you use [www.yourdomain.co.uk](http://www.yourdomain.co.uk) and [yourdomain.co.uk](http://yourdomain.co.uk)
- Check none of your links go back to your old site or your development site
- Submit your sitemap to Google
- Ensure your SEO plugin is added and populated (we use Yoast)

Once your site is on your live server and the domain has successfully repointed, you might want to kick the tyres again. Check all links, forms etc. We also recommend carrying out a speed test as you want your pages to load as quickly as possible. Google has another nifty tool for doing this, here's a link <https://developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/insights/>

To speed up your site further, there are 'cacheing plugins' you can implement. For Wordpress the one we prefer to use is Fastest Cache which you can read about and [download here.](#)

Don't stop there

It's never finished.

Now that your new website is live, you've told everyone about it on social media, sent out an email campaign don't stop there. This is something we see over and over again, a website is left to gather dust on the virtual shelf and it falls out of date, is no longer relevant and as a result doesn't bring in a return on investment.

Put in place your maintenance plan, recurring updates to continue building fresh content and regularly review your site's performance. With a Content Managed site ensure that you have your username and password to log in securely and start editing content. We typically offer some training with a website but make sure your web developer sits down to give you a tour.

■ Ask your web developer if they have a maintenance plan that you can take advantage of to keep your plugins and Wordpress updated as necessary.

Your web developer maybe hosting your site so they will look after annual renewals of hosting. Make sure that's the case and if not put some reminders in your calendar to look at that now

■ Set up a monthly appointment with you and your website to review performance (Google analytics) and to update your content.

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## **Want to have a chat about your web project?**

If you'd like to discuss your business goals and online objectives, we'll be happy to have a consultation to provide suggestions for improvements to your current site or a fresh strategy to overhaul your site completely.

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