

Current Site Analysis

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Note – This is one from a sequence of exercises from the Websites subject outlined in the Strategic Marketing Process eBook. Download the free e-book www.growthpanel.com/marketing-tools/index.html and subscribe to this subject at www.growthpanel.com/versions/get-started.html to download from Growth Panel’s Intelligent Marketing Platform.

Some of the graphics in this PDF might not display properly.

Are you wondering whether your current site is as effective as it could be? Are you trying to evaluate the cost of redesigning your site versus the potential benefits? Do you want to identify a list of “quick fixes” that you can implement in the short term?

QUICK CHECKLIST

Do you know whether your site needs help in any of these areas?

AREA	DESCRIPTION	DOES IT NEED IMPROVEMENT?
Marketing campaigns: Is it a true marketing vehicle?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Is your site optimized for search engines? (If you’re not sure, it probably isn’t.) ▶ Could you generate more leads from businesspeople who are searching for vendors or suppliers online? ▶ Could your site do more to help you generate new leads? ▶ Do you need to do more email marketing but your site isn’t strong enough? ▶ If your product/service is a high-ticket item with a long sales cycle, could your site help to educate and nurture your prospects? ▶ Could your site be more valuable in marketing to existing customers? ▶ Could you use it to process orders? ▶ Does it truly help you deliver information and educate prospects? 	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Fine as is <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure

AREA	DESCRIPTION	DOES IT NEED IMPROVEMENT?
Design General look and feel of the site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Is the design clean and simple, or is it cluttered with images and copy that compete for attention? ▶ Is your copy so long that it trails off the page and requires scrolling? ▶ How appealing are the graphics? Are they stale or interesting? Do they match your brand identity? ▶ Are the timesteps and colors attractive? Do they convey what you want them to convey? ▶ Is your site at least as attractive as those of your competitors? ▶ Are you proud to have prospects visit your site? 	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Fine as is <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Content The information you present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Does your home page have content on it, or is it primarily images? (You're missing out on search traffic if you don't have content.) ▶ Is your copy easy to scan with meaningful headlines, subheadings, and bullets? ▶ Is your copy written in an engaging way, or is it dull? ▶ Does your copy answer important questions, or is it vague and generic? ▶ Is it easy to get right to the information a prospect wants? Is the navigation intuitive rather than vague? ▶ Does the content sell? ▶ How good are your messages? Do you convey your true value? Is it succinct? Is it compelling? ▶ Do you have content that can be used in marketing campaigns? 	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Fine as is <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Functionality: Special tools and capabilities your site offers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Do you need more functionality to process orders, provide tools to users, or deliver more customized content to particular users? 	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Fine as is

AREA	DESCRIPTION	DOES IT NEED IMPROVEMENT?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Does the site load quickly? ▶ Does the site use technologies that aren't search-engine friendly (flash, heavy graphics, javascript menus, frames, dynamic content?) ▶ Is the technology appropriate for your market (i.e. executives may not have patience for a lot of flash that needs to load) 	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Fine as is <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Do you have good metrics: traffic sources, traffic flow in your site ▶ Do you want more data than your current reports can generate? 	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Fine as is <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Content management: Your system for changing or adding content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Do you need to be able to quickly and easily add pages without programming skill? ▶ Do you need to quickly and easily manage other aspects of your content without calling your developer? 	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Fine as is <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure

For those areas you know need improvement, explain what you would like:

AREA TO IMPROVE	IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

If you need help in any of the areas you're not sure about, here are more detailed analyses.

How much work will these changes involve, and what should you do next?

AREA TO IMPROVE	COMMENTS	RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS
<input type="checkbox"/> Marketing campaigns: Is it a true marketing vehicle?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ If you're serious about upgrading your site to make it a true marketing vehicle, you'll need to learn more about internet marketing (search, email, online advertising, publicity, etc.) to determine what kind of campaigns are best for your company. Then you can develop your site requirements with confidence. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use 538 – Internet Marketing Campaigns to help you evaluate your options 2. Use 304 – Sophisticated Site Architecture to develop your requirements.
<input type="checkbox"/> Design: General look and feel of the site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ If you're happy with the way your site functions and its content, but just want a new look, it's usually a straightforward project. You'll need a new interface design, then the design will need to be applied to your pages. ▶ If you need additional changes, you're potentially building a new site. 	<p>If you're redesigning a very simple site, you can use 302 – Simple Site Architecture; if it's a more complex site, you can use 304 – Sophisticated Site Architecture. Both exercises have a section that addresses design; you can use just that portion and give it to a designer for a quote.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Content: The information you present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ If you just need to rewrite your existing content or add a section or two, it's a minor project. ▶ If you need to reorganize the way your content is presented, alter your navigation, develop new content and rewrite it, the project is more substantial. ▶ If you have a lot of content already but need to optimize your site for search, your project will include keyword research, site architecture, rewriting, and programming. If the site uses any technologies that search engines can't read, they'll need to be redeveloped. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use 307—Develop Your Content to brainstorm and develop a list of content for your site. 2. Use 308 – Write Your Content to guide your writer (or yourself) during the writing process. 3. If you need to hire a copywriter, give them 308 – Write Your Content; you can also use the Vendor Selection to help identify and evaluate bidders. 4. If you need to optimize your site for search, use

AREA TO IMPROVE	COMMENTS	RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS
		<p>472 – Optimize Your Website</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Functionality: Special tools and capabilities your site offers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ If you need to add a large database-driven product catalog, you may need a major overhaul. ▶ Complexity is based on the extent of the functionality: Do you need to store a large amount of data? How do you update or modify the data? How is the data presented? Will you need a lot of “if/then” variables to present the right info to your users? 	<p>Use 304 – Sophisticated Site Architecture. Or just talk with a few potential vendors to understand the scope of the project if you’re not sure whether to proceed.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ If your site is built in flash, with frames, or uses other technology that search engines can’t read, it will need to be reprogrammed and potentially redesigned. If it’s a large site or it can’t be easily transferred into a new format, it could be a major programming project. 	<p>Talk with a few potential vendors to understand the scope of the project if you’re not sure whether to proceed.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There are a lot of good services and software packages that can provide you with better reports – and typically it’s fairly easy for a programmer to integrate them with your site. ▶ If you’re adding new functionality and want to be able to generate more sophisticated reports, that’s custom programming. 	<p>Research reporting services and/or software.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Content management: Your system for changing or adding content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Most good website developers include a basic content management system in the sites they build. If you have an older site, your programmer may be able to add a piece of software to help you edit it in a more user-friendly way. ▶ If you have a site with a lot of database functionality, you may need a custom system built. 	<p>Have a programmer look at your site and quote the cost of building or attaching a content management system. See the online library for software suggestions.</p>

Notes/Comments:

Next steps in the project

STEP	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DUE DATE

DETAILED SITE ANALYSIS

If you need a more thorough analysis of your site, here is a guide.

First, it's hard to be objective about your own site, especially if you were involved in creating it. Consider putting together a panel of people to give you unadulterated feedback. Use the questions from this section as needed.

PEOPLE TO ASK	STATUS

Areas to address:

- ▶ [Marketing campaign value](#)
- ▶ [Design](#)
- ▶ [Content](#)
- ▶ [Navigation](#)
- ▶ [Functionality](#)
- ▶ [Technology](#)
- ▶ [Reporting](#)
- ▶ [Content management](#)
- ▶ [Conclusion](#)

MARKETING CAMPAIGN VALUE

A well-designed site with rich content can be a powerful tool to help generate and qualify leads.

MARKETING PROGRAMS YOU COULD RUN	LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE
Email marketing: individual, regular campaigns (or newsletters) to a house list with links to feature articles on individual pages within your site; content is archived on the site as well.	<input type="checkbox"/> Site can already handle <input type="checkbox"/> We'd like our site to be able to do this <input type="checkbox"/> Not important at this time
Organic search marketing: Has your site been formally optimized to improve your ability to connect with buyers when they're using search engines?	<input type="checkbox"/> Site can already handle <input type="checkbox"/> We'd like our site to be able to do this <input type="checkbox"/> Not important at this time
Paid search programs: Can you easily create custom landing pages or use in paid search programs so you can generate targeted traffic from search engines?	<input type="checkbox"/> Site can already handle <input type="checkbox"/> We'd like our site to be able to do this <input type="checkbox"/> Not important at this time
Publicity: Do you have a strong publicity area with news releases stored on individual pages and links on both a master News page and your home page?	<input type="checkbox"/> Site can already handle <input type="checkbox"/> We'd like our site to be able to do this <input type="checkbox"/> Not important at this time
Content: Do you offer deep, rich content on your subject matter? With more content, you can generate more traffic through search AND better serve the needs of your visitors, especially when your product is an investment or has a long sales cycle.	<input type="checkbox"/> Site can already handle <input type="checkbox"/> We'd like our site to be able to do this <input type="checkbox"/> Not important at this time

Additional comments about the look of your website:

What changes (if any) would you recommend?

Decision: Do you need to update your design?

Yes No

NEXT STEPS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DUE DATE

DESIGN

Evaluate the look and feel of the site: The way the elements are organized on the page, the amount of content on each page, the graphic images, the typestyles and colors.

Does the design support your value proposition?

YOUR VALUE PROPOSITION	SITE REQUIREMENTS	RESPONSE
PRODUCT INNOVATION/ LEADERSHIP	Is your site current and innovative ?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	Is your site more than a few years old ?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	Does it make your company look like a leader in the field?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
CUSTOMER INTIMACY/ SOLUTIONS	Is the design warm and appealing ?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRICE/ OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY	Is the design streamlined ?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

If your site were a person, how would you describe him or her?

Is the description above consistent with your brand personality traits?

BRAND PERSONALITY TRAITS	DOES THE DESIGN CONVEY THIS TRAIT?
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

How well do you think your site design appeals to your potential customers?

Are you selling to any of the following prospects?

PROSPECTS	CRITERIA	DOES THE DESIGN CONVEY THIS TRAIT?
Creative	Is the design unique, innovative, creative, appealing?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	Does it use strong graphics rather than mostly text?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Executive	Is the design clean, simple, not garish?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	Do you focus on a few key elements on the page?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	Is the design professional?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Technology or scientific	Is it current, as if it's been developed in the last few years.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

How does your page design compare to that of your competitors?

COMPETITOR URL	QUALITY OF PAGE DESIGN	NOTES
	<input type="checkbox"/> Better than ours <input type="checkbox"/> About the same <input type="checkbox"/> Not as good	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Better than ours <input type="checkbox"/> About the same <input type="checkbox"/> Not as good	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Better than ours <input type="checkbox"/> About the same <input type="checkbox"/> Not as good	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Better than ours <input type="checkbox"/> About the same <input type="checkbox"/> Not as good	

Additional comments about the look of your website:

What changes (if any) would you recommend?

Decision: Do you need to update your design?

Yes No

NEXT STEPS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DUE DATE

CONTENT

Look carefully at the information you present on your site. Do you have enough content to meet the needs of your users? Does the content sell? Is it well-organized and well-written?

What's the key message on the home page?

Does the home page offer a compelling message and content?

(Note: the home page is the most important page to search engines – if it doesn't offer much content, then it's hurting your search engine rankings.)

How is the navigation -- is the information easy to find?

Does each page have a strong, action-oriented headline, subheadings, and bullets to help the reader scan?

Do you offer content for all of the users who visit your site?

Types of users who will visit the site (add any that this list doesn't cover)	How important is this user to you?
Prospects	<input type="checkbox"/> Very <input type="checkbox"/> Moderately <input type="checkbox"/> Not important
Current customers	<input type="checkbox"/> Very <input type="checkbox"/> Moderately <input type="checkbox"/> Not important
Distributors	<input type="checkbox"/> Very <input type="checkbox"/> Moderately <input type="checkbox"/> Not important
Resellers/channel partners	<input type="checkbox"/> Very <input type="checkbox"/> Moderately <input type="checkbox"/> Not important
Strategic partners	<input type="checkbox"/> Very <input type="checkbox"/> Moderately <input type="checkbox"/> Not important
Vendors	<input type="checkbox"/> Very <input type="checkbox"/> Moderately <input type="checkbox"/> Not important
Suppliers	<input type="checkbox"/> Very <input type="checkbox"/> Moderately <input type="checkbox"/> Not important
Media	<input type="checkbox"/> Very <input type="checkbox"/> Moderately <input type="checkbox"/> Not important
Investors	<input type="checkbox"/> Very <input type="checkbox"/> Moderately <input type="checkbox"/> Not important
Job seekers	<input type="checkbox"/> Very <input type="checkbox"/> Moderately <input type="checkbox"/> Not important
Employees	<input type="checkbox"/> Very <input type="checkbox"/> Moderately <input type="checkbox"/> Not important

For the users you rated as “very important,” what information do they need?

VERY IMPORTANT USER (FROM ABOVE)	CONTENT THEY'RE LOOKING FOR

Are you missing any of the content you've listed above?

How many clicks does it take to find that information?

How thorough is that information?

How compelling is it?

Is there a strong call-to-action?

How does the quality and depth of your content compare to that of your competitors?

COMPETITOR URL	QUALITY AND DEPTH OF CONTENT	NOTES
	<input type="checkbox"/> Better than ours <input type="checkbox"/> About the same <input type="checkbox"/> Not as good	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Better than ours <input type="checkbox"/> About the same <input type="checkbox"/> Not as good	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Better than ours <input type="checkbox"/> About the same <input type="checkbox"/> Not as good	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Better than ours <input type="checkbox"/> About the same <input type="checkbox"/> Not as good	

Decision: Will you make any of the following changes to your content?

- Just rewrite/tweak what's there
- Add content

Explain your recommendation:

NEXT STEPS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DUE DATE

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

It's important to optimize your site for search if you want to be ranked on the major search engines. Use **472** to learn about how to optimize your site for organic search, and use **471** to develop your keyword list.

After your site is complete, you can use **474** to build an inbound link program, and **475** to submit your site to the search engines and directories.

NAVIGATION

Good navigation is critical to any site, particularly when there is more content or your users are in the early research phase on a topic. What seems intuitive to you may not be intuitive to your user, and if the user doesn't find what s/he needs within a few moments, s/he'll leave.

It's easy to use the standard Products and Services sections in your navigation, but these titles are deceptive. When prospects come to your site, they're looking for solutions. They may not know whether the best solution is a product or a service; they care about how you can solve their problem. Instead, think about more intuitive, user-oriented organization. For example, you could create one section called Solutions, then let users choose from a list of industries or sample problems; the next page would just focus on the products and/or services that are appropriate for them.

Can each user find solutions to their problems within two obvious clicks from the home page?

Is it obvious to a user what each main navigational section contains?

Is the navigation simple and streamlined, or does the user have to look around the page to figure out where to go next?

Does the navigation drive the user through the site toward an end goal (to buy, request info, etc.)?

Are there any problems with the navigation?

What changes do you recommend?

NEXT STEPS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DUE DATE

FUNCTIONALITY

Do you have any type of online order processing for prospects, current customers, channel partners or distributors to place orders online?

- Yes
- No, but it's not appropriate
- No and we should consider it

If the site processes orders, how simple is the ordering process?

Does it take more than four screens?	
When you enter invalid information, does it erase the previous data that was entered?	
When you enter invalid information, is the error message well-written and clear?	
Does the system show you how far you are in the process?	
Is the price and shipping price displayed up front rather than buried in the back?	
Are your return policies and guarantees posted up front in the process?	
Can a user see real-time inventory figures?	
Review the emails that are generated afterward. Are they cleanly designed and well-written?	

Are there any tools that the site could provide to help move users through the sales process? For example, calculators, custom questionnaires, etc.?

Do your competitors offer any functionality that you don't?

COMPETITOR URL	FUNCTIONALITY	NOTES
	<input type="checkbox"/> Better than ours <input type="checkbox"/> About the same <input type="checkbox"/> Not as good	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Better than ours <input type="checkbox"/> About the same <input type="checkbox"/> Not as good	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Better than ours <input type="checkbox"/> About the same <input type="checkbox"/> Not as good	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Better than ours <input type="checkbox"/> About the same <input type="checkbox"/> Not as good	

Decision: Do you need to add functionality to your site?

- Yes
- No

Explain your recommendation:

TECHNOLOGY

Does each page in the site load quickly?

Does the site use technologies that aren't search-engine friendly?

TECHNOLOGY	DESCRIPTION	NEED IMPROVEMENT?
Heavy flash content	Search engines can't read content that's written in flash	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Heavy graphics	Search engines can't read the content within your graphic files – they can only read a tag that describes the graphic	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Javascript menus	Search engines can't follow links in javascript menus	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Frames	Search engines can't read your content through frames	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Dynamically-generated content	If your content is served through a database, the search engines may not be able to read that information	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Is the technology appropriate for your market? For example, executives may not have patience for a lot of flash that needs to load, but ad agency executives want to see the most creative presentation possible.

Decision: Do you need to make any technology changes to your site?

Yes No

Explain your recommendation:

REPORTING

Do you have good metrics: traffic sources, traffic flow in your site, conversion rates?

Do you want more data that your current reports can't generate? Explain:

Decision: Do you need to add any reporting capabilities to your site?

Yes No

Explain your recommendation:

CONTENT MANAGEMENT

Evaluate your system for changing or adding content to your site.

Do you need to be able to quickly and easily add pages without programming skill or calling your developer?

Do you need to quickly and easily manage other aspects of your content without calling your developer?

Other comments:

Decision: Do you need to add a content management system to your site?

Yes No

Explain your recommendation:

CONCLUSION

Summarize the changes you are recommending:

Explain why you recommend these changes.

Next steps in the project:

STEP	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DUE DATE

GAIN APPROVAL FOR YOUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Do you need to gain budget approval to revise your website? If so, here's a process for developing your recommendation:

	STEP	NOTES
<input type="checkbox"/>	Explain the revisions needed	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Quantify the benefits as much as possible	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Estimate the cost to optimize your site and implement your program	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do an ROI analysis to justify the program	

WEBSITE REVISION STRATEGY, PLAN AND BUDGET

Purpose: Why do you recommend revising your website?

How will the improved website contribute to your marketing programs?

What are the key steps in implementing the project?

When you implement the changes, what kind of traffic increases do you project? (new visitors, conversion rates, new customers, etc.) Are you projecting on a monthly or yearly basis?

What's the average projected lifetime value of your new customers? How much profit will they deliver to the company?

What is your project budget? What does it cover?

What's your anticipated ROI on the project?

What are the next key steps?

STEP	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DUE DATE
