5 THINGS TO CONSIDER

When Planning a Website Redesign

GRANICUS

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INTRODUCTION

Now, more than ever, an effective local government website is crucial to meeting the needs and expectations of citizens. According to a recent Accenture report, 72% of citizens surveyed said expanded digital services would both increase their overall satisfaction with government and willingness to engage. As you plan your website redesign, how can you ensure your efforts are successful?

You may have initiated this project thinking you simply need new technology, but it's more likely addressing your community's needs requires a more comprehensive approach. The following guide outlines five key themes to consider to help put your project on the right track.

⇗ USER EXPERIENCE

Why it Matters

When planning a website redesign, especially within a government organization, many priorities for the project will emerge. Each department, elected official and stakeholder will have a unique vision for the new design as well as ideas for what information should be showcased on the homepage. In this moment, it's important to take a step back and think about why you are developing the website in the first place. How will you make it easy for your online visitors to find, understand and use the information they need? Shifting your focus to the experience of your users – and letting that be a guide for your decisions for the site's layout, design and information – will help you build internal alignment for the site's development and ultimately result in a site your community will actually use.

What to Consider

Making User Experience a priority requires understanding how your community uses your website. Though following best practices is a start, gathering data will allow you to paint a clearer picture of how to most effectively meet their needs.

📌 ASK YOURSELF

- How will you learn what residents' expectations are for your website?

- How will you know you are placing the correct information on your homepage?

- Is the information on your website easy for residents to find, understand and use?
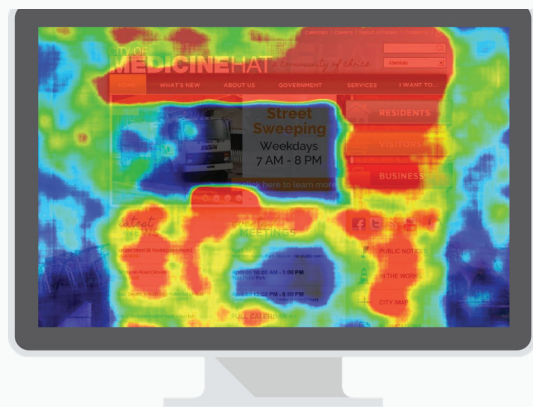
ACCESSIBILITY

Why it Matters

Over the last 15 years, the Department of Justice (DoJ) has conducted accessibility reviews at more than 200 locations across the US. While most of the DoJ reviews focus on modifications to physical facilities, websites and web-based services have also come under direct scrutiny. The DoJ entered into settlements with 14 cities and counties in 2015 alone. On a comparative basis, there were only five settlements in 2013 and none in 2014. The DoJ settlements state that websites and web services must become compliant with the accessibility standards known as WCAG 2.0, and they must adopt policies and procedures to maintain accessibility for all current and future content on their websites. Is your current site accessible?

What to Consider

Website accessibility is the result of several factors, involving both the technology you implement and how you use it.

ASK YOURSELF

- How will your content management system enable editors to create accessible content?

- How will you educate your editors about accessibility standards?

- Is your graphic designer familiar with the accessibility guidelines for color and contrast?
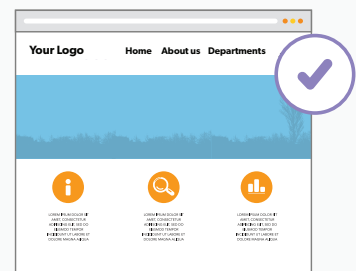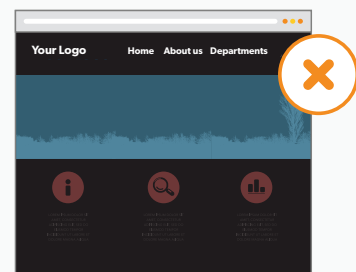
DISASTER RECOVERY

Why it Matters

Your website will be of little value to your community if they're not able to access it. In addition to your day-to-day need to provide critical services, in times of emergency your website will be a crucial hub to disseminate information, so ensuring its uptime is critical. Whether you host in-house or with an external vendor, no network infrastructure is complexly infallible. When something goes wrong, how quickly will you recover?

What to Consider

When deciding where to host your website, ask about potential providers' disaster recovery plans, which will give you insight into their approach to restoring your website after an outage.

📌 SPECIFICALLY, ASK

- What is your guaranteed uptime?

- What is your Recovery Time Objective (RTO)?

- What is your Recovery Point Objective (RPO)?

- How much downtime will we experience before receiving credit under your Service Level Agreement (SLA)?

- Is there any cause of downtime that would exclude us from your SLA terms?

🔒 SECURITY

Why it Matters

Security threats to your website evolve on a daily basis. In particular, Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks–attempts to overwhelm websites with traffic from multiple sources–have grown in scale and frequency. Protecting your visitors' information and ensuring the site stays available are key factors in creating a website your community will rely upon and trust.

What to Consider

Securing your website from intrusion will require thinking through both the technology you use and where you host it.

📌 ASK YOURSELF

- How will your CMS protect against security threats, like Cross-Site Scripting, Cross-Site Request Forgery and SQL inquiry injections?

- How will your site be protected from DDoS attacks?

- What is the physical security protocol of your website host?

MOBILE
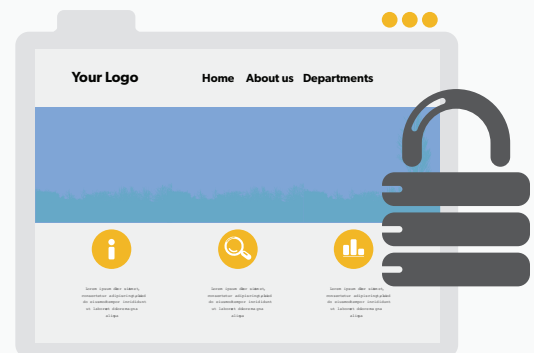
Why it Matters

According to Pew Research, "nearly two-thirds of Americans are now smartphone owners, and for many these devices are a key entry point to the online world." Based on our benchmark website analytics, 36% of local government website visitors are using a mobile device. While mobile usage is still skewed to those under the age of 50, the gap is closing. Users across all age groups are using their phones to follow breaking news, share information and learn about community events. So if your site is not mobile-friendly, it is not meeting the needs of a large number of your community.

What to Consider

Meeting the needs of your mobile visitors requires thinking about what devices they're using, what information they need and what tasks they're trying to perform.

📌 ASK YOURSELF

- Will your site be developed with Responsive Web Design (RWD) to ensure content dynamically resizes to suit all devices?

- How will you make sure your website content is easy to use on small screen devices?

- What control will you have over how your mobile content displays?

LOOKING FORWARD FOR INSPIRATION

Let the possibilities of the future – both for technology and the growing expectations of your community – be your guide. In today's ever-evolving digital environment, think about how you will keep your site relevant over time and if you decide to partner with an outside vendor, how they will help you in this endeavor.

Leverage new ideas, but always look to your community as the primary source to guide your decisions. Above all, embrace change and prepare your organization to enjoy a better, more effective website.

ABOUT GRANICUS

Granicus provides technology and services that empower government organizations to create seamless digital experiences for the people they serve. By offering the industry's leading cloud-based solutions for communications, content management, meeting and agenda management, and digital services to over 4,000 public sector organizations, Granicus helps turn government missions into quantifiable realities. Granicus products connect more than 185 million people, creating a powerful network to enhance citizen engagement. By optimizing decision-making processes, Granicus strives to help government see better outcomes and a greater impact for the citizens they serve.

For more information, visit granicus.com.