A successful online presence is the cornerstone of an effective marketing program.

It is the front door to your organization, and first impressions count. So your site needs to do a lot in the short time you have to engage your visitor. As a cornerstone of your marketing and communications, it should reflect all that's outstanding about your organization, and be a hallmark of the value you bring.

Process

The process of creating a web site is similar to creating other branding materials. It begins with establishing specific goals for the site and a direction to guide the stages of content creation and design development.

Phases of web design:

1. **Research** – We begin by thoroughly reviewing the results of the research described on the next page, as well as the mission and purpose of your organization, its goals, its audience, any obstacles to the execution of its mission, how the audience should be engaged, how to position the organization, and any other relevant questions that would have a bearing on site content and design. Additional research may be undertaken.

2. **Site Outline and Organization** – Based on the above research, a page list and draft content outline for all pages will be developed, geared to the goals of the site and the business it represents. A home page prototype will be produced that shows how the site is organized and how the navigation works. This portion of the process is like creating a blueprint before building a house.

3. **Site Content** – Based on the content outline, content will be created, submitted for review and finalized. This can include image development and acquisition as well as copywriting.

4. **Visual Design** - After approval of the prototype and content, the visual design direction and two draft page designs will be created.

5. **Design Review -** The draft page designs will be reviewed; at this point, you will either approve the design or ask for alterations. If the latter, the alterations will be executed and a second draft submitted for review. (Two rounds of approvals is the norm.)

6. **Page Layouts** – When page design is approved, a draft site will be designed and submitted for approval.

7. **Final Design Approval** – When the overall site design is approved and signed off, files will be produced and sent on to a web developer for site build-out.

8. **Site Development & Build-Out** – A preliminary site will be created from the page files by the web developer, and submitted for review by both you and LBCD. If desired, alterations and adjustments will be requested and executed. A finished site will be presented for final approval.

9. **Site Publishing** – When the completed site has been approved, the site will go live. From this point, you will be working directly with the web developer for future additions and changes to your site.

Notes

- *The extent of each step is subject to the scope of individual projects. Site complexity/simplicity is a spectrum, and this is defined during the proposal process.*
- *When the client is a group or a board, we recommend that the group designate a smaller sub-committee authorized to develop the project, go to meetings, evaluate the design concepts, render approvals and report back to the larger group.*

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COMMUNICATIONS + DESIGN

An effective web site always begins with research. You will be asked to:

1. Gather examples of web sites from entities similar to yours. It is important to understand the competitive context in which your web site will function.
2. Looking at these examples, observe which sites you like, and which you don't. Record your reactions to visual styles, functionalities, ease of use, content, or anything else that stands out to you for better or for worse. Be specific as to what you did or did not like about a site.

The next step is to answer the questions below in as much detail as possible.

1. What are your goals for the web site? How do you want it to help execute your mission?

2. Who is your primary audience or market? (There may be more than one.)

3. What are they seeking when they come to your site?

4. What do you want your visitors to do at your site?

5. What would you like visitors to do <u>after</u> they have visited your site?

6. Do you have established branding to tie the site to your other marketing and communications?

7. Who is your competition? Why should people come to you instead of your competition?

8. How is your organization positioned in relation to your competition?

9. What features and/or functions do you want the site to have?

10. Do you want to be able manage content on your site?

11. Do you have a domain name and host?

Hosting, Maintenance, Search Engine Optimization & More

In addition to site design and development, there are other services with separate costs that you will need to consider. One is hosting and maintenance. LBD works with developers who build Wordpress sites and will provide hosting and maintenance services for a monthly fee.

Other considerations are building a responsive version of your site for mobile devices and having an SSL certificate to ensure visitors that they are at a secure site. Phones and tablets are surpassing desktops for how users access anything on line. It is mandatory if you want your site to turn up in search on these devices. Having the assurance of an SSL security certificate will create confidence in the safety of your site and your organization.

And then there's Search Engine Optimization (SEO). This is a separate set of services that helps increase the ranking of your site on search engines and the likelihood that searchers will find your site. SEO is a process and is never done because the search engines constantly reconfigure the algorithms that determine rank. We should discuss the particular needs of your site and business for these services at the outset as this will have an impact on how your content is created.