

A Guidebook for Growth Driven Design

HubSpot



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Grow Better

foreword

The traditional web design model is totally broken. Whether you're an agency or a business, it leaves you extremely vulnerable to a number of risks and often does not produce optimal results. Growth-Driven Design is the new gold standard for delivering results and bringing measurable business value through web design. It is a smarter, agile and data-driven approach that minimizes the pitfalls of traditional web design and produces high-performing websites.

This book is a must read for anyone who's ever encountered a "website redesign nightmare" or who's not happy with the results they are getting from their current website. Luke breaks down exactly what's fundamentally wrong with the traditional web design process and sets the stage for a better process to follow, Growth-Driven Design. Invest the time in reading this book, take notes and start to think about how Growth-Driven Design can help your business grow.

Gabriel Wahhab

CMS Hub - GTM Lead

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introduction

You are wasting time and resources on your website and don't even know it.

For six years I ate, slept and breathed web design. Working both internally and at agencies, I launched hundreds of websites and just over a year ago I realised everything I thought I knew about the web design process was completely wrong.

What we have come to accept as the standard way we approach building and maintaining a website is riddled with systemic risk and is costing your business time, money and opportunity.

But there is a better way, a new way to approach your website that holds tremendous potential for you and your business.

It's time to take a step back and challenge the assumptions of the traditional web design process.

My hope in writing this book is to open your eyes to a smarter approach to website design so you can avoid website disasters, produce better results, impress your boss and grow your business.

Luke Summerfield

Director of CMS Hub GTM
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TRADITIONAL WEB DESIGN IS BROKEN

Your website is your biggest marketing asset and is the centerpiece of all your marketing activities. It is often the first place people go when looking for more information on your products or services. It is the place where we drive all of our marketing efforts and is often the first place prospects come looking for information.

Additionally, your website is also your “best salesperson”. It’s been said that a prospect has already moved through 70% of the sales process before even reaching out to your sales team. Where are they finding the information before talking to someone? – Your website. As critically important as our websites are, the way we approach building and improving our websites is fundamentally broken.

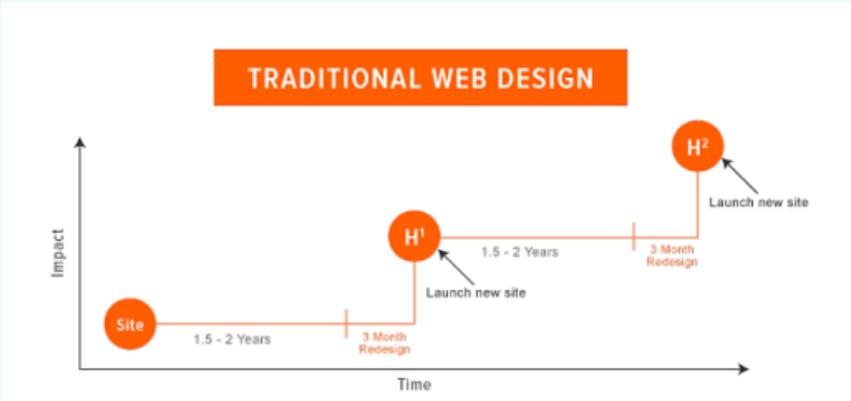
The Traditional Website Design Process

I love the look people give me when I ask them about their last website redesign project. Most tilt their head back, roll their eyes and cringe in disgust while remembering what a headache it was. Think back to your last website redesign project you did with your company and ask yourself:

- How would you describe the overall experience?
- What went right and wrong in the process?
- How much time/energy/resources did it take to finally get live?
- Did it get launched on time or on budget?
- After the launch, how much continuous improvement has happened to it?
- How excited are you to do another website redesign?

If you’ve ever been involved in a website redesign project, it’s likely that you did not fully enjoy the process.

The reason that we've come to accept the fact that a website redesign is one giant headache is because of the approach we take to build them. The traditional website redesign process is filled with systemic risk and headaches.



Risks of Traditional Web Design

Large Up-Front Cost: The average small to medium-sized business (SMB) website typically costs anywhere between \$15,000 - \$80,000, a substantial up-front cost for most businesses. Not only is this cost hard to budget for all at once, but it is also paid in full before even knowing what impact the website will have on your business.

Large Time & Resource Commitment: In addition to the up-front expense, the average SMB website typically takes three months to complete and requires a great deal of resources and energy from your team.

This amount of time to invest - with no business results to show from it until after it launches - is enough to make any boss get a bit uneasy.

Over Budget, Not on Time and Not Flexible: Even if the budget and time is approved, there are so many moving parts, people and steps involved in a large project, it's extremely difficult to accurately quote the cost and determine how long a project this large will take.

This makes it extremely common for a website project to be delayed and/or run over budget. This not only stalls out the results from your website, but also reflects poorly on you in the eyes of your boss and other department heads.

Subjective Designs and No Guarantee It Will Improve Performance: At the end of the day, you are being held accountable by your boss for a measurable increase in results from your website redesign.

So the question becomes: after all of the time, money and resources you've put into your website redesign, how do you (or the agency you've hired) know that what you're finally launching is the best possible performing website?

The answer is you can't, it's impossible.

All you can do is look through all your usage data, perform some user research and formulate a hypothesis of what you believe to be a high-performing website. Then this hypothesis is launched and never validated to see whether what we thought was in-fact correct.

We've all heard of these horror stories of a website being launched and then the website's performance tanking for one reason or another.

After launch, a website typically sits with no major updates for 1.5 to 2 years. Whatever the excuse is; "No Time", "Spent all our budget", "Other Focuses", etc. We let our website, our **#1 marketing asset** and best salesperson, sit relatively unchanged for years. This is clearly not an ideal way to maximise website performance, yet we continue to do it.

Yes, there may be some small updates or improvements, along with adding blogs or landing pages to the site, but the core and vast majority of the site remains untouched.

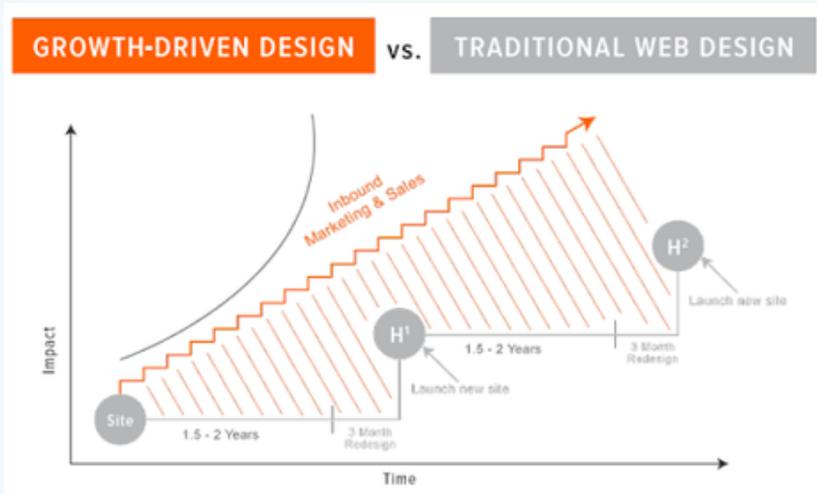
It's time we take a step back and look at how we can approach the website redesign process from a different angle.

We need to find a superior process that avoids all of the risks we outlined in the traditional web design process and produces a peak performing website; A web design process that is quick, agile and produces better results and ROI.

What is that process? – **Growth-Driven Design.**

A Smarter Way to Think About Web Design

Growth-Driven Design is a completely new approach and way of thinking about building and growing your website.



The Three Pillars of Growth-Driven Design

1. Minimize risks associated with traditional web design. We work to avoid the risks of traditional web design by taking a systematic approach to shorten the time to launch, focusing on real impact and continuous learning and improvement.
2. Continuously learn and improve. We are constantly researching, testing and learning about our visitors to inform on-going website improvements. Through continuous improvements we can reach peak performance.
3. As you learn, inform marketing and sales (and vice versa). Growth-Driven Design is tightly integrated with marketing & sales. What we learn about visitors helps inform and improve marketing & sales strategies and tactics (and vice versa).

THE GROWTH DRIVEN DESIGN PROCESS

The Growth-Driven Design process is broken up into **two major phases**:



STRATEGY

Much like the traditional website design process, the first stage of Growth-Driven Design is the strategy stage.

In this stage we'll develop a rock solid foundation that we can build our Growth-Driven Design process upon using the following steps:

Goals: What are the performance goals that we are trying to achieve with our website? How have we historically performed, where would we like to improve and how will this impact the overall marketing department's goal?

Personas: Next you will develop detailed persona profiles for the different types of groups visiting the site.

A persona is a fictional representation of your ideal customer. You can create different groups of personas based on common characteristics your audience shares. This could be a point of pain, industry, job title, etc.

As you'll learn later in the book, Growth-Driven Design centres around the user, so it is critically important to fully research and develop your persona profiles in the beginning, as they will set the stage for all future activities.

Quantitative Research - Website & Analytics Audit: It's time to start digging into the data. Perform a quantitative audit of how the existing website is performing, reviewing what is, and is not, performing well, where users are dropping off, etc.

As you are completing your website audit, you will start identifying where there is opportunity for improvements for your future web work.

“Our users are constantly telling us what they like and don't like about our websites and apps through the actions they take. Quantitative research is when we listen to our users by collecting data for these actions, and interpret in aggregate what the data means about our user base or product.

Through interpreting our quantitative data, we can create a hypothesis around what we can improve, how we can improve it, and relatively how much impact our improvement can have. We can then test our hypothesis with an experiment, and use our quantitative data to measure the results.”

Matthew Rheault

Lead Developer

Qualitative Research - User Research: After you have identified some of the areas of opportunity through your audit, the next step is proactively reaching out to your existing users to learn more about them, gain a better understanding of who they are and find ways to improve.

As you're collecting new user research, it will help you validate the assumptions you put in your original persona profiles.

“Through qualitative research, we're able to observe the user's goals, motivations, and pain points in action. This helps us to develop an understanding for the human behaviors that are tied to the quantitative data points that we've collected.

As a result, we can begin to empathise and design for the human on the other side of the monitor, thus improving our user experience and moving the needle on key performance indicators like conversion and retention.”

Austin Knight

UX Designer

Fundamental Assumptions: Using what you've learned in all of the previous steps, you can now start forming some fundamental assumptions about your users.

Some examples of fundamental assumptions include:

- Value propositions for each product, service and offer
- The various locations and devices users will be accessing your website from
- What information your users are looking for

These fundamental assumptions will help you explain the behaviour and motivations of your users and will be influential in both the global and page strategy and also future Growth-Driven Design cycles.

Global & Page Strategy: The last step in the strategy phase is to develop both a global strategy for the website as a whole and a specific page-by-page strategy for each major page on the site.

Both the global and individual page strategies should incorporate all of the previous steps and lay out a detailed strategy of exactly how to best engage and influence the user to best attain your goals.

Want to learn about these steps in more detail?

Sign up for the free Growth-Driven Design Deep Dive training course;

You will learn and gain access to:

- The exact step-by-step GDD process
- GDD Templates and documents
- Examples of completed steps

(<https://academy.hubspot.com/courses/growth-driven-design>)

Your Wishlist

The next stage in the Growth-Driven Design process is developing your wishlist. Taking what you've learned in your strategy planning, gather your team together and brainstorm every impactful, creative and innovative idea that you'd like to include on the site.

The key is to come into your brainstorming session with a "clean slate" and to not get hung up on the existing website. Think about what items should be on the list to achieve your goals in an ideal world if money, time and development skill were not an issue.

This includes brainstorming ideas such as:

- Key impactful website sections and pages
- Marketing assets, tools and resources
- Specific features, modules and functionality
- Design elements
- Changes in experience based on devices, country, etc.

After a few hours of brainstorming with the team you will have a list of 50-150+ ideas for the new website. Not all of these items will be implemented right away, however. But it's important to flesh out as many ideas as possible right off the bat. Your wishlist will be used both to determine the initial action items to implement.

LAUNCH PAD WEBSITE

In the traditional web design process we think of the launching of the website as the finish. In Growth- Driven Design it is the **complete opposite**.

In this stage we will be building and launching what we call a "Launch Pad website". This Launch Pad website is the starting point on which all of your other Growth-Driven Design activities and improvements start from.

The Launch Pad website should be launched quickly and will not be perfect. We want to avoid getting stuck on analysis, features or content while building our launch pad website. It may not be perfect on launch, but no website is. It will likely be a big improvement to your current website and give a starting point for which you can

The size and complexity of the Launch Pad website will vary depending on what you have on your wishlist and what type of website you have. However, it's extremely important that you're able to boil it down to the essential 20% that will make an impact and launch quickly so you can continue to learn about your users and improve the site.

Run an 80/20 Analysis on Your Wishlist

In the wishlist phase we compiled a long list of all the action items we'd ideally want on the site. Now it is time to start sorting and prioritizing these wishlist items to determine which action items are the first ones to implement on our launch pad website.

Review the list with your entire team and identify the 20 percent of items that will produce 80 percent of the impact and value for your website's users. Once you have identified those core 20 percent of items, pull them to the side and do some additional filtering by asking yourself, is this action item...

- A "must have" or actually a "nice to have"? – If you answer "nice to have" then it will return back to the main list.

Then with the remaining items ask:

- Is this absolutely necessary for the initial Launch Pad site, or could we build it into the site in month two or month three?

The goal of asking these additional questions is to really narrow your focus to just the core, “Must Have” action items that will provide the most impact. It’s essential to narrow down to these core action items to ensure a quick launch.

Hypothesis Statements for Each Core Action Item

Once we have narrowed down our list of action items for the Launch Pad website down to the core 20% most impactful, “must have” items, you will then create a “hypothesis statement” for each one of the action items.

The hypothesis statement allows us to gain clarity on how each action item relates.

Here’s an example hypothesis statement:

For [Marketing Mary] visiting the [Pricing Page], we believe changing [Enterprise Pricing] into a [Request a Quote] will [boost MQL conversion by 10%] We believe this to be true because [research or previously validated assumption]

At the bottom of each statement, there are four important items:

Expected Impact - The impact value should be a single number based on the value the visitor will get from the action item and the impact that will have in moving toward your goals.

Effort Required - The effort required should also be a single number that represents the combination of the number of hours, resources and difficulty to implement that particular action item.

Metrics Measured - What specific metrics will you need to measure to test this specific action item and evaluate if your hypothesis was correct? The more specific the metrics are that you list, the better.

Definition of Complete - What are all the steps you need to complete in order to consider this action item complete? Defining this up front is important because it will erase any grey areas that may arise later down the road when reviewing results or efficiency.

Web Process Steps

Once you have identified the most critical action items you must include on your Launch Pad site, you can run those items through the standard website implementation process, including:

- Messaging & Content
- User Experience (UX) & Site Architecture
- Inbound Marketing Strategy Alignment
- Wireframes
- Designs
- Development
- Quality Assurance and Testing

Set Up Data Collection

The last step of the Launch Pad website is to set up qualitative and quantitative data collection around:

- Your goals defined in the strategy phase
- Each of your fundamental assumptions --and--
- Each hypothesis statement of your action items implemented in the Launch Pad website.

Setting up data collection is an important step, as it allows you to start learning about your visitors once your Launch Pad site is live.

Just launched a new website?

Have you recently launched a website but want to implement the **Growth- Driven Design** continuous improvement model? No problem!

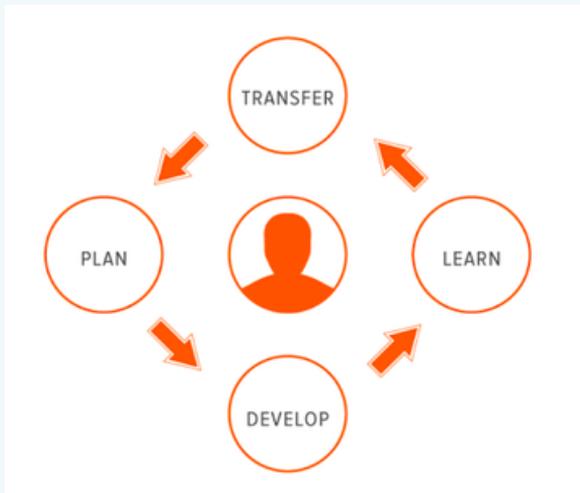
You can use your existing website as your launch pad website and move right to phase 2, the on-going cycle of Growth-Driven Design.

Phase 2: The Growth-Driven Design Cycle

Continuous Improvement

Once you have launched your Launch Pad website, it will be time to start your on- going cycles to continuously experiment, learn and improve on your website.

Coming out of your Launch Pad website you will still have a long wish list of impactful items that you'd like to implement on the site. This list is agile and should be updated on a regular basis.



This Revolves Around the Persona

This entire cycle starts with and revolves around the personas who are coming to your website.

At each stage of the cycle, we must continuously ask ourselves how this relates and provides value to the personas visiting your website.

At any point if it ever becomes unclear how an action item provides value to, or relates to the persona, you must take a step back and re-evaluate what you're working on.

Cycle Step 1: Plan

The first step of the Growth-Driven Design cycle is planning. At this step you will be identifying the most impactful items at the current moment and planning to implement the top ones into the current cycle.

There are a number of steps to go through in the planning phase:

Performance vs. Goals: Review the current performance of the website and contrast that to the goals you're trying to achieve. This will inform you of where there is opportunity to improve.

Additional Data or Research: Coming out of the last cycle and while reviewing your performance vs. goals, there is often additional data and research you may need to do in order to help clarify what action items you should add to your wishlist.

Learning from Marketing & Sales: Connect with the marketing and sales teams and see what key items they learned about the user since your last cycle.

This information can hold “golden nuggets” of insight that you can transfer to your action items you’re implementing in your Growth-Driven Design program.

Here’s an example...

The marketing team may have written a blog on a particular topic that exploded in popularity and resulted in a great number of organic and social visitors.

We’ve now learned that this topic is important to your personas. How can you take that knowledge and add new items to your wishlist to influence your Growth-Driven Design program?

Brainstorm and Prioritise Wishlist: Based on all of the new data, research and learnings you’ve had up to this point, you will now have another brainstorming session to determine any new action items to add to the wishlist.

Generally speaking, your action items will fit within these buckets:



Improve User Experience: Improvements to the website that give the user a better experience and make it easier for them to navigate, find what they are looking for and solve their problem(s).

Personalise to the User: Adapting the site, calls-to-action, content offers, etc. to the specific visitor based on the data we know about them. This includes, but is not limited to, tailoring based on interests, persona, device, geolocation, referral source or previous actions on your site.

Build Marketing Assets: Marketing assets are items that hold great value for your marketing program such as email lists, social accounts, your blog, etc.

Build new marketing assets into the website such as tools, in-depth resource sections, online training, directories, etc. - any item that will provide great value to both the end user and your company.

A great example of a marketing asset is HubSpot's Growth Grader. Users get a detailed report of their growth efforts and HubSpot gains links, data and leads.

General Website Updates: Of course, there are going to be general website updates that come up from time to time and can be added to your wishlist as well.

Prioritise Your Wishlist

Once you have all the new items added to the wishlist, you will then prioritise all the action items based on the (High / Medium / Low) impact they will have on the goals of the website and value to the user.

Plan sprint cycle: With an updated and prioritized wishlist, you can then pick the most impactful action items that you want to implement in this cycle.

The number of items you pick will depend on how long the cycle is. You're better off picking less items and really focusing on doing your best work with them. If you happen to complete them early, you can always go back to your wishlist and pick more.

Cycle Step 2: Develop

Moving into the develop phase of the cycle, you now have the most impactful action items to work on and it's time to start implementing them on the site.

This is where the rubber hits the road and everyone on your team gets together to start completing each action item that you selected in the planning phase.

Each action item that you implement should be considered an experiment to see the impact it has on the performance of the website. To measure your experiments you must setup validation tracking around the metrics outlined on the action item.

After your experiment is pushed live, you may want develop a marketing campaign (social, PPC, blogging, etc.) specifically to drive traffic to that section of the site so you can start collecting data.

During the develop phase of the cycle you will build and schedule that marketing campaign while working with your marketing team.

Cycle Step 3: Learn

After your experiments have had enough time to run and collect data, you can then move to the learn phase. In the learning phase you are going to review what information you collected about your website visitors.

Based on the information you collected, you can then validate or disprove your hypothesis on your action item card. Did your change have the impact you expected and why did or didn't it? Based on the results, what did this teach you about your visitor? What did you learn about them that you didn't know before?

Once you determine whether your hypothesis was correct and laid out what you've learned about your users, then you'll want to publish this information in a central location for everyone within the organisation to take advantage of. Having a structured system for publishing your findings is also a great reference for the future if you ever need to look for trends or look up previous experiments.

“Every website or application has a unique subset of users that share common traits. It is a primary goal of Growth-Driven experiments to answer questions about our unique subset of users.

Let's imagine that we have a food blog and want to know how to best engage our readers. Take a look at the following learnings we've had through running quantitative experiments:

- We learn that our users want comfort food in the winter, but want to lose weight through the rest of the year.
- We learn that our users are more likely to read an entire piece of content if our first paragraph contains less than 120 characters and is preceded by a full width image.
- We learn that our users are most engaged with our content at 9 am on weekdays.

These learnings all compound on one another and help us to hone in on who our users are and exactly what works best to engage them. With these three key learnings, we will know what to write about seasonally, how to format our content, and when to send out our newsletter.”

Matthew Rheault
Lead Developer

Cycle Step 4: Transfer

The last step in the cycle is to now transfer any impactful information you’ve learned in your cycle to other parts of your business.

Take time to review what you’ve learned from each completed action item and brainstorm how this may be useful for others. Review previously completed action items to see if you can find any patterns about your users.

Here’s an example

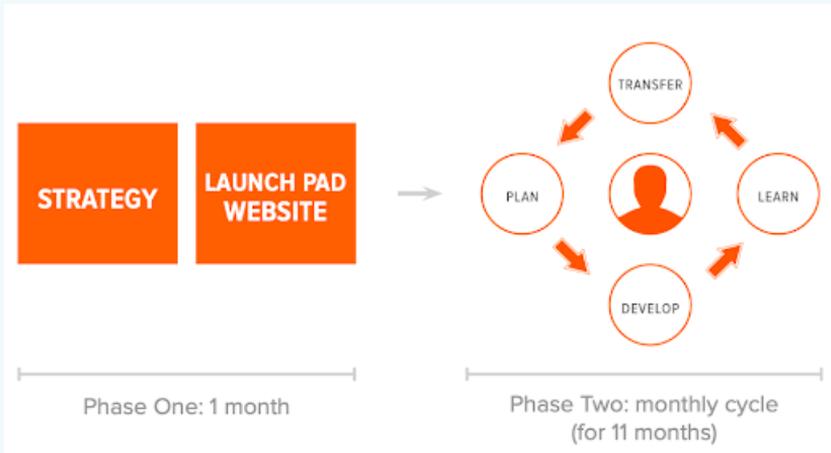
Let’s say that in your experiment you were testing two different landing page variations. One variation used social proof as the independent variable and the second variation used authority.

After running the experiment, you reviewed the data to find out that for your users coming to your website, social proof was a much more influential factor leading to conversions. Now that you’ve learned that social proof is a better trigger for your audience, you can inform your other teams to start incorporating social proof into other parts of their marketing and sales activities such as email or sales scripts.

Once you’ve put together your recommendations for others within the organisation, host a meeting to educate them and brainstorm ways they can integrate and transfer these ideas into tactical action items within their department.

Then, Repeat:

Once you’ve completed the cycle with a set of action items, go back to the beginning and start planning your next cycle. And so the cycle repeats itself over and over again each time with a better end result and more learning about your visitors. The more cycles you can complete, the more impact your website is going to have.



Final Thoughts and Next Steps:

If you've read this far into the book, you likely experienced some of the risks and pitfalls with the traditional web design process and likely have just come to expect it as part of the redesign process.

The reality is that these types of nightmares are completely avoidable if you simply take a step back and re-evaluate both the way you're approaching your existing website and how you approach future redesigns.

The companies who are adopting the Growth-Driven Design methodology are finding huge success in the flexibility and results they are getting.

It's time for you to grow as a marketer and adopt a smarter approach to your website.

It's time for you to start implementing **Growth-Driven Design**.