

Web Site Project Life Cycle

I. Discovery/Definition

- Analysis
- Content Organization
- Specification Building
- Marketing Plan

II. Design

- Wire Frame
- Content Writing
- Graphic Design

III. Development

- Site Development
- Content Edit
- Content Population
- Quality Assurance (QA)

IV. Delivery

- Site Deployment

V. Support

Notes:

- In this document, the terms “Web Site”, “Web Application”, and “Project” are interchangeable.
- This document should only be used as a **general guideline** in the development of Web projects.
- As each project is unique, modifications in this process are expected based on the specific requirements, size, and scope of each project and on the needs of each client.
- It is assumed that the Web Team will work with the IT department, external contractors/designers, and others throughout the process to meet project requirements.
- For each step in the project life cycle, the deliverables from both the client and the Web team are outlined in detail.
- For a visual depiction of this process, see the **Web Site Project Life Cycle Diagram**.

I. **Discovery/Definition**

• **Analysis**

In this initial step of the process, the client expresses a need for a specific Web Site or Web Application. The client should then complete a **Web Strategy Questionnaire** to define the intended audience for the project, the business goals the project intends to achieve, and the overall tone of the project.

A “Project Team” should be established at this point in order to best utilize individual skill sets. The project manager on the web team then meets with the client to define the overall business requirements of the project and to create a project plan. The project manager (PM) uses the response to the Web Strategy Questionnaire as well as the notes from all meetings with the client to create the **Business Requirements Document** (see template) as well as a **Project Plan & Timeline**.

• **Content Organization**

In this step, the client is expected to review any existing content and also define any new content that is intended to be included in the project. The client will work with the PM to organize all of the proposed content in a preliminary sitemap.

• **Specification Building**

Specifications are based on the deliverables from the Analysis step of the project. In this step, the PM meets with the Client to establish a clear understanding of all requirements involved in the application as well as any cross-departmental resources that will need to be utilized.

Once there is a clear understanding of the scope of the application, members of the Project Team should conduct ongoing meetings with all parties necessary to further define, in detail, the specific requirements for each feature within the application. Depending on the scope of the project, it may be necessary to conduct focus groups and user testing.

The ultimate goal of this step is to create the **Functional Specification** that will define, in detail, each feature within the project and the user’s experience while using each feature. The level of detail required will largely depend on the scope and complexity of the project.

• **Marketing Plan**

If necessary, the client should work with the PM to begin defining the **Marketing Plan** for the project in this step.

II. Design

- **Wire Frame**

In this step, a Web designer will use the Functional Specification to create a **Wire Frame** for the proposed application. If there are any further questions regarding the initial design, the Web designer should contact the Project Manager who should set up meetings with members of the Project Team when necessary.

In this step, all images, icons, and multimedia elements should begin to be defined as well. At a minimum, preliminary versions of these elements should be completed.

- **Content Writing**

The client is responsible for assembling and writing the content intended for the completed Web site with support from the Web team when necessary.

Content writers should follow the tone requirements outlined in the Business Requirements Document and should conform to current Web standards and best practices with regard to search engine optimization (SEO). At the completion of this step, **all content should be written and a final sitemap should be established.**

- **Graphic Design**

In this step a graphic designer(s) creates all visual elements, including imagery, icons, and multimedia elements. The color palette, all font styles, all font sizes, any image treatments, and any other stylized elements should be explicitly detailed in a **Style Guide**. There should be specific focus on color palettes and design elements, which should conform to any existing branding standards. At the completion of this step **Design Comps** should be complete.

III. Development

- **Site Development**

In this step, development of the actual Web site/application begins. The developers will use both the Functional Spec and the Design Comps provided to develop the application. If any questions arise regarding usability, design, technology or any other aspects of the project, the developers will have the ability to conduct further meetings with the end users of the system as well as any members of the Project Team involved in the process up to this step.

If there are any areas of the project that involve custom development by firms outside the Web team, or integration with external databases, systems, or

applications, then that development will be conducted simultaneously and a member of the outside firm department would work closely with a member of the project team to coordinate development.

- **Content Edit**

In this step, all content within the project is proof read and edited if necessary. At the completion of this step **ALL** content should be complete, organized, and ready to be included in the Web project.

- **Content Population**

In this step, the project is populated with all final, edited content.

- **Quality Assurance (QA)**

All aspects of testing should be conducted in this step. These include (depending on the size and scope of the application): Integration Testing, Stress Testing, Scalability Testing, Load Testing, Resolution Testing, and Cross Browser Compatibility. The site should also go through an SEO optimization review during this step. All issues that are discovered should be corrected on a case-by-case basis.

IV. Delivery

- **Deployment**

Once all testing is complete and all issues are resolved, the project should be uploaded to the live environment and re-tested. Once the project is re-tested, it should then be made accessible for use to the intended audience.

V. Support

Once the project is live, the support plan outlined in the Business Requirements Document should be followed in order to ensure proper long-term support and maintenance of the completed project.