



MANUFACTURER'S ULTIMATE GUIDE TO WEBSITE REDESIGN

FOREMOST
MEDIA



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KNOWING WHEN TO REDESIGN

When it comes to your manufacturing company's web presence, an older website is doing you more harm than good. In today's Digital Age, potential customers use your website to form their opinions about your company and decide whether or not they want to be your customer. It is difficult to convert web traffic into qualified leads when the look of your company's website appears outdated, is confusing to navigate, or lacks a clear purpose. Manufacturing companies have different needs than consumer or eCommerce websites, but no matter your sales process, your website still serves as a 24/7, 365 salesperson for your company. You do not want it to give visitors the impression that your company is as obsolete as your older website.

Many manufacturing companies incorrectly interpret a website redesign to mean that they need to make their website look "prettier." While the design and layout of the new website is important, website redesign is actually about modernizing your website to support:

- Modern devices and technology.
- Current SEO best practices.
- Integration with your ERP, CRM, and other platforms.
- Various lead generation efforts.
- Your sales process.
- Desired tools and functionality.



SO HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME TO REDESIGN YOUR COMPANY'S WEBSITE?

KNOWING WHEN TO REDESIGN

YOUR WEBSITE ISN'T MOBILE-FRIENDLY

With over 2.6 billion smartphone subscriptions globally and Google's increasing preference for mobile friendly sites, it is becoming increasingly important to ensure your website displays properly on a multitude of screen sizes. In 2010, PCs comprised 52.5% of the total market share of Smart Connected Devices (SCD), but by 2014, smartphones comprised 73.4% and PCs constituted a mere 16.8%. The International Data Corporation (IDC) expects mobile distribution to reach 77.8% market share by 2019.

On April 21, 2015, Google released a mobile-friendly update to their core ranking algorithm, marking the first time Google used mobile optimization as a ranking factor for websites displayed in search results. As a result, many websites have experienced decreasing organic search traffic and Google has announced their plans to increase the impact of their mobile-friendly

algorithm in May 2016. To find out if your company's website has a mobile-friendly design, use the free [Google Mobile-Friendly Test tool](#).

Mobile users engage with your website much differently than desktop users. Mobile visitors generally attempt to locate specific information on your site

and spend less time browsing your site as a result. Your company's website needs to be mobile responsive to display and function well on wide variety of devices and screen sizes so it is easy for users to navigate and complete the desired action. These types of increasingly popular interactions are called "micro moments". Micro-moments occur every time people reflexively use their mobile device—such as a smartphone—to fulfill their need to learn something, do something, discover something, watch something, or buy something.

YOUR WEBSITE HAS A HIGH BOUNCE RATE

Google Analytics defines bounce rate as the percentage of single-page visits, (i.e. visits in which the person left your site from the entrance page without interacting with the page). If your website has a bounce rate higher than 65%, it is not providing the best user experience possible and is likely causing your company to miss out on potential leads.

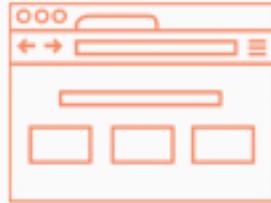


KNOWING WHEN TO REDESIGN

Nick Fitzgerald, President of Online Marketing at Foremost Media, clarifies how bounce rate relates to Google search rankings. "Google does not care how many pages are viewed. This data is not used as a ranking signal. However, you should still care about how many pages your visitors view, because it may indicate how much they do, or do not, like your website."

In other words, a high bounce rate may indicate poor user experience, which adversely affects conversions and search engine rankings. It is important for each page on your website to have a clear purpose and good content so visitors will view more pages on your website.

Fitzgerald also points to other key Google Analytics metrics, such as exit percentages, that can help you identify other potential website issues. "You may find that people would view more pages on your website, except that they keep running into a couple pages they really don't like."



“ BETTER WEBSITE NAVIGATION, A DEVELOPED INTERNAL LINK STRUCTURE, A PLEASING WEBSITE LAYOUT, AND GOOD CALLS TO ACTION. THESE ARE JUST SOME OF THE BASICS YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION TO WHEN REDESIGNING A WEBSITE.

- NICK FITZGERALD

PRESIDENT OF ONLINE MARKETING
FOREMOST MEDIA

So, what kinds of things make visitors view more pages and lower the bounce rate?

Fitzgerald's list includes, "Better website navigation, a developed internal link structure, a pleasing website layout, and good calls to action. These are just some of the basics you should pay attention to when redesigning a website." He also recommends reviewing Google Analytics for your website's traffic behavior to get a sense of what visitors do and do not like about your website before you redesign. "This will give you some data-driven ideas as to where you might need to make improvements."

YOUR WEBSITE HAS A LOW CONVERSION RATE

Conversion rate is the percentage of users who take a desired action that is in line with your company's website goals, whether your company's desired action is a request for quote (RFQ) or a successful sales transaction.

You can recognize this rate and respond to your business goals using conversion rate optimization (CRO). CRO is the process of increasing the percentage of visitors to your website that take your desired action, such as a form fill, purchase, or RFQ submission.

There is always room to improve the process by which you help a customer through your particular sales funnel. With raw data at your side, you can highlight an area of opportunity and respond accordingly. This kind of thorough analysis helps you optimize your website and digital marketing campaigns to improve user experience and focus on the types of customers that match your buyer personas, which helps you increase your bottom dollar and acquire strong leads.

You can calculate the impact that an increased number of conversions will have on your revenue with our [conversion and traffic calculator](#).



KNOWING WHEN TO REDESIGN

YOUR COMPANY IS REBRANDING

Whether your company's rebranding strategy includes a different brand name, logo, color scheme, message, or a little bit of each, you need to ensure your website is redesigned to match. If your company's website does not support

your rebranding strategy, it will confuse visitors and make them less likely to trust your company. Rebranding is time consuming and expensive. A redesigned website will help make your company's rebranding strategy a success instead of a failure.



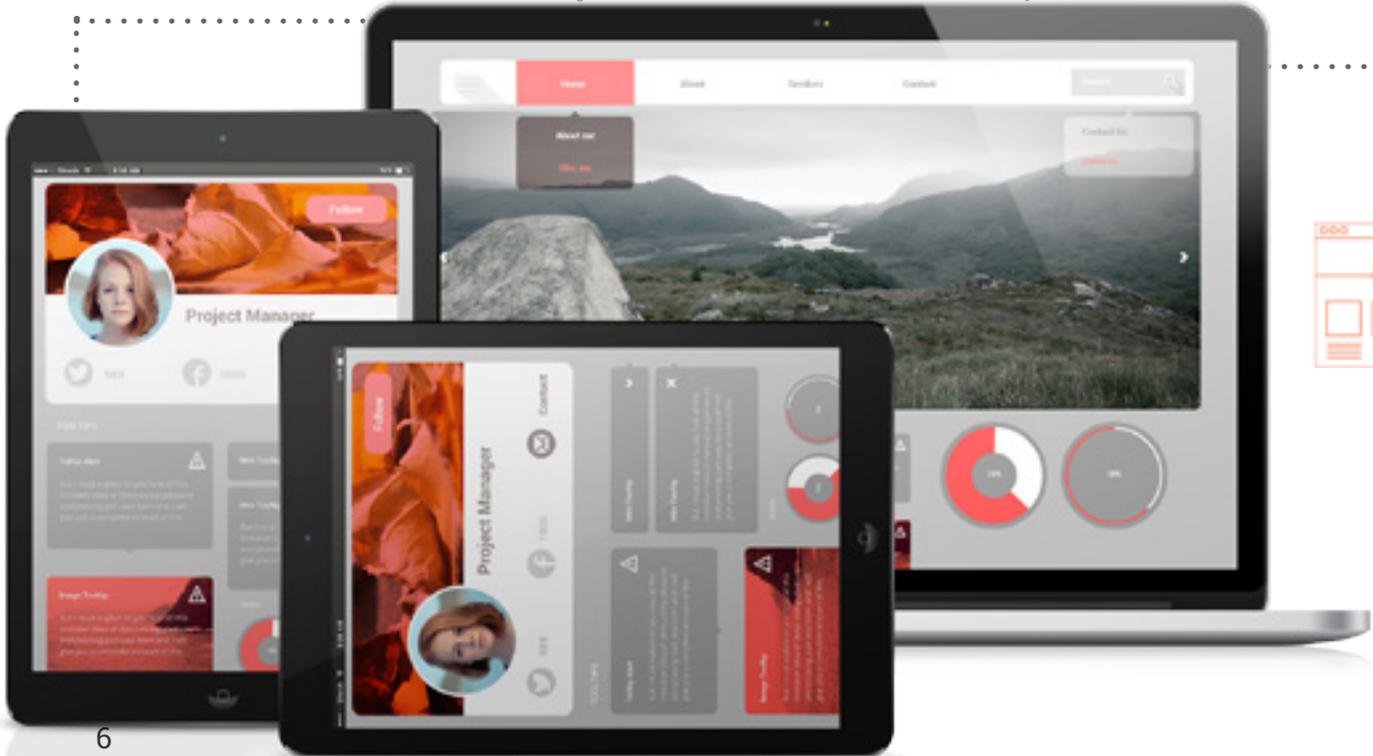
YOUR COMPANY WANTS A MORE ROBUST CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Your Content Management System (CMS) is the application that powers your website and allows you to create and update website content and pages.

Modern CMS's have a What You See Is What You Get (WYSIWYG) editor that provides even the most nontechnical users a simple way to update the website without having to learn code. If your company is spending more than it wants to have a developer make simple content changes to the website, or your in-house team is struggling with a CMS that is difficult to use, a website redesign on a new CMS platform will help eliminate those issues. Older CMS's, (or older versions of still popular systems), are not only difficult to use, but are also susceptible to security risks that threaten your company data.

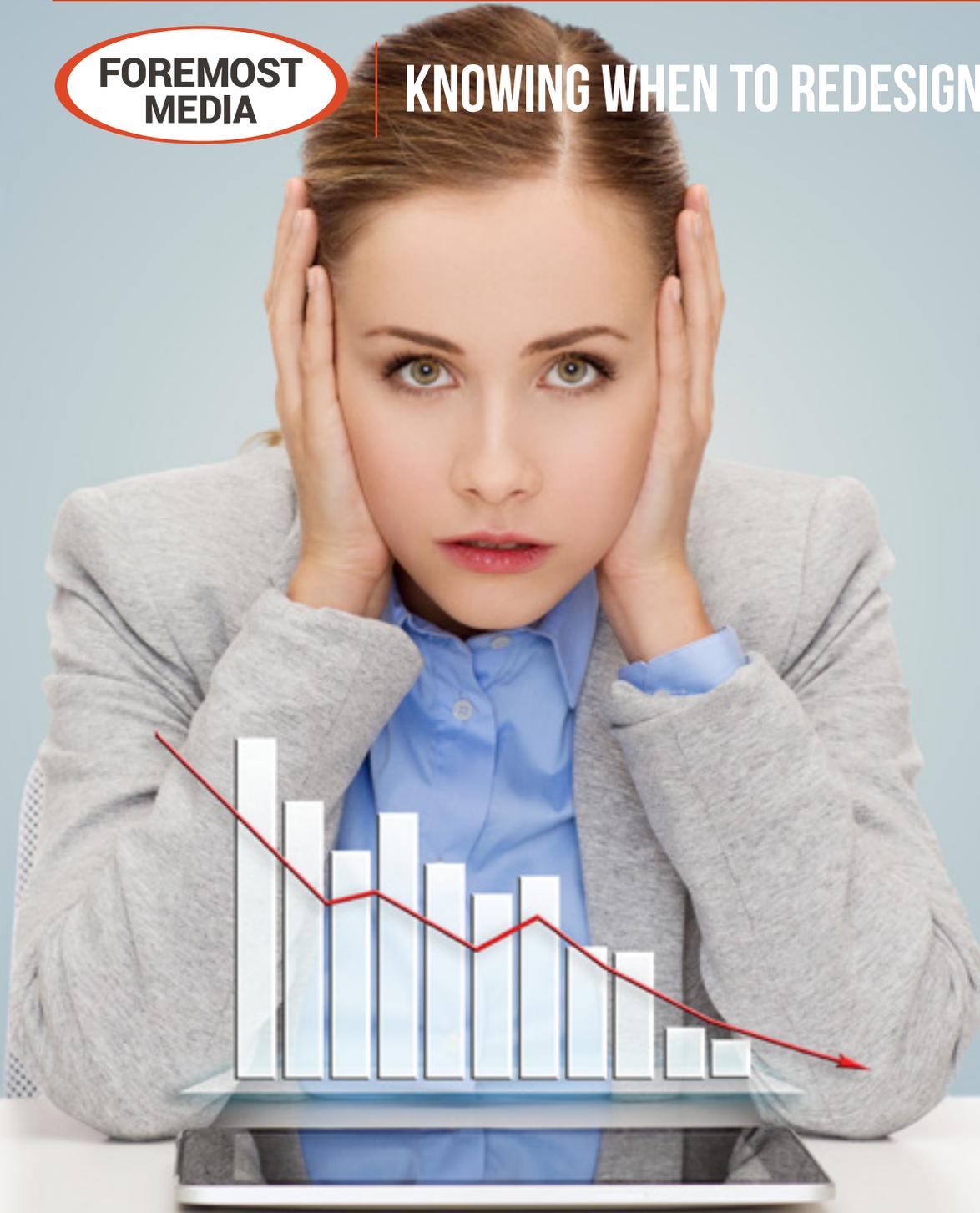
YOUR COMPETITORS RECENTLY REDESIGNED THEIR WEBSITES

If your competitor's website features everything listed above and your company's website does not, it gives your customers the impression that your company is behind the times.



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KNOWING WHEN TO REDESIGN



Matt Brown, Project Manager at Foremost Media, says that most companies redesign their websites every three to four years on average. In Brown's opinion, a website that is five years or older is overdue for a redesign.

We usually recommend an upgrade every two to three years; however, a website built on a solid CMS with regular updates and outstanding SEO may not need to be redesigned for several years.

“ FOR MANUFACTURING COMPANIES, IT IS MORE IMPORTANT TO FOCUS ON SECURITY AND ROI, RATHER THAN BE CONCERNED WITH A ‘FRESH’ LOOK AND FEEL.

Your company may not be able to redesign its website every time a competitor redesigns theirs, but if your competitor's website is outperforming yours, it is time to consider a website redesign.

MATT BROWN, PROJECT MANAGER AT FOREMOST MEDIA



WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN REDESIGNING YOUR WEBSITE

TEMPLATE VERSUS CUSTOM DESIGN

When redesigning your website, you will have to choose whether to model the new website from an existing template or develop a custom design. Your web development company should help guide you to the right solution for your business based on your company's budget, timeline, and goals. In order to make the best decision for your business, it is important to understand the key differences between the two options.

TEMPLATE WEBSITES

If your budget and needs are limited, your company may elect to use a template for their website redesign. A website template is a predesigned web page that lets your development team modify the color scheme, fonts, and page content to suit your company's needs.

PROS

- **Lower Cost**
If your budget is limited, using a template can help save your company money. Templates with an attractive, user friendly theme usually cost less than \$300. Although templates are predesigned, you will still need to customize it to ensure it matches your company's branding.
- **Fast Completion Time**
If your company has text and image content ready to use for the template, your website will be up and running much faster than a custom designed website.
- **Many Choices**
Depending on the CMS you go with, there are many templates to choose from. It is important to make sure you choose a template that matches your available content to ensure a professional look for your business.

CONS

- **Set Layout**
The layout of image and text content on template websites is limited. The template provides a guide of where to place images and text on certain areas of the page.
- **Resembles Other Websites**
Even with many templates to choose from, it is extremely likely for another company to purchase and modify the same template. Despite any modifications, there is a good chance your website will resemble other websites with the same template.
- **Slower Load Times**
Without control over how the template was coded, templates will load slower than custom sites because of existing scripts and functionality your company may not even use.

CUSTOM DESIGN WEBSITES

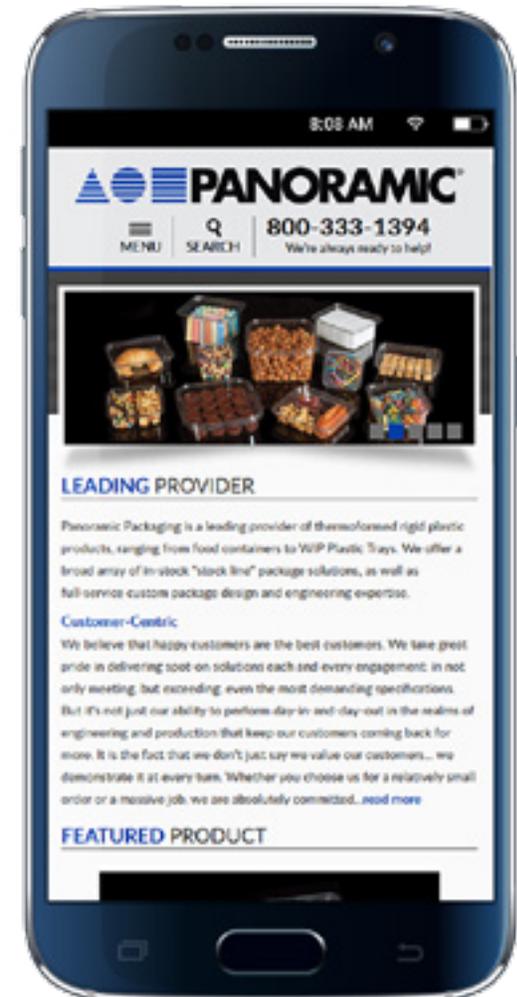
If your manufacturing company is looking to stand out from competitors and provide a unique user experience for website visitors, a custom design website is your best option. Custom design websites are unique in their functionality and how they portray your brand's value proposition.

PROS

- Unique Design**
 With the ability to strategically place content and graphics anywhere on the page, custom design websites can be tailored to specifically suit the needs of your company and help you to stand out from your competition.
- No Compromise**
 A custom design website lets you add any feature or functionality to the website and position it exactly where you want it on the web page. Whereas template websites make you compromise on any features, functions, and placements the template does not offer.
- Optimized Code**
 Unlike template websites, custom designed websites are coded specifically for your company. The only scripts included in the code are ones required for your specific site. This helps with page load times, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), cross browser compatibility, and platform integration.

CONS

- Longer Completion Time**
 A custom design website is built from the ground up, and each stage in the building process is unique to your company. This typically includes several design and functionality discussions and multiple revisions of design mock ups. This can be a time consuming process for everyone involved in the website redesign.
- Higher Cost**
 A custom design website will be more expensive than a template website because of the increased time investment that comes along with design discussions, mock ups, revisions, and custom coding.





WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN REDESIGNING YOUR WEBSITE

CHOOSING THE RIGHT CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

If your company does not have experience with web design and development, it is easy to be confused or even intimidated by industry jargon like Proprietary CMS, WordPress, or DNN. But these are important terms to know and understand if your company is redesigning its website.

PROPRIETARY CMS

Proprietary Content Management Systems (CMS) use closed-source software that only allows users to make limited modifications to their website post launch. These systems come in a variety of options, and were once popular, but over the years many have disappeared as open source options have improved. One of the main concerns with this CMS, is that you have to be careful about the company that owns the software because if they go out of business, or you no longer have a positive relationship with them, you will lose your support for your website.

PROS

- Depending on the developer, a proprietary CMS can be more secure as only the vendor has the ability to change the code.

CONS

- No access to source code.
- Lack of customization and flexibility.
- Most use outdated technology.
- Licensing fees.
- Not adaptable to changing needs.
- Less support.



WORDPRESS PLATFORM

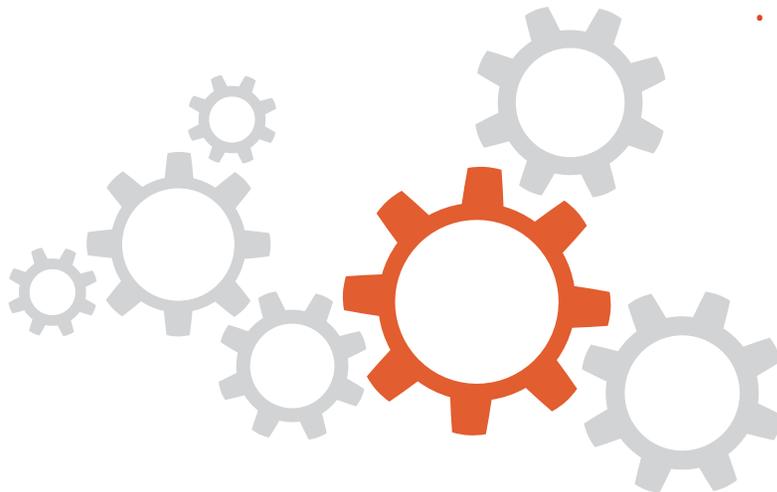
WordPress is a popular platform that has gained significant market share in recent years. In November 2015, WordPress comprised 58.7% market share. The platform uses open-source software and was initially created by a group of developers for building blog websites after other blogging software was discontinued. At the time, WordPress featured a new user interface and introduced the use of plugins that allowed other developers to expand the functionality of the website. Today, many companies are using WordPress and various plugins as the content management system (CMS) for their website. However, WordPress's widespread popularity and lack of core features has led to security risks that hackers routinely exploit. In December 2014, the security team at Sucuri found more than 100,000 WordPress sites hit by the SoakSoak.ru malware campaign. The same malware campaign that caused more than 11,000 domains to be blacklisted by Google. Security threats like this have forced WordPress to routinely upgrade the platform version, which frequently causes issues with existing site themes and plugins.

PROS

- Many free plugins to choose from for customization.
- Easy to find developers and support.
- Plugins feature solid SEO structure and capabilities.

CONS

- Relies on plugins that can be potential security risks.
- Does not work well for highly specialized data handling.
- Back end editing from separate admin interface can be cumbersome.
- Limited user role permissions.





WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN REDESIGNING YOUR WEBSITE

DNN PLATFORM

DNN was designed to be an enterprise level CMS for large and complex websites. The platform includes a front end administrator interface that also has drag and drop functionality, so someone with little technical knowledge will be able to easily navigate the software. Some of the largest sites on the internet have been created with DNN, such as NASA, US Army, Chrysler, Motorola, Bose and NASCAR. This is due to its flexibility, unmatched security, and advanced features.

PROS

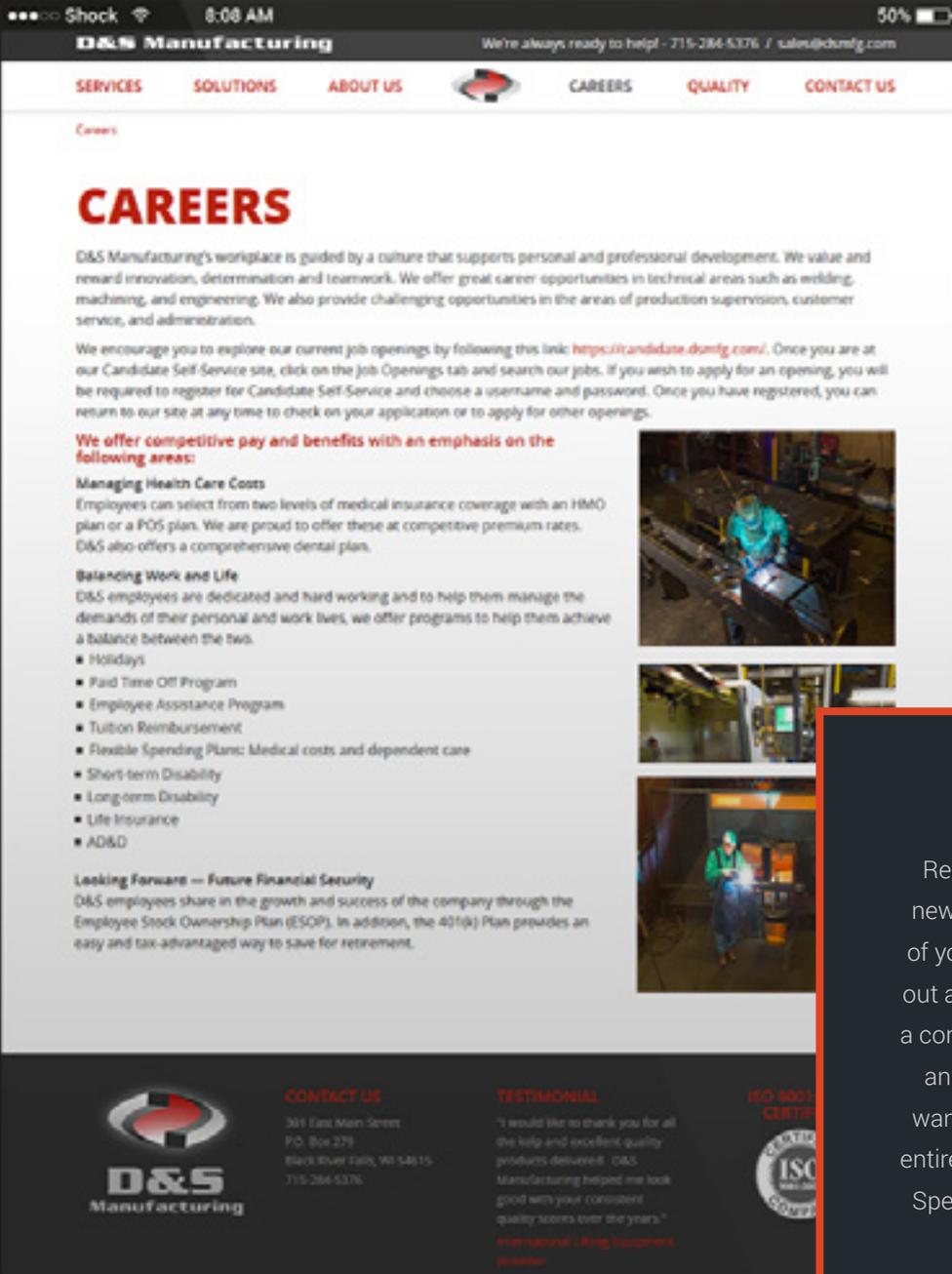
- Easily edit content from the front end.
- Secure and stable environment.
- Ability to have both distributor and employee portals.
- Easier to assign roles and permissions to pages or modules.
- Extensive audit trail of who is editing.
- ASP.NET allows for integration with virtually any business application, especially those in Microsoft stack of Dynamics (GP, CRM, etc.).
- Strong SEO structure.

CONS

- Robust system that utilizes more server-side resources.
- Less templates available (compared to WordPress).

These are just a few of the popular CMS options available for your website. Other options include Joomla, Drupal, and Concrete5. Deciding which CMS is best for your company depends the specific needs of your website and your preferred web development company's expertise. When reviewing different CMS platforms, ask for a quick tour and make sure it has a user interface you like and the functionalities you need. Also keep in mind any additional systems you will need to integrate with your website as well.





WHAT IS YOUR GOAL?

Ready to redesign your website? Before talking about your website's new look, colors, or layout, it is important to first determine the goal(s) of your website. Do you want visitors to your website to contact you, fill out an RFQ, or make a purchase? Many manufacturing companies have a complex sales process that involves distributors, wholesalers, brokers, and large teams in the purchase decision. Knowing what action you want your visitors to take on your website will help you throughout the entire redesign process. In order to create effective goals they should be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-Bound (SMART).

CUSTOM DESIGN WEBSITES

Creating SMART goals allows you to determine whether or not your website redesign is a success. Here is what we mean by SMART goals:



SPECIFIC

Effective goals are precise, not vague.



MEASURABLE

A measurable goal can be monitored and has clear-cut factors that define a successful completion.



ATTAINABLE

Your goal should be realistic, not set out of reach or below average performance.



RELEVANT

The goals of your website should be consistent with the goals of your manufacturing company.



TIME-BOUND

The goal should have a starting and ending point so you will be able to develop Key Performance Indicators (KPI) to determine if the website redesign is a success.

EXAMPLE

An example of a generic goal could be to increase marketing traffic to your new site, whereas a SMART goal would be to increase leads generated from the site by 35% within one year after launch.

Your goals will vary based on your business objectives and available budget and resources. A good web development company will help you define your goals so they can strategically design your website to help your company connect with your target audience and achieve your goals.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Knowing your target audience makes all parts of the website redesign and overall marketing efforts easier and more successful. To identify your target audience, start by collecting basic demographic information such as:

AGE / GENDER / EDUCATION / PROFESSION / INCOME

After collecting the basic demographic information, take it a step further to analyze the intentions of visitors to your website by considering the needs and wants of your target audience. To help you determine the content of your website, start by asking yourself the following questions:



- What words does my target audience use to search for my website?
- Why is my target audience coming to my website?
- What level of internet experience does my target audience have?
- What benefits appeal to my target audience the most?



It is alarming how many web designers gloss over the target audience's needs and wants when redesigning a website. In many cases, this kind of oversight results in a website that looks more modern, but that performs worse than its predecessor. Gathering information about your target audience will help you understand how your customers will use your website and ensure the redesign is successful.



CALCULATING ROI

Your expected return on investment (ROI) will vary depending on the goal and purpose of the website. However, creating **SMART goals** makes it easier to track ROI. With proper analytics installed, you can analyze metrics such as traffic, bounce rate, and demographics, to provide you with a clear picture of how many visitors completed the desired action on your website. Tracking these metrics and assigning value to the desired action allows you to evaluate the effectiveness of your investment in a website redesign and help you to calculate your return.



WHAT FEATURES WILL YOUR WEBSITE NEED?

As a manufacturer, your website will need to do more than just look good. Whether you are selling directly or through distributors, your website will require features that many web development companies may not be familiar with. During a website redesign it is important to not only consider features on your existing website, but to also consider other features on your new website that help you cut costs and increase profitability. You will find several of the more common solutions we have developed for manufacturing companies throughout the years listed below:

✓ **DISTRIBUTOR PORTAL**

Offer your distributors exclusive access to password protected areas on your site with a distributor portal. This feature strengthens your bond with your distribution network by providing them with the information they need to better understand and sell your product behind a secure login that is unique to each distributor.

✓ **STORE/DISTRIBUTOR LOCATOR**

A database or locator tool for distributors or retail locations on your website can help increase sales from your dealers and distributors while eliminating phone calls to your company. A store locator tool will help site visitors quickly find nearby locations that sell your products. A robust locator tool should be easily updated via an Excel upload in the admin section of the site.



✓ **LEAD MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

Lead management tools are designed to help manufacturing companies that sell through distribution. Leads can be automatically routed from your website directly to your regional sales managers who, in turn, can funnel the leads to a specific distributor in their region. The system also helps your sales team follow up on those leads to ensure your distributors are taking advantage of the leads they are being sent.

✓ **MARKETING AUTOMATION TOOLS**

Marketing automation systems identify and qualify leads based on detailed information collected from visitors' online actions on the website. After identifying leads, the system can then send personalized email campaigns and develop workflows based off of their actions. Workflows create a hands-off approach to seamlessly provide customers with the right information exactly when they need it.



WHAT FEATURES WILL YOUR WEBSITE NEED?

✓ ERP (ENTERPRISE RESOURCE PLANNING) INTEGRATION

You should have a cooperative approach to your overall web platform. Integrating your website with your ERP system keeps customer data and inventory up-to-date, increases efficiency, reduces operating costs, and eliminates errors. Synchronizing the data between your website and ERP ensures that all necessary data transfers properly in real-time without any human involvement or duplicate data entry.

✓ DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

If you are a manufacturer with sell sheets, Safety Data Sheets (SDS), or other documentation that needs to be organized and constantly updated, a document management system could be your ideal solution. This system helps organize your important business documents into Windows-like folders so you can easily manage revisions and access the documents online.

✓ MARKETING REPOSITORY

With a marketing repository, you can grant access to the public or specific members to browse and download high-resolution marketing materials and product logos without having to set up FTP accounts.

✓ CUSTOM QUOTE FORMS

A well-designed RFQ form engages visitors and turns them into prospects. Make sure the form asks for all information necessary to give a solid quote, including dimensions, extra options, and a general overview. It is extremely important to get contact information so you know who to send the quote to. If possible, you should ask if they prefer email or telephone communication as well.

✓ PRODUCT DEMO VIDEOS

Properly placed videos about your products and services turn shoppers into buyers and significantly shorten the sales cycle. Website visitors that watch a video tend to stay on the site longer and visit more pages compared to visitors that do not watch. According to HubSpot, nearly 60% of business executives prefer to watch a video on a page where both text and video are available.

WHAT FEATURES WILL YOUR WEBSITE NEED?

✓ ONLINE SAFETY TRAINING

Do you need to train your end users to safely use and properly handle your equipment or machinery? If so, you can reduce training costs by setting up an online safety training system that can even include certificates of completion.

✓ ONLINE EMPLOYMENT PORTALS

Employment modules allow Human Resources to manage of this section of your website and easily post new job openings and receive resumes or applications without involving the IT or Marketing departments.

✓ MANUFACTURER ECOMMERCE SOLUTIONS

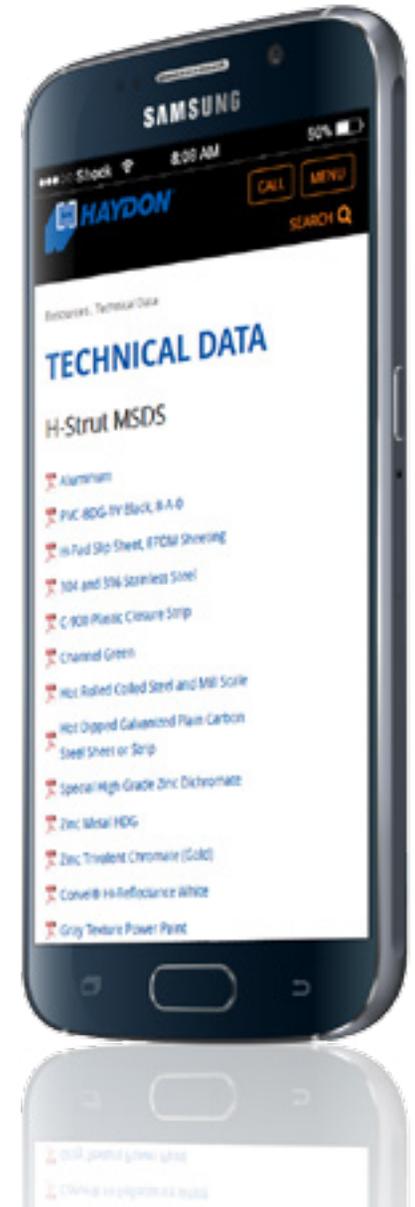
Whether you are a name brand manufacturer looking to sell directly online or simplify the online ordering process with your distributors through a secure online ordering portal, a specialized eCommerce solution can help. You should also consider tying your new storefront software into your back end ERP and other internal business managements systems for increased efficiency.

✓ PART ORDERING SYSTEMS WITH SCHEMATIC DRAWINGS

An online replacement parts ordering system for your product line allows your customers to find their machine and review schematic drawings to identify the part they wish to order and order it directly from the schematic drawing page.

✓ SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

Like most manufacturing companies you probably get solicitations from a new SEO company quite often. Those companies all say about the same thing: "We can make you #1 on Google..." If only SEO was that simple. Success on the web starts with getting the right traffic to your site and converting that traffic to a lead or buyer. Be sure to select a team with extensive experience providing SEO services to manufacturing companies and that stays up to the minute on the latest Google algorithm updates that change the way search results are generated.





WHAT FEATURES WILL YOUR WEBSITE NEED?

✓ ONLINE PRODUCT CATALOGS

If your company has a large product catalog with many different SKUs, an online product catalog can help organize and display data in a format that is easy to navigate.

✓ CRM (CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT) INTEGRATION

If you are using a CRM, (Salesforce, Microsoft Dynamics, SugarCRM, etc.), you need to make sure your website is passing web forms, such as RFQ or literature requests to your system. This cuts down on double data entry and ensures that contacts from your website are managed and responded to properly.

✓ PHOTO AND VIDEO GALLERIES

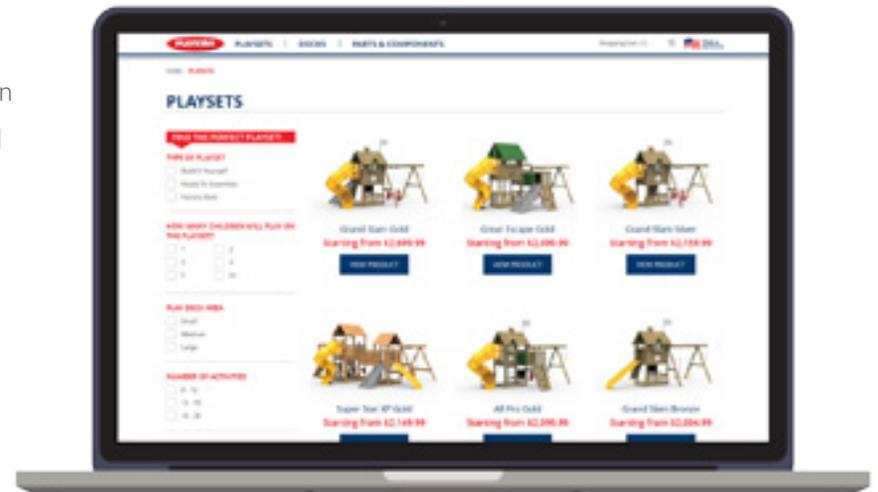
Photo and video galleries can differentiate your product(s) from the competition. These solutions make it easy to manage photos or videos for your entire product line.

✓ EVENTS MODULE

If your company has training classes or customer events that require registration, you should consider an event planner and registration module. With the event planner, you can display events in a calendar or event list view, show event locations via Google maps, and allow users to register and make online payments for upcoming events.

✓ WARRANTY REGISTRATION SOFTWARE

Collecting warranty information online is more efficient than through the the mail. These systems can be as simple as collecting basic information and providing it to you via email, to advanced features like CRM integration with marketing automation software so you can send follow up messages and upgrade notices to your customers.



Many web development companies add a line item for SEO to a proposal as way to increase profits without increasing their workload. However, SEO is a critical component of a successful website redesign to consider.

YOUR WEB DEVELOPMENT COMPANY SHOULD SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING SEO FACTORS TO YOU AS PART OF YOUR WEBSITE REDESIGN:

1 301 REDIRECTS

Skipping 301 redirects is one of the most overlooked and critical things inexperienced web developers do when redesigning a site. 301 redirects are a way to send both search engines and site visitors to a different page than other than the one they originally requested. This is incredibly important when redesigning a website as your page structures will likely change with your new site, leading visitors to experience 404 errors and causing search engines to remove those pages from search results. To ensure your website does not lose ranking pages or upset visitors with broken links, you must establish 301 redirects. A 301 redirect tells the search engines that the previous page has permanently moved to a new location, (as opposed to a 302, which is a temporary redirect), and automatically sends visitors and search engines from the old page to the new page.

2 SITE CONTENT

It is important to determine which pages or parts of your website you want to keep. From an SEO perspective, there are several ways to determine which pages to keep.

- **Google Analytics**

If you have Google Analytics on your existing site, your web development company should use your Google Analytics account to determine the top 80% of visited landing pages. These are pages you want to keep to make sure you do not lose any traffic from a website redesign.

- **Backlinks**

It is important for your web development company to identify all the pages on your site that have external backlinks coming in and linking to your site. Making your way to the top of the Search Engine Results Page (SERP) can only be achieved through backlinking to other relevant sites. Preserving the pages that have backlinks is extremely important as each backlink is essentially for a vote for your site to rank higher.

3 SITE LOADING SPEED

Visitors to your website do not like a slow load times and neither do search engines. Since 2010, Google has used site speed as a ranking factor for search results. This means Google places websites with slow load times lower in search results than websites with faster load times.

Aaron Jach, Front-End Developer at Foremost Media, says that the biggest contributing factors to slow load speeds are “improperly sized images, uncompressed images, broken links or files, uncached data, and unnecessary scripts and styles.” Jach also added that “while those are the biggest factors, there are other small factors that, when put together, equal a significant impact on site loading time.”



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SITE HOSTING CONSIDERATION

When choosing a website hosting provider for your company's website, consider more than cost.

“ COST IS IMPORTANT, HOWEVER, YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR, AND SOMETIMES CHEAPER COMES WITH A LACK OF SUPPORT, RESOURCES, FEATURES, AND OPTIONS.

TONY REYNOLDS,
SERVER SUPPORT MANAGER, FOREMOST MEDIA

Not all web hosting providers are the same, and you should choose a hosting provider that understands your company's speciality and focuses on meeting your unique needs. Make sure that the hosting provider supports the CMS platform of your website. Certain CMS require Linux while others need a Windows hosting environment. Your hosting provider should also offer you 24/7, 365 emergency support for your website. Many manufacturing companies choose to host with the same company that developed their website in order to have a single point of contact for any potential issues.

COMPARING WEB DEVELOPMENT COMPANIES

With a solid understanding of what you want and need on your updated website, you can start comparing web development companies. Not all web development companies are created equal however. Choosing the wrong company will be a costly mistake that can take years to correct. To avoid this type of situation, choose a web development company that:



HAS DISCUSSIONS WITH YOU BEFORE THE QUOTE

Did the web development company have an in depth discussion with you about your goals, objectives, and required site functionality? A good development team will take the time to understand your specific needs for the project. This process typically includes multiple conversations. The web development company should demonstrate that they fully understand your needs in the proposal they provide.



HAS INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

Does the web development company have experience in your general industry? As a manufacturer, your target market and website functionality needs are much different than a B2C retail business. Choosing a company with B2B manufacturing experience will save you time because you will not have to educate them about distributor relationships. A web development company that is familiar with your industry will also be able to provide insight and suggest strategies that have worked well for other companies in your industry.



USES OPEN SOURCE TECHNOLOGY

Many web development companies build websites on their own proprietary CMS or eCommerce platforms. Generally, it is better to choose a web development company that builds websites using open source software. This prevents you from being held hostage by the web development company if you decide to change companies down the road. It is also important to choose a web development company that has extensive experience in their open source platform and that can modify the source code should your project require custom functionality.



HAS DEDICATED SERVER EXPERTS

Does the web development company have a dedicated server expert? Depending on your specific needs, your website may connect to backend or internal databases or collect sensitive information that requires a level of security. It is important to ensure that web development company you choose has server technology experts on staff so they can build a site that runs efficiently and securely.

COMPARING WEB DEVELOPMENT COMPANIES



HAS BEEN IN BUSINESS AWHILE

Just because someone has a computer and a little HTML knowledge, does not mean they are a web developer. The company you choose should possess experience and a long list of repeat customers. The average shelf life of a web design is three to four years. Web development companies with a proven track record of maintaining clients through several website redesigns are more likely to stay up-to-date with technology and online marketing strategies.



USES AN IN-HOUSE TEAM

Many web development companies outsource their work to third parties, (often offshore), in an effort to reduce their costs. The result of this business model is long delays, communication breakdowns, and scheduling conflicts. Since these companies do not have any direct control over the person(s) doing the actual coding, there is little control over the quality of the coding. This can result in "creative coding" from developers.



HAS A REAL OFFICE

Does the company have a real office you can visit? This can be a true test of whether a web development company is legitimate or not. If possible, you should go to their office and meet the team members you will be working with. This will give you a feel for their company culture so you can be sure that they are a good fit for you and your business.



USES WORKFLOW SYSTEMS

Does the web development company have a dedicated server expert? Depending on your specific needs, your website may connect to backend or internal databases or collect sensitive information that requires a level of security. It is important to ensure that web development company you choose has server technology experts on staff so they can build a site that runs efficiently and securely.

COMPARING WEB DEVELOPMENT COMPANIES? [DOWNLOAD A PRINTABLE CHECKLIST](#)

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PROVIDES YOU WITH MIGRATION PLANS

If your current website is ranking well in search results, it is important to have a migration plan in place to ensure your site maintains, (and hopefully improves), its ranking. Specific steps must be taken when there are changes to your website's page structure and navigation. These steps should be outlined in the project proposal the web development company provides you.



HAS REFERENCES AVAILABLE

Do they have references available from other customers? Customer references should come with every proposal. A list of phone or email references will speak volumes of the professionalism you can expect.



HAS STAFF REDUNDANCY

The web development company you choose should have more than one developer or one graphic artist. Otherwise, you will experience long waits due to vacations or career changes. You want redundancy at all positions to ensure help will be available when you need it.



FOCUSES ON YOUR ROI

Is your prospective web development company concerned with the amount of ROI your new website will provide your company? When your website launches, you should have a plan in place to measure and track the effectiveness and ROI of your website. The web development company you choose to redesign your website should help you work toward and achieve your goals.



INTERESTED IN HAVING YOUR WEBSITE REDESIGNED?

RECEIVE A
FREE CONSULTATION



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We literally wrote the book on redesigning websites for manufacturing companies.