# Website Design.

**Think of website design as a pie with three equal parts called the 3-A's:**

1. **A**pplication Design

2. **A**sset Creation

3. **A**uthoring

Each piece is equally important and while these areas may be addressed concurrently to some degree, it is vital to follow a clear sequence in order to avoid a ripple effect of costly changes and reengineering delays during the development process.

## APPLICATION DESIGN

**Audit/Discovery** Review the current web environment (including competitor sites) and interview subject matter experts and stakeholders within the organization. The goal of this process is to better understand the business model, customer interaction points, sales processes, and pain points.

**Requirements Documentation** This document captures all decisions made in the Audit/Discovery phase and serves as a roadmap for site development. It includes site goals and objectives, audience, and required content. This is also the basis for the site mapping and wire framing.

**Site Mapping** An outline of the links for the home page and every page of the site. This serves as the content guide for the site and helps define the navigational priorities.

**Functionality** An overlay to the site map, functionality for the site is identified here, including databases, Flash/Actionscript, dropdown menus, searches, etc. This defines the user's interaction with the site.

**Content Outline/Migration** Specific content is identified based on the site mapping, including any plans for migration of existing content.

**Wire Framing** The wire frame for each page depicts the layout or arrangement of the content, including interface elements and navigational systems, and how they work together. The wire framing usually lacks typographic style, color, or graphics, since the main focus lies in the functionality, behavior, and priority of content, or hierarchy.

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## ASSET CREATION

**Home Page Design** Based on the Application Design, several different design mockups are prepared for the home page illustrating the most vital information and navigation, but limited to an "above the fold" display. Then, the selected design is fleshed out with all other related links and home page content. This builds the foundation of the aesthetics and design for the site.

**Secondary Page Design** The internal, or secondary, pages dominate the site, so a template is created that will best accommodate their deep content and intuitive navigation. This establishes the look and feel of the site with a system dominated by consistent visual elements. The guts of the website are developed here.

**Content Generation** Site content is generally blocks of information that capture search engine attention, while also providing information to the reader. Keyword-rich content and qualified original content is written in this step. For optimum results, content generation must be part copywriting, part SEO.

**Graphics/Iconology**  The user experience is enhanced by creating graphic effects such as rollovers, drop-downs, and various other navigational elements and techniques. Photographs are also incorporated. This is the imagery component that complements content generation.

## AUTHORING

**Programming/Coding** Following the W3C standards (HTML5, CSS3, Java Script) the site is coded based on the established content functionality as wire framed and per the asset creation. Coding is written with and without the use of a code generator tool. First, a small portion of the site is programmed as a Proof of Concept. Upon acceptance, the entire site is programmed.

**Database** Coding of PHP or SLQ database applications including data navigation; sorting; searching; advanced filtering; record addition, modification and deletion; file uploads; and other features. This is developed to manage dynamic content such as news, events, careers, etc. based on the defined site functionality.

**CMS** An open source or proprietary program is used to publish, edit and modify content on the site, as well as maintain it from a central interface. The CMS is designed to minimize the complex task of writing code. It is a DIY tool designed to keep the site current and allow easy transfer of ownership and the related maintenance.

**Alpha/Beta Testing** Upon completion of the authoring, the website is tested internally and then externally. The goal is to work out any bugs and to identify any needed modifications. Beta testing will also address more considerable issues, including load testing, failure recovery, security, and platform and browser compatibility, among others.

**Acceptance Testing** Prior to accepting the transfer of ownership, a formal test is conducted to ensure that all aspects of the finished site are working. A completed checklist is an indicator of a successful test and launch-ready project.

**SEO** To improve the visibility of the website and the organic search results, the site is submitted to major search engines for indexing. Title tags and Meta tags are also integrated to enhance visibility with those search engines that use them in their search results rankings. Care is also given to integrating key words into all content that is generated to aid in attracting search engine attention.

**Upon completion of the website, it is launched on the designated hosting server.** Training and documentation are provided pre- or post-launch based on specific needs. Site maintenance, ongoing SEO, and other website marketing services are also available.

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