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Pro Tips for Creating a New Website
The Marketing Chat Podcast ep.
Podcast Transcript

Welcome!

If you're thinking about creating a new website, you're probably already looking at other websites to get an idea of what you like–and don't like. And that's awesome. I always recommend that my clients look around for ideas and to share links with me so that I can get a feel for their taste.

Too often clients send me their links and expect me to create a gorgeous website for them out of thin air. Well, they expect that a website can be designed solely around their brand.

Now, the foundation of your website is indeed built around your brand–your logo (if you have one), your brand voice and personality, your colors, your fonts, and, really importantly, how you want your ideal client to feel when they land on your website.

All of that goes into every single page of your website. All of that infuses the entire look and feel of your website.

But, when it comes to designing each individual page, I need more specific items in order to design the best site possible. And you'll find you'll need the same things if you're DIY'ing your site.

Here's why.

If I design a template for a client, with placeholders for images and text, what if their images and text end up being different sizes? And, let me tell you, their images and text will most likely be different sizes from the placeholders.

It's the same thing when you use a pre-built template. You've probably already encountered this. You find a gorgeous template with all the placeholders right there. It looks perfect.

Then you start putting in your photos and text, and nothing fits anymore. Your text runs too long, and now the balance and proportion are all off. Or your images are different dimensions and just don't work with the placeholders.

So, what do you do? You can choose images that match the dimensions of the placeholders. And you can rewrite your text to fit the placeholders.

But, when I'm designing a website for a client, I do not want to limit their creativity. They may need more room for their text than what I would otherwise give them. Or they may need less room.

I will make suggestions about text length. But I really want to accommodate my clients' needs. So, if they have a piece of really lengthy text, I can design the page with extra images instead of leaving them with a sea of text. Website visitors don't like that.

So, today I'm going to discuss the essential things you'll need to prepare before you start to design your website—whether you're designing it yourself or hiring a designer to do it for you.

When you prepare these items ahead of time, your website will perfectly match your needs. Otherwise, you'll find yourself struggling to fit yourself into a mold that doesn't fit you or your needs.

Even if you do go with a template, most of them allow you to change everything about them. So, knowing how much space you'll need for text vs images, for example, you can pick the best-for-you template ahead of time and be able to gauge what changes you'll need to make to the template.

Preparing all of these items ahead of time will save you so much time and frustration.

If you go to this episode's page on my website, you can download the transcript. You can also download a checklist that is almost identical to the checklist that I give to my clients to help make the web design process go smoother and faster. That's Angela Kelly Smith dot com. Link to the actual episode in the show notes.

Some of the information that I'll be sharing may already be familiar to you. And some of it may be brand new. I'll be covering it as if it's brand new to cover all the bases and to make it as clear as possible.

So, let's dive in!

The first thing you'll need is a custom domain name. You can use your company name or your own name. Make it something that will be easy for people to search for on Google. Try not to make it too cutesy, unless that's your brand.

Try to avoid using dashes, if at all possible. If your preferred name with dot com is already taken, then you'll need to consider the trade off between using dashes to get a dot com versus using another ending without dashes. For example, if "my website dot com" isn't available, you could go with "my website dot online," "my website dot io,," "my website dot art," or whatever ending you like.

People do prefer dot coms, but they are getting used to other endings. And, most often, they'll be clicking on a link rather than typing the URL into their browser. As such, if you decide to go with a dash, it's not the end of the world!

Next, you'll need a custom email address at your domain name. It's not professional enough to use a free email address, such as at gmail dot com.

Plus, when you have an email list through an email service provider (which I'll discuss in a bit), your emails will likely be treated as spam if they come from a free email address. So, go ahead and get your custom email address right away. And it needs to match your domain name.

Next, you'll need a lead magnet. The ultimate goal of your website, of course, is to get clients. But 92% of first-time visitors to your site aren't going to make a purchase or hire you on that visit. So, your immediate goal is to get people onto your email list.

Why?

You want to stay top-of-mind so that they will think of you when they are ready to hire you.

Why a lead magnet instead of just a form for people to sign up for updates or for your newsletter?

People don't want just another newsletter. They don't want random updates. They get too many newsletters as it is. You need to give them an incentive to get onto your email list. That's what your lead magnet is for.

Your lead magnet is a free, downloadable gift that offers something of high value that will help them immediately. It can be a simple PDF, an exclusive podcast episode, an ebook, a video mini-course, a single video, or just about anything else you can think of.

It should be related to your services and lead to an opportunity for visitors to get in touch with you after they download your gift.

Now, here are some things that will need to go into your lead magnet if it's a PDF or an ebook:
1. A strong title—something enticing
2. Your photo and a brief bio—one paragraph is fine
3. Excellent content—holding back can make them think that you'll hold back in paid services, as well
4. A call-to-action—let them know at the end what you'd like them to do next
5. Your copyright
6. A link back to your website. When they open the document up again in a few years, they may have forgotten where they got it. You want them to come back to you.

In video and audio, you'll still have a strong title, give a brief bio, and have excellent content. You don't need to mention a copyright. You should definitely refer back to your website and give a call-to-action.

Next, you'll need a logo or a branded font for your company name—or whatever name you're using at the top of your website. This will go in the main navigation bar at the top of your site. If you don't have a logo (which is fine!), you can choose a font for your name and stick with that, even outside of your website.

For me, I use a branded font and created a typographic logo from that font. Then I use that in my main navigation bar. It looks like it's just my name written out. But it's actually an image.

Not all logos look great at the top of the site. If you find that that's your case, play with using just your company name or your name in the main navigation menu and putting your logo in the footer. Be careful that your logo doesn't stand out like a neon sign.

Make the footer color the same or similar color as the background of the logo. Or at least make it something that doesn't cause the logo to be too stark against it.

Next you'll uncover your brand voice and personality. Your brand voice and personality are essential for sharing your message in a unique way. What you say may not be unique. Honestly, most people in your industry say the same thing. Most people in my industry say the same thing! However, the way you say it is 100% you–if you put 100% of YOU into the way you say it. That's your brand voice and personality.

So, you'll want to come up with 3 to 5 words or phrases that describe your voice and personality. For example: Sophisticated, fun, compassionate, quirky, elegant, courageous, inspiring, down-to-earth, no B.S., … you get the idea.

For more help here, listen to my podcast called "How to Create a Brand Identity."

Next you'll need to pick your branded colors. If you have a logo with colors in it, then you've already got your colors.

If you don't have a logo, then you'll pick your colors based on your brand personality and how you want your ideal client to feel when they land on your website.

You can find photos that have a color palette you like. There are online color pickers where you can upload your image, and the system will create a color palette from the image. I do this in Adobe and right in Squarespace.

Also, think about the meanings of colors and the emotions you want to elicit in your ideal client. How do you want your ideal client to feel when they arrive at your site? Look up color meaning to get an idea of what will work.

For more help with picking colors, refer to my blog post called "How to Create a Color Palette for Your Brand."

Moving on. You'll need an email list service provider. You can't gather emails "by hand" and email them from your personal account. People need a one-click way to unsubscribe. And there is a law that requires you to have your business address at the bottom of your emails. Email service providers make sure that your emails follow all CAN-SPAM laws.

I use ConvertKit. There are so many email list service providers out there. I've tried several over the years. And I really like ConvertKit. It's super-powerful. And I love how easy it is to create tags and automations. I also like being able to create both landing pages *and* popups.

While no one likes popups, they are the most effective way to get people onto your email list. When you have both a form and a popup for your lead magnet, visitors have two opportunities to get onto your list.

Squarespace, where I design websites, has a built-in popup creator. But you'll need to use Squarespace's email campaign service to be able to collect email addresses.

Check out my podcast called "How Do I Get People to Sign Up for My Lead Magnet" for more help here.

Let's get into what you'll need for the specific pages on your website.

First, your Homepage. This is usually the first place visitors arrive when they find your website. It is going to have the most information of any page on your site. And yet it needs to be fairly simple so that it doesn't overwhelm your visitors.

Here's what needs to go on your Homepage:
1. A headline at the very top—something very clear that indicates what the site/business is about
2. An image at the very top. This can be a photo of you or an excellent stock photo.
3. A summary sentence at the top that describes what you do/what they'll get
4. Your lead magnet with a tiny blurb. You should also use an image of the lead magnet to go along with the blurb.
5. Your photo and short bio—one paragraph is fine
6. A blurb about your services or main service and a link to the Services page
7. A summary block for your blog and/or podcast that lists up to 4 of your most recent posts or episodes

As I mentioned earlier, you or your designer will be designing the Homepage around all of this copy and these images. So, you've got to write the copy ahead of time and find the images ahead of time. When my clients don't have images, I find stock photos for them through my Adobe account. Canva has great stock photos, too.

Next is your About page. People will want to read more about you than what you put on the Homepage. So, what you write for the About page needs to be longer and more personal.

Put all of your official credentials here. But make it personal, too. Write out your story so that your ideal client can relate to you. Tell them how you've gone through what they're going through. Let them know that you've been where they are. They care less about your degrees and certifications than they do about your experiences.

So, tell your story first, list your degrees and certifications next, then talk about your kids and cats!

Your Contact page is super-simple. You'll just need a form for visitors to fill out. You'll receive an email whenever someone submits it, and you can reply to them there. You can list your phone number and email address on the Contact page, if you like. Or you can just have the form.

For your Services page, you have a few ways to handle this.

First, you can list all of your services on one page in full detail and have a form on the page for people to contact you for more information. You could also put a scheduling form on the page so they can schedule a consultation with you. Now, this can be pretty overwhelming since you're giving full details for multiple services all on one page.

Second, you can list all of your services on the main Services page with brief descriptions and link each service to separate pages. Each service would then have its own separate page that gives all the details.

When you do it this way, you can set up the services as products and sell them directly through your website. You can put a form on each page for people to contact you. Or you can put a scheduling link.

Finally, you can have a separate page for each service as I just described and NOT have a main Services page at all. This is what I do. You can set up the main navigation menu to have a Services item in the menu. When you hover over it or click on it, it drops down to reveal each individual service.

Here's what you'll need to prepare ahead of time for yourself or for your designer:
- The names of each service
- Full descriptions for each service
- A short description for each service, if you choose to list them all on a main Services page
- Prices for each service, if you want to list them

Your descriptions should include:
- The client's problem
- The specific benefits of your service
- The value they'll get from working with you
- Why you're the right person to help them with this problem

It's a good practice to use some questions in the descriptions. Questions engage people and get them thinking. It's also a great idea to use storytelling in the description. Use yourself when you can.

Long-form selling is out. But your description does need to be long enough to give would-be clients enough info to make a decision. So, they'll need to do some scrolling—just not too much.

You'll need to put some images on the page. And they'll need to be high-quality. They can be some that you already have, if they look professional enough. Or you can use licensed stock photos.

Next, you'll need a blog or podcast. If you already have one, you'll just transfer it to your new site. If you don't have one, it's time to start!

You need to be creating original content every week for a few reasons. First, Google loves it when a site is updated frequently. Posting new content every week counts as updating your site. When you create a new post (blog or podcast) every week, that's 52 ways for Google to find you after one year. If you don't blog or podcast, then Google has just 4 ways to find you: Homepage, About page, Contact page, and Services page. In other words, Google won't find you except by your domain name.

Here is my podcast called "Do I Need a Blog" with links to lots of other resources.

If you're interested in creating a podcast and don't know where to start, I invite you to join the Women Podcasters Academy.

Finally, you'll need a Privacy Policy and a Terms & Conditions policy. A Privacy Policy is legally required for business websites that collect personal data (such as, by using cookies), and a Terms & Conditions policy is highly recommended. termsfeed.com has policies that are free or pay-per-use. In other words, they do not charge a monthly fee like some other services do.

Okay, that's it! I know it's a lot. And I know that you want to jump in and just start creating. But, like I explained earlier, you can't really design individual pages until you have the content that will go onto the pages.

So, spend this time now creating your brand voice and personality; writing your copy and finding your images; and getting your domain name, email address, and email list service provider. Then, when you sit down to design, it will be so much easier and faster.

And, if you end up hiring a designer, they will be so surprised and thrilled that you've already done all this work! When they give you a completion due date, that date is based on when they receive all the required elements from you. It's not based on when you sign the contract and make a deposit. So, put this work in now, and they'll be able to start that much faster once the contract is signed.

That's it for today. Remember to go to this episode's page on my website to download your Essential Checklist for Creating a New Website. Link in the show notes.

Thanks for listening! See you next time on the Marketing Chat Podcast!

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Links mentioned in the episode:
Essential Checklist for Creating a New Website
"How Do I Get People to Sign Up for My Lead Magnet"
"How to Create a Brand Identity"
"How to Create a Color Palette for Your Brand"
Link to this episode

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Angela Kelly Smith is a marketing strategist, Squarespace website designer, and the founder of the Women Podcasters Academy. Her mission is to help women entrepreneurs create the successful business of their dreams through strategic marketing that establishes them as authorities in their field and helps them attract more of their ideal clients.