HOW TO PLAN
A MAGENTO E-COMMERCE SITE

DEFINE YOUR AUDIENCE > CORRAL YOUR CONTENT > TURN YOUR CUSTOMERS INTO A SALES FORCE

TAILOR YOUR SITE FOR A COMFORTABLE FIT > THE VALUE OF A GOOD FOUNDATION

Web 2 Market

ONLINE SHOPPERS ARE SOPHISTICATED, AND WHY WOULDN'T THEY BE?

THEY'RE ACCUSTOMED TO MAKING BUYING DECISIONS on sites like Amazon and Zappos, businesses that invest millions in studying user behavior, and then invest more billions in building cutting-edge functions to serve their consumers' desires. Fortunately, the tools and techniques used by the biggest online retailers are increasingly available to smaller sellers, thanks to smart e-commerce systems like Magento.

**Affordable and flexible, Magento can meet almost any business's needs with advanced tools and functions.**

The Enterprise Edition is a complete and highly-scalable solution for fast-growing or large businesses. The Community Edition serves businesses that prefer a hands-on approach— and it's open source and free. A wide range of extensions are available, including order management, warehouse management, multi-origination drop shipping, EDI compliance, and sales tax management.

DESPITE THE AVAILABILITY OF THOUSANDS OF EXTENSIONS, A SUCCESSFUL MAGENTO SITE STILL HAS TO BEGIN WITH THE BASICS.
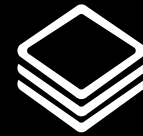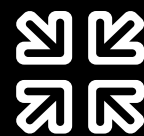
Define your audience > **Corral your content** > **Turn your customers into a sales force** > **Tailor your site for a comfortable fit** > **The value of a good foundation**

DEFINE YOUR AUDIENCE

The first principle of any content project is **KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE.** The type of market you are targeting will affect your decisions about everything from the colors of your brand to the tone of your text to the navigational structure of your site.

DEFINE YOUR AUDIENCE AS NARROWLY AS YOU NEED TO... AND THEN STOP. Begin with broad definitions and then drill down. Some typical segments for a business-to-consumer (B2C) audience might be:

GENDER **AGE** **GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION**

For a business-to-business market, the definitions are focused on job roles and expertise:

LEVEL OF AUTHORITY (CEO VS MIDDLE MANAGER) **BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL OR TECHNICAL PROFESSIONAL** **AREA OF SPECIALTY (HR VS PROCUREMENT VS IT)**

WE'RE CRAZY ABOUT MAGENTO!

CORRAL YOUR CONTENT

Your site's purpose may be to sell products, but the vehicle that drives sales is your content. Whether you personally like the appearance and layout of your site isn't relevant; what's relevant is whether it resonates with your market and gets results. A lot of thought needs to go into your design, images, and videos in order to create a site that draws visitors and keeps them with you long enough to make a purchasing decision.

GOOD DESIGN IS THE FOUNDATION OF A SUCCESSFUL SITE

The design of your site does more than support your brand. Quality design deepens your credibility, encourages visitors to spend time on the site, and directs your visitors' path from first click all the way to 'submit my order'. Design is so important that 46.1 percent of people said design is the most important factor in determining a company's credibility.[1]

Visitors to your site must be able to instantly:

UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU SELL

TRUST YOU WITH THEIR CREDIT CARD INFORMATION

When we talk about design, we're not only talking about look and feel. We're talking about load time. **FASTER LOAD TIME REDUCES BOUNCE** because people are less likely to click away when content downloads quickly. A well-designed site that uses the latest technology and manages images efficiently will download faster than a site that relies on outdated technology and web design practices.

1 Pritchard, 2014

WE'RE CRAZY ABOUT MAGENTO!

Color matters. GREEN, BLUE, AND PURPLE, in that order, HAVE BEEN STATISTICALLY PROVEN TO INCREASE SITE GROWTH, while red causes a drop in visits. That doesn't mean you can't use red; it just means that you might not want to use red as a main color. Use it instead to draw a visitor's eye to something important, like a special offer.

The way your page is composed WILL DETERMINE THE ORDER IN WHICH YOUR CUSTOMERS view your content. Visitors generally look at the top section first. If the page is organized horizontally, most people's eyes will travel around the page in a backwards Z. If it is organized vertically, most people will look down the left-hand side and then back to the main content in the center. This means you must think now about what types of content are most important to your business and LAYOUT YOUR CONTENT AREAS IN A WAY THAT MAKES SENSE FOR YOUR GOALS.

Most people scan online content,

NOTICING THE HEADERS,

SUB-HEADERS,

- and
- bullet
- lists.

KEEP TEXT TO A MINIMUM, relying instead on

SNAPPY HEADERS and **INTERESTING PHOTOS AND VIDEOS** to engage visitors.

As visitors increasingly surf the web on mobile devices, responsiveness becomes a critical issue. A RESPONSIVE SITE WORKS ON A VARIETY OF DEVICES WITHOUT REQUIRING THE VISITOR TO RESIZE. Responsiveness is more than simply shrinking the page to fit the screen; a responsive site presents content on differently on different devices. For instance, a site may automatically show a vertical organization of home page content and a simplified menu when it senses that a visitor is using a smartphone.

USE PICTURES TO INCREASE SALES

The use of photos and illustrations makes a big impact on user engagement. **PEOPLE ARE MORE LIKELY TO BUY BASED ON DETAILED PHOTOS** than on reviews or rating. According to marketing automation leader, HubSpot:

67% OF CONSUMERS SAY THAT THE QUALITY OF A PRODUCT IMAGE IS 'VERY IMPORTANT' TO PURCHASING DECISIONS

94%

CONTENT FEATURING COMPELLING IMAGES AVERAGES 94% MORE TOTAL VIEWS THAN CONTENT WITHOUT IMAGES.[2]

A compelling image is one that is professional in quality and relevant to your content. Quality photography and artwork is expensive, but it's worth it; stock photography has been shown in studies to measurably degrade the credibility of a site in the eyes of visitors.[3] People need to have every indicator that they can trust you with their credit card information.

Your images should be…

CONSISTENT IN STYLE; FOR INSTANCE, DON'T USE A PHOTO FOR ONE PRODUCT AND AN ILLUSTRATION FOR ANOTHER

ZOOMED IN ENOUGH TO DISPLAY THE DETAILS OF THE PRODUCT

COMPRESSED IN THE PROPER FILE FORMAT FOR FAST DOWNLOADING

VIDEOS MAKE AN IMPRESSION

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Web Market

Like the use of images, the use of videos significantly increases customer engagement and conversion. Videos can be short—15 seconds showing a product—or they can be longer—30 minutes explaining a process.

Making videos isn't easy, but it's worth the effort.

PRODUCT OR EXPLAINER VIDEOS INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD THAT A VISITOR WILL MAKE A PURCHASE BY 85%

VIDEOS ON LANDING PAGES INCREASE AVERAGE PAGE CONVERSION RATES BY 86%.[4]

And you don't have to create all the videos yourself; you can offer your customers a chance to upload their own videos about your products. That works especially well if you're selling products in categories that inspire strong customer loyalty, such as skateboards or beauty products.

2 Siu, 2014 | 3 Neilsen, 2014
4 blog.wishpond.com, 2014

TURN YOUR CUSTOMERS INTO A SALES FORCE

Customers trust other customers more than they trust vendors, so social media and blogs matter. People love to tell their friends about a great find, and they love to identify with a product they love. Social proof is a powerful tool for building trust.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Of course, you'll want to place icons linking to your social media accounts on each page. Many companies place these icons on the home page only, but they're missing an important opportunity. **EACH PRODUCT PAGE SHOULD ALSO DISPLAY YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA ICONS**, and they should be displayed in a position of high visibility—right near the product image. Every time a shopper sends a link to her friend asking, 'Would I look good in these jeans?', you have reached another potential customer… and it didn't cost you anything.

Let your visitors sign into your site with their social media logins. It's frictionless, and it encourages them to 'like' your site and to share your products with their friends.

On the other end of the user experience, **ALLOWING SHOPPERS TO USE THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA LOGINS TO BEGIN THE CHECKOUT PROCESS** decreases the likelihood of an abandoned shopping cart, probably because the ease of accessing the cart increases the likelihood of an impulse purchase.

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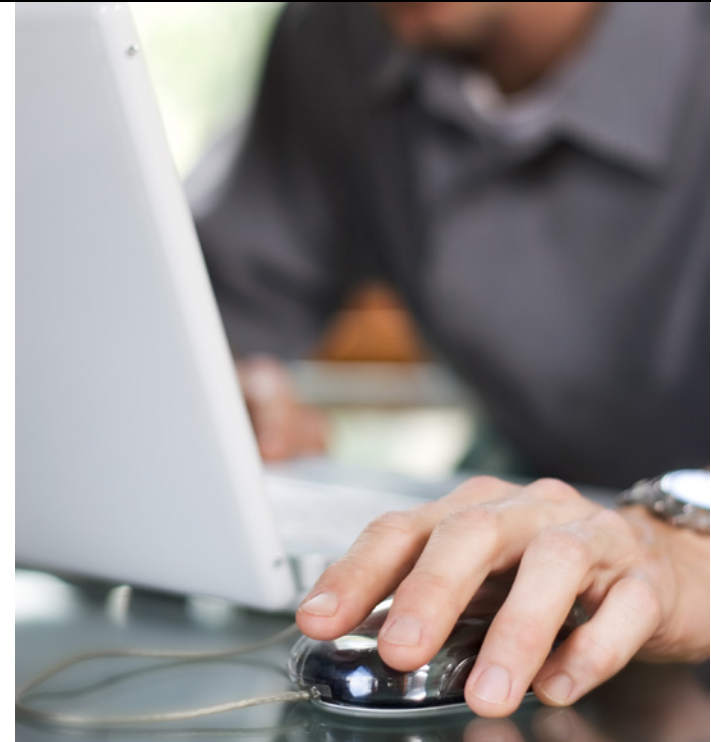
BE AN OPEN BOOK WITH A BLOG

Blogs can be used for many purposes simultaneously. The important thing is to be genuine. That means **WRITING IN A CONVERSATIONAL TONE** that uses the same vocabulary that your customer base uses. It means that **EVERY POST SHOULD NOT TRY TO PUSH A SALE**; most of your posts should be chatty and interesting, perhaps addressing life in your corporate culture, discussing current events that impact the lifestyle of your customer base, providing tips on how to best use your product or service, or simply presenting interesting and thoughtful ruminations on topics relating to your customers' interests.

Four Tips for Successful Blogging

ANNOUNCE IMPORTANT NEW PRODUCT LAUNCHES OR COMPANY NEWS

SHOW YOUR CUSTOMERS THAT YOU'RE A PERSON (OR PEOPLE)... NOT A SOULLESS CORPORATION

KEEP COMMENTS OPEN AND RESPOND PROMPTLY (AND APOLOGETICALLY) TO ANY COMPLAINTS THAT ARE POSTED

IF YOU START A BLOG, YOU HAVE TO KEEP BLOGGING. AN ABANDONED BLOG DAMAGES YOUR CREDIBILITY

TAILOR YOUR SITE FOR A COMFORTABLE FIT ‹‹‹‹‹‹‹‹‹‹‹‹‹

MAGENTO OFFERS GREAT FLEXIBILITY. You can customize your layout, product discovery, checkout, shipping, extensions, and more… but any customization has to serve a specific purpose.

LAYOUT

The most obvious customization is a change to your template. That's a good change to make, because you don't want your site to look like a million others. Work with the UI/UX designer (the expert in user experience) on your development team to **DECIDE WHAT CHANGES WILL MOST POSITIVELY IMPACT YOUR CONVERSION RATES.**

FINDING PRODUCTS

Your site will have a search function, but you may want to consider an advanced search function. Advanced search makes sense if you have a lot of products, and especially if you have a lot of products that are basically the same but have key differences. For example, if you sell laptops, you may want users to be able to filter their search by screen size, processor, hard drive, manufacturer, and so forth. **ADVANCED SEARCH WILL NARROW THE RESULTS ENOUGH THAT YOUR CUSTOMERS WON'T FEEL OVERWHELMED** and abandon the site. Rather than using the built-in Magento search tools, we recommend finding a search extension that provides more capabilities.

CHECKOUT

This is a crucial area of your site because a poor checkout process results in an high rate of cart abandonment. You may want to change the order of the steps in your checkout process, but these days, most vendors are moving toward a One Step checkout. A One Step checkout includes all the checkout forms—personal identification, billing and shipping address, payment method, and cart—on a single page. **ONE STEP CHECKOUT IS RECOMMENDED FOR MOST BUSINESSES** because it simplifies the checkout process, which results in more sales.

SHIPPING

There are many ways to customize shipping. Shipping can be flat rate or by weight; it can be free all the time, over a certain sale amount, or under a certain weight; it can be free or reduced with a discount code, or at certain times of the year, or when certain sales are running. **YOU WANT THE ABILITY TO EASILY CHANGE AS MANY OF THE SHIPPING OPTIONS AS POSSIBLE** so that you can make changes as your business needs change.

EXTENSIONS

Extensions are a modular way to add functions to your site. There are thousands of extensions available and more being added daily, so **ADDING ADDITIONAL CAPABILITIES TO YOUR SITE IS EASILY ACCOMPLISHED BY INSTALLING AN EXTENSION.** But not all extensions are created equal; extensions are developed by third-party developers, and some are more skilled than others. Also, although it's tempting to add every cool extension, remember that an overabundance of extensions on your site can significantly slow down your load times. But be careful as extensions from multiple companies can often create conflict with each other. Find a skilled developer to make them play nicely!

HOSTING

CHOOSE A HOST THAT IS HEAVILY FOCUSED ON MAGENTO. Your site will run faster and more reliably, and the host is likely to have Magento developers on staff or at least have relationships with trusted third-party developers. When you choose the right host, you'll be able to get help when you need it.

PCI COMPLIANCE

If you take credit card payments, you need to care about PCI compliance. PCI compliance is the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard, which is a set of requirements that ensures your customers' credit card data is handled securely throughout the transaction process. Magento Secure Payment Bridge (for EE only) helps you meet PCI compliance. Your host needs to support compliance, too, through activities such as automatically updating security patches. So **WHEN SELECTING A HOST, HAVE A CONVERSATION ABOUT PCI COMPLIANCE.**

SUPPORT

PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE HOURS THAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE—if your site goes down at 11 pm, you want to be able to open a ticket right away. Also, make sure your hosting provider performs software updates and security patches as necessary.

SEO

Search engine optimization is important for any retailer, and while optimizing a site for search engines isn't hard, it is a lengthy, detail-oriented process. Since your core business isn't SEO, **THIS IS A TASK THAT'S BEST TO OUTSOURCE.** Your web developers will be able conduct your SEO or recommend an SEO consultant.

SITE MAP

Few human beings will ever notice your site map, but Google's web crawlers will. Magento is capable of creating a site map XML file, and many extensions exist that will also create a site map for your site. If you choose a third-party site map creator, you have two options: research a few dozen, install them, and try them out... or **ASK YOUR WEB DEVELOPER TO RECOMMEND ONE THAT WILL SERVE YOUR NEEDS** and play well with your other extensions.

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ROBOTS.TXT

Robot.txt is a file that tells search engines not to index specific pages in your site. Magento may place a robots.txt file onto your site to prevent search engines from indexing it while it's in development. **THAT FILE HAS TO BE REMOVED** or edited when the site goes live, or you won't be discovered by search engines.

FEEDS

A feed is a file containing information about all of the products in your store. The feed uploads that information to the price comparison engines and product search sites such as Google Shopping and Bing Products. **THE FEED HAS TO BE STRUCTURED CORRECTLY** in order to show up in relevant comparisons.

META DATA

Meta data is the title and description of your site that displays in search results. Good meta data is clear and specific so **USERS CAN SEE IF YOUR SITE IS RELEVANT TO THEIR SEARCH**. Don't worry about the keywords; Google ignores those, so focus on a concise and accurate description. You only have 155 characters to tell users about your site, so be sure to include the keywords.

URL MANAGEMENT

URL MANAGEMENT IS THE ABILITY TO CHANGE THE URL OF A PAGE SO THAT IT READS NATURALLY. Rather than yoursite.com/842, your system can automatically change the path to yoursite.com/blue-shirt. URL managements can be changed in the configuration settings in Magento, but remember to re-index the new URLs or your changes will go unnoticed by Google.

SEO AUDIT

An SEO audit examines how discoverable your site is to search engines. Conducting an SEO audit is a smart move, but it's not an easy one for people who don't do them regularly. Doing this task on your own will take many hours until you've done it a few times. Do **BUDGET FOR A THIRD-PARTY SEO AUDIT TO BE PERFORMED ON A REGULAR BASIS**, however, because Google changes its algorithm frequently.

PRE-LAUNCH TESTING

Pre-launch testing is a form of quality assurance; websites are complex, and many small errors can be generated during development. Running pre-launch testing is simply good practice, and **YOU CAN DO MUCH OF IT ON YOUR OWN**. However, some of it has to be done by your developer, such as the validation of code and the elements relating to regulatory compliance.

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301 REDIRECTS

A 301 redirect is a search engine friendly way to help users and search engines find pages that you may have moved or renamed. If you do not set up 301 redirects, your site will sooner or later be rife with 404 errors—'page not found'. **301 REDIRECTS CAN BE CREATED MANUALLY OR MANAGED WITH AN EXTENSION.**

SSL CERTIFICATION

An SSL certificate is a data file that associates an encrypted key with your site details. It allows secure connections from a web server to a browser, which is, of course, **HIGHLY IMPORTANT TO AN ONLINE RETAILER.** In Magento, SSL certification is configured by an admin in the System>Configuration>Secure tab, and must also be configured on the web server.

SITE MONITORING

Sites are monitored for uptime. When a monitored site goes down, its administrators and other **STAKEHOLDERS ARE NOTIFIED THAT A PROBLEM HAS OCCURRED.** Monitoring is automated and is conducted either by your web host or by a third party on a subscription basis.

POST-LAUNCH TESTING

While pre-launch testing focuses on quality assurance, post-launch testing focuses on usability. Now that your site is live and hundreds or thousands of eyes are looking at it, the little inefficiencies that you and your team overlooked will be noticed by objective visitors. **THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO APPROACH A POST-LAUNCH TEST**; you can give a group of users a list of tasks and watch or video them performing it; you can ask them to record their own experiences on the site; or you can perform eyeball tracking tests. Once you've captured your results, they must be analyzed and a plan of action needs to be developed and implemented.

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THE VALUE OF A GOOD FOUNDATION

A LOT OF WORK GOES INTO PLANNING, DESIGNING, AND BUILDING A NEW SITE. But it's worth taking a methodical, granular approach, because the work you put into your site now will pay off later. Skipping steps or winging it will end up costing more in disgusted customers and increased developers' fees.

If you have questions about moving to Magento, we can help.
Web2Market specializes in Magento, so no matter what you're envisioning, we've probably built something like it before.

GET A WEBSITE THAT DOES THE SELLING FOR YOU. CALL WEB2MARKET TODAY.

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