

Guide to: **Designing Your Brand in an Online World**



A publication of:



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Introduction

Your website is your digital storefront, often serving as the point of entry to your product or service, and, to your brand. Whether building a website from scratch or making a few simple changes to the one you've had for years, keep in mind the following best practices to create the best possible first impression, user experience and to grow your business.

Simply Google the phrase “build the perfect website” and results will include everything from ads for website builders and 10-step how-to articles to mountains of advice and ideas. The options seem endless – CSS, CMS, SEO, free templates (which are rarely ever really free), DIY platforms, hundreds of website-only agencies and more. Moreover, with the proliferation of social media, you could be tempted to wonder if a website is even necessary ... don't go there.

Website creation has become an odd mix of joy and pain. Sure, everyone in the organization thinks a website is essential. Of course, it has to be visually amazing. But, no one quite knows what it should really look like, what content it should feature or what call-to-action is required. It's no wonder that frequently the end result is a virtual hodge-podge of pictures, colors and pages of well-intentioned, but often irrelevant content that can only be edited by a single person from IT.

So, how *do* you build the perfect website?



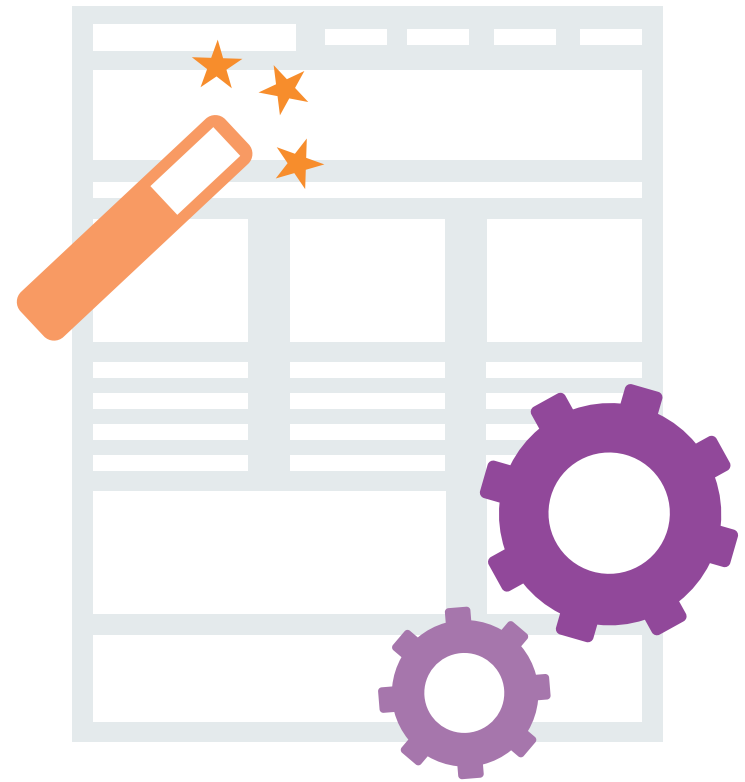
1. DIY Design or Not?

DIY Design or Not?

If you're small and just getting started, or if you only need a website as an online brochure of what you do and who you are, a DIY builder option may work for you.

However, if you want to reach a broad (or targeted) audience with creative, innovative and interesting content; if you want to move website visitors to a certain action (click-through, order, buy, download, etc.); and, if you're looking for a site that's going to function well for the long haul and be specifically and strategically targeted, then hiring an agency partner is the best move.

Agencies have people who design websites for a living. They understand CSS and SEO, whether a responsive site or an app is your smartest move and which CMS is easiest to use. And, since they're oriented toward customer support, they'll be there when you need help in the future.



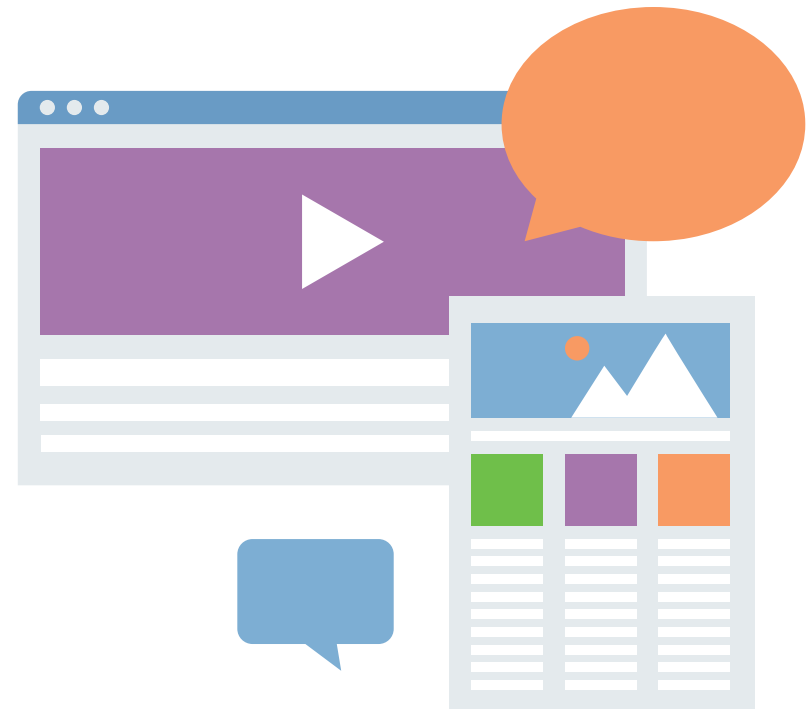
2. The Right Content is King

The Right Content is King

Content is king, right? Not quite. *Focused, purposeful* content is king. Adding lots of posts and pages to your site doesn't necessarily mean that you're smarter than that other guy, it just means that you're going to have a lot more pages (likely ones that no one ever sees).

In a world of online brevity and ever-shortening attention spans, site visitors are reading less and less. While visitors to a B2B site might browse for longer (potential clients are looking to see if you're up to spec), average consumers want to be informed quickly. Many would much rather have information delivered via entertainment or infographic.

The goal of any website is to activate your visitor to action. When designing your site, engage a partner in the design process who understands your audience *and* your content. Give them permission to reframe and refine content based on their knowledge.



3. Attract to Convert

Attract to Convert

The ultimate goals of any website are high viewership and conversion. The former is easier to measure than the latter, and also more readily achieved. That said, neither are easy tasks to accomplish on your own.

Most agencies have people (or whole departments) dedicated to understanding digital marketing. Google's dominance of search guarantees that you'll need some SEO expertise. Having an understanding of digital advertising, including options on social media platforms, and second screen marketing, will go a long way in getting people to make that click.

Once you drive traffic to your website, you also need a skilled inbound team to guide visitors through a conversion path by optimizing great content with effective calls-to-action and lead-capture forms.

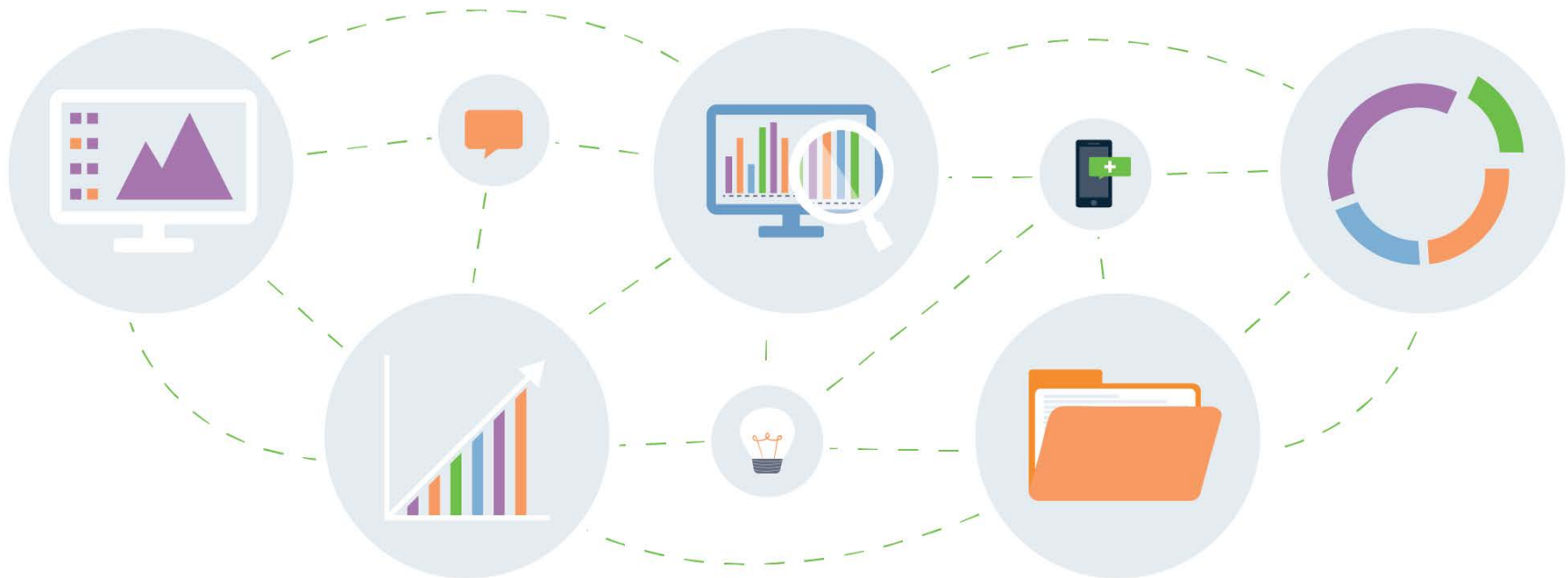


4. An Integrated Strategy

An Integrated Strategy

Make sure that your agency partner understands your business and your business strategy. They may never know your business as well as you do (but they can get pretty close), but you'll never know theirs as well as they do.

Be sure your agency looks at your web presence as part of a spectrum and not a sliver. Social media, digital ad placement, apps, mobile – what we here call The Big Pixel – should all be leveraged to create a cohesive experience for your audience.



About Vehr Communications

Vehr Communications, LLC seeks to be a strategic partner with its clients to help them manage their reputations, build valued relationships and deliver meaningful results.

We offer our clients:

Refreshing Attitude: We partner, we listen, we challenge. We learn. We work hard. We make a difference. And we have fun in the process.

Resourceful Approach: We approach each client opportunity with creativity, energy and discipline to build relationships that matter.

Global Reach: We're an IPREX partner ... 75 strategic communications agencies with 1,500 staff and 100 offices from 33 countries working as one to support global communications programs for our clients.

To learn more about who we are, what we do and how we think, visit us at www.vehrcommunications.com. While you're there, sign up for our monthly e-newsletter, visit our blog or download any of our publications designed to help you make the most of your strategic communications activities.

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