

An illustration of a mountain range against a bright orange background. The largest mountain is blue with a white peak. A yellow line with red circular markers starts at the base of the mountain and zig-zags up to the peak, where a blue flag is flying. There are smaller blue mountains to the right, and green pine trees at the base of the mountains. White clouds are scattered in the sky.

# The Two-Year Journey to Your Website's Summit

 myadvice

How strategically redesigning your website can get it to the top of its game — and keep it there.

# 1 Gearing Up

## 2 Acclimation

### 3 Gaining Momentum

### 4 The View From The Top

### 5 The Descent



There's a lot of Advice out there about how to create a good website. What to include, what to avoid, even what kinds of content you should put on your website...chances are, you've heard a lot of it. What's less commonly talked about is that a website is a static thing, existing in the ever-changing landscape of the internet. Without a plan to monitor, update, and refresh your website regularly, you'll be operating an outdated website before you know it. It's why we completely relaunch our client websites every two years.

Sound overwhelming? We hear you. You probably didn't start your business to become a marketer, after all, but if you're reading this guide, you know your website is a critically important piece of your strategy. Whether you're a seasoned pro or a complete newbie, use this guide as a map to help you identify and plan the optimizations that will have the biggest impact on your website's performance.

Need a more hands-on guide? We can help, let's chat.

Phase

# 1 Gearing Up

WHEN **90 Days Before Relaunch**

GOAL **Assess the current state of your site and set goals for improvement.**

Before launch, it's time to look at the current state of your website and create a plan to take it to the next summit.

In the same way you wouldn't climb a mountain without researching and preparing for the task at hand, redesigning a website requires similar preparation. Oh yeah, and a lot of planning. This is the phase where you map out what's working, what's not, and what needs to change on your site, as well as looking for signals indicating issues within your overall marketing strategy.

Actions you should take:



### Determine how your site is performing right now.

Look at your most important key performance indicators (KPIs). For most websites, these are things like the number of people visiting your site and the number of visitors who are converting to patients or clients. There's more to consider than just your website, however. Your local listings can give you a wealth of information about how visible your business is across the web.



### Review your site's SEO performance.

If you've noticed any significant change in website rankings, it's generally a sign your site needs to be updated. Major changes in rankings can occur for several reasons, but they almost always signal that search engines have deemed your site to be outdated, slow, or not reputable.



### Compare your site with your competitors.

Your competitors' websites can offer you a wealth of information about current website trends, from design to interfaces, especially those who rank well. Find the commonalities between sites that are performing well, and compare them against your own. You'll likely see some differences that can be useful for determining where your site isn't up to par.



### Research algorithm updates.

Major search engines frequently release updates to their algorithms. These changes affect how sites rank, and ignoring them can have disastrous consequences on your site. For example, mobile-first search now means that search engines use the mobile version of your website to crawl and rank. Similar rules exist around accessibility for users on adaptive devices. These are just two examples of the kinds of changes that can have big implications for your site if not addressed.

Pitfalls to avoid:



### Setting unrealistic goals.

Setting specific, measurable goals will help you get to where you need to go. Don't set yourself up to fail by trying to take on too much at once.



### Monitoring the wrong things.

Consider every metric that might point to success for your website. Focusing on the right things is an important key to success.



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Phase

2


# Acclimation


Nobody climbs a mountain without the proper safety measures. This stage helps you avoid making bad decisions.


When you climb a mountain, acclimation is what helps you avoid taking on too much too quickly and putting your health and safety at risk. The same theory applies here. Search engines don't react well to major changes in website content. They also take time to crawl your site completely. The easier you make the changeover, the smoother the process will go. The best way to do this is to start with your biggest change first - and then hold off on making any bigger changes until you have an accurate sense of where you're at.


Beyond the potential implications to search performance, making big changes to your site also comes with more working pieces to test for quality assurance, like forms, navigation bars, and other UX and structural elements. After all, it almost doesn't matter what happens to your search rankings if people can't use your site.

## Actions you should take:


 **Make your biggest change first.**  
There's an order of operations here, starting with your biggest change. If you're completely changing the location of your site, this is when you launch the new version, complete with the new, redesigned menus and user experience. Other things that could qualify as "big changes" could include changing your website hosting location or launching a new design or user experience. Doing any one of these things is a big change in and of itself, so doing anything beyond changing all three of these elements at once is generally not recommended. Safety first!

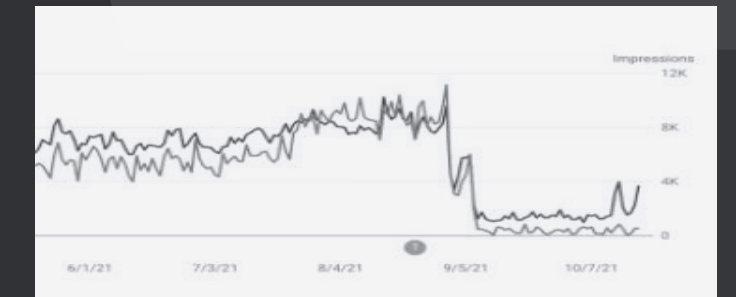
 **Test, test, and test again.**  
Making changes to your website means potentially breaking things. Testing helps you identify broken things before they become issues that your site visitors have to deal with. Any changes you make to your website should be accompanied by a thorough quality assurance testing period.


 **Monitor carefully.**  
The same metrics you used to decide which changes to make to your site are likely what you'll want to pay attention to here. Watch for any big drops or changes.

 **Don't panic.**  
Search algorithms can be fickle, and that's an understatement. You might see your KPIs fluctuate both upwards and downwards as your site rights itself. While we wish we could give you the exact amount of time it takes for website KPIs to magically self-correct, it's just impossible to know exactly. Expect the unexpected for 3-5 months after your launch, just to be safe.

## Pitfalls to avoid:

 **Doing too much, too soon.**  
Making multiple drastic changes to your site can trigger a massive drop in site traffic, search rankings, and search impressions. Here's a real-life example from an orthopedic surgeon whose site tanked after changing website partners and approaching the project with a "change everything at once" mentality. Within two weeks of launching their new website, their website impressions had dropped more than 80%:



 **Not testing your website on different browsers and devices.**  
Your website users aren't using the exact same browsers and devices as you. Testing how your website displays and performs across different devices like desktops, mobile devices, and browsers ensures you won't miss any errors.

WHEN

0-2 Months After Relaunch

GOAL

Establish a basecamp for your site by making the biggest change to your site first and letting the dust settle.

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Phase

# 3

## Gaining Momentum

Now that your new site is acclimated, it's time to start making more optimizations to drive website traffic and conversions.

WHEN **2-12 Months After Relaunch**

GOAL **Push for peak website performance by way of smaller changes and conversion optimizations to your website.**

Now that you've established your new website and verified its stability, it's time to start making the less drastic changes that will really start to accelerate your results even further. There are a number of different strategies to try here, and what works for you will depend on the goals you set out to achieve in the beginning. These more common strategies can benefit most websites.

### Actions you should take:



#### Audit your content.

Step One is to take an honest look at the content on your site and decide what's worth keeping. Make a note of duplicate content, content with broken elements, outdated content, and "thin" content (aka content that doesn't cover the intended topic with any real depth). From there, start to form an action plan to rewrite content wherever necessary and begin making small, regular changes to your site content.



#### Audit your backlinks.

Gone are the days of trying to get as many backlinks as possible. Link building is all about quality over quantity. Google and other search engines look at the sites linking to your site as a signal of quality. Having lots of low-quality links to your website will hinder your ability to rank for the terms you want. Disavowing low quality links means search engines won't factor them into your rankings.



#### Optimize your conversion elements.

Anything that your website visitors can utilize to make an appointment, contact your office, or interact with your business is a conversion element. Make sure any forms or buttons or chat elements are easy to use and working well.



#### Not staying vigilant with your tracking.

We haven't reached maintenance mode yet. It's really important to be consistent with tracking the metrics that can indicate performance issues while you're in this phase.



#### Being too comfortable with your own site.

You look at your site a lot, so having fresh eyes on things like the layout and conversion elements can be a great way to see what new visitors might notice. Ask your friend, your colleague, and your mom. Ask people who know things about websites and people who don't (after all, your users probably have similarly differing levels of comfort with website design). You might be surprised by what you learn.

### Pitfalls to avoid:

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This is the big payoff—all of the planning and thoughtful improvements resulting in revenue for your business.

Phase

# 4 The View From the Top

WHEN

13 Months After Relaunch (and beyond)

GOAL

Get the most out of your investment by making regular optimizations as needed.

Congratulations, you made it to the top. This is the stage where you can begin to focus more on the other aspects of your marketing strategy, trusting your site to do what it needs to do once you direct traffic to it. It's a good feeling, right? We think of this as the "maintenance mode" phase, but that doesn't mean it's time to get complacent.

**The key to keeping your website at the top of its game is knowing when it's time to go back to Phase 1 and make updates.**

Here's what to keep an eye on.

## Actions you should take:



### Monitor, monitor, monitor.

Those KPIs you were tracking back in Phase 1? Now isn't the time to stop tracking them. Any major changes can signal that it might be time to consider an update.



### Keep up with search algorithm updates.

Google and other search engines are always releasing updates to their search algorithms. These updates almost always include instructions for websites. There are tons of examples of this – mobile-first design and ADA compliance to name a few – but staying on top of these updates and making the changes needed to your site will always benefit you.



### Watch for major updates in design best practices.

The design world is always changing. While you don't need to make big changes for every update, comparing your website with others to make sure the design and functionality are staying relevant is a worthwhile investment.

## Pitfalls to avoid:



### Not watching for the signs that a decline is coming.

The best way to stay at the top? Knowing when it's time to prepare to climb even higher. Complacency at this phase will burn you, but routine monitoring will help you avoid losing out on the momentum you've built to this point.



### Putting it off.

Being proactive is your friend here. The longer you put off redesigning or changing your website, the more likely you are to see your site beginning to decline.



Phase

# 5 The Descent

What goes up must come down – or not?  
Here's how to help your website fight gravity – and avoid a downfall.

WHEN

Around 2 Years After Relaunch

GOAL

Avoid this phase completely by knowing when to go back to Phase 1.

Let's be clear: slight fluctuations in website performance aren't unheard of. Major declines in website performance, however, can be absolutely devastating to your business, because they result in a decline in new traffic and clients. The key is to routinely and carefully monitor the important stuff we mentioned in the last phase. Trusting your gut will serve you well, too. If you wouldn't use your site, would others?

Actions you should take:



**Learn from your mistakes *and* successes.**

Here's a secret about marketing – you can learn as much from what doesn't work as what does work. Going through the process of a redesign will teach you a lot, so make sure to incorporate those learnings into your next iteration.



**Don't delay.**

Once your website starts to decline, it will only accelerate. The longer you wait, the more your numbers will drop, and the more it will affect your bottom line.



**Remember, it's an investment.**

Yes, it costs money to update or completely redo your website if you're doing it on your own, but an outdated website will cost you revenue. Investing in your website means investing in the long-term success of your business. Keep a growth mindset and you'll be headed in the right direction.



**Indecision.**

Well, if you made it here it's possible you didn't avoid the pitfall after all, but it's never too late. Head back to Phase 1 and start gearing up for your next ascent. Don't delay!

Pitfalls to avoid:

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# More clients. Fewer headaches.

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