

HOW TO KNOW IT'S TIME FOR A NEW WEBSITE FOR YOUR NONPROFIT

Tips for assessing your current website and making the case for a website redesign



INTRODUCTION

You know that nagging feeling that it's time to update your nonprofit's website?

Maybe you aren't getting as many visitors to your site as you think you should. You might sense that people aren't clicking through to the pages you want them to see. And perhaps they aren't taking the actions you want them to take.

Then there's the way your website looks. It hasn't been updated in several years and it's starting to seem tired and outdated. Plus, it isn't easy to make the content edits and updates you need to make.

If you research the question of how often you should refresh or redesign your website, you'll find experts suggesting anywhere from every two to five years. But how do you know when it's really time to change your nonprofit's website? How do you evaluate your website to find solid reasons for a website redesign that justify the time and cost involved?

In this guide, you'll learn some basics to help you know when it's time for a website redesign and how to take the next steps forward, including:

1

Top reasons for kicking off a website redesign for your nonprofit

2

A checklist for taking the next steps with your website redesign

3

How to pinpoint key issues with your current website

WHY START A WEBSITE REDESIGN FOR YOUR NONPROFIT?



A website redesign takes time, effort, and dollars. It can be well worth it for your organization, but it should have a business justification. In general, there are two overarching reasons to redesign your website:



YOUR WEBSITE PERFORMANCE IS FLAT OR DECLINING.

You might notice that traffic to your website has levelled off. It could even be dropping. Dig in a little deeper, and you might find that site visitors are spending only a few seconds on your site and not clicking through to find out more about your organization and take the actions you want them to take – like registering for an event or donating to your cause.

In short, your website is not as effective as it should be.



YOUR WEBSITE NO LONGER ALIGNS WITH YOUR NONPROFIT'S WORK.

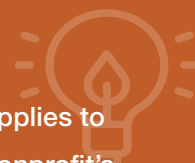
The world is changing rapidly, and your organization must evolve to keep up. The demand for your organization's services might have changed. Or maybe you've retooled your fundraising to include more virtual and hybrid events and campaigns. Perhaps you've even adjusted your strategy and rebranded your organization to support a new direction.

No matter what your organization's changes might be, the design and framework of the website that worked for you a few years ago doesn't support the way you work today and the direction you're headed for the future.

If either (or both!) of these scenarios sounds familiar, chances are good that it's time for a website redesign.

TIP

Good website design doesn't apply only to your nonprofit's overall website. It also applies to microsites for your fundraising campaigns, events, and programs. Keep all of your nonprofit's online sites in mind as you evaluate the need for website redesign.



HOW TO UNCOVER ISSUES WITH YOUR CURRENT WEBSITE



Once you understand the overarching business reasons for redesigning your nonprofit's website, it's time to dig deeper. It's important to pinpoint what it is about your website that needs attention and what must change to support your goals.

Let's look at areas that often need attention in three aspects of website design and development:

1

Visual design

The way your website looks matters. It conveys your organization's mission and identity. And it needs to stay current with your organization's business strategy. When executed well, it can inspire site visitors to volunteer, donate, and take other action to support your organization.

Items that often need attention include:

- **The branding is outdated.** Your organization's branding has been updated, and you need your website to reflect the new logo, colors, and overall look and feel.
- **New content needs a place to go.** Due to changes in your organization's strategy and programs, you have new content to share. But your new content doesn't fit well into your current website design.
- **The site looks tired.** Your website design hasn't had even a refresh in the past few years. It's looking old and outdated.

2

User experience (UX)

Your website's user experience can make or break the performance of your website. A poor experience can turn away site visitors who otherwise might have signed up for much-needed services, volunteered to help, donated to your cause, or supported your organization in other ways.

Items that often need attention include:

- **It's difficult to find things.** You've added new pages and content over time, and now important pages and content are buried multiple clicks away. Site visitors can't easily find the information they're looking for and that you want to highlight.

TIP

Another critical aspect of UX design is accessibility. Research suggests¹ that most home pages have accessibility failures, meaning they do not follow Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), which make websites usable for everyone, including those with disabilities. Following WCAG standards in your site redesign will help ensure that everyone can access information on your website.



¹ <https://webaim.org/projects/million/#wcag>

- **The mobile experience needs help.** Your website might function well on laptop and desktop computers. But the site misses the mark on mobile devices. With mobile traffic accounting for more than half of global website traffic², you need a site design that looks good and works well on mobile devices.

TIP

Consider using a “mobile-first” approach when designing your website by considering what something will look like on a mobile device before getting too far into the process.



3

Technology

The website template and content editing tool you use can make a big difference in the cost and performance of your website.

Items that often need attention include:

- **The website technology costs too much.** Your current website platform and hosting tools have grown too expensive (or maybe your budget has tightened) and you need a more affordable solution.
- **The website isn't flexible enough.** As your organization changes, you need to update content on your website. You need a website design and content editing tool that makes it easier for you and your staff to add and update images and text as well as modify content components on pages.

Also, you want to enhance your website with new functionality today and might need more down the road. You need a site design and website platform that's flexible enough to grow with you.

- **The site is slowing down.** As your website becomes older and more complex, the website has slowed down. It's taking longer for pages to load and for forms to process. You need a platform that is continually updated and a website design that optimizes page loading time so you don't lose the attention of site visitors.

TIP

As part of your website redesign, be sure to clean house. Take the opportunity to review and remove outdated content. The trimmer your site is, the easier it will be to organize and navigate.



²<https://blog.hubspot.com/website/mobile-optimization-stats>

A CAUTION ABOUT WEBSITE HOSTING

As you move forward with a new website, keep in mind that some website design and development firms might offer to “host” your website for an annual fee. Be wary of this, as they might simply be deploying your site with a hosting service and then charging you a markup fee. The biggest downside of this approach is that you no longer have a direct relationship with your hosting service. And if things don’t work out well with the design firm, they can possibly hold your website “hostage” (we’ve seen it happen). By having a direct relationship with your hosting provider, you have more control over the relationship with your design firm.





DON'T FORGET YOUR DONATION FORMS

As you consider a website redesign, it's a great time to make sure you're not only optimizing the overall online donation experience, but also enhancing your donation forms to get the most out of each donation. For example:



Ask the donor to cover the transaction fee.

When someone donates through your online donation forms, you're typically charged a transaction fee by your payment processor – effectively reducing each donation by some percentage. But by providing an option on your online donation form for donors to cover the cost of transaction fees, you can capture those lost dollars.



Add a monthly giving pop-up.

A donation form redesign is a great opportunity to increase the number of donors who give monthly. Present donors with the option to make it a recurring gift, with the convenience of monthly payments charged automatically to their credit card. This approach encourages donors to remain donors and give more over time.



Offer a range of payment options.

Giving donors the ability to give via their preferred way provides a simpler and more attractive path to completing transactions. There are many online payment options that move beyond credit or debit cards. Consider offering digital payment options such as: ACH, Amazon Pay, Cryptocurrency, and PayPal.



Embed a matching gift tool.

Adding a corporate matching tool to your donation forms makes it easier to take advantage of corporate matching programs to boost your fundraising campaign results. Companies like Double the Donation and HEPdata make it simple to embed their matching gift tool on web pages and donation forms.

CHECKLIST: TAKING THE NEXT STEPS WITH YOUR WEBSITE REDESIGN



Now that you've considered the business reasons for a website redesign and understand the areas of your website that need attention, it's time to build a business case and take the next steps for a website redesign.

TIP

Allow plenty of time for your website redesign process – from solution selection to testing and training. A general rule of thumb: Allow four to nine months for a small to mid-sized website, and up to a year for a larger and more complex website that requires an extensive internal approval process.



Here is a simple checklist to get you started toward your nonprofit's fresh, new website:



Assess your current website.

Look at your website analytics to identify key trends that point to the need for a site redesign.

For example:

- What are your website traffic trends over the past two to three years?
- How long are site visitors staying on your website?
- Are they visiting important pages on your site? How long are they staying on those pages?
- What is the conversion rate of site visitors to those who take an action, such as filling out a form or making a donation?

Consider your website from a visitor's point of view:

- Does your site look modern, and does it reflect your organization's current brand?
- Can you find your organization's most important campaigns and programs quickly and easily?
- Does the site look good and work well on multiple devices, including mobile devices?
- Do pages load quickly?

Think about the back end of your website:

- Is it cost-effective to host and maintain?
- Does it allow you and others at your organization to easily make content edits and update functionality?



List your key website issues.

Write down the top challenges with your website – from visual design and navigation to technology. Consider if the changes needed call for a site refresh, a full website redesign, and/or new website technology.



Get approval.

Use your assessment and research to make the business case with your executives and board of directors that it's time for a new website:

- Explain the overarching business reason for a website redesign.
- Share the specific issues with your current website.
- Ask for approval.



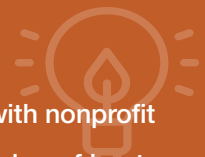
Find a new solution.

Finding the right solution will depend on your organization's procedures. However, here are the most common steps for moving forward with a new website:

- 1 Research website design and development firms.
- 2 Narrow the list of possible firms to three.
- 3 Share your list of issues and requirements with the firms, and ask for an assessment and proposal for a new website.
- 4 Make your selection, and work with the design/development firm on a project schedule.

TIP

Consider working with a website design and development firm that works exclusively with nonprofit organizations. They'll have a strong understanding of how nonprofits work, a knowledge of best practices for things like donation form design, and experience with website editing tools that integrate with nonprofit software.



GET A MODERN WEBSITE THAT SUPPORTS YOUR NONPROFIT'S GOALS.

It's hard to reach your nonprofit's goals without a website that reflects your organization's brand and provides a convenient, modern online experience. The good news is that redesigning your website doesn't have to be painful or costly.

At Cathexis Partners, we're ready to help you make your website work more efficiently and effectively for your nonprofit. If you have questions or would like help with the approaches in this guide, contact Cathexis Partners today:

 cathexispartners.com

 312.613.1655

